

**PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY'S RESPONSE
TOWARDS THE BLACK MOVEMENT, /
1961 - 1963**

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DEEPAK SHEKUJI GAIKWAD

**CENTRE FOR AMERICAN AND WEST EUROPEAN STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067
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Preface

A long history of racial suppression, discrimination and segregation in American society led to the emergence of Black protest movement in the 20th century. During 1950s the movement acquired a significant turn towards the betterment of the Blacks. The late Black leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., steered the Black movement and helped accelerate its political momentum. Hence, their cause gained a new dimension in the movement during 1950s. His non-violence approach coupled with the civil disobedience, in the form of sit-ins, stand-ins, kneel-ins, boycotts, freedom rides, and civil disobedience, made the US Government feel the necessity of responding to their demands decisively. The Blacks also became a viable political factor in the electoral politics of the American society.

President John F. Kennedy's inauguration in 1961 marked the beginning of a liberal era. In fact, the Democratic Party during Kennedy's election contested on the promises of bringing about effective changes for the Black, in various areas.

The present dissertation is a modest attempt to assess and evaluate President Kennedy's response towards the Black movement. This dissertation limits itself to merely highlighting the measures that he adopted in uplifting the Black minority.

The first chapter deals with the Blacks' historical background from 1661 to 1960. In this period, the Blacks changed their protest tactics and ideologies. By the beginning of 1960s, the Blacks were not in a mood to wait any more for their civil rights. They came out unitedly and demanded their rights under the guidance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Chapter 2 deals with the presidential election-campaign of 1960 and the emergence of Blacks' civil rights movement. In the campaigns of both the candidates, the Democratic John F. Kennedy and the Republican Richard Nixon, the importance of the Blacks' votes had been emphasized. It has also been shown how in this election the Blacks overwhelmingly voted for Kennedy and how it helped in bringing about his victory.

Chapter 3 deals with President Kennedy's role in making the Blacks programme feasible. Kennedy's several steps to integrate and desegregate the Blacks in American society, have been highlighted.

Chapter 4 shows, how during Kennedy's administration the Blacks fought unitedly and vigorously in a non-violent way, how they got more response from the State Governments and how several White segregationists violently opposed the Blacks in realizing their objectives. This chapter

also shows a balance sheet of what all happened during Kennedy's administration. The Black response towards Kennedy's efforts have also been pointed out.

The last is the Conclusion, which portrays the sum total of all the measures leading to an ineffective realization of the rights of Blacks and the appreciation of Kennedy in bringing about an atmosphere to change the life-style of the Blacks.

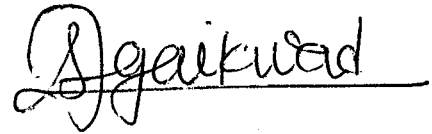
This dissertation has been carried out under the supervision of Dr. R.P. Kaushik, Associate Professor in American Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. I am deeply grateful to him for his invaluable help, constant guidance and encouragement, at every stage, of my work. It was his patience and inspiration which helped me to complete this dissertation. I am also thankful to Professor M.S. Venkataramani, Chairman of the Centre and Professor B.K. Shrivastava, for their kind and encouraging guidance towards my work.

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Last, indeed, are my gratitude and respects for my mother, Smt. Kachara Bai S. Gaikwad for her unfailing patience and support to me.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'D. Gaikwad', written over a horizontal line.

DEEPAK S. GAIKWAD

New Delhi

4th January 1982

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Negro problem in the United States "had its origin in 1619 with the landing of a cargo of Negro slaves in Jamestown, Virginia."¹ At first the Negroes served as indentured labourers, but eventually in 1661, they were "forced into legal slavery."²

Beginning in 1619 thousands of slaves were brought into America, especially into its southern parts. There were big plantations there, and these required large numbers of agricultural labourers. The slaves were segregated and discriminated against at every step. They had no citizenship rights; their masters behaved with them most cruelly. Numerous atrocities were perpetrated on them.

The United States of America emerged as an independent nation on 4 July 1776. The declaration issued at the time said; "...All men are created equal."³ And yet the American Negroes were not treated as equal; they remained slaves up to 1863.

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1. Louis Ruchames, "Segregation and Discrimination in the Twentieth Century", in Howard H. Qunit, Dean Albertson, and Milton Cantor, eds., Main Problems in American History (Homewood, Ill., 1964), vol. 2, Chap. 31, p. 331.
 2. Daniel C. Thompson, Sociology of the Black Experience (Westport, Conn., 1974), p. 3.
 3. Henry Steele Commager, ed., Documents of American History (New York, N.Y., 1958), edn. 6, p. 100.

During this period of slavery the Negroes revolted against their masters, especially under the leadership of Gabriel Prosser (1800), Denmark Vesey (1822), and Nat Turner (1831), but in vain. A Negro leader of that time named Frederick Douglass stated in his oration of 4 July at Rochester:

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass-fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thankgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety and hypocrisy - a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages...⁴

In 1857 the Supreme Court denied citizenship rights to the Negroes.⁵ The Negro masses grew increasingly restive so much so that white liberals of North America started thinking seriously about the question of freedom of the slaves.

The election of 1860 returned the Republican Party candidate Abraham Lincoln as President. The Republican Government pledged to give political freedom to the Negroes.

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4. Quoted in W.E.B. DuBois, Black Reconstruction (New York, 1935), p. 14.
 5. Christine Bolt, A History of the U.S.A. (London, 1974), p. 335.

In fact it went a long way towards fulfilling its pledge and made various amendments to the Constitution to confer greater political freedom on the Negroes - as, for instance, the Thirteenth Amendment of 1863, concerned with the emancipation of slavery; the Fourteenth Amendment of 1868, which gave citizenship rights to the Negroes; and the Fifteenth Amendment of 1870 which provided that voting rights should not be denied "on account of race, colour, or previous conditions of servitude."⁶

These three Constitutional amendments form an impressive record; the statesmen who devoted themselves to the reconstruction of the Southern States during the period of 1865-75, sought to make the Blacks full citizens of the United States.⁷ The Civil Rights Act of 1875 provided for non-discriminatory treatment in many other areas of life. These, however, were limited victories; for, by the end of the reconstruction, the former slaves found themselves in economic bondage. In 1883 the Supreme Court declared rights for the Blacks unconstitutional. And in the 1890s their voting rights were taken away through literary tests. Even the provisions of the various anti-racial legislations were not properly implemented in the South. Consequently segre-

6. R.P. Kaushik, "The Issues of Political Rights of the Blacks: The Formative Period 1865-1877", Indian Journal of American Studies (Hyderabad), January 1980, p. 58.

7. Ibid.

gation and discrimination were able to re-establish themselves in most American institutions.⁸ Then began a century of Jim Crow laws and customs that supported segregation and discrimination in all spheres of Black life. In a series of cases connected with segregation - such as the Hall Vs. de Cuir (1877), Louisville, New Orleans, and Texas Railroad Vs. Mississippi (1890), Plessy Vs. Ferguson (1896), and in Williams Mississippi (1898) - the Supreme Court upheld segregation.⁹ It "completed the opening of the legal road to proscription, segregation and disenfranchisement by approving the Mississippi plan for depriving Negroes of the franchise." It also declared that State legislation providing for segregation and disenfranchisement was constitutional and lawful.¹⁰ The Negroes thus found themselves in a paradoxical situation: though technically equal, they were obliged to live separately. What was the reaction of the Negro leadership at that time?

The famous Negro leader, Booker T. Washington, declared at Atlanta, Ga, in 1895: "In all things that are purely social, we can be as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." He added: "Cast your bucket where you

8. Richard M. Pious, ed., Civil Rights and Liberties in the 1970s (New York, N.Y., 1973), p. 14.

9. See Thompson, n. 2, p. 4.

10. C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (New York, N.Y., 1966), Quoted in Kaushik, n. 6, p. 63.

are."¹¹ This means that Washington wanted to solve all Negro problems through negotiation. W.E.B. DuBois disagreed with Washington. He gave the Negro movement a radical, nationalistic, and separatist position. He wrote in The Souls of Black Folk (1903): "One ever feels his twoness - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."¹² In 1905 he rallied a handful of militant young Negroes, mostly professional men, in the Niagara Movement. The manifesto of this movement, described by a moderate Black leader at the time as "a wild and frantic shriek", demanded the abolition of all racial restrictions in suffrage, civil rights, jobs, welfare provisions, and educational opportunities. "We will not be satisfied," DuBois declared, "to take one jot or tittle less than our full manhood rights; and until we get these rights, we will never cease to protest and assail the ears of America."¹³

The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) was established in 1909. It launched a massive programme to eliminate segregation and discrimination

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11. George Ducas and Charles Van Doren, eds., Great Documents in Black American History (New York, N.Y., 1972), pp. 154-5.
 12. W.E.B. DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk (New York, N.Y., 1970), p. 3.
 13. See Bolt, n. 5, p. 357.

in housing, employment, voting, schools, courts, transportation, and recreation by peaceful and legal means. It gradually widened its scope to touch all facets of civil rights activity.¹⁴ It took part in all types of Negro civil rights struggle.

The National League on Urban Conditions on Negroes (commonly known as the National Urban League) was established in 1911¹⁵, to look after the interests of the Negroes migrating to, or settled in, urban areas, to give them jobs, to arrange for various facilities to train young men and women for social work and to provide fellowships for students enrolled at the School of Philanthropy in New York.¹⁶ It made every effort to help the Negro community in urban areas. Although it was in its early years rather conservative in its orientation, pressure from its members and other situations forced it gradually to involve itself more actively in the Negro civil rights struggle.¹⁷

In 1914 yet another development was the launching of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) by Marcus

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14. Joan Martin Murke, ed., A CBS Reference Book: Civil Rights: A Current Guide to the People, Organizations and Events (New York, N.Y., 1970), p. 75.
 15. John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans (New Delhi, 1967), edn 3, p. 449.
 16. Ibid.
 17. T. Edmund, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Black Protest Movement in the U.S.A. (New Delhi, 1976), p. 24.

