The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Forum, “Desegregation and the Future”
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Transcript Begins:

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: As we look over the broad sweep of race relations in the United States, we notice three distinct periods. The second period represents growth and progress over the first period and the third period represents growth and progress over the second period. And it is interesting to notice that, in each period, there finally came a decision from the Supreme Court of our nation to give legal and constitutional validity for the dominant thought patterns of that particular period.

The first period was an era of slavery. This period had its beginning in 1619 when the first Negro slaves landed on the shores of this nation. And it extended through1862 when Abraham Lincoln signed the immortal document known as the Emancipation Proclamation. And throughout the period of slavery, the Negro was treated in a very inhuman fashion. He was a thing to be used, not a person to be respected. He was merely a depersonalized cog in a vast plantation machine. And finally in 1857, toward the end of that period, the supreme court of the nation rendered a decision known as the *Dred Scott* decision which gave legal and constitution validity to the whole system of slavery. This decision said, in substance, that the Negro is not a citizen of the United States. He is merely property subject to the dictates of his owner. It went on to say that the Negro has no rights that the white man is bound to respect.

The second period had its beginning in 1863 and extended to 1954. We may refer to this as the period of restricted emancipation. Now, in a real sense, it was an improvement over the first period because it at least freed the Negro from the bondage of physical slavery. But it was not at all the best period because it did not accept the Negro as a person. And, therefore, it was very easy for the ethos of segregation to emerge as the dominant practice and theory of this particular period. And in 1896, the Supreme Court of the United States rendered a decision known as the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, which established the doctrine of "separate but equal" as the law of the land. And it was this decision that gave legal and constitutional validity to the dominant thought patterns of the second period in race relations. But we all know what happened as a result of this period. There was always a strict enforcement of the separate, without the slightest intention to abide by the equal. The Negro ended up being plunged into the abyss of exploitation where he experienced the bleakness of nagging injustice. So something had to happen to bring about another period.

Things began to happen in the nation and in the world. And the rolling tide of world opinion had its influence. The industrialization of the South and the concomitant urbanization had its influence. And then something happened to the

Negro. Living with slavery for many years, many Negroes came to feel that perhaps they were inferior and perhaps they were less than human. But then something happened to cause the Negro to reevaluate himself. Circumstances made it possible and necessary for him to travel more-the coming of the automobile, the upheavals of two World Wars, the Great Depression. And so his rural plantations background gradually gave way to urban industrial life. And even his economic life was rising through the growth of industry, the development of organized labor, and expanded educational opportunities. And even his cultural life was gradually rising through the steady decline of crippling illiteracy. All of these forces conjoined to cause the Negro to take a new look at himself. Negro masses all over began to reevaluate themselves. And the Negro came to feel that he was somebody. His religion revealed to him that God loves all of his children and that all men are made in his image; that the basic thing about a man is not his specificity, but his fundamentum, not the texture of his hair, or the color of his skin, but his eternal dignity and worth. And so with this a new Negro came into being with a new sense of dignity and a new sense of self respect, and a new determination to struggle, to sacrifice in order to be free. And with all these forces working together we saw the second period gradually pass away.

And so today we see emerging the third period in race relations. We may refer to this as the period of Constructive Desegregation. It had its beginning in 1954, on May 1st when the Supreme Court rendered a decision which gave legal and constitutional validity to the dominant thought patterns of this particular period. That decision said, in substance, that the old *Plessy* doctrine must go, that separate facilities are inherently unequal, that to segregate a child on the basis of his race is to deny that child equal protection of the law. As a result of this decision, we have seen many developments, and we have seen many changes. To put it figuratively in Biblical language, we have broken loose from the Egypt of slavery and we have moved through the wilderness of segregation, and now we stand on the border of the promised land of desegregation. And this is where we are at this particular moment in the period of desegregation: seeking to move ahead finally toward a truly integrated society.

