

NOT SOMEDAY - BUT NOW!

WE SHALL OVERCOME

By Rev. Albert B. Cleage Jr., Contributing Editor

One hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation the Negro has at long last begun his march to freedom and first class citizenship. The white press reports that we have made more progress during the last thirty days than during the entire one hundred years following the Civil War. The Federal Government realizes that the Negro's demands for Freedom must be given immediate attention. Everywhere people are coming to accept the fact that the Negro has completely rejected gradualism and tokenism. For all of its loud talk and futile efforts to preserve the status quo, the South realizes that times have changed. The solid wall of racial segregation and discrimination has begun to crumble and fall. Southern leaders are now talking for the record.

They seek only to slow up an inevitable process; and for this slowing up process, they are depending upon the basic weakness and confusion of President Kennedy upon the Civil Rights question, and his foolish hope that he can hold both the Solid South and the northern Negro vote in 1964. At the present moment he is in grave danger of losing both! He has not yet realized that he can win without the South, but he cannot hope to win without the Negro vote in the key cities of the North.

Damon Keith, Broadus Butler, and the Detroit Council for Political Education completely misread the signs of the times in commending President Kennedy on his "Civil Rights stand." President Kennedy did nothing until he was forced to act by the increasing pressure of the NEGRO PROTEST. Rev. Martin Luther King dragged Kennedy screaming and kicking into the twentieth century .. and we still have no assurance that he will really fight for Civil Rights legislation. President Kennedy's appeal to Negro leaders to stop Protest Demonstrations until after Congress has had an opportunity to act, shows a complete failure to understand the realities of the Negro's Freedom Struggle. If the pressure of Negro protest is removed, our movement towards first class citizenship will stop! This is the essential fact which the Negro must understand. The walls of segregation and discrimination are crumbling because of the increasing pressure of Negro Protest. Men, women, and Children willing to suffer the indignities of fire hoses, police dogs, clubs, and jail have accomplished in thirty days what one hundred years of conversations and behind the scenes negotiations could not accomplish. Rev. Martin Luther King has proven his method. It works! The old Uncle Tom method did not work. Roy Wilkins blast against the Southern Christian Leadership Conference

CORE, and SNICK completely missed the point. The masses of people are supporting those organizations which are essentially protest organizations because the masses of people have grasped the basic fact that we are engaged in a power struggle in which direct action is vitally necessary. The NAACP has become "one among many" rather than "the one" in our Civil Rights struggle. The NAACP is now the legal arm of our Freedom struggle and as such deserves our support. It cannot, however, hope to supplant Rev. Martin Luther King, Core, and Snick no matter how loudly Roy Wilkins screams about the importance of the NAACP.

Negro leadership everywhere is reflecting the fighting temper of the Negro community. Only a few Old Guard spokesmen like George S. Schuyler still shudder at the sight of militant new Negroes arguing with the Attorney General and refusing to heed the President's appeal to stop demonstrating for freedom and first class citizenship. The Council of Bishops of the A.M.E. Church correctly interpret the mood of the Negro Community when they initiate a drive to register two million new Negro voters before the 1964 national election.

The Detroit Council for Human Rights has already inspired a new epidemic of militant action in the City of Detroit. Old Guard Negro Leaders, clearly reading the handwriting on the wall, and realizing that they must act or be unceremoniously pushed to one side, are frantically trying to either act or create the illusion of action.

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The Detroit NAACP has announced a series of protest demonstrations beginning in Dearborn, and then moving to Grosse Pointe and other segregated suburban communities. Abraham Ulmer, Chairman of the NAACP Housing Committee deserves credit for pulling the Detroit Branch into the Freedom struggle. It is impossible to know whether or not these protests will accomplish his objective of pressuring the state legislature into adopting a fair housing law, but certainly they indicate a welcome about face in local NAACP strategy and serve to give the community hope that the organization will also take positive action in other areas of community concern such as schools and jobs without fear of antagonizing white liberals. After a year of inactivity the "Preachers of Detroit and Vicinity" have announced a "Selective Patronage Campaign" against the A & P Food Stores. This announcement comes upon the heels of a Boycott against the Kroger stores announced by the Detroit Chapter of CORE. Negroes are asked to stay out of both A & P Food Stores and Kroger Super Markets until both have adopted a fair hiring policy.

GOAL (Group on Advanced Leadership) has announced support for the Preacher's Campaign and promised to picket A & P Stores every Saturday until the Boycott is settled.

TULC has announced plans to picket construction jobs in Detroit in which there is racial discrimination and has served notice on the Unions of their intention. This is a tremendous step forward for TULC, and no doubt much credit for the new militancy stems from Willie Baxter and the young Turks who have consistently fought against the middle of the road policies laid down by "the powers that be." Perhaps most surprising of all has been the venturing forth of Dr. Remus Robinson, Negro member of the Board of Education, on Teacher Placement and Apprentice-Training. During a conference with Attorney General Kelly, Dr. Robinson suggested that the F.E.P.C. should force the placement of Negro teachers and the establishment of a non-discriminatory policy of apprentice training. He also proposed to the Board of Education that racial discrimination in teacher placement be removed and that the Board drop from the apprentice training program any unions or businesses which have not filed non-discrimination affidavits.

Detroit has come a long way in a few short weeks. The climate of opinion has changed and the precipitating cause has been the formation of the Detroit Council for Human Rights. The Detroit Council proposes to be a mass organization. In seeking mass support for a militant community program it has created a new situation in which old organizations and "Old Guard Leaders" must re-think their over-all strategy. Two simple facts have now become obvious: (1) "Freedom Now" depends upon continuing protest, and a steadily mounting pressure by Negroes who refuse to take "No" or "tomorrow" for an answer, and are willing to make any sacrifice to secure this objective; and (2) The masses of Negro people are prepared to reject any leadership and any organization which is unwilling to fight unselfishly for "Freedom Now." For this reason every organization in the

Negro Community has found it impossible not to endorse the June 23rd Freedom March. The power of the rank and file Negro people has already been felt through the Detroit Council for Human Rights. Also important is the fact that the white community has almost unanimously moved to support a PROTEST DEMONSTRATION which obviously has the support of the masses of Negro people. The white community did not wait to see where "Old Guard Negro Leaders" stood on the Freedom March." The American Civil Liberties Union stated well the position of the larger community in a letter addressed to its members and friends.

"It is important that we bear public witness to our solidarity with the courageous men and women of Birmingham and Jackson and Greensboro. It is important that those of us who are not Negro proclaim to heaven and Hyannisport that the struggle for equality and dignity transcends pigmentation. It is important that we who have mouthed fine words, sent money or signed petitions, identify ourselves publicly and proudly with those who have acted for what we say we believe in.

It is important, in a sentence, that the Freedom March be large, be interracial, be spirited, be dedicated — be successful."

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