August 28, 1963
March on Washington

Text of Speech to be delivered at Lincoln Memorial

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STUDENT NON-VIOLENT COordinating Committee, CHAIRMAN

We march today for jobs and freedom, but we have nothing to be proud
of. For hundreds and thousands of our brothers are not here. They have no
money for their transportation, for they are receiving starvation wages...or
no wages, at all.

In good conscience, we cannot support the administration's civil rights
bill, for it is too little, and too late. There's not one thing in the bill
that will protect our people from police brutality.

This bill will not protect young children and old women from police dogs
and fire hoses, for engaging in peaceful demonstrations. This bill will not
protect the citizens in Danville, Virginia, who must live in constant fear
in a police state. This bill will not protect the hundreds of people who have
been arrested on trumped-up charges. What about the three young men in Americus,
Georgia, who face the death penalty for engaging in peaceful protest?

The voting section of this bill will not help thousands of black citizens
who want to vote. It will not help the citizens of Mississippi, of Alabama,
and Georgia, who are qualified to vote, but lack a 6th Grade education.
"One man, one vote," is the African cry. It is ours, too. (It must be ours.)

People have been forced to leave their homes because they dared to
exercise their right to register to vote. What is in the bill that will
protect the homeless and starving people of this nation? What is there in this
bill to insure the equality of a maid who earns $2 a week in the home of a
family whose income is $100,000 a year?

For the first time in 100 years this nation is being awakened to the
fact that segregation is evil and that it must be destroyed in all forms. Your
presence today proves that you have been aroused to the point of action.
We are now involved in a serious revolution. This nation is still a place of cheap political leaders who build their careers on immoral compromises and ally themselves with open forms of political, economic and social exploitation. What political leader here can stand up and say "My party is the party of principles"? The party of Kennedy is also the party of Eastland. The party of Javits is also the party of Goldwater. Where is our party?

In some parts of the South we work in the fields from sun-up to sun-down for $12 a week. In Albany, Georgia, nine of our leaders have been indicted not by Dixiecrats but by the Federal Government for peaceful protest. But what did the Federal Government do when Albany's Deputy Sheriff beat Attorney C. B. King and left him half-dead? What did the Federal Government do when local police officials kicked and assaulted the pregnant wife of Slater King, and she lost her baby?

It seems to me that the Albany indictment is part of a conspiracy on the part of the Federal Government and local politicians in the interest of expediency.

I want to know, which side is the Federal Government on?

The revolution is at hand, and we must free ourselves of the chains of political and economic slavery. The non-violent revolution is saying, "We will not wait for the courts to act, for we have been waiting for 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 of any national structure that could and would assure us a victory." To those who have said, "Be Patient and Wait." we must say that, "Patience is a dirty and nasty word." We cannot be patient, we do not want to be free gradually, we want our freedom, and we want it now. We cannot depend on any political party, for both the Democrats and the Republicans have betrayed the basic principles of the Declaration of Independence.
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We all recognize the fact that if any radical social, political and economic changes are to take place in our society, the people, the masses, must bring them about. In the struggle we must seek more than more civil rights; we must work for the community of love, peace and true brotherhood. Our minds, souls, and hearts cannot rest until freedom and justice exist for all the people.

The revolution is a serious one. Mr. Kennedy is trying to take the revolution out of the street and put it in the courts. Listen, Mr. Kennedy, listen Mr. Congressmen, listen fellow citizens, the black masses are on the march for jobs and freedom, and we must say to the politicians that there won't be a "cooling-off" period.

All of us must get in the revolution. Get in and stay in the streets of every city, every village and every hamlet of this nation, until true freedom comes, until the revolution is complete. In the Delta of Mississippi, in southwest Georgia, in Alabama, Harlem, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia and all over this nation. The black masses are on the march!

We won't stop now. All of the forces of Eastland, Barnett, Wallace, and Thurmond won't stop this revolution. The time will come when we will not confine our marching to Washington. We will march through the South, through the Heart of Dixie, the way Sherman did. We shall pursue our own "scorched earth" policy and burn Jim Crow to the ground -- nonviolently. We shall fragment the South into a thousand pieces and put them back together in the image of democracy. We will make the action of the past few months look petty. And I say to you, WAKE UP AMERICA!