The great challenge facing America at this hour is to work passionately and unrelentingly to bring the ideals and principles of this third period into full realization. Certainly we don't have long to do it. And I know there are those people who are constantly saying to those in the civil rights struggle "Slow up for a while. You're pushing things too fast. Cool off." They are saying, "adopt a policy of moderation." Well, if moderation means moving on towards the goal of justice with wise restraint and calm reasonableness, then moderation is a great virtue which all men of good will must seek to achieve during this tense period of transition. But if moderation means slowing up in the move for freedom and capitulating to the undemocratic practices of the guardians of a deadening status quo, then moderation is a tragic vice, which all men of good will must condemn. We can't afford to slow up. We have our self-respect to maintain, but more than that, we love democracy too much, and we love the American way of life too much to slow up.

As you know there are approximately 3 billion people living in our world and the vast majority of these people live in Asia and in Africa. For years they were dominated politically, exploited economically, segregated and humiliated by some foreign power. But today they are gaining independence. Millions and millions and millions of the former colonial subjects are gaining independence. I can remember when we first went to Africa back in 1957. We were happy about the fact that now independence was starting south of the Sahara; now there were eight independent countries in Africa. But since that time more than 25 new independent countries have come into being in just a few years. Twenty-five or thirty years ago there were only three independent countries in Africa. So Prime Minister MacMillan was right when he said, "the wind of change was blowing in Africa." It is blowing all over the world. As these former colonial subjects gain their independence, their leaders are saying in no uncertain terms that racism and colonialism must go. They are making it clear that they would not respect any nation that will subject its citizenry on the basis of race or color. And so in a real sense, the hour is late. The clock of destiny is ticking out and we must act now before it is too late.

And I almost hasten to say that this isn't the only reason that we must seek to solve this problem in America. We must not seek to solve the racial problem merely to appeal to Asian and African peoples. We must not seek to solve this problem to meet the Communist challenge as important as that happens to be. But, in the final analysis, racial discrimination must be uprooted from American society because it is morally wrong. In the final analysis, this problem must be solved because racial discrimination stands against all the noble precepts of our Judo-Christian heritage. Segregation is wrong because it substitutes an "I-it" relationship for the "I-Thou" relationship, and relegates persons to the status of things. And so we must seek to solve this problem not merely because it is diplomatically expedient, but because it is morally compelling. This is the great challenge of the hour.

Now what must we do and what must be done in the future to make desegregation a reality, and then to move on toward a truly integrated society? And I say that because that is the difference between desegregation and integration: desegregation is eliminative and, therefore, has negative aspects. Segregation is prohibitive in that it prohibits individuals from using certain facilities. Legal barriers stand before them. Desegregation eliminates these barriers. Integration is creative in that it deals with attitudes; it is mutual acceptance. It is genuine interpersonal and inter-group relations. So that while desegregation is a necessary step that we must think of and deal with, we must always remember that the ultimate goal is a truly integrated society. Now what must be done if this is to be a reality?

First, I would like to mention the need for forthright leadership from the federal government. The government must use all of its constitutional authority to enforce the law and to make justice a reality. And we must honestly confess that this has not always been done. If we look back over the last ten years, we can see that the only consistent forthright leadership has come from the judicial branch of the federal government. The judicial or rather the legislative and executive branches have not always been forthright, have not always been determined, and certainly have not always been consistent. But if this problem is to be solved, there must be a concerted effort on the part of all the branches of the federal government. It must rise above the timid stage. It must rise above the compromising stage, and move on toward that stage of making great moral decisions, which will certainly change our nation in this period of transition.

