

**“And don’t call *me* a racist!”**

**A treasury of quotes  
on the past, present, and future  
of the color line in America**

**SELECTED AND ARRANGED BY Ella Mazel**

**ARGONAUT PRESS / LEXINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

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NINETEENTH PRINTING

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 98-74108

# THE FUTURE

The faces and the tactics of the leaders  
may change every four years, or two, or one,  
but the people go on forever.  
The people — beaten down today,  
yet rising tomorrow;  
losing the road one minute  
but finding it the next;  
their eyes always fixed on a star  
of true brotherhood, equality and dignity  
— *the people* are the real guardians  
of our hopes and dreams.

PAUL ROBESON, 1952



# ONE AMERICA: The President's Initiative on Race

*Announcement by President Clinton*  
June 14, 1997

The greatest challenge we face . . . is also our greatest opportunity. . . . Can we fulfill the promise of America by embracing all our citizens of all races . . . can we become one America in the 21st century? . . . . Money cannot buy this goal, power cannot compel it, technology cannot create it. This is something that can come only from the human spirit.

If ten years from now people can look back and see that this year of honest dialogue and concerted action helped to lift the heavy burden of race from our children's future, we will have given a precious gift to America.

*Town Meeting, Akron, Ohio*  
December 3, 1997

When you look to the future, you must . . . find a way to organize a continuing mechanism where people of good will can come together.

Our country has never really dealt with the race issue before except in an atmosphere of crisis and conflict and riots in the cities. So a lot of people . . . think I am nuts to be doing this. You know, what's the end, what's the point? The point is, making a more perfect union. The point is, proving

we can have one America. The point is, it will be a lot more interesting, a lot more fun, and far more noble if we do it right.

I don't like it when people say we ought to tolerate our differences — I don't buy that. I think we ought to respect and celebrate our differences.

We're given a world that is much more interesting and exciting if we know and relate to people of different racial and other backgrounds. And it's up to us to decide what to do with it.

What we're trying to do here is drop a pebble in the pond and have it reverberate all across America.

*Press Conference*  
December 17, 1997

I would like to . . . move beyond the I'm-for-it and you're-against-it stage to a more sophisticated and, ultimately, more meaningful debate. . . . What would you do to make sure that you didn't exclude whole groups who happen to be predominantly of racial minorities . . . predominantly poor, predominantly from difficult neighborhoods, predominantly born into families without the kinds of advantages many other children have. . . . And that debate is . . . in its infancy.

# Talking and listening

White America is beginning to be able to admit that it carries racial prejudice in its heart, and that understanding marks the beginning of the end of racism.

SHIRLEY CHISHOLM, 1970

What Myrdal called the American dilemma, what Du Bois called the color line, and what present commentators call the race relations problem are all part of our national culture. Until we speak the truth about it, we cannot know the truth about our own condition.

CHARLES R. LAWRENCE III /  
MARI J. MATSUDA, 1997

When discussing issues of racial equality, most Americans, black or white, rely on the same words: their disagreements are about what the words mean.

ALAN WOLFE, 1998

In Congress, it's really interesting to hear these folks who don't want to do anything about it now criticize you for only wanting to talk about it. . . . Our answer has to be, you can't possibly do anything about race if you don't talk about it.

REPRESENTATIVE ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, 1998

Racism is not easy to talk about in racially mixed company. It is often considered downright *impolite* to bring it up. Too many demons of guilt, resentment, and vulnerability are tied up in it. Unfortunately, it usually takes a racial eruption . . . to get Americans to acknowledge their racial differences in public and talk about them, at least for a while, before clamping the lid of denial back down.

CLARENCE PAGE, 1996

The problems of racism have not been solved and they will never be solved until we can learn to communicate with one another. Yet we have never listened to the words of minority spokesmen who have told us truths about ourselves and our country.

JOHN HOWARD GRIFFIN, 1977

We talk a lot and we talk pretty well about race, but we don't listen enough. And I'm hoping that if we listen to each other, we can begin to . . . make this society of ours into less and less of a country of strangers.