Garvey.¹⁸ The first branch of the Association opened at Harlem in New York in 1917.¹⁹ Thompson describes the personality of Garvey and his approach to the problems of the Blacks as follows:

Garvey, a flamboyant man, relied mainly on intense emotional appeal and emphasized Black separatism and Black supremacy. He insisted that Blacks could never expect justice and dignity in White America and zealously attempted to unite Blacks in a movement calling for the renunciation of American citizenship and the establishment of an All-Black African Nation.²⁰

To reinforce his appeal Marcus Garvey depended mainly on Black racial chauvinism. He raised the slogan "Back to Africa" and fully utilized the "suspicions, prejudices, aspirations, frustrations, and limited intellectual attainments of the Black masses."²¹

In the 1920s there arose a wave of creative endeavour known as the Harlem Renaissance, it marked the Negro advancement in arts and literature. It produced outstanding writers like Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and Richard Wright; artists like Hale Woodroff and Richard Barthe; and composers like William Dawson and William Grant Still. It encouraged popular musicians like Paul Robeson, Bessie Smith, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington. The

18. Arthur L. Smith and Stephen Robb, The Voice of Black Rhetoric (Boston, Mass., 1971), p. 100.

19. Ronald Segal, The Race War (London, 1966), p. 214.

20. See Thompson, n. 2, p. 147.

21. Ibid.

impact of these creative men and their works may well be responsible for the emergence of a sympathetic attitude in Washington, D.C., during the time of Franklin D. Roosevelt towards the plight of the Blacks.²² The Harlem Renaissance bred the new Negro. The Negro now made his own literature and culture. He exuded a new confidence and seemed determined to wrest respect from others.

An organization called the Moorish American Science Temple was founded by Noble Drew Ali at Newark in New Jersey in 1913. Ali sought to popularize many of Garvey's ideas but with the added emphasis that the "Blacks were Asiatic Moors who should embrace Islamic beliefs."²³ In 1934 Elijah Mohammad, the Chief of the Black Muslims, emerged as an advocate of the principle of Black Muslims. He declared that the Muslims should depend on their own masses, have their own nation in America, and rely on themselves. They should not depend on the White society.

The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was founded in Chicago, Illinois in 1942.²⁴ The basic principles of this organization were democracy, integration, and non-violence, and its activists scrupulously adhered to these principles.²⁵ During 1942-63 CORE participated in sit-ins

22. See Bolt, n. 5, pp. 459-60.

23. Ibid.

24. See Segal, n. 19, p. 220.

25. Bayard Rustin, Strategies for Freedom: The Changing Patterns of Black Protest (New York, N.Y., 1976), p. 20.

and freedom riders, which were basically non-violent in nature.

From 1910 to the Second World War, the Federal Government played only a limited role in the protection of civil rights.²⁶ Owing to the changing strategy of the struggle of the Blacks and its mounting pressure, many policy changes came about at the level of the Federal Government. For instance, President Harry S. Truman barred the ongoing discrimination in Federal employment and in works done under Government contract. He also issued an Executive Order ending segregation in the armed forces.²⁷

During the inter-war period the American Negroes fought for equality, fraternity and democracy. Though America was among the victors in the two world wars, the Negroes received no share in the two big victories. They were still segregated and discriminated against in all walks of life. The beginning of the 1950s hence saw the launching of a long and bitter struggle by the Blacks for full civil rights.²⁸ In this civil rights struggle the White liberals also participated alongside the Negroes. This is an indication that an appreciable number of Whites

26. Congressional Quarterly, Revolution in Civil Rights (Washington, D.C., 1970), p. 2.

27. Ibid., p. 3.

28. Charles Stanford Miller and Nabalie Joyward, History of America: A Challenge and a Crisis (New York, N.Y., 1971), p. 742.

totally disapproved of discrimination and segregation. The Whites were an effective ally of the Negroes in their struggle. Consequently, during the post-war period, the problems of the Blacks came to the forefront necessitating quick formulation of long term solutions. Integration in schools, housing, public accommodation, employment, and voting rights became a major issue.

In the early 1950s the American civil rights movement was confronted with many challenges. During the Administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-60) the Supreme Court became involved in the civil rights controversy in consequence of its judgement in the case Brown Vs. Board of Education Topeka, Kansas. It held that; "... in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."²⁹ This was the most important decision ever taken by the Supreme Court in the field of promotion of racial equality. At this time the influence of the radicals who had raised slogans like "Separate Negro Nation", "Back to Africa" was on the decline. The American Negroes had turned round to the view that their good lay in integrating themselves into American life.

During the same period yet another event of great significance occurred, an event which brought to the lime-

29. Revolution in Civil Rights, n. 26, p. 3.

light one of the outstanding leaders of the Negro struggle. A Negro seamstress named Rosa Parks in downtown Montgomery, Ala., boarded a bus and sat down on a seat reserved for the Whites, and when the driver of the bus ordered her to vacate the seat, she refused. Thereupon she was arrested for violating the segregation rule.³⁰ This raised a hue and cry among the Montgomery Negroes who decided upon a bus boycott under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr. This historic bus boycott began on 5 December 1955 and continued for a year. Thanks to the mounting legal pressure and the tenacity of the Negro struggle under King's leadership, the Supreme Court finally struck down the segregation rule. King, who had adopted the method of non-violent direct action, received support from not only American Negroes throughout the country but also White liberals. King's convincing personality and the strategy he adopted helped him in emerging as a great Negro leader.

Despite the court verdict the process of implementing desegregation and the reaction to it varied considerably from state to state. The issue of desegregation gradually ceased to be a live one both in the North and in the South. Peaceful but token transitions were seen in Atlanta, Ga., Dallas, Tex., Memphis, Tenn., New Orleans, La., However,

30. Martin Luther King, Jr., Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story (London, 1959), p. 41.

violent reaction was not uncommon. For instance, in Little Rock, Ark., Prince Edward County's Public schools were closed without integration, a school was bombed in Nashville, Tenn.³¹ To curb violence the President ordered use of Federal forces in 1957 in the State of Arkansas, especially in Little Rock. Subsequently in the same year, the Eisenhower passed a Civil Rights Act. This Act provided for the creation of a Civil Rights Division in the Department of Justice. It also removed some voting prohibitory rules connected with the voting rights of the Negroes. More importantly, it gave power to the Attorney-General to initiate legal proceedings whenever a person was deprived of his voting rights.³² The Eisenhower Administration passed another legislation in 1960 which is known as the Civil Rights Act of 1960. This legislation provided for the preservation of voting records. It also contained limited criminal penalty provisions to prevent obstruction of Federal Court orders relating to school desegregation.³³

The 1950s also witnessed many positive developments in the sphere of employment. The labour unions played an important role in increasing employment opportunities for

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31. Lynne Ianniello, ed., Milestones along March; Twelve Historical Civil Rights Documents, from World War to Selma (New York, N.Y., 1966), edn 2, p. 50.
32. Congressional Quarterly, Civil Rights Progress Report (Washington, D.C., 1971), p. 3.
33. Ibid.

the Negroes, especially in the industrial sector. The American Federation of Labour and the Congress of Industrial Organizations merged in 1955, with a commitment to work for labour integration. It was stated categorically on their behalf:

The merged federation shall constitutionally recognize the right to all workers, without regard to race, creed color or national origin to share in the full benefits of trade union organization in the merged federation. The merged federation shall establish appropriate internal machinery to bring about, at the earliest possible date, the effective implementation of this principle of non-discrimination.³⁴

The organization also lived up to its declaration with its increasing Negro membership with equal rights to Negro and non-Negro alike. Negro leaders like Philip Randolph and William Townsend became its Vice-Presidents. The integration process in schooling and employment helped in elevating the social status and increasing the participation of the Negroes.

Another programme undertaken during the period to improve the hygienic living conditions of the Negroes was in the field of housing. The Federal Government played an important role by establishing the U.S. Housing and Finance Agency. Thanks to the work of this agency, Negro ownership of houses increased from 35 per cent in 1950 to 38 per cent

34. Arthur J. Goldberg, AFL-CIO; Labour United (New York, N.Y., 1964), p. 267.

in 1960.³⁵ The phenomenon of desegregation however, continued to persist in housing too. The Federal Government in fact failed to take any vigorous step to evolve and implement any integration policy in housing. At this time a movement started which exerted pressure on the Government to take positive measures in this regard.

Four students from the Agricultural and Technical College of Greensboro, N.C., launched on 1 February 1960 a sit-in programme in front of the stores and the lunch-counters. They did so because they had been refused service on the ground that they were Negroes.³⁶ The insulting discrimination provoked many protest movements in the mid 1960s in the urban centres of the North.³⁷ The protests soon gained momentum, and many Negro organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League (NUL), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC), joined together to fight for civil rights. Their programme of struggle called "for direct action by

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35. Joseph H. Douglas, "The Urban Negro Family", in John P. Davis, ed., The American Negro Reference Book (New York, N.Y., 1969), p. 345.
36. John Hope Franklin and Isidore Starr, The Negro in the Twentieth Century (New York, N.Y., 1967), p. 117.
37. N. Sivachyov and E. Yazkov, History of the USA since World War I (Moscow, 1976), p. 360.

way of sit-ins, standings, kneel-ins, boycotts, freedom sides, civil disobedience." All these forms of struggle were non-violent in nature and produced immediate results.³⁸

Unfortunately, however, the massive but non-violent protests of the American Negroes met with a violent response from the White segregationists. During the entire protest period lynchings, murders, bombings, and kidnapping of Negroes and their leaders by the Whites were a common feature.

It is against this background of racial tension that the Presidential election of 1960 was held. Both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party pledged their support to the civil rights struggle, during the election campaign. Senator John F. Kennedy, who was eventually elected as the President, was an active sympathizer of the Negroes and their problems. During his Administration the American Negroes demanded full freedom in their own country. They also celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1963. Kennedy, who had been most active in the field of civil rights, asked Congress to pass a bill in 1963 aimed at giving full freedom to the Negroes in American life. However, this bill framed during the

38. Loren Miller, "The Negro Insists on Speaking for Himself", in Francis L. Broderick and August Meier, eds., Negro, Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century (New York, N.Y., 1965), pp. 340-1.

Kennedy Administration could be passed only in 1964, i.e. only after Kennedy's assassination. It is now known popularly as the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Chapter 2

KENNEDY'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND
CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Chapter 2

KENNEDY'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The year 1960 was a Presidential election year in the United States. All political parties big and small, started their election campaigns according to the schedule.

In this election every vote is regarded as an important one. There are several minority groups in America. The biggest of these is the Negro group. The Negro vote has often been decisive and always effective in the election of the President.

The population of the United States in 1960 was 180 million. The strength of the Negro population was 18,871,000. The Negroes were thus numerous enough to merit the attention of all political parties.