Now if the government is to do its job, it must get rid of two myths that tend to get around and are circulated all around the nation. One is what I often refer to as the "myth of time." Now there are those who argue that the federal government cannot do anything about this problem because only time can solve the problem. They go on to say that if we would just be patient and nice and pray, a hundred or two hundred years from now the problem will work itself out. Well, the only answer that we can give to the myth of time, to those who believe in this myth,is that time is neutral. It can be used either constructively or destructively, and at points I think the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than the people of good will. And it may well be that we will have to repent in this generation, not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people. Somewhere we must come to see that human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability, it comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of the dedicated individuals, who are willing to be co-workers with God. And without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of primitive forces of social stagnation and irrational emotionalism. And so it is necessary to see that we must help time and to realize that the time is always right to do right.

The other myth that is often circulated and gets back to the government is that idea that legislation can't solve the problem of racial injustice. We have heard this idea that morality cannot be legislated, that this problem must be solved by changing attitudes. So this must be done through education and it must be done through religion. Legislation can do nothing about it. Well, there is an element of truth in this. Certainly education and religion will have a great role to play in changing attitudes. It may be true that morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. It may be true that the law cannot change the heart, but it can restrain the heartless. It may be true that the law can't make a man love me, but it can keep him from lynching me and I think that's pretty important also. In other words... (Applause) and so this is what we must see, that it will take education and religion to change bad internal attitudes, but we need legislation to control the external effects of those bad internal attitudes. And so that is the need for strong civil rights legislation now, in this session of congress.

And it is significant that a few days ago, President Kennedy went on record for the first time since he has been in office calling for civil rights legislation, mainly in the area of voter registration. And I think if the proposals set forth are accepted and passed by Congress, many of the problems that we now face in the South in seeking to get Negroes registered and voting will be solved. And there is a great deal here that will change the political structure of the South and liberalize the political climate, and so there is a great deal that must be done through legislation. There is a need for executive orders to continue. Fortunately President Kennedy has signed two executive orders. One in employment-making it clear that there is not to be any discrimination in employment where government contracts are involved and in federal agencies. Another executive order in the realm of housing; this is a good beginning. Certainly this executive order is not strong enough. It could be much more forthright and it could deal with the enormity of the problem in a much more depthful manner, but at least it is a start. And this is why I have urged that President Kennedy sign what I have called "the Second Emancipation Proclamation." For I think the time has come for such an order to be issued.

A hundred years ago, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed the Negro from the bondage of physical slavery. But one hundred years later the Negro is still in slavery. The Negro still isn't free, North or South. And it is not too much to ask one hundred years after the first Emancipation Proclamation for a Second Emancipation Proclamation to make freedom a reality. For in a real sense, segregation is a form of slavery covered up with certain niceties of complexity. And I believe that such an executive order would go a long, long way to set forth a sound national policy. And it would be a great beacon light of hope to millions of disinherited people all over this nation, and all over the world, so the federal government has a great role to play.

I would like to mention the need for forthright leadership from the moderates of the white South. And I would not give you the impression tonight that there are not white persons of good will in the South. I would leave you with the idea and the fact that there are hundreds and thousands and, I believe, millions of white people of good will in the South. But they are silent today, and they have been silent for years because they are afraid: afraid of social, political, and economic reprisals. God grant that something will happen, so that these persons will rise up and take over the leadership in this tense period of transition and somehow open channels of communication. For I am convinced that men hate each other because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don't know each other. And they don't know each other because they fail to communicate with each other. And they fail to communicate with each other because they are separated from each other.

And one of the great tragedies of our time, one of the great tragedies of the South, is that in all too many situations we are still seeking to live in monologue

rather than dialogue. There is a need for the white persons of good will to stand up in the South. We look back over the last few months and think about the ugly and tragic things that took place in Oxford, Mississippi, and that continue to take place in that state. One thing that we will always have to face and remember is that Governor Barnett was able to do what he did because of the breakdown in the power structure. And that he felt that he had the approval of the political, the economic, and the ecclesiastical power structure. Nobody really took a stand against his irresponsible action. Now, certainly somebody in Mississippi disagreed with that: somebody in Mississippi disagreed with the methods and the actions and the words of Governor Barnett. But they failed to stand up. And so there is a great need if this problem is to be solved for forthright action and courageous action and commitment on the part of the moderate and the white South.