DAVID SHIPLER, 1997

Having people feel free to disagree with people of different races without having somebody draw a racial inference, that's a huge thing. That's one of the benchmarks when you know you're getting where you need to be. (December 3)

I believe talking is better than fighting. And I believe when people don't talk and communicate and understand, their fears, their ignorance, and their problems are more likely to fester. (December 17)

Somewhere in here there's a way that we can get to . . . stop talking past each other and start working together. I cannot believe that 90 percent of the people in this country don't want the same kind of country in terms of racial matters. (December 19)

PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON, 1997

People are becoming more civil in the dialogue. That is a value that I think we need to cherish and deeply prize because in the celebration of our differences, we do need to be able to come together and say, you know, I kind of disagree, without saying you're racist because of that — so that persons can find the freedom to talk about the issues that deeply affect them.

RONALD FOWLER, 1997

We have utterly ignorant conversations about race in which my feelings are as valid as your feelings are as valid as her feelings, because nobody is dealing with any facts.

ROGER WILKINS, 1998

Conversation is critical, but not without self-reflection, both individually and communally. While myths help us make sense of the incomprehensible, they can also confine us, confuse us and leave us prey to historical laziness. Moreover, truth is not always easily discernible — and even when it is, the prism, depending on which side of the river you reside on, may create a wholly different illusion.

ALEX KOTLOWITZ, 1998

We have talked about racism over the years and talked about it and argued about it and fought about it and talked about it and wondered if, out of all those years, we learned a thing. I like to think that we have. Maybe it was something an audience member said. Maybe it's something you saw in the eyes of an interracial child that made you just think differently. Maybe those moments made you stop and think and, in a small way, open your heart a little wider.

OPRAH WINFREY, 1998

We need to talk with each other, honestly, simply, caringly.

PAUL KIVEL, 1993

Even when we admit to racially discriminatory practices, we rarely admit we are racist. This kind of massive denial is not possible without a strictly enforced taboo against speaking publicly about racism.

CHARLES R. LAWRENCE III /  
MARI J. MATSUDA, 1997

Our truncated public discussions of race suppress the best of who and what we are as a people because they fail to confront the complexity of the issue in a candid and critical manner.

CORNEL WEST, 1993

While cynical politicians peddle the poison of "reverse discrimination," no genuine interracial dialogue is possible.

MANNING MARABLE, 1997

By doing our homework we can transform a pretend conversation that seeks to simplify the impact of race in America into a full-scale dialogue that reveals the utter complexity, variability, and adaptability of racism.

Once the fig leaf has fallen, we might as well look at what it has been hiding. For it is by exploring the things we dare not say to each other that we can best get to know one another.

Unlike those who counsel smoothing over our differences and pushing our fears to the side, I am convinced that the only way to truly heal the past and prepare for a more just future is to (as we used to say) let it all hang out.

The very process of racial engagement puts us all on the same plane. When we are open and honest with each other; when we abandon our hiding places, take risks, and own up to our own self-interest, when we place on the table our assumptions, fears, trepidations, and secret desires, *by that very act* we are connecting with one another as equals.

HARLON L. DALTON, 1995

Meetings on racial justice often resemble nothing so much as a bazaar filled with peddlers offering the all-purpose answer. . . . The reality is that the problem has no single or simple solution. If there is one answer, it lies in recognizing how complex the issue has become and in not using that complexity as an excuse for inaction.

ELLIS COSE, 1997

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Everyone is so quick to choose sides, to refute the other's myths and to pass on their own.

ALEX KOTLOWITZ, 1998

## Person to person

What I came to find out was that black people had those same fears white people had. They don't want to lose their services. They don't want to have bad schools. They don't want the same things that white people don't want.

JIM KISH, 1992

Going to this [private] school gave me an opportunity to really get to know a white person. When that happens, you abandon some of your prejudices and begin to see that fundamentally these people are just like you.

CHARLISE LYLES, 1992

Whatever white people do not know about Negroes reveals, precisely and inexorably, what they do not know about themselves.

JAMES BALDWIN, 1963

Even as the evil walls of legal segregation were tumbling down . . . it occurred to me that my reality might never be quite the same as that experienced by my white friends. . . . Separated by thick walls of prejudice, we would view each other through windows of stained-glass perceptions, colored by our personal experiences.

CLARENCE PAGE, 1996

You can't feel a sense of community with someone you don't know. The point is not that exposure makes us see that our similarities are more significant than our differences — that may not even be true in particular circumstances — but that it gives us a better understanding of our differences, which encourages acceptance or accommodation to them.

CHRISTOPHER EDLEY, JR., 1996

Men often hate each other because they fear each other; they fear each other because they do not know each other; they do not know each other because they cannot communicate; they cannot communicate because they are separated.

