

“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

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THE PAST

Negro men and women came here
long before the Mayflower
and they cleared the forests,
drained the swamps
and cultivated the grain.
The wealth of this country was founded
on what Abraham Lincoln called
“the 250 years of unrequited toil”
of Negro men and women.

From the muted wail of slaves
going in chains to American plantations
came the gold that made capitalism possible;
from black brawn came tobacco;
from black blood, white sugar.

LERONE BENNETT, JR., 1964



An invoice of ten negroes sent this day to John
B Williamson by Geo Kremer named & cost as fol-
lows

Tomit .. Betsey Kackley	\$ 410.00
.. Nancy Anlick	515.00
Harry & Helen Miller	1200.00
Mary Kootz	600.00
Betsey Ott?	560.00
Isaac & Fanny Brevat	992.00
Lucinda Luckett	467.50
George Smith	510.00

Amount of my traveling expences & boarding	5254.50
of Lot No 9 not included in the other bills	39.50
Kremer's expences transporting Lot No 9 to Chick ²	51.00
Barryall hire	6.00
	<u>\$ 5351.00</u>

I have this day delivered the above named negroes
costing including my expences and other expences
five thousand three hundred & fifty dollars this May
20th 1835-

John W. Pittman

I did intend to leave Nancy child but she made
such a damned fuss I had to let her take it I could
of got fifty Dollars for so you must add forty Dollars
to the above

Past history

The feeling of the nation
must be quickened;
the conscience of the nation
must be roused;
the propriety of the nation
must be startled;
the hypocrisy of the nation
must be exposed;
and its crimes against God and man
must be denounced.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS, 1852



CAUTION!!

COLORED PEOPLE

OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL,

You are hereby respectfully CAUTIONED and
advised, to avoid conversing with the

**Watchmen and Police Officers
of Boston,**

For since the recent **ORDER OF THE MAYOR &
ALDERMEN**, they are empowered to act as

KIDNAPPERS

AND

Slave Catchers,

And they have already been actually employed in
**KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING
SLAVES.** Therefore, if you value your **LIBERTY**,
and the *Welfare of the Fugitives* among you, *Shun*
them in every possible manner, as so many **HOUNDS**
on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.

**Keep a Sharp Look Out for
KIDNAPPERS, and have
TOP EYE open.**

APRIL 24, 1851.

Disinterring the past

In order for us, black and white, to disenthral ourselves from the harshest slavemaster, racism, we must disinter our buried history. STUDS TERKEL, 1992

The past matters . . . The reason is not that such knowledge will necessarily lead to good policymaking, but that ignorance will surely lead to bad.

ELLIS COSE, (December) 1997

To engage in a serious discussion of race in America, we must begin not with the problems of black people but with the flaws of American society — flaws rooted in historic inequalities and longstanding cultural stereotypes.

CORNEL WEST, 1993

The past isn't as remote as it seems, if you realize that there are people alive today whose grandparents were born as slaves. On the other hand, the recent past of segregation and the civil rights movement is ancient history to many young people.

Perhaps the very first thing we need to do as a nation and as individual members of society is to confront our past and see it for what it is. It is a past that is filled with some of the ugliest possible examples of racial brutality and degradation in human history. We need to recognize it for what it was and is and not explain it away, excuse it, or justify it.

JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN, 1993

The constant struggle between social and economic equality and the lust for profit . . . the battle of African-Americans for true freedom and a piece of the American dream . . . these themes have been with us for some time. And that they still trouble us is the best reason why knowing what those events were and what they mean is important in itself.

ALAN AXELROD / CHARLES PHILLIPS, 1992

We know White Supremacy is indefensible in today's world, we know that as an idea it is dead, but the bitter struggle goes on, South and North: wasting minds and time and hearts and economic resources, tying us to a past where ghost battles ghost.

LILLIAN SMITH, 1949

Some truths have to be really pounded into the national psyche. And one of them is that history counts.
ROGER WILKINS, 1998

The historical roots of American racism are conscious and deliberate, but sheer ignorance perpetuates it without any extra effort; most white Americans don't even know the history of slavery and the long continuing struggle of blacks to overcome it.

ANDREW YOUNG, 1996

There are complexities in every racial situation. Never are such matters neat and simple. They can't be. For they reach deep into history, memory, beliefs, values — or into the hollow place where values should be.

LILLIAN SMITH, 1949

The psychic and physical devastation that so marked slave and colonial systems echoes into our lives today . . . If we could but see a causal chain, a procession of events linked over time, it might teach us many lessons about the long-term consequences of violently exploiting humans as only capital.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS, 1997

We are what we are today because of what happened yesterday, and our todays will remain horrible for precisely as long as we avoid the necessary confrontation with yesterday.

LERONE BENNETT, JR., 1964

Confronting and knowing our collective history is important because it is what shapes present circumstances; we are racist today because we were racist yesterday. The forms and the dynamics of that racism will change over time, but the root is connected to the branch in a way that is present in the here and now.

