WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

WE HAVE SPENT THE MAJORITY OF THIS EVENING LISTENING TO THE WORDS OF BLACK ADVOCATES OF THE PAST AND HONORING BLACK ADVOCATES OF THE PRESENT.

IT HAS BEEN A LONG EVENING---YOU'VE BEEN TOLD TO LIFT YOUR VOICES, GENUFLECT TO ALL OF US, AND BE ADVOCATES OF THE HIGH PLACE. YOU'VE HAD THE BLACK EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA SUMMED UP FOR YOU IN ONE WORD---ADVOCATE.

WE'VE BEEN ADVOCATING FOR A LONG TIME. WE ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE AND STILL INJUSTICE PREVAILS. WE ADVOCATE FOR FULL EMPLOYMENT AND STILL UNEMPLOYMENT EXISTS. WE ADVOCATE FOR FULL EQUALITY AND STILL BLACK MEN AND WOMEN ARE DENIED THEIR RIGHTS.

YOU WOULD THINK IT SIMPLE TO UNDERSTAND THE REASONABLENESS OF WHAT WE ADVOCATE. YET TODAY SOME PEOPLE FIND SOMETHING WRONG WITH THESE CONCEPTS. SOME PRETEND NOT TO UNDERSTAND OUR UNCOMPLICATED PERSPECTIVE. WE ARE TOLD TO BE WHAT WE DON'T AND I DON'T, BUT THEY STILL DO. A STRANGE PHENOMENON OF PRESIDENTS, GOVERNORS AND SENATORS WHO CAN'T DEBATE SIMPLE WORDS LIKE JUSTICE, FREEDOM AND EQUALITY.

MAYBE OUR APPROACH IS WRONG. MAYBE WE SHOULD TRY TO GET OUR MESSAGE ACROSS IN A DIFFERENT WAY.
Perhaps we could try to attract their attention by singing patriotic songs. That is what they did in Kansas City. Maybe if we all stand up and sing, "God bless America" several times they will understand that our message really isn't so bad. That equality, justice, and full employment are things that might be good for America.

Maybe we should put up billboards all across the country that read, "Justice, try it you'll like it" or "Equality, it's the real thing", or maybe we should hire skywriters to fill our skies with the message, "Full employment—the better way".

I think we could try these approaches. Maybe they might just work. But in the end, I think we will have to be satisfied with the only approach that has been successful for us so far—the vote.

We fought for it so why don't we use it? We have it now. All we have to do is make it work for us. It has helped us to achieve a higher standard of living, given our children the right to a decent education, and given us the means by
WHICH WE CAN WIPE AWAY THE BLIGHT OF RACIAL
DISCRIMINATION THAT STILL EXISTS IN THIS COUNTRY.
ABOVE ALL IT HAS GIVEN US A PUBLIC VOICE, A
PUBLIC VOICE THAT WE CAN USE TO PERSUADE OTHERS
THAT OUR CAUSE IS JUST.

YET, WE FIND OURSELVES IN A PRECULIAR SITUATION.
JUST WHEN WE ARE BEGINNING TO FULFILL GEORGE
WHITE'S PROPHECY THAT WE ARE A "RISING PEOPLE
FULL OF POTENTIAL FORCE" WE HAVE STOPPED RISING.
IN A RECENT NATIONAL POLL OF NON-VOTERS, 18% OF
ALL THOSE INTERVIEWED, WHO STATED THAT THEY WOULD
NOT VOTE IN THE GENERAL ELECTION WERE BLACK.
MILLIONS OF BLACK AMERICANS HAVE VOLUNTARILY
GONE TO THE BACK OF THE BUS. I DON'T
UNDERSTAND THAT. AS FAR AS I CAN REMEMBER, THE SEATS
IN THE BACK OF THE BUS WERE UNCOMFORTABLE, THE VIEW
WAS TERRIBLE, AND WE NEVER LET OFF QUITE WHERE
WE WANTED TO BE. YET MANY BLACK AMERICANS HAVE
SIMPLY GIVEN UP. THEY HAVE LOWERED THEIR EXPECTATIONS
AND LOST THEIR SENSE OF THE POSSIBLE. IN DOING SO,
THEY HAVE PLAYED RIGHT INTO THE HANDS OF THOSE WHO
SAY THAT WE CAN NOT AFFORD FULL EMPLOYMENT, JUSTICE,
AND EQUALITY.

WE ARE TREATED TO THE SPECTACLE OF SOME BLACK AMERICANS
ADVOCATING A 90% SLOW GROWTH POLICY IN REMOVING THE BARRIERS TO
HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT.
THEY HAVE ACQUIESCED TO A NEW NEGATIVISM THAT IS SPREADING ACROSS THIS LAND. A NEGATIVISM THAT BELITTLES THE POSITIVE GOOD THAT THE GOVERNMENT CAN ACCOMPLISH.

WE CAN NOT ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN. WE CAN NOT ALLOW THE PUBLIC VOICE THAT ADVOCATES FOR EQUALITY, JUSTICE AND FULL EMPLOYMENT TO BECOME WEAKER. WE CAN NOT WALK OUT OF THIS BALLROOM TONIGHT JUST TALKING ABOUT THIS FINE MUSIC AND THE GOOD TIME WE HAD.

WE MUST BECOME ADVOCATES FOR VOTING. EACH ONE OF US. WE DO NOT NEED SONGS, BILLBOARDS, OR SKYWRITERS TO GET OUR MESSAGE ACROSS. WE JUST NEED ENOUGH GOOD PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELVES, WHO ARE COMMITTED TO IMPROVING AMERICA. WE CAN NOT PROMISE THOSE WHO ARE NOT REGISTERED A NEW CAMELOT. WE CAN ONLY PROMISE THAT IF OUR PUBLIC VOICE IS STRONG ENOUGH PEOPLE WILL UNDERSTAND THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF OUR CAUSE.

GEORGE WHITE SUMMED UP WHAT OUR CAUSE IS ALL ABOUT IN HIS FAREWELL ADDRESS IN 1901: "HE (THE BLACK AMERICAN) ASKS NO SPECIAL FAVORS, BUT SIMPLY DEMANDS THAT HE BE GIVEN THE SAME CHANCE FOR EXISTENCE, FOR
EARNING A LIVELIHOOD, FOR RAISING HIMSELF IN THE SCALES OF MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD THAT ARE ACCORDED TO KINDERED NATIONALITIES."

WE ARE STILL ADVOCATING THAT IDEA. LET US CONTINUE.

The problem with our advocacy is that millions of black Americans have no public voice. In many places, they have chosen to remain muted by not registering and not voting. We must find ways for everyone to have a voice. We must be determined to implement voice.

We leave this place with renewed confidence. But before we leave, we leave a message for mankind in our case. And we insist that before we go home to our Lord... we shall be free.