A. PHILIP RANDOLPH

I believe in my bones that the things that separate us make up one percent of who we are, that ninety-nine percent of our lives are similar. . . . We have given so much over the years to that one percent, complexion, it's a travesty. It think it's one of the great tragedies of our species.

CHARLES JOHNSON, 1992

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We're on this merry-go-round just once. The least we can do is get to know the people we're riding with.

TASHA KNIGHT, 1992

Prejudice is the world's biggest coward in the face of fact. Proximity — if we can get enough of it — can solve these problems of racial prejudice and bigotry.

BRANCH RICKEY

The ability of Negroes and whites to work together, to understand each other, will not be found readymade; it must be created by the fact of contact.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.  
1967

If we could find ways of getting people to work on common projects . . . racial divisions seem to disappear and friendships occur.

THOMAS H. KEAN, 1997

I don't believe in the perfectibility of white people anymore. . . . God, how I loved America in 1950 . . . I thought then that prejudice was an individual thing that would die in heart after heart after the Constitution and the true humanity of black people were demonstrated to the people of our country.

ROGER WILKINS, 1982

It's "them" they're afraid of. So if I come into their neighborhood to rent an apartment or buy a house, they still see "them." If people could accept us as individuals, we would get a hell of a lot farther.

JULIAN JEFFERSON, 1992

A lot of white people think, hey, you're black, you're a criminal. Most black people see a white person, hey, all white people are rich. I know that's not true. How can you make a suggestion like that if you don't know the person, white or black?

KEVIN ROBINSON, 1992

Employment will offer, in the immediate future, more opportunities for favorable contact than housing, education, or any other area of activity. That this is so is an essentially negative comment about other realms of American society.

THOMAS F. PETTIGREW, 1971

If we can find constructive ways for people to work together, learn together, talk together, be together, that's the best shot we've got to avoid some of the horrible problems we see in the rest of the world, to avoid some of the difficult problems we've had in our own history, and to make progress on the problems that we still have here today.

PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON, (December 3) 1997

The more contact we have with people of color and with images and information about them, the more we are motivated and equipped to challenge racism. . . . This awareness can guide our action and enrich our lives.

PAUL KIVEL, 1993

We hoped that given exposure to blacks each person would grow naturally to challenge the myths and prejudices of prior generations and mature at his or her own pace.

ANDREW YOUNG, 1996

The whole barrier exists because most people never come together and sit down at a table . . . join together, break bread together, and celebrate their differences and their likenesses.

OPRAH WINFREY, 1998

Unlike any other place, the workplace brings together people who pursue common objectives. . . . They go together through similar failure and successes. And that creates bonds that really go way beyond whatever racial tensions may exist in society at large.

SAMIR GIBARA, 1997

It is one thing to throw people from different worlds together in a classroom or an Army boot camp and yet another thing to make them feel a connection that produces a sense of community and mutual commitment. More is needed than proximity.

CHRISTOPHER EDLEY, JR., 1996

The key to taming fear and reducing uncertainty is for all of us to find ways to actually experience racial equality firsthand. Today, before we reach the Promised Land. . . . Now, more than ever, opportunities exist for White people to deal with Blacks (and other people of color) as true peers; to, in effect, try equality on for size.

HARLON L. DALTON, 1995

The best strategy in face-to-face relations between individuals from different ethnic groups is the good old Golden Rule — do unto others as you would wish them to do unto you. . . . Like democracy, the Golden Rule may not be perfect, but in a multiethnic society such as America, it is by far the best and safest strategy when dealing with fellow citizens, especially ones as traditionally American as Afro-Americans. All that it requires is a modicum of good faith and a willingness to negotiate one's way around the tricky social situations inevitably encountered in heterogeneous societies.

ORLANDO PATTERSON, 1997

When people are forced to interact to survive, their prejudices diminish.

MUHAMMAD ALI, 1996

## Working for change

Only by a union of intelligence and sympathy across the color-line in this critical period of the Republic shall justice and right triumph.

W.E.B. DU BOIS, 1903

The initiative, and the future, rest with those whites and blacks who have liberated themselves from the master/slave syndrome.

ELDRIDGE CLEAVER, 1968

There are many persons ready to do what is right because in their hearts they know it is right. But they hesitate, waiting for the other fellow to make the first move — and he, in turn, waits for you. The minute a person whose word means a great deal dares to take the open-hearted and courageous way, many others follow.

