

Tuskegee Institute

TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE
ALABAMA

March 18, 1952

DEPARTMENT OF
RECORDS AND RESEARCH

My dear Mr. Mitchell:

As you can see, this speech is very much in the "rough" and was not intended for circulation; for this reason, I am sure you will overlook errors, etc.

Sincerely,

Jessie P. Guyman

Resumé of the Tuskegee Institute Race Relations Report, Delivered at the Sunday Evening Vespers Services, Sunday, February 17, 1963 by Jessie J. Gyzman

better race relations in this country. This has been a part of the program of the institution from its beginning. The purpose of these reports has been to bring to the attention of the American people trends and developments in ~~race~~ relations between white and Negroes to the end that the undemocratic practice of racial discrimination may be eliminated.

As you, I am sure know, the United States Supreme Court in 1954 reversed its old decision known as Plessy vs. Ferguson, decided in 1896, which sanctioned segregation of the races, and replaced it with a new ruling known as Brown vs. Board of Education, which, in effect, outlawed segregation.

Tuskegee Institute has set up the Supreme Court's 1954 ruling as a standard, a frame of reference, by which to measure race relations developments, as to their compliance or non-compliance with the desegregation principles inherent in the 1954 decision.

The 1962
This report deals with legal action taken by Federal, state and local governments and action by voluntary groups. Related to legal and voluntary group action is a section on violence, as a race relations factor. The report ends with a statement showing the resistance by the South to Federal Leadership. An evaluation by the President of Tuskegee of the materials which the report presents introduces the report. (Discussed are the following areas: Education, employment, recreation, registration and voting, transportation and public accommodations.)

It will not be possible for me to cover all aspects of the ^{document} report, but I will present parts ^{of it} which, in my opinion, should be of interest to you as students.

The materials dealing with the Federal Government summarize the part the Government is taking ^{to} bring equality of citizenship to Negroes and indicate that the Executive Branch, led by the President of the United States, is playing a most significant role. This is indicated by the fact that in more than thirteen instances he made pronouncements and issued executive orders and

proclamations on behalf of civil rights. He used presidential power to enroll James H. Meredith in the University of Mississippi, and authorized the Secretary of Defense to take appropriate steps to enforce all orders of the federal courts. It was by this order that more than 25,000 troops and United States Marshall were sent to Mississippi to carry out the orders of the federal courts, admitting Meredith to the University of Mississippi and to protect him while there.

The President of the United States, told the nation, "If this country should ever reach the point where any man or group of men by force or threat could long defy the commands of our courts and our Constitution, then no law would stand free from doubt, no judge would be sure of his writ, and no citizen would be safe from his neighbors."

On November 20, the President signed another order barring racial discrimination in all future housing units built with direct Government help. Eventually, this will mean better housing for Negroes and other underprivileged groups.

The President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity outlined a five-fold program ~~aimed at insuring~~ ^{to insure} equal opportunity for all citizens in Federal Government employment. Tuskegee's report shows that this committee had induced 87 international and national labor unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO, to pledge to "accept membership without regard to race, creed, color, or national origin; and to work for complete integration.

Tuskegee's race relations report also shows what the several department and agencies of the Federal Government are doing to implement ~~Executive Order 10925~~ Executive Order 10925, created to promote equality of opportunity in Government employment. It ~~shows~~ ^{points out} that the Department of Defense has set up non-discriminatory procedures in employment practices and has directed the ending of all racial segregation in the Armed Services. The United States Department of Agriculture asked and received advice from Negro land-grant colleges about

"obtaining able, well-trained and effective graduates of Negro colleges who can help provide leadership and direction in carrying out its programs."

This Department reported that top-level Negro workers had been increased from fifteen to forty-six and they were receiving salaries ranging from \$9,000 to \$13,000.

The Department of Labor urged Negro colleges to train their students for "unprecedented" opportunities in international work. Colleges were notified by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare that they must sign an anti-discrimination clause in order to secure federal funds under the National Defense Education Act for language instruction and student guidance short courses. Twenty-five institutions said they would sign, seven refused to sign. This same department announced that beginning in September, 1963, segregated schools will be declared unsuitable for children who live on military bases.

Other Federal Department and agencies advanced social justice, the report revealed. The Department of Justice filed and won suits to desegregate schools, took over the management of the James H. Meredith case in Mississippi, filed and won suits to end discrimination at lunch counters, airports, restaurants and hospitals, also to desegregate transportation facilities in several cities. This same department advised Negroes to register and vote in all of the Southern States and announced that investigations and court actions were being carried out in 100 southern counties to protect citizens' voting rights.

Very significant for students who wish to pursue a career with the Federal Government is an item calling attention to an analysis of the results of the participation of Negro college graduates in the Federal Service Entrance Examination given by the Civil Service Commission. This analysis says that 712 Negro applicants in the Southern regions took the examination but only 56 or 7.8 percent made a passing grade; while 3,200 students from white schools took the examination and 1,437 or about 44.9 percent passed.