The Negro biracial organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), had started its voting registration programme among the Negro masses. It had touched as much as 95 per cent of the more than 400 cities and counties in the course of its voting registration programme.¹

In the Presidential election held in the past the Negro vote had affected the result. The Negroes had, after

1. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP Report for 1960 (New York, N.Y., 1961), p. 36.

the martyrdom of President Abraham Lincoln, voted by and large for the Republican Party. Since 1936 they had been voting for the Democratic Party.²

In any democracy, literacy is very important; for it enables people to think and decide for themselves which party programme is good or bad. The Negro literacy had registered a phenomenal increase between 1940 and 1959; so much so that only 7 per cent of the Negroes were illiterate in 1960. The number of college graduates had in fact tripled.³ The Negroes consequently became quite conscious of their rights.

The White politicians of North America knew the importance of the Negro vote, so that the Negro leaders could press publicly for equal rights and White liberals would verbally agree.⁴

In view of the importance of the Negro vote and the Negro demand for equal rights, both parties, the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, tried to get Negro support for their respective Presidential candidates.

In the Democratic Party at least eight Senators were potential candidates. Four of them -- Senators John F. Kennedy,

2. Harry Golden, Mr. Kennedy and the Negroes (New York, N.Y., 1964), p. 51.

3. Theodore H. White, The Making of the President, 1960: A Narrative History of American Politics in Action (New York, N.Y., 1961), p. 255.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 258-9.

Lyndon B. Johnson, Hubert H. Humphrey, and Stuart Symington -- were active seekers of the nomination.⁵ Adlai Stevenson was a most senior member. He had secured the Presidential nomination twice (in 1952 and again in 1956). He had been defeated on both occasions by the Republican Party candidate, Dwight D. Eisenhower.⁶ He was now clearly out of the race for nomination. John F. Kennedy was a suitable candidate, but he was a Catholic. As the majority of Americans were Protestants, members of the Democratic Party thought that if Kennedy was nominated, the people might not vote for him. In 1928 the Catholic candidate, Alfred E. Smith, had been defeated by Herbert Hoover. Kennedy was, therefore, not sure as to how his religion would affect his prospects. Many people predicted that a Catholic would not be elected as President.⁷ Kennedy worked hard: he travelled some 65,000 miles and visited twenty-four States. Thanks to these exertions he was able to win in West Virginia. West Virginia was 95 per cent Protestant. Kennedy's victory there was a very important victory inasmuch as it showed him to be a viable candidate.⁸ The thirty-third party

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5. Theodore E. Sorensen, "Election of 1960", in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Fred L. Israel, eds., History of American Presidential Elections, 1789-1960 (New York, N.Y., 1971), vol. 4, p. 3452.
 6. Walt Anderson, Campaign Cases in Political Conflict (Pacific Palisades, Calif., 1970), p. 165.
 7. Ibid.
 8. Aaron Singer, ed., Campaign Speeches of American Presidential Candidates, 1928-1972 (New York, N.Y., 1976), p. 295.

convention was held from 11 July to 15 July 1960 in Los Angeles, Calif. Here Kennedy was nominated for the Presidency; and Lyndon B. Johnson, for the Vice-Presidency.

The Republican Party was unable to renominate Dwight D. Eisenhower as he had already served two terms and was not competent under the Twenty-Second Amendment of the US Constitution to run for a third time for the Presidency.⁹ Vice-President Richard M. Nixon was an eminent man. He had served as Vice-President for eight years and had gained valuable experience. He was an extremely active campaigner.

The twenty-seventh convention of the Republican Party, held in Chicago, Ill., therefore, nominated Nixon for the Presidency. It nominated Henry Cabot Lodge for the Vice-Presidency.

There were many other parties in the electoral battle. It may be worthwhile to place these candidates in view of the religious factor involved in Kennedy's election. The following candidates were nominated respectively by these parties:

9. John H. Ferguson and Dean E. McHenry, The American System of Government (New York, N.Y., 1953), p. 1010. Article XXII, Section, reads: "No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice, and no person who has held the office of President, or acted as President, for more than two years of a term to which some other person was elected President shall be elected to the office of the President more than once." Adopted on 27 February 1951.

National States Rights Party

For President: Ovril Engene Faubus, Arkansas.

For Vice-President: John Geraerdt Crommelin, Alabama.

Socialist Labour Party Convention

For President: Eric Hass, New York.

For Vice-President: Georgia Cozzini, Wisconsin.

Prohibition Party Convention

For President: Rutherford Losey Decker, Montana.

For Vice-President: Earle Harold Munn, Michigan.

Socialist Workers' Party

For President: Farrell Dobbs, New York.

For Vice-President: Myra Tanner Weiss, New York.

Conservative Party (New Jersey)

For President: Joseph Bracken Lee, Utah.

For Vice-President: Kent H. Courtney, Louisiana.

Conservative Party (Virginia)

For President: C. Benton Coiner, Virginia.

For Vice-President: Edward M. Silverman, Virginia.

Constitutional Party (Texas)

For President: Charles Loten Sullivan, Mississippi.

Nobody was nominated for the Vice-Presidency.

Constitutional Party (Washington)

For President: Merrit Barton Curtis, Washington, D.C.

Nobody was nominated for the Vice-Presidency.

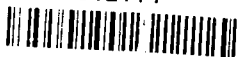
Greenback Party

For Presidentship: Whitney Hart Slocomb, California.

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For Vice-President: Edward Kirby Meador, Massachusetts.

Independent Afro-American Party

For President: Clennon King, Georgia.

Nobody was nominated for the Vice-Presidency.

Socialist Party

No candidates were nominated for the two offices.

Tax Cut Party

For President: Lar Daly, Illinois.

For Vice-President: Merritt Barton Curtis, Washington, D.C.

Theocratic Party Convention

For President: Homer Aurbey Tomlison, New York.

For Vice-President: Raymond L. Teague, Alaska.

Vegetarian Party

For President: Symon Gould, New York.

For Vice-President: Christopher Gian-Cursio, Florida.¹⁰

The election of 1960 was, however, a contest strictly between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. The two parties started their election campaigns after they had decided their respective party programmes. They cast their nets widely enough to woo the votes of the Negroes, the woman, the immigrants, and other minority groups. Both parties took clear positions on the civil rights issue.

10. Joseph Nathan Kane, Facts about the Presidents: A Compilation of Biographical and Historical Data (New York, N.Y., 1974), edn 3, pp. 248-49.

Members of the Democratic Party examined the problems of the Nation, and found that the Northern Whites, being more liberal, were in favour of civil rights for the Negroes. Kennedy's election staff devised a programme which could get the votes of the moderates, the liberals, the Negroes, and other minority groups.

The party declared that it had campaigned in 1776 under the leadership of Thomas Jefferson for recognition and acceptance of "the rights of man" and that it would continue to campaign for the same ideal in America and the world. It said that, if elected to power, it would, in the field of voting rights, eliminate literacy tests and poll taxes and extend the right to vote to all Americans. It declared that it would, besides, enforce the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960. It expressed its support for the US Supreme Court's school desegregation decision, and said that it would insist on all schools submitting their desegregation plans before 1963, i.e. the centenary year of the Emancipation Proclamation. If, in the process of desegregation the schools encountered any transitional problems, it would help them in solving them. The Attorney-General would be empowered to prevent segregation and discrimination on grounds of race, creed, or color. The Administration would uphold everyone's right to equal employment opportunities. It would, again, broaden the scope, strengthen the

powers, and make permanent the President's Committee on Civil Rights set up in 1949. The Administration would end discrimination in the Federal Housing Programme.¹¹

The Democratic Party supported the sit-ins of the Negroes. It pledged to secure for the Negroes equal access to all areas of American life.¹² Its Presidential candidate, Kennedy, spoke: "The rights of man - the civil and economic rights essential to the human dignity of all men - are indeed our goal and are indeed our first principles. This is a platform on which I can run with enthusiasm and with conviction."¹³ And the Vice-Presidential candidate, Lyndon B. Johnson, said that the Americans should unite and put an end to their religious divisions and racial strife.

There is love of freedom in every section and every State - a fervent respect for the rights of man is in every American heart. These are the embers that we need to fan into flame to burn more brightly - and to light our way to greatness.¹⁴

In the whole history of the Democratic Party this was the first time that it had taken such a strong and unequivocal stand on civil rights; so much so that the Southern Democrats felt outraged¹⁵ and threatened to reject the

11. New York Times, 14 July 1960.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., 17 July 1960.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 18 July 1960.

party's liberal stand on civil rights.¹⁶ Kennedy, however, declared that he would stand by civil rights "in all particulars".¹⁷

The Democratic Party declared its stand on civil rights at its national convention held in Los Angeles in California from 11 July to 15 July 1960. The Republican Party convention came off later, from 25 July to 28 July 1960, in Chicago in Illinois.

On the question of civil rights the Republic Party adopted a programme less liberal than that of Democrats. The Republican Party declared that "all men are created equal; racial discrimination has no place." And it guaranteed that, if elected to power, it would afford equal protection under law to all people, promote universal franchise, ensure equal opportunities to all Americans regardless of race, religion, colour, or national origin, and extend support to the US Supreme Court's school desegregation decision. It also said that it would vest the Attorney-General with the necessary Powers to prevent segregation. It, futher, promised a legislation to establish a Commission on Equal Job Opportunities to end discrimination in employment discrimination in the labour unions and the Federal services, and discrimination in the allotment of houses constructed

16. Ibid., 14 July 1960.

17. Ibid., 18 July 1960.

out of Federal funds. All public facilities, it added would be desegregated. It declared: "Civil rights is a responsibility not only of States and localities; it is a national problem and a national responsibility". The party thus came out with a policy aimed at the ending of all discrimination and segregation based on race, colour, creed, religion, and national origin.¹⁸

At the Republican Party convention Nixon's field workers had sought to assure Republicans from the South that Nixon would not adopt a strong civil rights plank.¹⁹ The civil rights programme eventually adopted by the party, therefore, came as a rude shock to members of the party from the South. They lodged a vigorous protest but in vain.²⁰ The programme was accepted by a voice vote in the midst of prolonged cheers.

Nixon later stated at his Press conference in Chicago, Ill.:

I believe it is essential that the Republican convention adopt a strong civil rights platform, an honest one, which does deal specifically and not in generalities with the problems and with the goals that we desire to reach in these fields. Now on this particular plank I have taken a ... personal interest.²¹

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18. Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, National Party Platforms (London, 1966), pp. 618-20.
19. New York Times, 25 July 1960.
20. Ibid. See also Times of India (New Delhi), 30 July 1960.
21. New York Times, 27 July 1960.