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

The past was supposed to be safely buried; the most crude and blatant forms of prejudice had apparently been discredited many years ago. This assumption failed to reckon with the subtler formulations in which the same basic ideas now insinuate themselves.

ALEXANDER THOMAS, M.D., 1972

A society is always eager to cover misdeeds with a cloak of forgetfulness, but no society can fully repress an ugly past when the ravages persist into the present. America owes a debt of justice which it has only begun to pay.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., 1967

Perhaps a brighter vision of our future can be inspired by a better understanding of our recent past.

ANDREW YOUNG, 1996

Slavery

Long described as America's original sin, slavery is also our shadow: dogging our steps forward, projecting in black against the sunlight of democratic ideals.

JONATHAN ALTER, 1997

By the middle of the twentieth century, the color line was as well defined and as firmly entrenched as any institution in the land. After all, it was older than most institutions, including the federal government itself.

JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN, 1993

NEGROES FOR SALE.

Will be sold at public auction, at Spring Hill, in the County of Hempstead, on a credit of twelve months, on Friday the 28th day of this present month, 15 young and valuable Slaves, consisting of 9 superior Men & Boys, between 12 and 27 years of age, one woman about 43 years who is a good washer and cook, one woman about twenty-seven, and one very likely young woman with three children.

Also at the same time, and on the same terms, three Mules, about forty head of Cattle, plantation tools, one wagon, and a first rate Gin stand, manufactured by Pratt & Co.

Good with two or more approved securities will be required.

Sale to commence at 10 o'clock.

**E. E. Hundley,
W. Robinson,
H. M. Robinson.**

From 1619 until 1863 — almost 250 years — the southern states of the U.S. practiced the legalized enslavement of black Africans and their descendants. This institution was supported by a claim on the three most powerful symbols of civilized society — God, science, and profit.

I will, in the name of humanity, which is outraged, in the name of liberty, which is fettered, in the name of the Constitution and the Bible, which are disregarded and trampled upon, dare to call in question and to denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery — the great sin and shame of America!

FREDERICK DOUGLASS, 1852

Certainly it was no accident that slavery was the major moral issue the signers of the Declaration [of Independence] failed to address when they proclaimed liberty, equality, and justice for all, and went home to oversee their slaves. Just as it is no accident that our public dialogue on race today is more a monologue of frustration and rage.

KAREEM ABDUL-JABBAR, 1996

[In a new production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*] there is a slave auction done entirely in pantomime — far more harrowing than if it had been staged with some attempt at realism, because what we are witnessing is something unspeakable.

MARGO JEFFERSON, 1998

Slavery has always been the defining event of American society.

KAREEM ABDUL-JABBAR, 1996

Through the looking glass darkly:

The means . . . by which the African race now in this country have been reduced to Slavery, cannot affect us, since they are our property, as your land is yours, by inheritance or purchase and prescriptive right. You will say that man cannot hold *property in man*. The answer is, that he can and *actually does* hold property in his fellow all the world over, in a variety of forms, and *has always done so*.

You attempt to avert the otherwise irresistible conclusion, that Slavery was . . . ordained by God, by declaring that the word "slave" is not . . . to be found in the Bible. . . . It is well known that both the Hebrew and Greek words translated "servant" in the Scriptures, mean also, and most usually, "slave." The use of the one word, instead of the other, was a mere matter of taste with the translators of the Bible.

I endorse without reserve the much abused sentiment . . . that "Slavery is the cornerstone of our republican edifice;" while I repudiate, as ridiculously absurd, that much lauded but nowhere accredited dogma of Mr. Jefferson, that "all men are born equal." No society has ever yet existed . . . without a natural variety of classes. The most marked of these must, in a country like ours, be the rich and the poor, the educated and the ignorant.

Laws have been recently passed . . . making it penal to teach slaves to read. . . . If the slave is not allowed to read his bible, the sin rests upon the abolitionists; for they stand prepared to furnish him with a key to it, which would make it, not a book of hope, and love, and peace, but of despair, hatred and blood; which would convert the reader, not into a Christian, but a demon. To preserve him from such a horrid destiny, it is a sacred duty which we owe to our slaves, not less than to ourselves, to interpose the most decisive means.

The research and ingenuity of the abolitionists, aided by the invention of runaway slaves — in which faculty, so far as improvising falsehood goes, the African race is without a rival — have succeeded in shocking the world with a small number of pretended instances of our barbarity.

It is, and it always has been, an object of prime consideration with our slaveholders, to keep families together. Negroes are themselves both perverse and comparatively indifferent about this matter.

If pleasure is correctly defined to be the absence of pain . . . I believe our slaves are the happiest three millions of human beings on whom the sun shines. Into their Eden is coming Satan in the guise of an abolitionist.

JAMES HENRY HAMMOND, 1845

Selections from *The Ideology of Slavery* [FAUST, Ed.]

A knowledge of reading, writing, and the elements of arithmetic, is convenient and important to the free laborer, who is the transactor of his own affairs, and the guardian of his own interests — but of what use would they be to the slave? These alone do not elevate the mind or character, if such elevation were desirable.

