



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Delegate Magazine 1984

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the whole thing. It was the only amendment to have passed on that whole budget.

"And then, I pick up the paper and find you have put me and Ronald Reagan together!"

"I would look beyond just the core record of some of the statisticians, as the NAACP has done. Get up and see the kind of person you would have as your next President. When you come down to it, I want them to match me.

"I don't yield on my Civil Rights record.

"I've had to strain. I've had to learn. I've had to grow.

"The result: I realize the good and the mistakes I've made. And I wanted them to come tell you that, yes, when I voted against Thurgood Marshall, that was back against Lyndon Johnson. That was politics. Our state had gone solid against Johnson and for Goldwater. They know that. But I've been elected three times by overwhelming black support and votes.

"I am the one that appointed the first black judge in the Southeast - NAACP attorney Matthew Perry. I'm proud of that [I.] Ask the Vice President, 'Where's his black judge?'

"If you all are going to start this rating business, then I'll rate them.

"Where is the black director of the Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Committee? I appointed the first one in this nation.

"We want people in leadership positions. I told Dr. Gibson, 'We've got our friends in now we can make some appointments. Haven't you got someone outstanding?' He said, 'Yes. I'll give you Andy Chisolm.' So we appointed Andy Chisolm the first black U.S. Marshal.

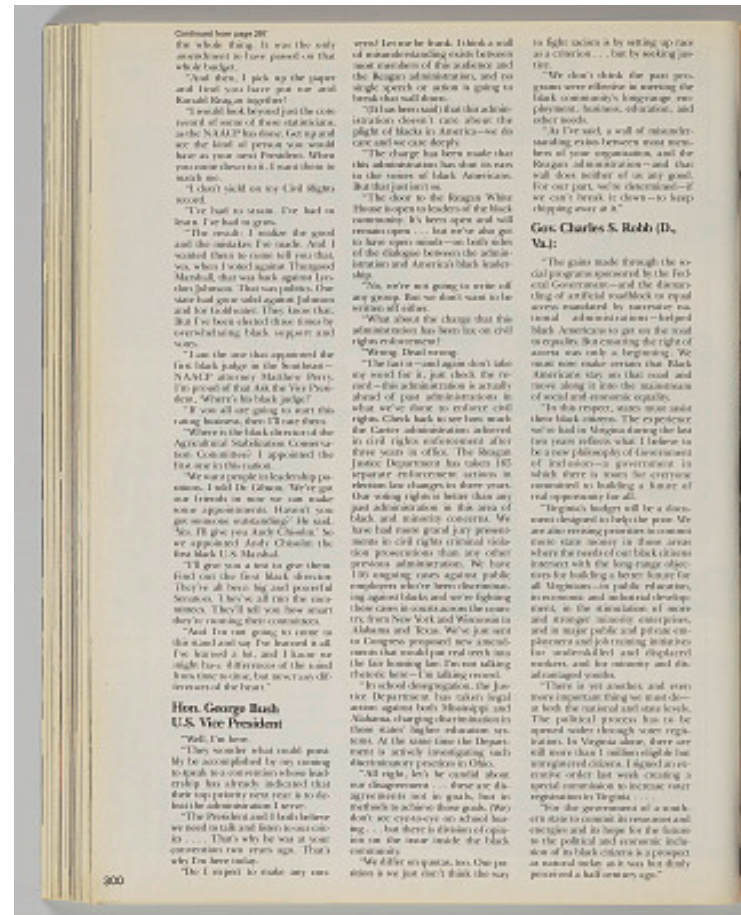
"I'll give you a test to give them. Find out the first black director. They've all been big and powerful Senators. They've all run the committees. They'll tell you how smart they're running their committees.

"And I'm not going to come to this stand and say I've learned it all. I've learned a lot, and I know we might have differences of the mind from time to time, but never any differences of the heart."

Hon. George Bush
U.S. Vice President

"Well, I'm here.

"They wonder what could possibly be accomplished by my coming to speak to a convention whose leadership has already indicated that their top priority next year is to defeat the administration I serve.



"The President and I both believe we need to talk and listen to our critics....That's why he was at your convention two years ago. That's why I'm here today.

"Do I expect to make any converts? Let me be frank. I think a wall of misunderstanding exists between most members of this audience and the Reagan administration, and no single speech or action is going to break that wall down.

"(It has been said) that this administration doesn't care about the plight of blacks in America - we do care and we care deeply.

"The charge has been made that this administration has shut its ears to the voices of black Americans. But that just isn't so.

"The door to the Reagan White House is open to leaders of the black community. It's been open and will remain open...but we've also got to have open minds-on both sides of the dialogue between the administration and America's black leadership.

"No, we're not going to write off any group. But we don't want to be written off either.

"What about the charge that this administration has been lax on civil rights enforcement?

"Wrong. Dead wrong.

"The fact is - and again don't take my word for it, just check the record- this administration is actually ahead of past administrations in what we've done to enforce civil rights. Check back to see how much the Carter administration achieved in civil rights enforcement after three years in office. The Reagan Justice Department has taken 165 separate enforcement actions in election law changes in three years. Our voting rights is better than any past administration in this area of black and minority concerns. We have had more grand jury presentments in civil rights criminal violation prosecutions than any other previous administration. We have 116 ongoing cases against public employers who've been discriminating against blacks and we're fighting these cases in courts across the country, from New York and Wisconsin to Alabama and Texas. We've just sent to Congress proposed new amendments that would put real teeth into the fair housing law. I'm not talking rhetoric here - I'm talking record.

"In school desegregation, the Justice Department has taken legal action against both Mississippi and Alabama, charging discrimination in those states' higher education systems. At the same time the Department is actively investigating such discriminatory practices in Ohio.

"All right, let's be candid about our disagreement...these are disagreements not in goals, but in methods to achieve those goals. (We) don't see eye-to-eye on school busing...but there is division of opinion on the issue inside the black community.

"We differ on quotas, too. Our position is we just don't think the way to fight racism is by setting up race as a criterion...but by seeking justice.

"We don't think the past programs were effective in meeting the black community's long-range employment, business, education, and other needs.

"As I've said, a wall of misunderstanding exists between most members of your organization, and the Reagan administration - and that wall does neither of us any good. For our part, we're determined - if we can't break it down - to keep chipping away at it."

Gov. Charles S. Robb (D., Va.):

"The gains made through the social programs sponsored by the Federal Government - and the dismantling of artificial roadblock to equal access mandated by successive national administrations - helped black Americans to get on the road to equality. But ensuring the right of access was only a beginning. We must now make certain that Black Americans stay on that road and move along it into the mainstream of social and economic equality.

"In this respect, states must assist their black citizens. The experience we've had in Virginia during the last two years reflects what I believe to be a new philosophy of Government of inclusion - a government in which there is room for everyone committed to building a future of real opportunity for all.

"Virginia's budget will be a document designed to help the poor. We are also revising priorities to commit more state money in those areas where the needs of our black citizens intersect with the long-range objectives for building a better future for all Virginians - in public education, in economic and industrial development, in the stimulation of more and stronger minority enterprises, and in major public and private employment and job training initiatives for underskilled and displaced workers, and for minority and disadvantaged youths.

"There is yet another, and even more important thing we must do - at both the national and state levels. The political process has to be opened wider through voter registration. In Virginia alone, there are still more than 1 million eligible but unregistered citizens. I signed an executive order last week creating a special commission to increase voter registration in Virginia....

"For the government of a southern state to commit its resources and energies and its hope for the future to the political and economic inclusion of its black citizens is a prospect as natural today as it was but dimly perceived a half century ago."

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