MARIAN ANDERSON, 1956

There was no one in the astronaut corps who looked anything like me. There were no women, no Blacks, no Asians, no Latinos. I could not reconcile the term “United States space program” with an endeavor that did not involve anyone except white males. . . . Thousands of fans wrote thanking me for Uhura’s inspiration. . . . Things had to change.

NICHELE NICHOLS, 1994

At some point, you have to face up to your place in American society. To find out what that place is, you have to determine how far you can walk out on the plank without feeling uncomfortable by yourself.

ARTHUR ASHE, 1981

It does no service to the cause of racial equality for white people to content themselves with judging themselves to be nonracist. Few people outside the Klan or skinhead movements own up to all-out racism these days. White people must take the extra step. They must become anti-racist.

CLARENCE PAGE, 1996

Each generation must decide whether to dig defensive trenches or build bridges, and each of us must choose whether to participate in that decision or just let others decide for us and for our children.

CHRISTOPHER EDLEY, JR., 1996

The American Negro problem is a problem in the heart of the American. It is there that the interracial tension has its focus. It is there that the decisive struggle goes on.

GUNNAR MYRDAL, 1942

The struggle itself is the point. To stand for a brighter vision of human possibility gives life meaning; it is a refusal to participate in the murder of one's own spirit.

CHARLES R. LAWRENCE III /  
MARI J. MATSUDA, 1997

Americans of good-will, the nice decent church people, the well-meaning liberals, the good-hearted souls who themselves wouldn't lynch anyone, must begin to realize that they have to be more than passively good-hearted, more than church-goingly Christian, and much more than word-of-mouth in their liberalism.

LANGSTON HUGHES, 1943

Any honest examination of the national life proves how far we are from the standard of human freedom with which we began. The recovery of this standard demands of everyone who loves this country a hard look at himself, for the greatest achievements must begin somewhere, and they always begin with the person. If we are not capable of this examination, we may yet become one of the most distinguished and monumental failures in the history of nations.

JAMES BALDWIN, 1961

Sometimes change comes not in the first round, but at the second, third or fourth. Change starts with one person questioning, challenging, speaking up and doing something to make a difference. We can each make a difference . . . because each of us is already part of the community where racism exists and thrives.

PAUL KIVEL, 1993

While the legal, material, and even superficial requirements to eradicate racism are well known, its psychological and more deeply spiritual requirements have been persistently neglected — namely, the oneness of the human family. It is this principle of oneness that needs to be the driving force behind the struggle of uniting the races.

SARA HARRINGTON, 1998

We have to "walk the walk" not just "talk the talk."

PAUL KIVEL, 1993

None of us alone can save  
the nation or world. But  
each of us can make a  
positive difference if we  
commit ourselves to do so.

CORNEL WEST, 1994

The tolerance and under-  
standing necessary to heal  
must come from each and  
every one of us, arising out  
of our everyday conduct,  
until decency reaches a  
flood tide.

MUHAMMAD ALI, 1986

While many of us regard ourselves as powerless, the fact is that all of us have some sphere of influence in which we can work for change, even if it is just in our own network of family and friends.

BEVERLY DANIEL TATUM, 1998

Except worry, there is very little that a single individual, working alone, can do about improving race relations in this country. . . . You cannot be a thousand people, but you can join a thousand people, and the whole will be greater than the sum of its parts.

The people who are unprejudiced, but who . . . feel it is so hopeless there is no use trying . . . probably do just as much damage to the emotional atmosphere in which we are facing the problem as the fanatical Negrophobes.

MARGARET HALSEY, 1946

You had to decide: Am I going to change the world, or am I going to change me? Or maybe change the world a little bit, just by changing me? If I can get ahead, doesn't that help my people?

SADIE DELANY, 1993

If the moderates of the white South fail to act now, history will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.

No social advance rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., 1958

One of the less dismaying aspects of race relations in the United States is that their improvement is not a matter of a few people having a great deal of courage. It is a matter of a great many people having just a little courage.

MARGARET HALSEY, 1946

By changing ourselves, we are doing the only thing we can do to change the world. To say that it is not enough is a lack of will, a lack of faith. It must be enough, for it is everything.

SARA BULLARD, 1996

As an African-American man who attended school in the South, I could either shut my eyes to what's going on, or help to dismantle the problem. It is for my well-being to be part of something rather than dying a bit each day.

