



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Delegate Magazine 1985

Extracted on Apr-18-2024 04:33:25

The Smithsonian Institution thanks all digital volunteers that transcribed and reviewed this material. Your work enriches Smithsonian collections, making them available to anyone with an interest in using them.

The Smithsonian Institution (the "Smithsonian") provides the content on this website (transcription.si.edu), other Smithsonian websites, and third-party sites on which it maintains a presence ("SI Websites") in support of its mission for the "increase and diffusion of knowledge." The Smithsonian invites visitors to use its online content for personal, educational and other non-commercial purposes. By using this website, you accept and agree to abide by the [following terms](#).

- If sharing the material in personal and educational contexts, please cite the National Museum of African American History and Culture as source of the content and the project title as provided at the top of the document. Include the accession number or collection name; when possible, link to the National Museum of African American History and Culture website.
- If you wish to use this material in a for-profit publication, exhibition, or online project, please contact National Museum of African American History and Culture or transcribe@si.edu

For more information on this project and related material, contact the National Museum of African American History and Culture. [See this project](#) and other collections in the Smithsonian Transcription Center.

closing years of World War II. As a result of this study a report was issued, "Freedom to Serve," which served as the blue print of the steps to be achieved in the Korean War. Integration in the Korean conflict jumped from 9% in May, 1951 to 30% of the troops in the field by August, 1951.

That same year the President sent to Congress a special message on civil rights, the first such message that any President had ever sent. He called for the permanent Commission on Civil Rights; Federal Legislation against lynching; the establishment of a permanent FEPC; the prohibition of discrimination in interstate travel, and the strengthening of existing civil rights statutes. While Congress, dominated by Southerners, took no steps to implement the demands of the President, or the recommendations of his several commissions, the Country knew where the President stood on the vital issues of civil rights, and it became mandatory that any President following him would have to address himself to, and concern himself with, the same problems.

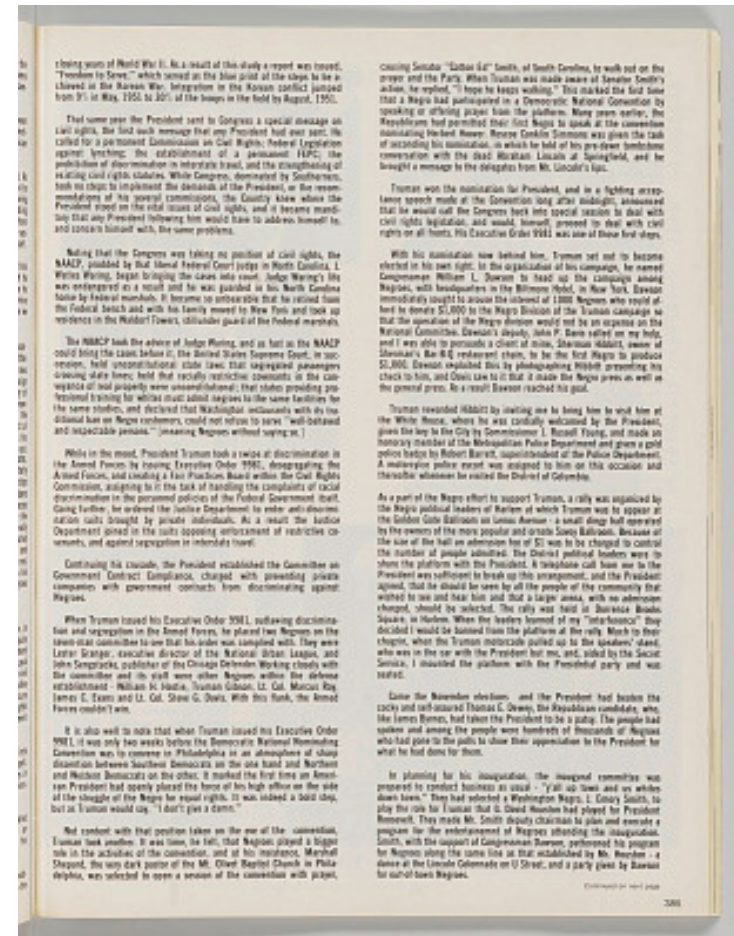
Noting that the Congress was taking no position of civil rights, the NAACP, prodded by that liberal Federal Court judge in North Carolina, J. Waties Waring, began bringing the cases into court. Judge Waring's life was endangered as a result and he was guarded in his North Carolina home by Federal marshals. It became so unbearable that he retired from the Federal bench and with his family moved to New York and took up residence in the Waldorf Towers, still under guard of the Federal marshals.

The NAACP took the advice of Judge Waring, and as fast as the NAACP could bring the cases before it, the United States Supreme Court, in succession, held unconstitutional state laws that segregated passengers crossing state lines; held that racially restrictive covenants in the conveyance of real property were unconstitutional; that states providing professional training for whites must admit negroes to the same facilities for the same studies, and declared that Washington restaurants with its traditional ban on Negro customers, could not refuse to serve "well-behaved and respectable persons." [meaning Negroes without saying so.]

While in the mood, President Truman took a swipe at discrimination in the Armed Forces by issuing Executive Order 9981, desegregating the Armed Forces, and creating a Fair Practices Board within the Civil Rights Commission, assigning to it the task of handling the complaints of racial discrimination in the personnel policies of the Federal Government itself. Going further, he ordered the Justice Department to enter anti-discrimination suits brought by private individuals. As a result the Justice Department joined in the suits opposing enforcement of restrictive covenants, and against segregation in interstate travel.

Continuing his crusade, the President established the Committee on Government Contract Compliance, charged with preventing private companies with government contracts from discriminating against Negroes.