The slave is certainly liable to be sold. But, perhaps, it may be questioned, whether this is a greater evil than the liability of the laborer . . . to be dismissed by his employer, with the uncertainty of being able to obtain employment, or the means of subsistence elsewhere. With us, the employer cannot dismiss his laborer without providing him with another employer.

The line of a slave's duty is marked out with precision, and he has no choice but to follow it. He is saved the double difficulty, first of determining the proper course for himself, and then of summoning up the energy which will sustain him in pursuing it.

At least as much injury has been done and suffering inflicted by weak and injudicious indulgence, as by inordinate severity. He whose business is to labor, should be made to labor, and that with due diligence, and should be vigorously restrained from excess or vice. This is no less necessary to his

happiness than to his usefulness. The master who neglects this, not only makes his slaves unprofitable to himself, but discontented and wretched.

WILLIAM HARPER, 1852

It is the duty of society to protect all its members . . . The love of power, properly directed, becomes the noblest of virtues, because power alone can enable us to be safely benevolent to the weak, poor, or criminal. To protect the weak, we must first enslave them . . . Domestic slaves . . . require masters of some kind, whose will and discretion shall stand as a law to them, who shall be entitled to their labor, and bound to provide for them. This social organization begets harmony and good will instead of competition, rivalry, and war of the wits.

Economically, slavery is necessary to bring about association of labor and division of expenses. Labor becomes far more efficient when many are associated together, and the expenses of living are greatly diminished when many families are united under a common government. The socialists are all aiming to attain these ends by an unnatural association, let them adopt the natural one, slavery, and they would show themselves wise and useful men.

GEORGE FITZHUGH, 1857

Most of us came here in chains and most of you came here to escape your chains. Your freedom was our slavery, and therein lies the bitter difference in the way we look at life.

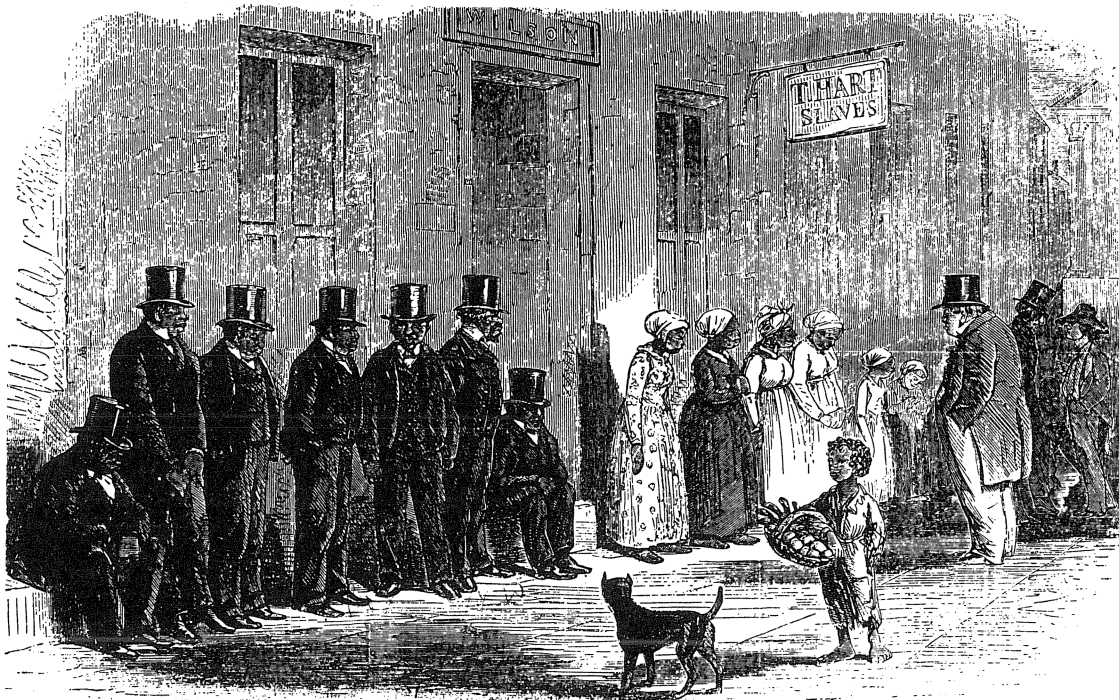
JOHN OLIVER KILLENS, 1964

Slaveholders [are] a people whose men are proverbially brave, intellectual and hospitable, and whose women are unaffectedly chaste, devoted to domestic life, and happy in it . . . My decided opinion is, that our system of Slavery contributes largely to the development and culture of these high and noble qualities.

JAMES HENRY HAMMOND, 1845

[Thomas] Jefferson talked about slaves as “my family.” Obviously if some family members owned other family members, it is not a family in a traditional sense. You keep having to answer the question, was Jefferson a good slave master? That’s an oxymoron. There are no good slave masters.

JULIAN BOND, 1998



Sometimes there was brutality; sometimes there wasn't. But the whole system turned on violence.

