

Document analysis: "Heed their rising voices"

The analyzed document is an article posted on "The New York Times" on March 19, 1960. It represents an appeal to the entire American nation in order to be able to help the Committee which defends Martin Luther King and supports the struggle for freedom in the South.


The readers are asked to mail a coupon due to which they can enclose their contribution for the work and the efforts of this Committee. It seems to count mainly leaders and members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference that was founded by King himself in 1957 with the aim of stopping the Segregation and that is still active nowadays with the aim of transcending national boundaries in the human rights international movement.

Indeed, on the newspaper are reported some of their names, precisely twenty of them, which should appear to the readers as guarantee or at least as a proof of the importance, seriosity and urgency of this appeal.

This article starts with the quotation of the U.S.

Constitution and of the Bill of Rights, just to show the reader that the right to live in dignity and equality, required by the students who are fighting this peaceful demonstration, is in fact guaranteed by the law, thus suggesting the understandable and right claim of the Southern Negro students. Indeed, in the second paragraph, are listed some recent and famous events like the Orangeburg and Montgomery ones, which show the racist and unfair behaviour of the Southern violators and which also highlight the courage and the great spirit of these students that are stepping as protagonists of democracy.

Afterwards, on one hand, the article introduces the figure of Martin Luther King, who



NEW YORK, TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 1960

Heed Their Rising Voices

"The growing movement of peaceful mass demonstrations by Negroes is something new in the South, something understandable. . . . Let Congress heed their rising voices, for they will be heard."

—New York Times editorial Saturday, March 19, 1960

As the whole world knows by now, thousands of Southern Negro students are engaged in widespread non-violent demonstrations in positive affirmation of the right to live in human dignity as guaranteed by the U. S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. In their efforts to uphold these guarantees, they are being met by an unprecedented wave of terror by those who would deny and negate that document which the whole world looks upon as setting the pattern for modern freedom. . . .

In Orangeburg, South Carolina, when 400 students peacefully sought to buy doughnuts and coffee in lunch counters in the business district, they were forcibly ejected, tear-gassed, soaked to the skin in freezing weather with fire hoses, arrested en masse and herded into an open barbed-wire stockade to stand for hours in the bitter cold.

In Montgomery, Alabama, after students sang "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" on the State Capitol steps, their leaders were expelled from school, and truckloads of police armed with shotguns and tear-gas ringed the Alabama State College Campus. When the entire student body protested to state authorities by refusing to re-register, their dining hall was padlocked in an attempt to starve them into submission.

In Tallahassee, Atlanta, Nashville, Savannah, Greensboro, Memphis, Richmond, Charlotte, and a host of other cities in the South, young American teenagers, in face of the entire weight of official state apparatus and police power, have boldly stepped forth as

protagonists of democracy. Their courage and amazing restraint have inspired millions and given a new dignity to the cause of freedom.

Small wonder that the Southern violators of the Constitution fear this new, non-violent brand of freedom fighter . . . even as they fear the upswelling right-to-vote movement. Small wonder that they are determined to destroy the one man who, more than any other, symbolizes the new spirit now sweeping the South—the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., world-famous leader of the Montgomery Bus Protest. For it is his doctrine of non-violence which has inspired and guided the students in their widening wave of sit-ins; and it is this same Dr. King who founded and is president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference—the organization which is spearheading the surging right-to-vote movement. Under Dr. King's direction the Leadership Conference conducts Student Workshops and Seminars in the philosophy and technique of non-violent resistance.

Again and again the Southern violators have answered Dr. King's peaceful protests with intimidation and violence. They have bombed his home almost killing his wife and child. They have assaulted his person. They have arrested him seven times—for "speaking," "loitering" and similar "offenses." And now they have charged him with "perjury"—a felony under which they could imprison him for ten years. Obviously, their real purpose is to remove him physically as the leader to whom the students and millions

of others look for guidance and support, and thereby to intimidate all leaders who may rise in the South. Their strategy is to hehead this affirmative movement, and thus to demoralize Negro Americans and weaken their will to struggle. The defense of Martin Luther King, spiritual leader of the student sit-in movement, clearly, therefore, is an integral part of the total struggle for freedom in the South.

Decent-minded Americans cannot help but applaud the creative daring of the students and the quiet heroism of Dr. King. But this is one of those moments in the storied history of Freedom when men and women of good will must do more than applaud the rising-to-glory of others. The America whose good name hangs in the balance before a watchful world, the America whose heritage of Liberty these Southern Uplifters of the Constitution are defending, is our America as well as theirs. . . .

We must heed their rising voices—yes—but we must add our own.

We must extend ourselves above and beyond moral support and render the material help so urgently needed by those who are taking the risks, facing jail, and even death in a glorious re-affirmation of our Constitution and its Bill of Rights.

We urge you to join hands with our fellow Americans in the South by supporting, with your dollars, this Combined Appeal for all three needs—the defense of Martin Luther King—the support of the embattled students—and the struggle for the right-to-vote.