President Eisenhower drew the attention of the convention to a number of serious domestic problems which, he said, called for immediate solution. He mentioned racial and religious discrimination as a problem deserving of immediate tackling.²²

Both political parties, thus, for the first time in the history of their participation in the elections to the office of President, gave support to a strong civil rights programme. In both parties members from the South differed sharply over the question of civil rights. Both parties endorsed the Negro "sit-ins". Both parties were inclined to revise and improve Senate Rule 22 about filibuster, a weapon used traditionally to stop civil rights legislation.

There were, however, a few differences. In the sphere of education, the Democratic Party wanted every School District in the South to submit a plan of integration before 1963, the centenary year of the Emancipation Proclamation, but the Republican Party made no such demand. As regards affording equal employment opportunities, the Democratic Party expressed itself in favour of a Federal legislation establishing a Fair Employment Practices Commission. The Republican Party made no mention of such a legislation, but suggested that more avenues of employment

22. Ibid., 28 July 1960.

should be opened up to the Negroes. In the field of housing, the Democratic Party sought an end to discrimination in the Federal Housing Programme and Federally assisted housing, but the Republican Party only called for an end to discrimination in respect of allotment of the houses constructed with the help of Federal subsidies. The Democratic Party pledged to make the Civil Rights Commission a permanent body so as to afford help to individuals and communities, as well as to industry, in the securing of the various constitutional civil rights, but the Republican Party did not make any such commitment.

During the election period the various Negro racial and biracial organizations fought unitedly for equal rights in American life. The movement for equal rights was led by the prominent Negro leader Martin Luther King, Jr, who adopted the method of non-violent direct action. In the early 1960s the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), another Negro organization, launched a "sit-in" movement to desegregate public accommodation. This movement first arose in the South, but spread gradually to the North. The Negroes by this time were fully conscious of their rights and strongly demanded an end to discrimination and segregation in all walks of American life.

Fifty organizations, including the NAACP, the American Jewish Congress, and Americans for Democratic Action, organi-

zed a conference and urged the Republican nominee Nixon and the Democratic nominee Kennedy to take the issue of civil rights "out of the partisan arena".²³

The Negro biracial organization, the NAACP, held rallies at the national conventions of the two major parties²⁴ and demanded equal rights for Black Americans. Governor Rockefeller told the rally that the issue of civil rights was "the great and burning issue" of the time.²⁵ The NAACP's General Secretary, Roy Wilkins, responded by saying that Rockefeller "has made a backbone plank out of a spaghetti plank."²⁶ At the rally held at the Democratic convention, Kennedy pledged strong support for civil rights.²⁷

Both the major parties tried their best to get as large a slice of the Negro vote as possible. They made many promises to the Negroes in order to secure their votes.

The stand of the Republic candidate, Nixon, on the issue of civil rights was comparatively weak and mild. During the Eisenhower Administration, the Supreme Court had given the most important verdict against school segre-

23. Ibid., 9 August 1960.

24. NAACP Report, 1960, n. 1, p. 48.

25. New York Times, 26 July 1960.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

gation (1954); and yet, in 1959-60, after six years, only 6 per cent of the pupils in the South were desegregated.²⁸ The Eisenhower Administration had passed the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960, but it was the Democratic Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson whom the NAACP's Director had complimented for the measure.²⁹ His role in getting the legislation passed was appreciated. The Republican nominee for Vice-President, Henry Cabot Lodge, promised that the Republican Administration would appoint a Negro in their next Cabinet.³⁰ He added that Ralph Bunche "would make a wonderful United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union".

During the election campaign, the role of the Democratic Presidential nominee on civil rights was hence strong and assertive. Kennedy met large numbers of White and Black Americans and gave many promises to the Negroes. He said that the large population of American Negroes would be a great asset in building better relations with the new nations of Africa: "We move ahead in civil rights and provide equal opportunity for all Americans."³¹ He said

28. U.S. News and World Report (Washington, D.C.), 20 June 1960, p. 113.

29. Harry Golden, n. 2, p. 81.

30. The Guardian(Manchester), 24 October 1960.

31. New York Times, 7 August 1960.

in a speech in Wisconsin that

... the Negro baby, ... regardless of his talents, statistically has one-half as much chance of finishing high school as the White baby, one-third as much chance of finishing college, one-fourth as much chance of being a professional man or woman, and four times as much chance of being out of work. 32

The important final event of the election campaign of 1960 was that the eminent civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, was arrested for traffic violation. King's wife, Coretta Scott King, was expecting a baby, at this time. Kennedy immediately phoned to Coretta Scott King:

I want to express to you my concern about your husband. I know this must be very hard for you. I understand you are expecting a baby, and I just wanted you to know that I was thinking about you and Dr King. If there is anything I can do to help, please feel free to call on me. 33

The Republican Presidential nominee, on the other hand, did not react to the arrest of King.³⁴ Kennedy's initiative in talking to Coretta Scott King on the telephone and the unsympathetic attitude of Nixon influenced the Negroes. Kennedy won the hearts of the American Negroes by his humanity. King's father said: "I had a suitcase full of votes, I'd take them all and place them at Senator Kennedy's

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32. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House (London, 1965), p. 792.
33. Coretta Scott King, My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr. (New York, N.Y., 1969), p. 196.
34. Stanley Kelley, Jr., "The Presidential Campaign", in Paul T. David, ed., The Presidential Election and Transition, 1960-61 (Washington, D.C., 1961), p. 85.

feet."³⁵

During the election campaign Kennedy repeatedly stressed his willingness to use the Presidential powers to eliminate all sorts of discrimination and segregation in American life.

On election day, i.e. 8 November 1960, a total of 68,838,979 Americans cast their votes for President. Kennedy got 34,221,349. His total electoral vote was 303, but he had needed only 289 electoral votes to win. On the other hand Nixon polled 34,108,546 votes. His electoral vote was 219.³⁶ According to one election estimate, Kennedy had got 85 per cent of the Negro vote.³⁷ Another report confirmed that Kennedy had received a very large share of the Negro vote.³⁸ It means that the American Negroes had overwhelmingly voted for Kennedy, who became the 35th President of the United States of America. One can, thus, say that the Negro votes had a good deal of role to play in the Presidential elections of 1960.

35. Scott King, n. 33, p. 197.

36. Congressional Quarterly Service, Politics in America (Washington, D.C., 1967), p. 39. This includes 318, 303 Alabama votes also cast for unpledged electors. The Democratic electorate in Alabama was split between five loyalist electors (who voted for Kennedy) and six unpledged States Rights electors (who voted for Senator Harry Flood Byrd).

37. Quoted in Golden, n. 2, p. 51, The estimates of the NAACP and the Democratic National Committee vary only fractionally.

38. Quoted in Schlesinger, n. 32, p. 793. Gallup and Harris, the two main polling organizations give figures ranging from 68 to 78 per cent.

Chapter 3

**KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION AND CIVIL
RIGHTS MEASURES**

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KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION AND CIVIL RIGHTS MEASURES

At the beginning of the Kennedy Administration the Negroes were more hopeful of their demand for full equality in American life being fulfilled. They, however, did not choose to wait for the Kennedy Administration to embark on a civil rights programme on its own. Their organizations - like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) - came together and launched a massive struggle, a kind of non-violent direct action, under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr.

It was in the South that the civil rights struggle first started in the mid 1960s, the movement spread in the urban areas of the North as well.

On 20 January 1961 Kennedy declared in his inaugural speech:

We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom ... the rights of man come not from the generosity of the State but from the hand of God ... we are the heirs of that revolution ... the torch has been passed on to a new generation of Americans ... unwilling to ... permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed at home and around the world ...

If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.¹

Kennedy further emphasized his commitment to the cause of Negroes in his State of the Union message to Congress, 30 January 1961:

The denial of Constitutional rights to some of our fellow Americans on account of race at the ballot box and elsewhere disturbs the national conscience, and subjects us to the charge of world opinion that our democracy is not equal to the high promise of our heritage.²

In an article published in The Nation (New York, N.Y.) on 4 February 1961 King urged the importance of the Federal Government appreciating the urgency of racial desegregation. He stressed the role of Presidential Executive Orders in extending the public good and requested the President to appoint a Secretary of Integration.³ He also called for a kind of Marshall Plan for America. He further said: "The President has proposed a ten-year plan to put a man on the moon. We do not yet have a plan to put a Negro in the State Legislature of Alabama."⁴ On 8 March 1961, at a

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1. United States Government Printing Office, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches and Statements of the President, January 20 to December 31, 1961 (Washington, D.C., 1962), p. 1.
 2. Fred L. Israel, ed., The State of the Union Messages of the Presidents, 1790-1966 (New York, N.Y., 1967), vol. 3, (1905-66), p. 3126.
 3. Martin Luther King, Jr., "The President has the Power: Equality Now", The Nation (New York, N.Y.), 4 February 1961, pp. 91-95.
 4. Lerone Bennett, Jr., A Biography of What Manner of Man Martin Luther King, Jr. (Chicago, Ill., 1964), p. 120.

news conference, Kennedy cleared his stand on civil rights.

He said:

I do believe that there are a good deal of things we can do now in administering laws previously passed by the Congress, particularly in the area of voting, and also by using the powers which the Constitution gives to the President through Executive orders. When I feel that there is a necessity for Congressional action, with a chance of getting that Congressional action, then I will recommend it to the Congress.⁵

President Kennedy appointed his brother Robert Kennedy as Attorney-General of the United States. In an address at the Law Day Exercises of the University of Georgia Law Schools, Athens, Ga, Robert Kennedy said:

If one man's rights are denied, the rights of all are endangered I happen to believe that the 1954 decision /by the US Supreme Court ordering an end to school segregation/ was right. But my belief does not matter - it is the law. Some of you may believe /that/ the decision was wrong. That does not matter. It is the law. And we both respect the law.⁶

In 1961 CORE launched a movement called Freedom Riders to test the desegregation of inter-State bus terminals.⁷

Explaining the need for Freedom Riders in The Reporter (New York, N.Y.), Eugene V. Rostow said that the South had

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5. Harold W. Chase and Allen H. Lerman, eds., Kennedy and the Press: The News Conferences (New York, N.Y., 1965), p. 43.
 6. Time (New York, N.Y.), 12 May 1961, p. 14.
 7. William Lerene Katz, Teachers Guide to American Negro History (Chicago, Ill., 1968), p. 155.

not made rapid progress in the field of civil rights.⁸ The demonstrations held by the Freedom Riders were peaceful. It was the duty of the State Government and the Federal Government to protect them.⁹ When, however, the Freedom Riders reached Alabama, the Police Commissioner of Birmingham, Eugene ("Bull") Connor, said: "Our people of Birmingham are a peaceful people, and we never have any trouble here unless some people come into our city looking for trouble."¹⁰ And Governor John Patterson of Alabama declared: "I cannot guarantee protection for this bunch of rabble-rousers."¹¹ The situation in Alabama grew worse; so much so that President Kennedy felt it necessary to get in touch with the Governor, John Patterson, in his office. He was, however, told that Patterson was out and that he could not be reached.¹² Attorney-General Robert Kennedy tried to keep law and order in Alabama. And yet a segregationist mob managed to attack Freedom Riders. Thereupon President Kennedy sent six hundred deputy US marshals for the protection of Freedom Riders.¹³ He stated on 20 May 1961;

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8. Eugene V. Rostow, "The Freedom Riders and the Future", The Reporter (New York, N.Y.), 22 June 1961, p. 18.
 9. See editorial entitled "Freedom Riders" in the New Republic (Washington, D.C.), 5 June 1961, p. 5.
 10. "The U.S., the South, Trouble in Alabama", Time, 26 May 1961, pp. 12-13.
 11. Ibid.
 12. Ibid.
 13. Theodore C. Sorensen, Kennedy (New York, N.Y., 1965), p. 537.