EDWARD BALL, 1998

The “science” of slavery

Let us recall that the white man, in order to justify slavery and, later on, to justify segregation, elaborated a complex, all-pervasive myth which at one time classified the black man as a subhuman beast of burden.

ELDRIDGE CLEAVER, 1968

The negro . . . depends upon the white man to do his mental work He is by nature and habit a servant, not alone because of his long period of enslavement, but because of his mental inferiority.

HUBERT HOWE BANCROFT
1912

In order to justify slavery in a courageous new world which was spouting slogans of freedom and equality and brotherhood, the enslavers, through their propagandists, had to create the fiction that the enslaved people were subhuman and undeserving of human rights and sympathies. The first job was to convince the outside world of the inherent inferiority of the enslaved. The second job was to convince the American people. And the third job, which was the cruelest hoax of all, was to convince the slaves themselves that they deserved to be slaves.

JOHN OLIVER KILLENS, 1964

In its long and ugly history . . . white racism has improvised a thousand variations on two basic themes. The first is that black people are born with inferior brains and a limited capacity for mental growth. The second is that their personality tends to be abnormal, whether by nature or by nurture. . . . Both have served to sanctify a hierarchical social order in which “the Negro’s place” is forever ordained by his genes and the accumulated disabilities of his past.

ALEXANDER THOMAS, M.D., 1972

An “educated” negro, like a “free negro,” is a social monstrosity, even more unnatural and repulsive than the latter. . . . God has made the negro an inferior being, not in most cases, but in all cases, for there are no accidents or exceptions in His works. There never could be such a thing as a negro equaling the standard Caucasian in natural ability.

DR. JOHN H. VAN EVRIE, 1853

Racism has always been able to come up with a scientific veneer.

ANDREW HACKER, 1992

"Scientific racism" . . . holds that various human groups exist at different stages of biological evolution. . . . Since the theorists who devised this scenario were white, it is not difficult to deduce the skin color of the front-runners and of those who will pursue them forever like figures on a Grecian urn.

ALEXANDER THOMAS, M.D.
1972

Too often of late the media have been flooded with studies purporting to "inform" us of the inherent . . . inferiority . . . of this or that group. . . . Those slavery manifestos are dusted right off and tidied up into neat statistical columns, with rows of impressive numbers dotted with decimal points, percentage signs hovering at the edges like so much filigree.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS, 1997

The brain of the Negro . . . is, according to positive measurements, smaller than the Caucasian by a full tenth; and this deficiency exists particularly in the anterior portion of the brain, which is known to be the seat of the higher faculties. History and observation, both teach that in accordance with this defective organization, the Mongol, the Malay, the Indian and Negro, are now and have been in all ages and all places, inferior to the Caucasian.

There is in the animal kingdom, a regular gradation in the form of the brain, from the Caucasian down to the lowest order of animals, and . . . the intellectual faculties and instincts are commensurate with the size and form. . . . In animals where the senses and sensual faculties predominate, the nerves coming off the brain are large, and we find the nerves of the Negro larger than those of the Caucasian.

No black race . . . has been, or can be established at any great distance from the equator. Look at the bills of mortality . . . and you will see the proportion of deaths amongst the blacks, increasing as you go north, until you get to Boston . . . a cold climate so freezes their brains as to make them insane or idiotical. JOSIAH C. NOTT, 1844

[In 1851] Samuel Cartwright published a paper in the *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* which attempted to substantiate the association of blackness and madness by specifically identifying those psychopathologies to which Blacks alone were prey. He pinpoints two "illnesses" which he labels "Drapetomania, or the diseases causing slaves to run away" and "Dysaesthesia aethiopsis or hebetude of mind and obtuse sensibility of body — a disease peculiar to negroes — called by overseers, 'rascality'."

SANDER L. GILMAN, 1982

Whiteness was not based on natural, biological premises but on property and terror.

DAVID ROEDIGER, 1998

Rather than feel superior to the benighted psychiatrists of past generations, we should be reminded how easy it is to distort science in the service of racism.

ALEXANDER THOMAS, M.D.
1972

Racial science . . . makes anyone who knows the great messy, unprovable contrary . . . unintelligent, uninformed, powerless, and naïve. . . . It narrows the debate to the property of (extra-intelligent) "experts" who wrap their opinions in the sheepskin of false "proof."

PATRICIA WILLIAMS, 1997

This tradition continued virtually undisturbed into the present century. In 1906, a professor of anatomy at Johns Hopkins concluded that "it is useless to elevate the Negro by education or otherwise, except in the direction of his natural endowments". . . . This myth is by no means dead.

ALEXANDER THOMAS, M.D., 1972

Professor Michael Levin of City College of New York . . . concisely outlined the evidence for racial differences in such traits as average intelligence, aggressiveness, and the willingness to sacrifice today for benefits tomorrow. . . . He concluded with a bold survey of the ways in which employment, education, and law enforcement policies should recognize the biology that underlies the divergent ways in which the races behave.

Professor Eugene Valberg . . . argued that unless black Africans are taught liberal nonsense by whites, they are completely at ease with the notion of racial differences in intelligence.