Now let us turn to what is reported about what the Federal courts are doing. The United States Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional Louisiana's^a option law which permitted counties to close public schools rather than desegregate; ^{it} said the convictions imposed on 16 Negro students for sitting in at a Baton Rouge, Louisiana, lunch counter were unconstitutional; and in the case brought by the State of Tennessee known as Baker vs. Carr, moved into an ^a are in which it had refused to rule until the way was opened by the Tuskegee Gerrymander Case, Gomillion vs. Lightfoot, in which Negro citizens of Tuskegee sued to have city lines excluding them restored. The Supreme Court held that federal courts ^{could} ~~can~~ take a hand in reapportionment to remedy the over-representation of rural areas. This ruling is expected not only to increase the weight of the ballots of city voters but to increase the actual number of Negro voters, for cities are known to be more liberal in their attitude toward granting the ballot to Negroes than are rural governments.

Another significant ruling was that made on February 26, when the highest court ^{clearly held} ~~made it clear~~ that both intra-state and inter-state travel segregation laws are unconstitutional, and are no longer an issue for litigation. But this ruling ^{did} ~~has~~ not prevented cities from attempting to enforce segregation. For example, in McComb and Jackson, Mississippi, signs "white only" and "colored only" were placed on the side walks ^{outside} of bus and train terminals, so city officials said "for the sole purpose of assisting the members of both races who may desire to use separate facilities in the terminals."

In the Federal circuit court, many of the cases decided, ~~the report~~ ⁹ reveals, dealt with the unconstitutional uses made of the pupil placement laws to maintain segregation in the public school. ^s The Circuit court told Roanoke, County, Virginia, it could not use the State Placement Act to make Negro children meet certain residential and academic criteria not required of whites. This court also helped facilitate the admission of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi by a series of decisions; and when Birmingham, Alabama, took the issue of its recreational facilities to this court, the city too was told that

the issue of recreational facilities was no longer open to legitimate debate.

Many and varied were the decisions of the United States District Court. A few of them will be cited. This court told the State of Virginia that a school system could not reject a Negro child on academic grounds if his standing was at least as high as that of the lowest ranking white child in the class sought by the Negro child; the pupil placement laws of New Orleans, Louisiana, were declared unconstitutional, and the court gave Jacksonville, Daytona Beach, and Tampa, Florida, until October 30, 1962, to file plans segregating their respective counties and to stop using the Pupil Placement Law to discriminate.

This court opened some public places to Negroes, for example, the Municipal auditorium at Memphis, Tennessee, for public functions, the city library and museum at Montgomery, Alabama; ~~although city officials removed the seats~~ some recreational facilities in Atlanta, Georgia; and park and other recreational facilities in Bessemer, Alabama.

The court decided on a number of cases relating to voting. Montgomery, Alabama, was ordered to register 1,070 Negroes, ^{aid to stop discrimination against prospective voters,} Albany and Dougherty County in Georgia were told they could not maintain separate precincts for Negroes and whites; and Bibb County, Georgia, including the City of Macon, was advised that segregation at the voting places was unconstitutional.

The race relations report points out that the outlawing of the old unit system in Georgia caused Carl Sanders of Augusta, Georgia, who later was elected to the governorship of that state to qualify for office and to defeat the staunch segregationist Marvin Griffin. Under the old unit system, with rural votes having more weight than those of urban centers, Sanders had believed he did not have a chance to win.

Here we should note that the Federal Executive Branch of Government and the Federal courts were most active in promoting better race relations and civil rights for Negroes; but that the legislative branch, the Congress of the United States, has been very delinquent in this respect. Since 1957, when it passed the first civil rights bill in ~~80~~ 80 years, this branch of the Federal Govern-

ment has passed only two other bills, the Civil Rights Act bill of 1960 and a measure to eliminate the poll tax in federal elections by a constitutional amendment, to be submitted to the states. It has, frudgingly, extended the life of the United States Commission on Civil Rights for two year periods only, ~~and at times, it appeared it would not do this.~~

Turning to other divisions of the report, those of compliance and non-compliance by State and local governments, ~~we would be correct in stating that~~ *we would like to make the observation* State legislatures are not ~~prone to~~ *in the habit of* enacting bills to eliminate discrimination based on race. The reason is obvious. However, a few bills passed by Southern legislatures are significant. Georgia's legislature repealed an act which set age limits for students being admitted to state institutions of higher learning. It was originally enacted to keep Negroes out of white colleges. The Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations announced it was investigating charges that uncertified substitute white teachers were being employed while available qualified Negro teachers remain unemployed.

Under Executive state action, the report publicizes the fact that 146 of the 234 predominantly all-white institutions in the Southern States were reported desegregated and that more than half of them had accepted Negroes voluntarily; that ~~the~~ University of Alabama officials announced they would treat applications made by Negroes the same as those for whites, although developments since seem not to bear out the truth of this statement.

A decision by a state court which is of ~~extreme~~ importance to Negroes was that ~~of~~ *made by* the Georgia Supreme Court, ~~which ruled~~ that Emory University in Georgia and othr private colleges may admit Negro students without losing their property tax exemptions. The interesting thing about this decision was that Emory University initiated ~~this~~ *the* suit itself to test the law. Professional schools for Negroes are scarce in this region, especially in the field of medicine; and Emory is willing to enroll Negroes in her professional schools.