The situation ... in Alabama is a source of the deepest concern to me as it must be to the vast majority of the citizens of Alabama and other Americans. I have instructed the Justice Department to take all necessary steps I call upon the Governor and other responsible State officials ... as well as the Mayors of Birmingham and Montgomery to exercise their lawful authority to prevent any further outbreaks of violence. I would also hope that any persons, whether a citizen of Alabama or a visitor there, would refrain from any action which would in any way tend to provoke further outbreaks. I hope that state and local officials in Alabama will meet their responsibilities. The United States Government intends to meet its.¹⁴

Negro organizations like the SCLC, the SNCC, and CORE formed a committee called the Freedom Riders Co-ordinating Committee and named King its spokesman. Thanks to their struggle, the Inter-State Commerce Commission was ordered on 1 November 1961 to provide seats on its buses to all without regard to race, colour, creed, or national origin.¹⁵ A 60-member delegation of the NAACP met Kennedy to press their demands. Kennedy assured them of his continuing interest in civil rights.¹⁶

In the beginning of 1962, in view of the growing Negro protest against discrimination, Kennedy said in his second State of the Union message to Congress:

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14. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961, n. 1, p. 391.
 15. T. Edmund, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Black Protest Movement (New Delhi, 1976), pp. 153-6.
 16. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Report for 1961: NAACP in Action (New York, N.Y., 1962), pp. 60-61.

America stands for progress in human rights, ... a strong America requires the assurances of full and equal rights to all its citizens, of any race or of any color. This administration ... the full use of Executive Powers ... through persuasion, negotiation, and litigation, to secure ... the right to vote, the right to travel, ... right to free public education. I issued ... order ... equal employment opportunity in all federal agencies and contractors As we approach the 100th anniversary next January, of the Emancipation Proclamation let the acts of every branch of the Government - and every citizen portray that "righteousness does exalt a nation".¹⁷

The US Supreme Court had given its school desegregation decision in 1954, but the South had made very little progress towards desegregation. In Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina especially segregation was very much the rule at the elementary and secondary stages of schooling.¹⁸ A Negro named James Meredith decided to seek admission into the University of Mississippi. It was an invitation to confrontation; for Governor Ross Barnett of Mississippi had refused to obey a Federal court order on Meredith's enrolment.¹⁹ When Meredith reached Mississippi to demand that he be enrolled, tension mounted. On 30 September 1961 President Kennedy addressed the nation;

17. Israel, n. 2, p. 3135.

18. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Report for 1962 (New York, N.Y., 1962), p. 7.

19. Albert P. Blaustein and Robert L. Zangrando, eds., Civil Rights and the American Negro (New York, N.Y., 1968), pp. 469.

The orders of the court in the case of Meredith ... are beginning to be carried out ... the law endorsement officers of the United States of Mississippi and the federal marshals will continue to be sufficient in the future. All students, members of the faculty and public officials ... will be able, it is hoped, to return to their normal activities with full confidence, in the integrity of American law Americans are free to disagree with the law, but not to disobey it ... my responsibility as President ... (is) inescapable. I accept it You have a new opportunity to show that you are men of patriotism and integrity.²⁰

The Mississippians did not hear the President's speech. The roughnecks and racists gathered at Oxford, with clubs, pipes, bricks, bottles, bats, firebombs, and guns.²¹ A riot broke out on the University campus. The Government used 15,000 troops to quell it.²² In this critical situation Attorney-General Robert F. Kennedy played the important role of mediator. He discussed the matter with Governor Barnett. Barnett finally agreed to the admission of James Meredith and pledged to maintain order in the State.²³ Meredith thus became the first Negro to get admission at the University of Oxford, Mississippi.

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20. Allan Nevins, ed., The Burden and the Glory by President John F. Kennedy (New York, N.Y., 1964), pp. 167-70.
21. Sorensen, n. 13, p. 546.
22. Report for 1962, n. 18, p. 7.
23. Anthony Lewis, The Second American Revolution: A First Hand Account of the Struggle for Civil Rights (London, 1966), p. 218.

There was residential segregation even at the national level in the United States.²⁴ During his election campaign Kennedy had promised that he would bar discrimination in Federal housing by a "stroke of the pen".²⁵ When he was reminded of this at his Press conference on 15 January 1962, the President answered:

I have stated that I would issue that order ... we have, for example, carried out a great many more suits in voting rights, the appointment of federal employees, and judges, and ending segregation in interstate travel and terminal facilities, ... at least the communities involved made important progress in integrating in this field I am fully conscious of the wording of the statement to which you refer, and plan to meet my responsibilities in regard to this matter.²⁶

The long-delayed Executive Order came eventually on 28 November 1962. The order prohibited discrimination in Federally assisted housing.²⁷ Roy Wilkins, Executive Secretary of the NAACP, hailed this housing desegregation order. He said that it was an important step in combating racial segregation in housing.²⁸

In 1961 the Negroes had launched a massive protest against segregation in public facilities in Albany, Ga. In

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24. Jacob K. Javits, Discrimination U.S.A. (New York, N.Y., 1962), p. 117.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
26. Chase and Lerman, n. 5, p. 157.
27. Congressional Quarterly, Civil Rights Progress Report, 1970 (Washington, D.C., 1971), p. 6.
28. Report for 1962, n. 18, p. 103.

1962 the protest movement gathered marked momentum. President Kennedy said at his Press conference on 1 August 1962:

I find it wholly inexplicable why the city council will sit down with the citizens of Albany, who may be Negroes, and attempt to secure them, in peaceful way, their rights. The United States Government is involved in sitting down at Geneva with the Soviet Union. I can't understand why the Government of Albany, city council of Albany, cannot do the same for American citizens.²⁹

At another Press conference, President Kennedy denounced the burning down of Negro churches.³⁰ King too protested against segregation and discrimination in Albany. As a result there was desegregation in Albany in all walks of life.³¹

President Kennedy took positive steps to appoint Negroes to a number of posts in the Federal Government; Anred Thomas Hatcher was named Associate Press Secretary; Robert Clifton Weaver became Administrator of the Housing and Home Finance Agency, the highest administrative position to which any Negro had ever risen till then; and Carl T. Rowan was appointed first as Deputy Assistant State Secretary for Public Affairs and later, in May 1963, as Ambassador to

29. Chase and Lerman, n. 5, p. 298.

30. Howard Zinn, "Kennedy : The Reluctant Emancipator", The Nation, 1 December 1962, p. 314.

31. Edmund, n. 15, p. 154.

Finland. Ambassador John Howard Morrow became Permanent Representative to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Clifton Wharton was named Ambassador to Norway. Mercer Cook became Ambassador to Niger; he was the first US envoy to the new republic.³²

Thurgood Marshall was appointed as Federal Judge in the US Court of Appeals for the US 2nd Circuit, New York; Wade H. Mc Cree, Jr., as US District Judge for Detroit, Mich.; Joseph C. Waddy, as Judge, Domestic Relations Court, District of Columbia; A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., as US District Judge for Eastern Pennsylvania; Spoltswood W. Robinson, as District Judge for the District of Columbia; and James B. Parsons, as US District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois. Marjorie McKenzie Lawson became Judge, Juvenile Court, District Court of Columbia; she was the first Negro woman to be appointed a judge by a President of the United States and to have her appointment approved by the Senate.³³

Cecil F. Poole, Attorney for the Northern District of California, was the first Negro in the nation to become as Attorney. Later, Merle McCurdy too became Attorney for Northeast Ohio.³⁴

32. Doris E. Saunders, ed., The Kennedy Years and the Negro (Chicago, Ill., 1964), pp. 48-56.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-59.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

George Leon Paul Weaver, Assistant Secretary of Labor for International Affairs, became the first Negro to hold that important sub-Cabinet position. Andrew F. Brimmer was appointed as Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of Commerce; Samuel Z. Westerfield, as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs, Department of States; Christopher Scott, as Deputy Postmaster-General for Transportation, Post Office Department; Howard Jenkins, as Member, National Labor Relations Board; Lisle C. Carter as Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; Roy Davenport, as Deputy Under Secretary of the Army for Personnel; Alfred L. Edwards, as Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of Agriculture; and Chester Carter, as Deputy Secretary for Congressional Relations, Department of State.³⁵

John B. Dunkan became Commissioner, District of Columbia, Charles T. Dunkan was appointed as First Assistant, US Attorney's office, District of Columbia; Peter Ridley, as Recorder of Deeds, District of Columbia; Walter E. Washington, District of Columbia, as Executive Director, National Capital Housing Authority; G. Franklin Edwards as Board of National Capital Transportation Agency; and James Washington, as Chairman of the Public Utilities Commission,

35. Ibid., pp. 61-63.

District of Columbia. Luke Moore, as Marshal of the District of Columbia, was the first Negro to hold that post after Frederic Douglass.³⁶

A number of Negro women too were given important positions. These included Grace L. Hewell, who was made Program Coordination Officer, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; Charlotte Hubbard, who became Public Affairs Officer, Department of State; Ruth Jones, who was posted as Collector of Customs, Virgin Islands; Christine Ray Davis, who was given the position of Staff Director, House Committee on Government Operations; Jemy Whittington, who was appointed White House Secretary; and Anne M. Roberts, who was raised to be Deputy Regional Administrator, Housing and Home Finance Agency.³⁷

Ralph Johnson Bunche was designated US Under Secretary for the United Nations.³⁸ Several other Negroes were given high Executive and professional positions by President Kennedy.