"RACE AND AMERICAN CIVILIZATION" CONFERENCE,
1994

It's hard to keep one's concentration when, phoenix-like, the rooster of racial science rises every twenty years or so, in ever more seductive plumage, intent upon proving the lost link between the rising of the sun and its crowing loudly. Like clockwork, black people must put aside the activities of everyday life and subject ourselves to the cyclical inspection point of proving our worth, justifying our existence, and teaching our history, over and over and over again.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS, 1997

The aftermath of slavery

After the initial period of exultation that followed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, most blacks discovered that there was nowhere for them to go except back to the farms of their former masters to labor as sharecroppers.

Had white America really believed in its egalitarian declarations, it would have welcomed former slaves into its midst at the close of the Civil War. Indeed, had that happened, America would not be two racial nations today.

ANDREW HACKER, 1992

One of the most stupendous of the wrongs which the Negro has suffered was in turning the whole army of slaves loose in a hostile country, without money, without friends, without experience in home getting or even self-support. Their two hundred fifty years of unrequited labor counted for naught. They were free but penniless in the land which they had made rich.

But though they were robbed of the reward of their labor, though they have been denied their common rights, though they have been discriminated against in every walk of life . . . yet through it all they have been true: true to the country they *owe* (?) so little, true to the flag that denies them protection, true to the government that practically disowns them, true to their honor, fidelity and loyalty.

HENRY CLAY BRUCE, 1895

Even after emancipation, citizens who had been slaves still found themselves consigned to a subordinate status. Put most simply, the ideology that had provided the rationale for slavery by no means disappeared. Blacks continued to be seen as an inferior species, not only unsuited for equality but not even meriting a chance to show their worth.

ANDREW HACKER, 1992

To find the origins of the Negro problem we must turn to the white man's problem.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., 1967

The "redeemers" . . . framed new laws aimed just as surely at disenfranchising blacks as the Reconstruction legislation had aimed at protecting them. Such pieces of legislation were called "Jim Crow" laws, taking their name from the antebellum minstrel show that had given the Confederacy its national anthem, "Dixie."

ALAN AXELROD /
CHARLES PHILLIPS, 1992

**WALNUT STREET
THEATRE,**

Box 50 cents—Pit 25 cents—Gallery 10 & 4 cents.
Doors will be opened at half after 6, and the Curtain
rise at a quarter after 7 o'clock, precisely.

On this occasion
Mr. J. R. SCOTT

AND
MR. HOWARD,

WILL APPEAR
Mr. RICE

As the Far Famed

Jim Crow

Will also appear, and discuss
10 New Subjects,
In his Fashionable Lyric Style.

Monday Evening,
JUNE 3, 1893.

A hopeful period (that was to last only ten years) was heralded with the Reconstruction Acts of 1867 and followed by the 14th and 15th Amendments, which gave Negroes citizenship and the right to vote without regard to "race, color, or previous condition of servitude." During that period, Negroes attended school with whites and were elected to state legislatures as well as to Congress.

There has never been a period in America, before or since, when the climate of public opinion was favorable to the passage of national legislation of the breadth and scope of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments. . . . The Reconstructionists . . . made . . . the first — and last — real attempt to bring the American Dream down from its parchment heaven to the hard and challenging earth of black hope.

LERONE BENNETT, JR., 1987

Many black colleges were established in these years — but so were the Ku Klux Klan and uncouneted secret white supremacist groups. In 1896, the Supreme Court hammered the nail in the coffin of Reconstruction with its decision in Plessy v. Ferguson establishing the principle of "separate but equal." This enabled the Jim Crow system of segregation, which lasted until the 1950s.

Black Americans throughout their history have always been challenged by the harsh and often brutal reality of institutional racism. As a system of unequal power, political racism led to the disfranchisement of African-Americans after the Reconstruction's brief experiment in democracy.

MANNING MARABLE, 1997

At the heart of the fractured soul of America is the frightening chasm of race.

MANNING MARABLE, 1997

Separate-but-equal marked the last stage of the white man's flight into cultural neurosis, and the beginning of the black man's frantic striving to assert his humanity and equalize his position with the white.

ELDRIDGE CLEAVER, 1968

Sanctified by religion, justified by philosophy and legalized by the Supreme Court, separate-but-equal was enforced by day by agencies of the law, and by the KKK & Co. under cover of night.

ELDRIDGE CLEAVER, 1968

What is so often forgotten in any discussion of the Negro's "place" in American society is the fact that it was only as a slave that he really had one. The post-slave society had no place for the black American, and if there were to be any area of the society where the Negro might have an integral function, that area would have to be one that he created for himself. The Jim Crow laws were the white South's attempts to limit the new citizen's presence and rights in the mainstream of society, and they were extremely effective.

LEROI JONES, 1963

It's well worth remembering that Jim Crow flourished during the very time that millions of Europeans entered the United States. A deeply racialized U.S. society transformed ignorant and impoverished immigrants . . . into white people. And as whites, European newcomers enjoyed access to the American transition belt of upward economic mobility.