When Truman issued his Executive Order 9981, outlawing discrimination and segregation in the Armed Forces, he placed two Negroes on the seven-man committee to see that his order was complied with. They were Lester Granger, executive director of the



National Urban League, and John Sengstacke, publisher of the Chicago Defender. Working closely with the committee and its staff were other Negroes within the defense establishment-William H. Hastie, Truman Gibson, Lt. Col. Marcus Ray, James C. Evans and Lt. Col. Steve G. Davis. With this flank, the Armed Forces couldn't win.

It is also well to note that when Truman issued his Executive Order 9811, it was only two weeks before the Democratic National Nominating Convention was to convene in Philadelphia in an atmosphere of sharp dissention between Southern Democrats on the one hand and Northern and Western Democrats on the other. It marked the first time an American President had openly placed the force of his high office on the side of the struggle of the Negro for equal rights. It was indeed a bold step, but as Truman would say, "I don't give a damn."

Not content with that position taken on the eve of the convention, Truman took another. It was time, he felt, that Negroes played a bigger role in the activities of the convention, and at his insistence, Marshall Shepard, the very dark pastor of the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church in Philadelphia, was selected to open a session of the convention with prayer, causing Senator "Cotton Ed" Smith, of South Carolina, to walk out on the prayer and the Party. When Truman was made aware of Senator Smith's action, he replied, "I hope he keeps walking." This marked the first time that a Negro had participated in a Democratic National Convention by speaking or offering prayer from the platform. Many years earlier, the Republicans had permitted their first Negro to speak at the convention nominating Herbert Hoover. Roscoe Conklin Simmons was given the task of seconding his nomination, in which he told of his pre-dawn tombstone conversation with the dead Abraham Lincoln at Springfield, and he brought a message to the delegates from Mr. Lincoln's Lips.

Truman won the nomination for President, and in a fighting acceptance speech made at the Convention long after midnight, announced that he would call the Congress back into special session to deal with civil rights legislation, and would, himself, proceed to deal with civil rights on all fronts. His Executive Order 9811 was one of those first steps.

With his nomination now behind him, Truman set out to become elected in his own right. In the organization of his campaign among Negroes, with headquarters in the Biltmore Hotel, in New York. Dawson immediately sought to arouse the interest of 1000 Negroes who could afford to donate \$1,000 to the Negro Division of the Truman campaign so that the operation of the Negro division would not be an expense on the National Committee. Dawson's deputy, John P. Davis called on my help, and I was able to persuade a client of mine, Sherman Hibbitt, owner of Sherman's Bar-B-Q restaurant chain, to be the first Negro to produce \$1,000. Dawson exploited this by photographing Hibbitt presenting his check to him, and Davis saw to it that it made the Negro press as well as the general press. As a result Dawson reached his goal.

Truman rewarded Hibbitt by inviting me to bring him to visit him at the White House, where he was cordially welcomed by the President, given the key to the City by the Commissioner J. Russell Young, and made an honorary member of the Metropolitan Police Department and given a gold police badge by Robert Barrett, superintendent of the Police Department. A motorcycle police escort was assigned to him on this occasion and thereafter whenever he visited the District of Columbia.

As a part of the Negro effort to support Truman, a rally was organized by the Negro political leaders of Harlem at which Truman was to appear at the Golden Gate Ballroom on Lenox Avenue- a small dingy hall operated by the owners of the more popular and ornate Savoy Ballroom. Because of the size of the hall an admission fee of \$1 was to be charged to control the number of people admitted. The District political leaders were to share the platform with the President. A telephone call from me to the President was sufficient to break up this arrangement, and the President agreed, that he should be seen by all the people of the community that wished to see and hear him and that a larger arena, with no admission charged, should be selected. The rally was held in Dorrence Brooks Square, in Harlem. When the leaders learned of my "interference" they decided I would be banned from the platform at the rally. Much to their chagrin, when Truman motorcade pulled up to the speakers' stand, who was in the car with the President but me, and, aided by the Secret Service, I mounted the platform with the Presidential party and was seated.

Come the November elections and the President had beaten the cocky and self-assured Thomas E. Dewey, the Republican candidate, who, like James Byrnes, had taken the President to be a patsy. The people had spoken and among the people were hundreds of thousands of Negroes who had gone to the polls to show their appreciation to the President for what he had done for them.

In planning for his inauguration, the inaugural committee was prepared to conduct business as usual-"y'all up town and us whites down town." They had selected a Washington Negro, J. Emory Smith, to play the role for Truman that G. David Houston had played for President Roosevelt. They made Mr. Smith deputy chairman to plan and execute a program for the entertainemnt of Negroes attending the inauguration. Smith, with the support of Congressman Dawson, patterned his program for Negroes along the same line as the established by Mr. Houston-a dance at the Lincoln Colonnade on U Street, and a party given by Dawson for out-of-town Negroes.

Continued on next page

385

Delegate Magazine 1985
Transcribed and Reviewed by Digital Volunteers
Extracted Apr-18-2024 04:33:25



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

The mission of the Smithsonian is the increase and diffusion of knowledge - shaping the future by preserving our heritage, discovering new knowledge, and sharing our resources with the world. Founded in 1846, the Smithsonian is the world's largest museum and research complex, consisting of 19 museums and galleries, the National Zoological Park, and nine research facilities. Become an active part of our mission through the Transcription Center. Together, we are discovering secrets hidden deep inside our collections that illuminate our history and our world.

Join us!

The Transcription Center: <https://transcription.si.edu>

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SmithsonianTranscriptionCenter>

On Twitter: [@TranscribeSI](https://twitter.com/TranscribeSI)

Connect with the Smithsonian

Smithsonian Institution: www.si.edu

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Smithsonian>

On Twitter: [@smithsonian](https://twitter.com/smithsonian)