On 6 March 1961 President Kennedy issued an Executive Order, creating the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity.³⁹ He said:

36. Ibid., pp. 64-65.

37. Ibid., p. 68.

38. Ibid., p. 69.

39. Executive Order No. 10925, dated 6 March 1961.

... I intend to ensure that Americans of all colors and beliefs will have equal access to employment within the government, and with those who do business with the government I have dedicated my Administration to the cause of equal opportunity in employment by the government or its contractors I have no doubt that the vigorous enforcement of this order will mean the end of such discrimination I have already directed all Departments to take immediate action to broaden the government employment opportunity for members of minority groups.⁴⁰

Employment discrimination was the subject of Kennedy's first Executive Order in the sphere of civil rights.⁴¹ The President's Committee on Equal Employment was charged to ensure the elimination of racial discrimination among Federal employees.

The Civil Service Commission too played an important role in the matter of ending racial discrimination. It embarked on a programme of paying visits to Negro colleges and encouraging qualified Negroes to apply for Federal jobs.⁴²

President Kennedy also established a Committee on Equal Opportunity in the Armed Forces to protect civil rights in the armed forces. This was among the most

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40. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961, n.1, p. 150.
41. Lewis, n. 23, p. 118.
42. Benjamin Muse, The American Negro Revolution: From Non-Violence to Black Power (Bombay, 1976), p. 43.

important steps that President Kennedy took.⁴³

On 14 January 1963, in a Message to Congress, President Kennedy stated as follows on the subject of civil rights:

We need to strengthen our nation by protecting the basic rights of its citizens. And the most precious and powerful right in the world, the right to vote in a free American election, must not be denied to any citizen on grounds of his race or color. I wish that all qualified Americans permitted to vote were willing to vote; but surely in this centennial year of the emancipation, all those who are willing to vote should always be permitted.⁴⁴

The City of Birmingham in the southern part of the United States of America was a citadel of racialism. King and his followers, therefore, selected Birmingham for an agitation to end discrimination in all walks of life. On 2 April 1963 King launched an intense struggle for desegregation.⁴⁵ Thanks to his struggle, lunch counters and public facilities were desegregated.⁴⁶ In the period that followed, Negroes used different kinds of tactics such as kneel-ins in the churches, sit-ins in the libraries, and marches for voting registration.⁴⁷ King was arrested

43. Ruth P. Morgan, The President and Civil Rights: Policy Making by Executive Orders (New York, N.Y., 1970), p.26.

44. Israel, n. 2, p. 3148.

45. Martin Luther King, Jr., Why We Can't Wait (New York, N.Y., 1964), pp. 46-58.

46. Ibid., p. 109.

47. Edmund, n. 15, p. 160.

and sentenced to solitary confinement. Attorney-General Robert Kennedy phoned to Coretta Scott King, wife of Martin Luther King. He asked: what can we do for you? "Bull Connor is very hard to deal with."⁴⁸ Next day President Kennedy himself phoned to Coretta Scott King. He said: "I know you will be interested in that knowing we sent the FBI into Birmingham last night. We checked on your husband, and he's all right Of course, Birmingham is a very difficult place."⁴⁹ In April-May 1963 the struggle in Birmingham stood on the verge of total disorder. President Kennedy, therefore, said at a Press conference: "... I would use all available means to protect human rights and uphold the law of the land We have committed all the power of the Federal Government to insure respect and obedience of court decisions and the law of the land."⁵⁰ He also phoned to Governor Wallace of Alabama on 13 May 1963, and said:

In the absence of any violation of Federal Statutes of court orders ..., our efforts will continue to be focussed on helping local citizens to achieve and maintain peaceful, reasonable settlement ... but I would be derelict in my duty if I did not take the

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48. Coretta Scott King, My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr. (London, 1969), p. 226.
49. Ibid., p. 227.
50. United States Government Printing Office, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States; John F. Kennedy; Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to November 22, 1963 (Washington, D.C., 1964), p. 372.

preliminary steps announced last night that will enable this Government, if required, to meet its obligations without delay. 51

On 20 May 1963 the US Supreme Court declared that segregation in Birmingham was unconstitutional. 52

The Negroes voiced their protest against segregation and discrimination in the southern part of America. President Kennedy addressed the United States Mayors' Conference on 9 June 1963. He referred to the Negro demonstrations in Birmingham, Ala, Chicago, Ill., Los Angeles, Calif., and Atlanta, Ga, and said that race relations was a national problem. He added:

I am asking you ... to be alert, ... The demonstrations of unrest in Birmingham, in Boston, in Jackson, in Greensboro, Nashville, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and elsewhere can be expected in many other cities in the next few months, North and South The Federal Government does not control these demonstrations. It neither starts them, directs them, nor stops them. What we can do is seek, through legislation and Executive action, to provide peaceful remedies for the grievances which set them off, to give all Americans, in short, a fair chance for an equal life. 53

The various Negro organizations convened a conference. This was attended among others by A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, John Lewis of the SNCC, Dorothy

51. New York Times, 14 May 1963.

52. Edmund, n. 15, p. 164.

53. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1963, n. 50, pp. 454-65.

Height of National Council of Negro Women, James Farmer of CORE, and Whitney Young of the Urban League. Randolph proposed a massive march on Washington, D.C., for "Jobs and Freedom."⁵⁴ Agene E. Meyers, who possessed outstanding knowledge of the civil rights movement, predicted that the march on Washington, D.C., would be "disastrous and catastrophic" and cause bloodshed and damage to property.⁵⁵ In an editorial on 27 July 1963 The Nation said that there was a possibility of violence from the American Nazi Party, the Ku Klux Klan, the citizen councils of the Birchites, and other organizations.⁵⁶ And yet a majority approved the idea of a march and voted for it. In another editorial, on 10 August 1963, The Nation commented that the Negroes were pursuing their equal rights struggle with verve and vigour.⁵⁷

On 17 July 1963, at a Press conference, President Kennedy cleared the proposal for a march on Washington, D.C. He stated:

I think that the way that Washington march is now developed, which is a peaceful assembly calling for a redress of grievances, the cooperation with the police, every evidence that it is going to be peaceful, they are going to the Washington Monument,

54. Scott King, n. 48, p. 235.

55. Quoted in "To March or Not to March", editorial, The Nation, 27 July 1963, p. 41.

56. Ibid.

57. "The Whites", editorial, *ibid.*, 10 August 1963, p. 61.

... to express their strong views We want citizens to come to Washington if they feel that they are not having their rights expressed. But, of course, arrangements have been made to make this responsible and peaceful. This is not a march on the capital.⁵⁸

The demands behind the March on Washington were :

(i) end to Jim Crow in education, in housing, in transportation, and in every other social, economic, and political privilege, as also end to segregation in public places and public institutions; (ii) end to lynching, protection of life, and legislation to enforce the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments; (iii) removal of all voting barriers; (iv) abolition of discrimination and segregation in the defence forces; (v) end to discrimination in jobs, and powers to the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) to enforce its decisions or its findings; (vi) withholding of Federal funds/grants from an agency as a penalty for pursuing a policy of discrimination; (vii) adequate representation on all administrative agencies for all colored and minority groups; and (viii) similar representation in all missions, political and technical, for all colored and minority groups.⁵⁹

58. Chase and Lerman, n. 5, p. 464.

59. John Hope Franklin and Isidore Starr, The Negro in the Twentieth Century (New York, N.Y., 1967), pp. 140-1.

On the day of the March the US Government took several precautionary measures. The Administration deployed thousands of policemen to maintain law and order. The President made it clear that he would be in his office.⁶⁰ The New York Times wrote on the March: "... the milling throng ... was flowing like a swollen river towards the brooding statue of Abraham Lincoln.... The march ... consisted of 200,000 Negroes It was one of the largest but most orderly demonstrations ever in the nation's capital."⁶¹

Martin Luther King made a memorable speech on the occasion. He observed that the Negro Emancipation Proclamation had been made a hundred years before, but that the Negroes were still not free. He said he dreamed that one day the American nation would rise up and show the true meaning of the words "all men are created equal."⁶²

At the end of the March on Washington, President Kennedy met the leaders. These included Whitney Young of the National Urban League; King of the SLIC; John Lewis of the SNCC; Rabbi Joachim Prinz of the American Jewish Congress; Eugene P. Blake of the National Council

60. Sorensen, n. 13, pp. 566-7.

61. New York Times, 29 May 1963.

62. Franklin and Starr, n. 59, pp. 143-7.

of Churches; A. Randolph, AFL-CIO, Vice-President; Walter Reuther of the United Auto Workers; and Roy Wilkins of the NAACP.⁶³ Kennedy stated after the meeting that the March was an example of

Americans - both Negro and White - exercising their right to assemble peacefully and direct the widest possible attention to a great national issue. Efforts to secure equal treatment and equal opportunity for all without regard to race, color, creed or nationality are neither novel nor difficult to understand One cannot help but be impressed with the deep fervor and the quiet dignity that characterizes the thousands who have gathered in the Nation's Capital ... to demonstrate their faith and confidence in our democratic ... government The executive branch of Federal Government will continue its efforts ... to eliminate discrimination in employment ... (and) to secure enactment of the legislative proposals made to the Congress ... including civil rights bill. ⁶⁴

The March on Washington ended peacefully and in an orderly manner.

In an editorial The Nation wrote that the March was an example of democratic self-expression.⁶⁵ The success of the March demonstrated the unity of the Negroes and the support of a significant number of Whites for their demands. It cleared the way to further civil rights legislation.

63. John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans (New Delhi, 1967), p. 634.

64. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1963, n. 50, p. 645.

65. "The March", editorial, The Nation, 14 September 1963, p. 121.

The Negroes further intensified their equal rights struggle. They thus made it inescapable for the American Government to do something tangible to ensure their rights. On 1 June 1963 President Kennedy addressed the people of the United States. He said that the American nation

... was founded on the principle that all men are created equal.... Today we are committed to a world-wide struggle to promote and protect the rights of all who wish to be free We are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the scriptures and is as clear as the American Constitution.... I am, therefore, asking the Congress to enact legislation giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public-hotels, restaurants, theatres, retail stores, and similar establishments (and) to authorize the Federal Government to participate more fully in law suits designed to end segregation in public education.⁶⁶

Kennedy thus set the stage for further civil rights legislation.