NELL IRVIN PAINTER, 1998

We may decry the color-prejudice of the South, yet it remains a heavy fact. Such curious kinks of the human mind . . . cannot be laughed away, nor always successfully stormed at, nor easily abolished by act of legislature. . . . They must be recognized as . . . things that stand in the way of civilization and religion and common decency. They can be met in but one way — by the breadth and broadening of human reason.

W.E.B. DU BOIS, 1903

Our minorities alone are in a position to know what the fathers of our democracy were talking about.

SARAH PATTON BOYLE, 1962

W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington espoused diametrically opposed philosophies regarding the advancement of Negroes after Reconstruction. Washington established Tuskegee Institute, for primarily vocational training. Du Bois advocated the entry into higher education of "the talented tenth" of the Negro population.

In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, 1895

No race has ever risen out of the shadows into the sunlight without fierce opposition. We have been no exception to the rule . . . but we shall win in the end, for we shall have God and justice and fair play on our side.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, 1899

No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top. Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities.

We shall constitute one-third and more of the ignorance and crime of the South, or one-third its intelligence and progress; we shall contribute one-third to the business and industrial prosperity of the South, or we shall prove a veritable body of death, stagnating, depressing, retarding every effort to advance the body politic.

It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercises of these privileges. The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera-house.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, 1895

Racism is still that hound of hell which dogs the tracks of our civilization.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., 1967

The permanent scar

Every time a black man sits down to write a coming-of-age memoir he must drag after him hundreds of years of history. Race is still the subject.

JUDITH DUNFORD, 1998

Slavery continues to shape our lives more than a century after abolition because the link it forged between Blackness and inferiority, Blackness and subservience, Blackness and danger, has survived to this day.

HARLON L. DALTON, 1995

It would take the wisdom of the ages to see the profound impact that several centuries of preoccupation with undervaluing an entire race of people could have on the moral fiber of a nation, and on the national psyche.

JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN, 1993

Two hundred and forty-four years of slavery and nearly a century of institutionalized terrorism in the form of segregation, lynchings, and second-class citizenship in America . . . has left its toll in the psychic scars and personal wounds now inscribed in the souls of black folk.

CORNEL WEST, 1993

Blacks could care for the most prized possessions of white people — their children. They could prepare the item most crucial to whites' well-being — their food. Yet whites persisted in saying, and perhaps believing, that blacks were inherently irresponsible.

CARL T. ROWAN, 1974

Slavery and the postjuridical slavery that was Jim Crow are what make the Afro-American experience unique in America. The impact of these institutions was devastating, and it continues today — which, in the long duration of social history and the development of human institutions, is but a moment away from these tragedies.

ORLANDO PATTERSON, 1997

For years the Negro has been taught that he is nobody, that his color is a sign of his biological depravity, that his being has been stamped with an indelible imprint of inferiority . . . All too few people realize how slavery and racial segregation have scarred the soul and wounded the spirit of the black man.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., 1967

What we might have become, we are not. What we are now is only half of what we might have been.

CHARLES H. KING, JR., 1983

That Americans of African origin once wore the chains of chattels remains alive in the memory of both races and continues to separate them.

ANDREW HACKER, 1992

I have met many families whose ancestors were enslaved by my family. I've apologized only to one of those families because I don't think that words are enough. . . . They're like a Band-Aid on the wound.

EDWARD BALL, 1998

It does not matter that contemporary Black folk were not personally enslaved so long as we carry the stigmata of those who were — dark skin. Similarly, it does not matter whether our White counterparts actually descended from slavemasters so long as they inherited from our culture the mind-set that made it possible for liberty-loving, God-fearing people to subordinate their fellow human beings.

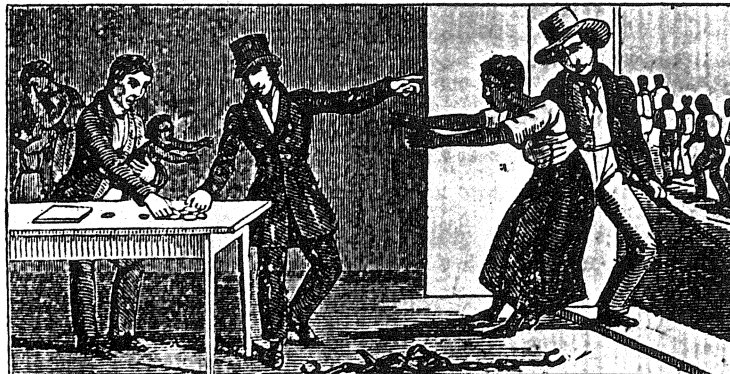
HARLON L. DALTON, 1995

The fact, as chilling as it is unavoidable, is that many among the conservative elite seem tone-deaf on the issue of race. They can't see that our country's moral aspirations — to be "a city on a hill," a beacon of hope and freedom to all the world — seem impossible when one sees the despair of so many of those Americans who descend from slaves.

GLENN C. LOURY, 1997

In my eye, my frantic scramblings to become substantial, I imagine myself functionally insane, operating within the constraints of a society itself driven mad, made sick by its unresolved history of slavery and ongoing trauma of racism.