JOHN TUCKER, 1997

Voices within our community call us to turn inward, away from potential allies with whom we can work to achieve positive change. What is required is the definition of a new moral assignment, a new vision of human emancipation.

MANNING MARABLE, 1997

The solution to racism lies in our ability to see its ubiquity but not to concede its inevitability. It lies in the collective and institutional power to make change, at least as much as with the individual will to change. It also lies in the absolute moral imperative to break the childish, deadly circularity of centuries of blindness to the shimmering brilliance of our common, ordinary humanity.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS, 1997

A nice lady in the back . . . asked what I thought about how we begin to move forward. I think it is up to each individual, which then moves to your family, which moves to your community. Each person, in their own life, let your life be a light for peace, for justice, for all that is good. Just let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

OPRAH WINFREY, 1998

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Power comes from coalitions, not through isolation or alienation from others.

MANNING MARABLE, 1997

# Keeping the dream alive

May I not appeal to you . . . to join with us in continuing to fight . . . until in all sections of this fair land there will be equal opportunities for all, and character shall be the standard of excellence . . . and until black and white shall clasp friendly hands in the consciousness of the fact that we are all brethren and that God is the father of us all.

PAUL ROBESON, 1919

We can choose either to walk the high road of human brotherhood or to tread the low road of man's inhumanity to man.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.  
1958

After King, we argue how his dream can best be fulfilled. We forget how significant it is that we no longer argue about whether it *should* be fulfilled.

ALAN WOLFE, (January) 1998

Through all the sorrow of the Sorrow Songs there breathes a hope — a faith in the ultimate justice of things. . . . Sometimes it is faith in life, sometimes a faith in death, sometimes assurance of boundless justice in some fair world beyond. But . . . the meaning is always clear: that sometime, somewhere, men will judge men by their souls and not by their skins.

Work, culture, liberty — all these we need, not singly but together, not successively but together, each growing and aiding each, and all striving toward that vaster ideal that swims before the Negro people, the ideal of human brotherhood.

W.E.B. DU BOIS, 1903

Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all of their scintillating beauty.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., (Letter) 1963

What is required now is an act of the spirit. We must abandon our shallow trenches and confront each other as coinheritors of a common land, which is to say that we must meet and know each other as brothers in the marriage of visions, as coconspirators in the making of a dream, as fellow passengers on a journey into the unknown.

LERONE BENNETT, JR., 1964

Let us hope and pray that the vast intelligence, imagination, humor, and courage of Americans will not fail us. Either we learn a new language of empathy and compassion, or the fire this time will consume us all.

CORNEL WEST, 1993

The task that remains is to cope with our interdependence — to see ourselves reflected in every other human being and to respect and honor our differences.

MELBA PATILLO BEALS, 1994

If we . . . the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks . . . do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. If we do not now dare everything, the fulfillment of that prophecy, re-created from the Bible in song by a slave, is upon us: *God gave Noah the rainbow sign, No more water, the fire next time!*

JAMES BALDWIN, 1963

I think white America has to be jolted into reality: if we do not devote the resources necessary to avert the tragedy, we will become a police state. . . . Will there have to be some sort of explosion, some sort of civil disorder, before we realize the gravity of the situation? Think of the money we instantly manufactured for Desert Storm. The crisis in this country is much more grave than that. But we don't have the same kind of will to tackle it. We have to. We simply have no choice.

SALIM MUWAKKIL, 1992

Comparing the reality here with the reality of societies in extremis is too easy. . . . It is fairer, and certainly right, instead, to compare American practice with America's ideals, and American life with America's dreams.

The continuing controversy . . . is about values and vision. What does America want to see in the mirror? What kind of communities do we want for our children? What dreams will nourish the spirits of the least among us? We have a history of division, but for the most part it is division based on our perspectives, not our dreams.

CHRISTOPHER EDLEY, JR., 1996

The so-called "racial problem" . . . requires . . . a new grasp of the meaning of the human experience.

LILLIAN SMITH, 1949

Desegregation will break down the legal barriers and bring men together physically, but something must touch the hearts and souls of men so that they will come together spiritually because it is natural and right.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.  
1967

What we need is a new political vision that continues to take race seriously even as we search for new ways to transform its significance.

HARLON L. DALTON, 1995

We know what the problem is; it has been well outlined statistically and historically. The problem is white racism. The problem is discrimination. The problem is racial prejudice. Now, what is the answer to the problems of black people? The answer is the will and power of white society and white institutions to change. They *must* change.