As a follow-up of his utterances and promises in June 1963 President Kennedy submitted his civil rights programme to Congress. It was aimed (i) to end discrimination in hotels, restaurants, places of recreation, stores, and other facilities; (ii) at investing the Attorney-General with more authority to speed up the desegregation process in public schools; (iii) at establis-

66. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1963, n. 50, pp. 468-71.

hing a President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity; (iv) at banning Federally assisted programmes from practising discrimination and at withholding funds in the event of violation of the ban; and (v) at establishing a Community Relations Service to help the community to solve racial discrimination problems.

Kennedy thus insisted that a solution of the problem of racial discrimination was imperative.⁶⁷ After much debate and many changes this bill was passed, and it became the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

67. Muse, n. 42, p. 7.

Chapter 4

THE BALANCE SHEET AND THE BLACK RESPONSE

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THE BALANCE-SHEET AND THE BLACK RESPONSE

The American Negroes waged a historic struggle for emancipation and full freedom for a whole century, i.e. from 1863 to 1963. They changed their tactics and strategies of struggle as well as their ideological postures from time to time. The 1950s were an important period for the Negro struggle because it was during that period that it realized most of its objectives. The US Supreme Court outlawed the invidious system of separate but equal education in 1954. The Montgomery bus boycott in 1956 succeeded in accomplishing desegregation in public transportation. President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent Federal troops in 1957 to Little Rock, Ark., in support of school integration. Subsequently the US Congress also passed two important legislations, the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and the Civil Rights Act of 1960. These achievements were in fact made possible by the changing strategy of struggle, i.e. from a radical, anti-nationalist position to non-violent direct action, which gave a moral orientation to the struggle. The effectiveness of the non-violent method was increasingly felt during the late 1950s and later, in the early 1960s, under the able guidance of Martin Luther King, Jr. The non-violent approach helped in winning the sympathy of a section of the Whites as well who now supported

the Black movement. Along with the inspiring leadership of King and the superiority of his strategy, the changing international climate too was responsible for the success of the struggle; for there was a qualitative change in the international situation with the emergence of the Communist bloc as a powerful force in world politics, the growth in the influence of the non-aligned bloc of countries, and the attainment of full statehood by a large number of African states. The world saw how the United States posed as a champion of democracy and cried itself hoarse about sovereignty, fraternity, and equality everywhere and how at the same time, it denied basic human rights to some of its own citizens on account of their colour. The new international climate compelled the United States to have a fresh look at the Negro problem. The US leaders realized that the Negro problem was spoiling the international image of the country. John F. Kennedy declared that the denial of Constitutional rights on account of race would "subject us to the charge of world opinion that our democracy is not equal to the high promise of our heritage."¹

During the Presidential election of 1960, Kennedy, as the candidate of the Democratic Party, strongly supported

1. Fred L. Israel, ed., The State of the Union Messages of the Presidents of the United States of America, 1870-1966 (New York, N.Y., 1967), vol. 3, 1905-1966, p. 3126.

the Black movement and also assured the use of Executive power in accomplishing full integration. The Negroes overwhelmingly voted for Kennedy and helped in his election to the Presidency.

Naturally, therefore, the Negroes reposed great hope in the Kennedy Administration. However, the Kennedy Administration did not quite live up to their expectations. We may note that Kennedy chose to refer generally to rights in his Inaugural Address, and the expression "civil rights" was conspicuously absent from the Address.²

From this as well as his subsequent action it is not difficult to infer that President Kennedy was inclined to ignore the question of civil rights. The Blacks felt that the Kennedy Administration had let them down. Their discontent erupted in a new wave of violent incidents.

On 4 May 1961 the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) brought about a direct confrontation between the States and the Federal Government by launching a movement called Freedom Riders to test the advance of desegregation in inter-state transportation in the South. The Freedom Riders were attacked by angry segregationists, especially in

2. US Government, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States; John F. Kennedy: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches and Statements of the Presidents, January 20 to December 31, 1961 (Washington, D.C., 1962), pp. 1-3.

Anniston and Birmingham in Alabama. The violence that followed forced the then Attorney-General, Robert F. Kennedy, to dispatch 600 US marshals to restore peace. This action precipitated a crisis in the Federal policy of the United States. The Governor of Alabama denounced the action of the Federal Government as unwarranted interference in the State's autonomy and also threatened to arrest the Federal agents. This created what seemed to be a perfect setting for a civil war.³ The Federal judge of Alabama, Frank Johnson, banned the activities of the Freedom Riders for twenty days and also threatened to jail the Negro leaders, the White police, and the city officials if there was a recurrence of "incidents" in Montgomery and Birmingham.⁴ However, on 1 November 1961, thanks to the long struggle, the Inter-State Commerce Commission banned racial segregation in inter-state bus transportation.

There is evidence to believe that there was considerable advance in the field of civil rights in 1961 despite the characteristic inconsistencies discernible in the claims of official documents. While the annual report of the Attorney-General for 1961 exaggerated the achievements⁵,

3. Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 2 June 1961.

4. Hindu (Madras), 4 June 1961.

5. The Times (London), 28 February 1962.

the report of the Civil Rights Commission presented the situation as one that was far from satisfactory. During 1956-61 only forty-four school districts in the seventeen Southern and border States had initiated the process of desegregation; in twenty-eight school districts the process had been stayed by court orders etc.⁶ And, more importantly, the progress of school desegregation was very slow, especially in the year 1961.

During 1962, however, the attitude of the Kennedy Administration was distinctly more sympathetic towards the Negro problem. President Kennedy in his speech to the US Congress on 11 January 1962 referred to the emancipation of the Blacks. He called upon the various Government Departments and citizens to show that "righteousness does exalt a nation."⁷

Yet another instance where the Federal Government came into direct conflict with a State Government was the issue of admission of a Negro, James Meredith by name, at the segregated University of Oxford in the State of Mississippi. Whereas the Federal courts, including the US Supreme Court, pronounced his admission valid, the Mississippi State Court endorsed the steps taken by the State Government

6. Ibid.

7. Israel, n. 1, p. 3135.

to deny him admission. The Governor had power under the Constitution to close down the University, and the Federal Government had power to reopen it.⁸ To dramatize the situation, the Federal Government upheld the admission of Meredith and dispatched troops to the campus of the University of Oxford. This infused a genuine fear among the officials in Washington, D.C., that there might eventually be an armed conflict between the Federal soldiers and the Mississippi law enforcement officers and citizens.⁹ To top it all, a riot erupted on the University campus the day Meredith was admitted.

This incident might be a small one, but it created conflict nevertheless between the US Supreme Court and the State Court. Also, it brought to the fore the contradictions arising largely from certain ambiguous provisions in the United States Constitution. These, however, failed to strifle the aspirations of the Blacks, who were determined to establish desegregation in all walks of life.

After some notable achievements, King launched a massive movement to end discrimination and segregation in shops and restaurants and in the field of employment oppor-

8. Daily Telegraph (London), 26 September 1962.

9. Anthony Lewis, The American Negro Revolution: A First-Hand Account of the Struggle for Civil Rights (London, 1966), p. 218.

tunity in Birmingham, Ala. During demonstrations by the Negroes the local administration ordered its police to use fire hoses and police dogs to disperse the demonstrators.¹⁰ The Negroes were also made to endure the tortures and the injuries inflicted upon them by the Whites segregationists.¹¹ Undeterred, they stood their ground. While the non-violent Negroes were subjected to unconscionable suffering and humiliation by the White segregationists, the State Government stood passively by as if it were helpless. The Federal Government sent 3,000 marshals to prevent further violence by the Whites.

This struggle, in which the Negroes suffered at the hands of both the State police and the racist Whites, produced reverberations in the world at large. For instance, the official organ of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Pravda, wrote about the incident under the caption "Monstrous Crimes among Racists in the United States."¹² Most British newspapers also published front-page reports on the Birmingham incident with pictures of White policemen in action with their fire hoses and dogs. The London-based Daily Worker said that the United States had "done nothing

10. Dawn (Karachi), 23 May, 1963.

11. Ibid.

12. New York Times, 10 May 1963.

to protect the civil rights of the Negroes."¹³ The Rome-based L'Unita stated that Birmingham had indicated that a revolution was under way in the United States. It continued: "The weapon of repression used massively against children and girls will backfire against those who use it." The Communist organ L'Humanite of Paris also condemned the brutal repression.¹⁴ The Asian newspapers also reported the racial strife in Birmingham, Ala, extensively.¹⁵ The world Press thus played an important role in creating world opinion against the racialists.

The reaction to the violence in Birmingham was particularly strong in Africa. The incident seemed even to affect US diplomatic relations on the African continent. The United States Information Service informed President Kennedy that the damage caused to the international reputation of the United States on account of the Birmingham violence was much worse than the incident that had occurred at Little Rock, Ark., during the Eisenhower Administration and later at Oxford, Miss. The Birmingham incident created hostility and bitterness among the Africans, who particularly resented the use of dogs against Negro children and youth.¹⁶

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Indian Express (New Delhi), 21 May 1963.

Eventually, after a long struggle, Birmingham became a desegregated city.

In 1963 President Kennedy sent a bill on civil rights to the US Congress. It was a comprehensive bill aimed at ending racial segregation in stores, hotels, restaurants, theatres, and other business establishments involved in inter-state commerce. President Kennedy held that civil rights was a moral rather than a political question. He also delayed the submission of his bill. And he chose to be away in Europe at the crucial stage of mobilizing national opinion in support of the bill.¹⁷ When, finally, he sent the bill to the US Congress, he warned the Negroes to avoid demonstrations that might lead to violence as well as to desist from using pressures and unruly tactics in support of the legislation.¹⁸ The CORE leaders, however, decided to continue their demonstrations in the interest of the bill becoming law as soon as possible without a filibuster.¹⁹ King warned that if the Southern legislators attempted a filibuster to block the legislation, the Negroes would organize a massive protest march to the capital.²⁰ He explained that he did not favour violent demonstrations.

17. New York Times, 7 June 1963.

18. Ibid., 20 June 1963.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

He was all for non-violent demonstrations as, in his view, they would help the President's civil rights legislation.²¹

Thus the Negroes kept up their struggle while the bill was being discussed in the US Congress so as to speed up the passing of the bill.