Ex Paso, Texas, should be praised for being the first city to adopt a law making desegregation official policy; and Richmond, Virginia, made a big step forward when its City Council declared a policy of employment based solely on the basis of merit and without regard to race, color, or arbitrary maximum age limit.

Other developments on the local governmental level ~~are~~ should be noted: Five counties in Florida desegregated some of their schools for the first time. Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Pensacola, Florida, were the major cities which began desegregation in 1962; the University of Miami in Florida graduated its first ^{et} Negro; a colored police lieutenant was named in Atlanta, and that city removed all restrictions which prevented colored officers from arresting white offenders and suspects. A few other cities did the same thing. On January 5, 1962, it was publicized that 200 southern cities had desegregated their eating places. Other cities had joined these at the end of the year. A surprising witness for Talladega College students, when on trial for demonstrations against segregation, was the Chief of Police of the City of Talladega. When called by the State to show that the students were responsible for the violence that accompanied their demonstrations in that city, the Chief showed instead that "angry cursing mobs of white segregationists were responsible for the disorders;" that the students were orderly at all times, did not resist, curse, or strike back at police.

There was some compliance on the part of state and local government as has just been revealed, but there was also stubborn resistance. The heads of State of Mississippi and Alabama are notable examples ^{of this} of ~~state non-compliance~~. You are all familiar with the legal barricade, ~~erected by the State of Mississippi, led by the Governor, to keep one Negro out of its State University, so I will not go into that.~~ The State of Alabama was doubly unfortunate in that it already had a segregationist as governor, and at the close of the period covered by this report, ~~December 1, 1961 to~~ November 30, 1962, it was about to inaugurate another. Our present governor ran, the report shows,

on a six-point program of segregation, one of which was that he would follow the Mississippi plan of resistance ~~to desegregation~~, especially in education.

One can hardly believe he will take such a course of action after recent developments, and yet ^a recent news items ^{in the Washington Post} say he plans to do just that. A comment on Governor Wallace's stand by Drew Pearson states that the Governor will not find in the President of the University of Alabama a man like the one at the head of the University of Mississippi. Pearson believes that the President of Alabama's university will challenge the Governor and "Stand up to him." All we can do is to wait and see.

While many cities in the South have turned away from the practice of jailing and convicting Negroes and whites for demonstrating against segregation practices, many other cities and communities in the South still cling to this policy. In 1962, Albany, Georgia, was the outstanding example ^{of this} ~~of local~~ ~~resistance to desegregation~~. There, city officials refused to consider any of the petitions of Negro citizens, who had banded themselves together in what is known as the Albany Movement, in an attempt to gain, ^{at first} in the beginning, the most elementary concessions in the matter of eliminating segregation. The case is now in the federal courts.

① Voluntary groups, the reports points out, that are working for Negro rights were widespread in the South. Some were working to implement school desegregation and to enhance education for Negroes. Others were striving to desegregate public accommodation, some advocated, initiated or increased desegregation in their structures, still others, like private businesses voluntarily revised their hiring, upgrading or segregation policies to the Negroes' advantage. These included bus companies, stores and industries. Participating in this action were religious, educational, political, economic, human relations, civic and professional organizations.

Opposed to these groups working for a desegregated society were similar ones seeking to maintain a segregated society. It was encouraging to see that

Tuskegee's report shows ~~that~~ these groups seem to be decreasing. Working along the same line as the segregation groups were the Ku Klux Klan and, of course, the White Citizens Councils, noted in 1962 for promoting Reverse Freedom Rides out of the South of poor and unfortunate Negroes and their families.

The report ^{reveals} ~~showed~~ that a great deal of violence occurred in 1962--that there were many cases of beating, bombing, incendiatism, rioting, shooting and other crimes against Negroes and their supporters.]

I will not discuss the final part of the report which is entitled RESISTANCE TO FEDERAL LEADERSHIP IN THE SOUTH except to quote the last paragraph which really summarizes its substance. ^{This paragraph} ~~It~~ says: "Supreme Court decisions in recent years have been directed toward the full realization of freedom and equality under the law for all citizens. The Federal Executive policy is now clearly to eliminate discrimination in national life based on race, creed, or color. Nonetheless, state and local governments in the South have rarely accepted the opportunity to join constructively in supporting these new directions--have, in fact, strongly resisted their implementation in most instances. Increasingly the South will undoubtedly conform to these policies which strongly assert the national interest and promote the national welfare."

[President's Foster's concluding paragraph in his evaluation of the report is a warning and should cause all Americans to start working for the elimination of artificial barriers such as race which make for national disunity. In the last sentence ^{of his introduction + assessment} he states: "The impinging pressures of a universe in both human and scientific ferment might destroy the constructive influence of American democracy throughout the world before America could fully know herself and ^{use} ~~see~~ this knowledge to help make better lives even for all its citizens at home."