WANDA COLEMAN, 1993



Slavery's enduring legacy is that our "subhumanity" has been deeply imprinted in the American psyche.

HARLON L. DALTON, 1995

The enduring legacy

Slavery robbed our black ancestors of trust and other values of social glue as much as it robbed them of dignity.

CLARENCE PAGE, 1996

Many black people feel that whites don't understand just how great an atrocity slavery was. . . . We lost who we were as a people.

GERALD EARLY, 1997

We are where we are, with the huge bloody problem delicately referred to as "race relations," because of a history.

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

Among the most pervasive aspects of the "race problem" is the perception many black citizens have that they are still excluded, whether physically or psychologically, from American society.

African-Americans had answered the country's every call from its infancy Yet, the fame and fortune that were their just due never came. For their blood spent, lives lost, and battles won, they received *nothing*. They went back to slavery, real or economic, consigned there by hate, prejudice, bigotry, and intolerance.

COLIN POWELL, 1995

From slavery to the present, the nation has never opened its doors sufficiently to give black Americans a chance to become full citizens. White Americans often respond that it rests with blacks to put aside enough of their own culture so they can be absorbed into the dominant stream. Blacks can only shake their heads and reply that they have been doing just that for several centuries, with very little to show for it.

It is white America that has made being black so disconsolate an estate. Legal slavery may be in the past, but segregation and subordination have been allowed to persist. Even today, America imposes a stigma on every black child at birth.

ANDREW HACKER, 1992

The minorities have been confined to the city by a moat of bigotry.

SHIRLEY CHISHOLM, 1970

African-Americans see a clear distinction between their experience and that of the many immigrants, and their descendants, who take the "we made it, why couldn't they" attitude.

Born as others in the melting pot of America, we did not melt. Instead, we were strung out to mature in the slime of ghettos; denied equal opportunities, our flesh and spirits wasted away into nothingness.

CHARLES H. KING, JR., 1983

The openings in the American society which were there for every successive immigrant group for more than a century were never there for Negroes.

HAROLD R. ISAACS, 1963

Somebody asked us if we remembered seeing the Statue of Liberty as we pulled into the harbor. Tell you the truth, we didn't care too much about it. The Statue of Liberty was important to white European immigrants. It was a symbol to them. We knew it wasn't meant for us.

SADIE AND BESSIE DELANY, 1993

Other Americans, for the most part . . . are just Americans. But we are more than just Americans, not because of our color but because of how America exploited our color. We are different, not because we willed it, but because America set us apart from the rest of the community for special exploitation.

JOHN OLIVER KILLENS, 1964

Other immigrant groups came to America with language and economic handicaps, but not with the stigma of color. Above all, no other ethnic group has been a slave on American soil, and no other group has had its family structure deliberately torn apart.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., 1967

Like it or not, who we *were* has much to do with who we *are*.

TOM MORGANTHAU / MARK RAMBLER, 1997

When I think of the many horrors of slavery, the destruction of the family strikes me as probably the worst. We are still facing the consequences of that destruction.

ARTHUR ASHE, 1993

The Negro family for three hundred years has been on the tracks of the racing locomotives of American history, dragged along mangled and crippled.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.,
1967

The terrible tragedy for most of us black Americans is that we have not recovered from those days of slavery when the "master" viewed family life as something too good, too civilized, or too costly to him, for black people to enjoy.

CARL T. ROWAN, 1974

It is impossible to ignore the devastating effect on "family values" of a system under which couples could be separated, and parents and children sold away from each other, at the will of the owner.

The entire nation — but especially the Afro-American poor whose postslavery ancestors simply never recovered from the familial ethnocide — are paying the price of the rapacity and wickedness of Southern slaveholders, *and let no one forget it.*

ORLANDO PATTERSON, 1997

White people tend to berate blacks for the breakdown of black families, but they habitually deny their history of suppressing these bonds. . . . It is a major problem in the black community. But we all need to ask why this weed still grows. Its roots are slavery; it flourishes today on prejudice, injustice, and white supremacy. Deal with the roots and the weed dies, and maybe flowers will grow.

KAREEM ABDUL-JABBAR, 1996

Millions on millions of white Americans are unable to understand that slums, family disorganization and illiteracy are not the causes of the racial problem, but the end product of that problem.

LERONE BENNETT, JR., 1965

Segregationists love to quote hard, statistical percentages of illegitimacy among lower-class Negroes, but this is a blot on our escutcheon, not theirs. Among people of whom a large number still remember grandmothers raised in slavery, it is remarkable that so many endorse high standards of chastity, rather than that many still do not.

SARAH PATTON BOYLE, 1962

The Negro is deep in the psyche and soma of America.