Let me also mention the need for a forthright leadership and commitment on the part of white persons of good will in the North. This is all important, for this problem is not a sectional problem. No area of our country can boast of clean hands in the area of brotherhood, and the estrangement of the races in the North can be as devastating as the segregation of the races in the South. For deception can be much more frustrating that outright rejection; somehow indifference can be much more embittering than outright hostility. And this is what it is necessary for everyone in the North to see. It is one thing for a white person of good will in the North to rise up with righteous indignation when a bus is burned in Aniston, Alabama with freedom riders or when a church is burned in Sassa, Georgia where Negroes are seeking to learn how to register and vote, or when a courageous James Meredith confronts a howling and jeering mob when he seeks to go to the University of Mississippi. But it is just as necessary and important for white persons of good will in the North to rise up with righteous indignation when a Negro cannot live in their community or their neighborhood because of certain restrictions and agreements, or when a Negro cannot get a job in their firm, or when a Negro cannot join a particular professional society, academic society, or fraternity or sorority. In other words, there must be an inner commitment on the part of the people all over this nation.

Now in the North, the twin evils of housing and employment discrimination stand out as they do all over this country. These must be grappled with in a very significant and determined manner. Unemployment is growing every day, and the Negro is the greatest victim. He constitutes ten percent of the population, but 44% of the unemployed. And the problem is being augmented even more today because of the force known as automation. The Negro has been limited to unskilled and semi-skilled labor because of discrimination, denied apprenticeship training. And now these are the jobs, which are passing away. Now, something must be done in order to grapple with this problem and make employment opportunities equal and real for all people. For the Negro is still the last hired and first fired all over the United States. And he is still at the bottom of the economic ladder. Forty-two percent of the Negro families in America earn less than

$2,000 a year, while just 17% of the white families earn less $2,000 a year. Twenty percent of the Negro families in America earn less than $1,000 a year, while less than five percent of the white families earn less than $1,000 a year. Eighty-eight percent of the Negro families of America still earn less than $5,000 a year, while just 58% of the white families earn less than $5,000 a year.

Now this problem of economic injustice must be solved if America is to be a great nation. For you can see the problems here. If one does not have economic security·, he cannot adequately educate his children, he cannot have adequate housing conditions, he cannot have adequate health conditions. And it is very easy for one to cry out that the Negro is a criminal or that his standards are lagging. If there are lagging standards in the Negro community, they lag because of segregation and discrimination. Poverty, ignorance, economic deprivation, [and] social isolation breed crime whatever the racial group may be. And it is a tortuous logic to use the tragic results of segregation as an argument for the continuation of it. It is necessary to go to the source, to go to the root of the problem, and so there is need for work all over the nation to deal with the problem of employment discrimination and the problem of housing discrimination. For as long as there is residential discrimination, there will be segregation in the public schools, segregation in recreational facilities, segregation in hospitals, [and] segregation in churches. And this is why de facto segregation in the North can be as crippling as de jure segregation in the South. And this must be seen and met with vigor and determination.

I would also like to mention the need for leadership from organized religion. And I must say, and honestly admit, that in this area the church has not done its job. It is one of the shameful facts that we must face that in the midst of injustices all around, the church has too often stood silently by, mouthing pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of the tragic injustices of our days, the church has too often remained silently behind the safe security of stained glass windows and so often Christians have had a high-blood pressure of creeds and anemia of deeds. And for this reason eleven o'clock on Sunday morning, when millions of people stand over this nation to sing *In Christ There is No East or West,* we find ourselves in the most segregated hour of America. This is tragic indeed. And the most segregated school of the week is the Sunday school. (Applause.)

