

Address at Youth March for Integrated
Schools in Washington, D.C.,
Delivered by Coretta Scott King

25 October 1958
New York, N.Y.

At the Lincoln Memorial Coretta Scott King delivered these remarks on behalf of her husband to ten thousand people who had marched down Constitution Avenue in support of school integration.¹ During the march Harry Belafonte led a small integrated contingent of students to the White House to meet the president. They were met at the gate by a guard who informed them that neither the president nor any of his assistants would be available. After staging a half-hour picket, the students left a list of demands to be forwarded to the president.² These remarks were contained in a press release issued from Youth March headquarters in New York City.

Walking for freedom has been an integral part of man's struggle for freedom and dignity.

Gandhi of India began the great, non-violent deliverance of India by a massive people's march to the sea. The people of China, defenseless against Japanese aggression, walked thousands of miles across their nation, and Japan never really

1. A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and Martin Luther King, Jr. joined Ruth Bunche, Jackie Robinson, and Daisy Bates in co-chairing the Youth March.

2. Edward Peeks, "10,000 in Youth March say 'integrate,'" *Baltimore Afro-American*, 1 November 1958. Preparations for the Youth March aggravated tensions among national civil rights leaders. In a 12 September letter to Randolph, Wilkins suggested that NAACP branches could not offer "active support to the project," explaining that though he had agreed to be a sponsor of the march, the NAACP had been excluded from the event's initial planning. He also expressed his group's "sober reservations about the responsibilities involved in transporting a large number of children by bus to Washington." In a 15 October letter to Wilkins, Randolph defended the inclusion of children in the protest.

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conquered or broke the spirit of China. We all know how Moses, inflamed by the oppression of his people, led the march out of Egypt into the promised land.

Walking for freedom has been an inseparable part of the Negro struggle for full emancipation.

Over a century ago courageous slaves broke out of plantations and, despite terrifying dangers, began a long march North, to freedom. This was the underground railroad. This walking to end injustice went on for years and did three mighty things: It shook the slave system to its very roots. It aroused the conscience of this nation. It gave the lie to the myth of the so-called "kindly masters" and "contented slaves."

Many years later, when abuse and insults grew intolerable in Montgomery, Alabama, the tradition of walking in protest for human rights was revived. Bus segregation in Montgomery was crushed under 50,000 marching feet.

Today, in this great and historic demonstration, you, the young people of America, have marched for freedom. Fifty thousand in the fight for a free America.

There is a unique element in this demonstration; it is a young people's march. You are proving that the youth of America is freeing itself of the prejudices of an older and darker time in our history. In addition, you are proving the so-called "silent generation" is not so silent. And the so-called "beat generation" may have been hit hard, but it is definitely not "beat." It is standing up and fighting hard for the rights of all Americans.

Keep marching and show the pessimists and the weak of spirit that they are wrong. Keep marching and don't let them silence you. Keep marching and resist injustice with the firm, non-violent spirit you demonstrated today.

The future belongs, not to those who slumber or sleep, but to those who cannot rest while the evil of injustice thrives in the bosom of America. The future belongs to those who march toward freedom.