Unemployment among the Negroes was a serious problem, one which added another dimension to the issue of segregation. The Blacks had no tradition of entering into business; they had to depend on employment opportunities. In order to look into this problem President Kennedy issued an Executive Order (Executive Order No. 10925) on 6 March 1961 creating the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity.²² This body was, however, hampered in its work by the fact that it lacked the kind of authority that it would have had if it had been created by an act of the US Congress.²³ None of its suggestions was implemented. The progress of the cause of promoting more employment for the Blacks was consequently painfully slow.

Public accommodation was yet another basic problem facing the Blacks. Although it was part of the President's

21. Ibid., 24 June 1963.

22. Ruth P. Margan, The President and Civil Rights Policy Making by Executive Order (New York, N.Y., 1970), p. 88.

23. Jacob K. Javits, Discrimination U.S.A. (Washington, D.C., 1962), p. 11.

programme of civil rights, many Americans sought to have it eliminated from the programme. Indeed, in 1963, as many as five cities and thirty-one States were against providing for public accommodation to the Blacks.²⁴ Thus the problem of giving equality to the Negroes in the matter of public accommodation was not solved even by 1963.

Housing was a field where there was extreme racial discrimination. President Kennedy signed an Executive Order (No. 11063) on 20 November 1962 aimed at prohibition of discrimination in Federal housing. He also created the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity in Housing. However, the sad fact about this order was that it could not be applied to any existing housing, even public housing. About two million housing units had already been built with Federal financial assistance or were under construction as on 20 November 1962, and yet they were excluded from the purview of the order.²⁵ The practical effect of the Executive Order was thus very little on the housing pattern in the United States.

School segregation was an important problem in the field of integration. In spite of the US Supreme Court's

24. Benjamin Muse, The American Negro Revolution: From Non-Violence to Black Power, 1963-1967 (Bombay, 1970), pp. 59-60.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-73.

desegregation verdict, the desegregation process was moving at a snail's pace.²⁶ During the Kennedy Administration the Blacks struggled vigorously for school desegregation. Although we have already discussed some of the important aspects of this struggle in connexion with the Black movement, we may as well recapitulate them here. In 1962 the University of Oxford in Mississippi, after a long Constitutional and legal war between the Federal Government and the State Government of Mississippi, admitted a Negro student named James Meredith. However, the process of admitting Black students in White schools proved to be very slow. For instance, even in December 1963, as few as 30,798 out of a total of 2,901,671 Black students of the eleven former Confederate States were attending schools with the Whites.²⁷ The struggle for school desegregation picked up only after December 1963.

It is ironical that the United States of America, the advocate of democracy, should ever have denied the Blacks the right to vote, which is the very cornerstone of democracy. The Blacks waged a political struggle to end this discrimination. Two civil rights legislations were passed, one in 1957 and the other in 1960. These

26. John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans (New Delhi, 1967), edn 3, p. 628.

27. Muse, n. 25, p. 67.

conferred on the Blacks the right to vote. During the Kennedy Administration the Blacks tried their best to register themselves as voters. King speeded up the process of electoral enrolment by doubling the target to be achieved in the next two years. As a result as many as 1,300,000 Southern Blacks were registered as voters in the early 1960s.²⁸ The Black leaders of the past had, owing to their partisan orientation, suspected the Justice Department's emphasis on voting to be aimed at blunting the edge of their struggle. King, however, looked upon the voting right as essential to gain the necessary bargaining power in the political field.

During this period there were a number of important racial and biracial organizations struggling for the rights of the Blacks. The leaders included Roy Wilkins, Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); Whitney Young, Jr, Executive Director of the National Urban League; James Farmer, National Director of the Congress for Racial Equality; the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr, President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); and James Forman, Executive Secretary of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).²⁹

28. New York Times, 23 October 1962.

29. Christian Science Monitor (Boston, Mass.), 10 August 1963.

These five men were known as the Big Five; they were captains of the five most vigorous organizations. These organizations differed in their history, methods, and means; and yet they fought unitedly for the Negro cause. They led the battle for freedom.³⁰

These five big organizations adopted non-violent direct action as the method of struggle. The peaceful way of passive resistance produced no effect on the White segregationists. The Blacks were subjected to all manner of indignities such as fire hoses, cattle prods, police dogs, etc. The State Governments sent them to jail, and the White segregationists violently attacked them and abused them.

In the face of this kind of attitude on the part of the White segregationists, some Blacks felt tempted to adopt violence. During the March on Washington in 1963 John Lewis, the head of the SNCC, spoke:

The civil rights bill is too little and too late. There is not one thing in that bill that will protect our people from police brutality We will not wait for the courts to act; for we have been waiting hundreds of years. We will not wait for the President, the Justice Department, nor Congress, but we will take matters into our own hands and create a source of power outside any national structure.... The revolution is at hand The black masses are on the march We shall pursue our own scorched earth policy and

30. Ibid.

burn Jim Crow to the ground - nonviolently. We will make the action of the past few months look petty.³¹

Another development among the Blacks was the rise of an extremist group called the Black Muslims. Black Muslim leader Malcolm X said:

The White man is devil, the black man is divine. The day is long past when the two races can or should live together, for an integrated society will always be a White society and the Negro will live and work as a gelded White, a freed slave, on sufferance. The future of the America Negro lies in one or two separate and sovereign moderates Negro states. The enemies of this future are the moderates of either color, the NAACP, the Jews, the Federal Constitution as now interpreted. The means to this end is through the seizure of all national Negro organizations and resources.³²

During the March on Washington, Malcolm X spoke at a Press conference. He denounced the Marchers for "seeking favors" from the "White man's government."³³

The American Negroes were no longer in a waiting mood. The Federal Government's response to their non-violent resistance had made them tired and frustrated. They were looking for new tactics and ideologies for their struggle for equal rights in American life.

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31. Quoted in Sterling Tucker, For Blacks Only: Black Strategies for Change in America (New Delhi, 1972), p.14.
32. The Guardian (Manchester), 13 May 1963.
33. The New York Times, 29 August 1963.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

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Ever since the emancipation of the Blacks in 1863, the Whites in America have seldom come to terms with the Blacks. The Blacks' segregation and discrimination on grounds of race had been prevalent in the fields of education, public accommodation, employment, and housing. The two centuries have, therefore, represented a bleak period for making any progress towards the betterment of Blacks in above mentioned areas. The process has been too slow and too frustrating for this minority.

It was not until the aftermath of the World War II, that the two Civil Rights Acts, one in 1957 and the other in 1960, were passed. They gave the voting rights for the Blacks. The two Civil Right Acts were preceded by the famous decision of the Supreme Court in 1954 that outlawed the school segregation and established what they called 'separate but equal' system. This verdict paved the way for further integration of the Blacks in American society. Yet another important event took place in the field of integration when the Montgomery Bus Boycott occurred. After one year's boycott, the Montgomery bus system began desegregating. In their struggle, the Blacks were led by an eminent leader Martin Luther King, Jr. The racial and biracial Black organizations came out unitedly

and demanded their equal rights under the guidance of Dr. King. Then came the year, 1960 when Presidential elections were due. Both the candidates, Richard M. Nixon (Republican) and John F. Kennedy (Democrat) supported the demands of the Blacks. But the Republicans were somewhat lukewarm in their attitude while Kennedy made his thrust towards their cause. Hence in this election Blacks overwhelmingly voted for Kennedy. And Kennedy was elected as the 35th President of the United States.

It was, thus, for the first time in the history of the United States that the cause of the Blacks was taken up in this manner by the Federal Government and the US Supreme Court together. But the majority of the White Americans refused to have a racial integration of Blacks in their mainstream.

In view of the Federal Government's aid and the US Supreme Court's support to the Blacks they intensified their struggle for integration in public accommodation, housing, education, and employment. They waged their struggle in a non-violent and direct action, viz. sit-ins, kneel-ins, wade-ins, boycotts, rallies and picketing. The Blacks were peaceful and non-violent in their demonstrations. But they met with White resistance in the form of fire hoses, cattle prods, police dogs. They were jailed and beaten, tortured, murdered and bombed. This kind of violent hostility

shown by Whites towards the Blacks created an atmosphere of animosity between the two races.

In the U.S. political system, the President is supposed to be responsive to the world as well as the public at home for bringing harmony in the society. Kennedy has to show to the world, that the U.S. democracy believed in imparting equal opportunities to all its citizens.

Hence, he took several positive steps to eliminate segregation and discrimination in this fields of education, housing, employment and public accommodation. He publicly declared his commitment to the Supreme Court's "desegregation decision". He appointed Blacks to highest positions as ambassadors, federal judges, commissioners, attorneys and secretaries.

The Justice Department under the charge of his brother, Robert Kennedy intervened in the Prince Edward County, New Orleans, Oxford, Tuscaloosa and other areas to make the claims of the Blacks upright and just.

He also warned the Whites not to nurture their enemical and hostile attitudes towards the Black Community. When judged in the context of his various Press conferences and public lectures as well as concrete measures taken by his Government, his role cannot be underestimated.

During his two years of Presidency, he employed every weapon to eliminate segregation and discrimination

viz. litigation, negotiation, legislation, persuasion, executive orders, executive actions and directives in order to affect Blacks integration in American society.

In 1963, he sent the comprehensive Civil Rights bill to the Congress. The bill was passed as the famous Civil Rights Act of 1964. It was framed and sculptured by Kennedy and his colleagues. Although Lyndon B. Johnson took over the Presidency and it was during Johnson's administration that the two famous bills, Act of 1964, Act of 1965, came into existence, but the pioneering efforts made by John F. Kennedy to make these Acts feasible cannot be ignored.

It is, however, unfortunate that America continued to be predominantly a White society in terms of its values and also continued to represent the basic interest of the White men. But Kennedy had employed his efforts to minimise the burden of the White men over the Black. It may also be argued that the several Black organizations did not feel adequately assured by Kennedy's Administration in terms of the goals achieved and the efforts made by him towards the Black cause. But it may be noted that the centuries old prejudices against the Blacks could not have been eliminated by the stroke of a pen, no matter how strong the President might have been. The genuineness displayed by a President

towards the Blacks cause can, therefore, be appreciated on a limited scale only.

Besides, Kennedy lived as President for a short period only. One is, therefore, inhibited to formulate any decisive judgement on his role. One wonders, however, what would have been his role had providence not taken him away from the scenes.

It can safely be said that it was from Kennedy's time that the Black storm began gathering a further propensity towards making its thrust felt on the White society of America. The Black militancy soon took over the scene in the form of the Black Panthers and the Black Muslims. The 1960s were thus in ferments. Kennedy, perhaps, lent a helping hand to Blacks to make their demands more and more forthright and exact for the future Administrations to deal with.

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