Now if something isn't done about that, the church will lose its redemptive power, and certainly its power to serve as a moral guardian of the community. If it is to have a relevant voice, and to stand up creatively with power and spiritual strength during these days, it must take a stand on this issue. It is good that some have become conscious of this, and I am encouraged because more and more church bodies are taking a stand, even in the most difficult communities of the South. They are all too few, but they are growing, and I'm convinced as they continue to grow the transition from a segregated to desegregated society and finally an integrated one will be much, much smoother. And the church will be

not merely a taillight, but it will be a headlight, leading men and women on in this day and in this age.

But after saying all of this, I must say that if this problem is to be solved--if we are to have truly desegregated society, if we are to break down the barriers--the Negro himself must stand up with courage and determination and a willingness to sacrifice and even suffer. He must not stand idly by waiting for somebody else to do something for him. But he must work for his own freedom, in this day and at this time. And there are many areas in which we must work. Certainly we must continue to work for meaningful legislation, as I mentioned a few minutes ago. We must continue to work through the courts; many things have been done through the courts. I mentioned the Supreme Court's decision of 1954, and this was a decision handed down by the highest court of the land. Many things have been done through the Supreme Court and through Federal District Courts and through Federal Courts of Appeal. And so we must continue to work through the courts to clarify the law. This is very important. We must continue to work to double the number of Negro registered voters, North and South. For as I said earlier I am convinced that, if we can increase the number of Negro registered voters, we will be able to liberalize the political climate of the South. There are still approximately 10 million, more than 10 million, Negroes in the South. Out of this number, almost 6 million are eligible to vote at least they are of voting age. Yet only about a million, 500 thousand are registered to vote. You can see that is a big job ahead. And wherever Negroes are voting in large numbers, you do see a different climate in race relations.

I think of my own city of Atlanta, Georgia, and we have worked there a long, long time seeking to get Negroes registered to vote. And now the Negro vote is a force in Atlanta with almost 50,000 registered to vote. This means that no mayor can be elected in Atlanta without the Negro vote. This means that no alderman can be elected in Atlanta without the Negro vote, and it really makes a difference. I remember when the present mayor, a man of good will I'm convinced, was running for governor several years ago. He was a segregationist, he talked about the eternality of segregation. But then when he started running for mayor, he started talking about integration. And somebody asked him one day: why did he change? He said, "Well, I have seen the light now." Well 50,000 votes will make anybody see the light. (Thunderous applause.)

Last year, I remember very vividly some of the students from Atlanta University and Morehouse College and Spellman and Clark and the other schools in Atlanta went down to attend a legislative session at the statehouse there. And they went in and went into the balcony where the spectators were seated and they were almost kicked out and threatened with arrest if they didn't get out immediately. But I'm happy to report to you tonight that not only are Negroes able to sit in the balcony now at the statehouse, just a year later. But now a Negro is sitting on the main floor helping to make the laws for a state of Georgia. (Applause.) Now this is because of the ballot and this will be done more and more if this job of

Increasing, of doubling the number of registered voters is undertaken with zeal and courage.

Then there is a need for the Negro to use his buying power to achieve a sense of dignity. And I am not speaking of something negative now, I'm speaking of something positive. I'm not speaking of a negative thrust to put somebody out of business, but a positive thrust to put justice in business. And I think the time has come for the Negro to say to industries and businesses all over this country, "If you respect my dollar, you must respect my person." The buying power of the Negro is now more than $20,000,000,000 a year, which is more than all the exports of the United States, and more than the national budget of Canada. It's still far from what it should be, but at least it reveals that it is a force and it is large enough to make the difference between profit and loss in almost any business. And we know that there are industries and businesses all over the country practicing glaring and notorious discrimination against Negroes in employment. And so that is a need for selective buying programs. We have started in several cities already, and pretty soon we will be calling a national conference to launch a nation-wide selective buying program. The procedure would certainly be to begin with negotiations, starting out negotiating with an industry, urging them to change their policies and employ Negroes in more than the manual areas or the unskilled areas. And, then, if there is a refusal, there would be no alternative but to inform people all over this country-Negroes and white peoples of good wiII-that this particular business, that this particular industry, discriminates against Negroes in employment. And I think this can be a great force for good bringing about a sort of moral balance within our nation.