CHARLES H. KING, JR., 1983

That perennial traveler — the visitor from Mars — would wonder how a democracy can harbor group prejudice, and why we are concerned with controlling and not with eliminating it. . . . Prejudice is not innate but acquired; is not congenital but parental; is a virus infection, not a vital function. One generation, he would say, was sufficient to eradicate smallpox, diphtheria, and other plagues. A much shorter period should suffice to inoculate against the plague of prejudice.

ABRAHAM RUBIN / GEORGE J. SEGAL, 1946

Can we African Americans . . . prevent our outrage at the wrongs we have suffered in America from destroying our spirit, from depriving us of the high moral ground we once held? Can we avoid the temptation to sink utterly into despair, cynicism, and violence, and thus become abject prisoners of our past?

I see nothing inconsistent between being proud of oneself and one's ancestors and, at the same time, seeing oneself as first and foremost a member of the commonwealth of humanity, the commonwealth of all races and creeds. . . . I would ask that all Americans could see themselves that way, past the barbed-wire fences of race and color. We are the weaker for these divisions, and the stronger when we transcend them. ARTHUR ASHE, 1993

Nothing venture, nothing gain. If you embark on a project as magnificent in concept as the brotherhood of man, it is foolish not to anticipate difficulties of proportionate magnificence.

The feelings, myths and prejudices about the Negro American which now seem so vivid and real to some of our white contemporaries will take their place on the shelf along with the belief in witches and the notion that the earth is the center of the solar system.

Nobody knows as yet whether the future [of the race situation] is hopeless. All we know is that it can be made hopeless, if enough people choose to consider it so.

MARGARET HALSEY, 1946

One of the biggest challenges that remains is to be able to weave people of all different colors and creeds into the beautiful tapestry of American life. . . . Eradicating racial differences can only happen when a generation of Americans becomes firmly convinced that race truly doesn't matter.

ARMSTRONG WILLIAMS, 1997

Although racism is still a central constituent of American life, we have made progress, things have changed . . . because the human spirit is indomitable and we each share that spirit. We can only sustain our efforts by building on and celebrating the achievements of the vast numbers of people who have contributed to getting us as far as we are today.

PAUL KIVEL, 1993

I can't say for sure what a racially just America would look like, but . . . we might discover that we are more united in what we desire for the future than in how we deal with the present. If so, we ought to consider working backward. By spending a little time dreaming together about the promised land, we just might figure out how to bring it about.

HARLON L. DALTON, 1995

All of the evidence suggests that most ordinary Americans have proven themselves extraordinary in their willingness to suffer the pain of ethnic change. . . . They do so because the truth has finally dawned on all but the most ethnically myopic that Afro-Americans are among the most American of Americans. . . because it is the right thing to do. . . because they know that integration, however difficult the journey, is the only way to go, and . . . because, as a nation, there can be no turning back.

ORLANDO PATTERSON, 1997

It's time for us as a country to try to come together in ways that freedom was really meant to be.

OPRAH WINFREY, 1998

We are a people determined to make it, not in spite of our blackness, but because of it. Historians will record it, social scientists will be astounded by it, and civilizations will be magnified by it.

CHARLES H. KING, JR., 1983

Our earth is but a small star in the great universe. Yet of it we can make, if we choose, a planet untroubled by war, untroubled by hunger or fear, undivided by senseless distinctions of race, color or theory.

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT, 1942

Are we — the nation that first embarked on the high adventure of making a world fit for human beings to live in — about to destroy ourselves because we have killed our dream? Can we live with a dead dream inside us? How many dead dreams will it take to destroy us all?

LILLIAN SMITH, 1961

The struggle to eliminate racism, war, and poverty is a burden, but in America, with all the freedom and opportunity afforded us under our Constitution, in the most productive society in human history, it is an easy burden if we undertake it together.

ANDREW YOUNG, 1996

America may not be the best nation on earth, but it has conceived loftier ideals and dreamed higher dreams than any other nation. America is a heterogeneous nation of many different people of different races, religions, and creeds. Should this experiment go forth and prosper, we will have offered humans a new way to look at life; should it fail, we will simply go the way of all failed civilizations.

NIKKI GIOVANNI, 1993

I do believe that wherever Gene [Roddenberry] may be, he will one day see his dream of the future unfold, not on a soundstage but in space, in a time when humankind's propensity for hatred and intolerance will be a memory.

NICHELLE NICHOLS, 1994