Your Help Is Urgently Needed . . . NOW !!

Stella Adler Raymond Ross Alexander Shelly Aspinion Henry Van Beek Mary Belafonte Julia Belafonte Dr. Augustus Black Marc Blittin William Brown William Branch Madie Branch Mrs. Ralph Branch Dakota Card Dr. Alan Knight Chalmers	Joseph Cohen Richard Cole Nat King Cole Ozell Crawford Dorothy Dandridge Ozie Davis Sammy Davis, Jr. Ruby Dee Henry Duffey Scotty Ellwood Dr. Philip Elliott Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick	Anthony Francis Madison Givens Lorraine Hansbury Rev. Donald Hamilton Nat Hazzell Dorothy Dandridge Ozie Davis Sammy Davis, Jr. Ruby Dee Henry Duffey Scotty Ellwood Dr. Philip Elliott Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick	Ethel Kish Rabbi Edward Klein Hugo Lange John Lewis Vance Lindfors David Lorington William McLendon Cal Murphy Don Murray John Murray A. J. Muste Frederick O'Hair Peter Oberly L. Joseph Overton	Albert P. Palmer Gweneth Platt Shad Poler Liberie Puller Michael Puckler Dr. Philip Randolph John Ratt Ezer Rice Cleveland Robinson Jackie Robinson Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt Bayard Rustin Robert Ryan Max Yergstein	Frank Shivers Louis Simon Hope Stevens David Sullivan Julius Sum Dr. Philip Randolph Rev. Gaudin C. Taylor Norman Thomas Kathleen Tynes Charles White Rabbi Walter Wines Max Yergstein
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We in the south who are struggling daily for dignity and freedom warmly endorse this appeal

Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy (Montgomery, Ala.) Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth (Birmingham, Ala.) Rev. Kelly Miller Smith (Nashville, Tenn.) Rev. W. A. Dennis (Chattanooga, Tenn.) Rev. C. E. Sledge (Tallahassee, Fla.)	Rev. Matthew D. (Orangeburg, S. C.) Rev. William Holmes Raines (Atlanta, Ga.) Rev. Douglas Moore (Durham, N. C.) Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker (Pittsburgh, Pa.)	Rev. Wayne L. Hamilton (Norfolk, Va.) I. S. Levy (Columbia, S. C.) Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr. (Atlanta, Ga.) Rev. Henry C. Bryan (Memphis, Tenn.) Rev. S. S. Seay, Sr. (Montgomery, Ala.) Rev. Samuel W. Williams (Houston, Ga.)	Rev. A. L. Davis (New Orleans, La.) Mrs. Kate E. Whickham (New Orleans, La.) Rev. W. H. Hall (Hattiesburg, Miss.) Rev. J. E. Lowery (Mobile, Ala.) Rev. T. J. Jernigan (Baton Rouge, La.)
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COMMITTEE TO DEFEND MARTIN LUTHER KING AND THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM IN THE SOUTH
 312 West 125th Street, New York 27, N. Y. UNIVERSITY 6-1700

Chairmen: A. Philip Randolph, Dr. Gardner C. Taylor; Chairmen of Cultural Division: Harry Belafonte, Sidney Poitier; Treasurer: Nat King Cole; Executive Director: Bayard Rustin; Chairmen of Church Division: Father George B. Ford, Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick, Rev. Thomas Kilgore, Jr., Rabbi Edward E. Klein; Chairmen of Labor Division: Morris Lehman, Cleveland Robinson

Please mail this coupon TODAY!

Committee To Defend Martin Luther King
and
The Struggle For Freedom In The South
 312 West 125th Street, New York 27, N. Y.
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is presented the best way: he is said to be the man who inspired the non-violent fight for freedom, the man who symbolizes the spirit of the rising people, the one who, due to his active participation to the right-to-vote movement, could be even considered a hero, in that he is seen this way by the Afro-American people.

On the other hand, the Southern violators are clearly painted as the antagonists of this hero, who want to destroy him, his family, his house and his free spirit by using intimidation and violence. Therefore, since the aim of the violators is to demoralize all the Negro American leaders, who could eventually rise, and to weaken the will of struggle of the population itself by killing the soul of this movement, that is M.L.King, the main target the entire nation should be inspired by must be the defence of this leader and the moral and, of course, material support to him. This is why in the name of the American reputation before a watchful world and in name of the heritage of the history of rights, the readers are stimulated to demonstrate their solidarity to those who are taking risks and facing jail, not only by applauding to their rising voices but also by adding their own.

This document is particularly interesting because it is promoted by an entire Committee of countless people supporting the civil rights movement and the article is clearly written with passion and with a lot of emphasis in order to be able to convince the audience of the New York Times to take part to this fair struggle and to support immediately those Americans who are said to be deprived of their freedom and their dignity as human beings. This is why this article results in an authentic manifest of the involvement of the most American nation into these protests and of the different ways the leaders of the S.C.L.C. tried to promote the increasing moral and material support to these movements.

Sitografia:

<https://nationalsclc.org/about/history/>

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