But after we do all of this, (applause) we must supplement what is being done with non-violent direct action. And I'd like to take just a few minutes to say something about this method of non-violent direct action since it has been the method that is being, and has been, used over the South-and over the country for that matter-over the last few months and for the last few years. For I am convinced that non-violence is the most potent weapon available to impress people in the struggle for freedom and human dignity. Now first, this method has a way of disarming the opponent. It exposes his moral defenses; it weakens his morale and, at the same time, it works on his conscience and he just doesn't know how to handle it. If he doesn't beat you, wonderful. If he beats you, you develop the courage of accepting blows without retaliating. If he doesn't put you in jail, wonderful. Nobody with any sense loves to go to jail. But if he puts you in jail, you go in that jail and transform it from a dungeon of shame to a haven of human freedom and dignity. Even if he tries to kill you, you develop the quiet courage of dying if necessary without killing. And there is something about this that the opponent just can't grasp; he doesn't know how to deal with it.

Another thing about this method is that it gives the individual a means of working to secure moral ends through moral means. One of the great debates of history has been over the question of ends and means. There have been those who

have argued that the ends justify the means. And this is where non-violence breaks with the philosophy that argues this, and in a system that contends that destructive means will bring constructive ends because, in the long run, the end is pre-existent in the means. The means represent the ideal in the making and the end in process. And so it is wonderful to have a method that makes it possible for the individual to struggle to secure moral ends through moral means. And then another thing about this approach is that it makes it possible for the individual to struggle against an unjust system and yet maintain an attitude of active good will towards the perpetrators of that unjust system. One centers his vision on getting rid of the evil system, and not getting rid of the person. In other words, it becomes possible to hate segregation, and yetlove the segregationist.

Now when I talk about love at this point, I'm not talking about emotional bosh. I'm not talking about some sentimental or affectionate response. Certainly, it is nonsense to urge oppressed people to love their oppressors in an affectionate sense. I'm talking about something much deeper than that, I'm talking about that force that is the supreme uniting force of life, that force which is willing to go the second mile in order to restore the broken community, that force which is willing to forgive seventy times seven in order to restore the broken community, that force which somehow says that within everyman there is something of goodness in a potential sense, and it can somehow be actualized. And this is what we attempt to do, for we have come to see that hate is a dangerous force, hate is as injurious to the hater as it is to the hated. The psychiatrists are telling us now that many of the strange things that happen in the subconscious, many of the inner-conflicts are rooted in hate, and so they are saying, love or perish. Eric Fromm can say in a book like *The Art of Loving* that love is the most vital force in life and there can be no personality integration without it. And this is what I'm speaking of and this is what I'm thinking about, and I think it can be a force in this struggle to make justice and freedom a reality. And so, in some way, as I've said so many times before, this is what we are able to say to our most bitter opponents "We will match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will and we will still love you. We cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws because non-cooperation with evil is as must a moral obligation as is cooperation with good, and so throw us in jail and we will still love you. Threaten our children and bomb our homes and, as difficult as it is, we will still love you. Send your propaganda agents around the nation and make it appear that we are not fit morally, culturally, or otherwise for integration and we will still love you. Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our communities at the midnight hours and drag us out on some wayside road and beat us and leave us half dead and, as difficult as it is, we will still love you. But be assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer, and we will continue to resist the evil system. And one day we will win our victory, but we will not only win victory for ourselves, we will so appeal to your heart and your conscience that we will win you in the process, and our victory will be a double victory. And this method is not at all without successful precedent. It was used by a little brown man in India by the

name of Mohandas K. Gandhi to free his people from the political domination and the economic exploitation inflicted upon them for years. He struggled only with the weapons of soul force, non-injury, moral courage, and love. It has been used in a marvelous manner by hundreds and thousands of students all over our nation. They have taken our deep groans and passionate yearnings for freedom and filtered them in their own souls and fashioned them into a creative protest, which is an epic known all over this nation. And for all of these months they have moved in a uniquely meaningful orbit, imparting light and heat to distant satellites, and as a result of their non-violent, disciplined yet courageous efforts, they have been able to bring about integration at lunch counters in almost two hundred cities in the South as a result of the freedom rides. Segregation is almost dead in the South and almost dead in every community that we can point to.

And so this is a powerful method. And I believe by using all of these forces and by all these forces working together, we will be able to bring into being that new day when we have not only a desegregated society, but also an integrated society. And if we will struggle with nonviolence, resist with nonviolence, we will go into the new age with a proper attitude realizing that our aim must never be to rise from a position of disadvantage to one of advantage thus averting justice. We will not seek to substitute one tyranny for another. But something will remind us that black supremacy is as dangerous as white supremacy, and that God is not interested merely in the freedom of black men and brown men and yellow men, but that God in interested in the freedom of the whole human race.

This is a challenge. Great opportunities stand before America at this hour. To paraphrase the words of John Oxenham, "To every nation there openeth a way and ways and a way. The high nation climbs the high way, and the low nation gropes the low, and in between, on the misty flats, the rest drift to and fro. But to every nation, there openeth a high and a low way. Every nation decideth which way its soul shall go." And God grant that we here in America will chose a high way, a way in which men will be able to live together as brothers, a way in which every man will respect the dignity and worth of human personality, a way in which the words of Amos will become real: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream," a way in which we will live out the true meaning of the Declaration of Independence. "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." And, if we will follow this way, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. We may take courage and we may gain consolation from the fact that we have made strides, that we have solved some of the problems, we have done some things in spite of the fact that there is still much to be done. We do have that consolation behind, that we have done something. And so I close by quoting the words of an old Negro slave preacher, who didn't quite have his grammar right and his diction, but uttered words of symbolic profundity. His words--worded in the form

of a prayer- "Lord, we ain't what we ought to be, we ain't what we want to be, we ain't what we gonna be. But, thank God, we ain't what we was."

Moderator: Dr. King would you be willing to comment on the Muslim movement and the extent of its power.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: Well, first let me say that while I disagree with the philosophy of this movement, it is necessary to realize that it didn't come into being out of thin air. It is here because certain conditions brought it into being. It is symptomatic of the deeper unrest, of frustration, the discontent of many Negroes in America. And the conditions of discrimination in their varied forms brought this movement into being; these are the things that the Muslims thrive on. And it is just as important to work to get rid of the conditions that brought this movement into being than it is to condemn the philosophy. It may well be the fact that a movement like this is alive in 1963 in America is an indictment on America and Christianity and democracy itself. And it means that we've got to become more democratic and more committed to the principles of our religious heritage. Now as far as the influence, the power of this movement, I would say that up to this point this movement has not appealed to the vast majority of Negroes. The best estimate would place the number of members around 75,000. I think the FBI says about 75,000. Dr. Eric Lincoln in a recent book on the movement says about 100,000 or a few more. But it is still a small number when you think about the fact that there are approximately 20 million Negroes in the United States. And I'm sure that it is true that the vast majority of Negroes have not, at this time, come to the point of accepting this idea. I think there are many, many more than a hundred thousand who would agree with their criticism of America society, and I do say that it is a challenge to everybody to work harder to get rid of the problem because they are going to be here as long as we have the problem. Groups like this will exist. It doesn't get off the ground in communities where progress is being made in race relations; it does in communities where you see retrogress and a great deal of frustration and the constant development of the ghetto. So it means that it is necessary to work together to get rid of the conditions that brought it into being as well as condemn the philosophy. (Applause.)