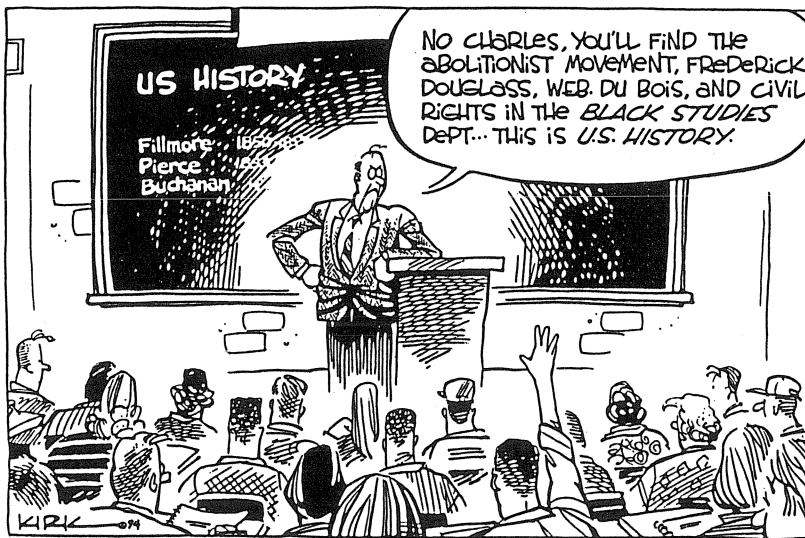
LERONE BENNETT, JR., 1964

Recent history

We come from a people
... who didn't know which way north was,
didn't have a map to get there,
didn't know if they would have shoes
or food or comfort or housing
... or nurturing or support
but who said, "I believe I'm better than this,
and I will run on and see what the end's gonna be."
... who had nothing — nothing,
and out of nothing, made a bridge to today,
made a bridge so that your children
and your children's children
could walk across,
which is the same thing
that Dr. King did for us.

OPRAH WINFREY, 1998





The Southern way

Sometimes southern members [of Congress] stop to talk to me, and I feel they wish they had a knife to open me up down the middle and see what's inside.

SHIRLEY CHISHOLM, 1970

The South cannot go backward to slavery, but because it accepts as real many fantasies and legends about the Negro, it is utterly terrified to go forward to racial equality.

MARGARET HALSEY, 1946

The Southern white power structure apparently understood throughout the Jim Crow era that if this vicious system were to have any chance of surviving, we blacks would have to be made to some large extent willing co-keepers of our own prison. RANDALL ROBINSON, 1998

Colonel Brookhart . . . warned me that I needed to be careful. Georgia was not New York. . . . I had to learn to compromise, to accept a world I had not made and that was beyond my changing. . . . The colonel was telling me, in effect, not to rock the boat, to be a "good Negro."

COLIN POWELL, 1995

For almost a century after the abolition of slavery, America's black population subsisted under a system of controls. In the South, physical force was blatant and unabashed. The whims of a sheriff, an employer, even the driver of a bus, could hold black lives in thrall.

ANDREW HACKER, 1992

"Mr. Rickey," [Clay Hopper] said, "do you really think a nigger's a human being?" Branch Rickey bristled momentarily. Then, as he tells it, "I saw that this Mississippi-born man was sincere . . . that this regarding the Negro as subhuman was part of his heritage, that here was a man who had practically nursed racial prejudice from his mother's breast, so I decided to ignore the comment."

CARL T. ROWAN, 1960

In the segregated South poor whites could be kept in check by rich whites simply by reminding them that they were not blacks, that even in their poverty they were higher in the pecking order than black Harvard professors or black millionaires.

ARTHUR ASHE, 1993

In most towns with one fountain, only the word *White* is painted on it. The town's white idiot can drink out of it but the town's black college professor must go thirsty on a hot August day.

LILLIAN SMITH, 1949

Democracy, like charity, really begins at home. With a mote in one's own eye, it is hard to remove the beam from another's. . . . The whole English-speaking Caucasian world . . . needs its eyes opened. They are full of the dust of race prejudice. Our own American Southland is almost blind as a result.

1945

The South is the land of what is isn't. It is the land of the great evasion. The land of the positive negative. The land of doing things backward. A Punch and Judy land, a tragi-comedy place where human beings block their own doorways.

1947

From all I can gather in the South, the average white person does not give a tinker's damn whether Negroes have available to them the same public treatment as is given an alien enemy. Any white Nazi prisoner during the war could drink out of a WHITE fountain. But not me. . . . And the shame of it is that nobody is ashamed.

1952

The shameless old, funny old, quaint, queer, bad-mannered, old South. I really think when Secretary [of State] Dulles gets through flying around the world teaching democracy to foreigners, he ought to make a little speaking trip through the South, and start teaching our white folks there how to be democratic, too.

1954

Slavery times are almost a hundred years gone, and freedom in theory is almost a century old. Why do so many Southern white people still behave in the same old-fashioned way, still talk and act as if social philosophies, Negro achievements, and world aspirations had not advanced beyond the 18th century?

1957

LANGSTON HUGHES

Terrorism relied for its effectiveness on the racism of genteel society.

ALAN WOLFE, 1998

From *Killers of the Dream* [LILLIAN SMITH, 1949]

Every little southern town is a fine stage-set for Southern Tradition to use as it teaches its children the twisting turning dance of segregation.

Bending, shoving, genuflecting, ignoring, stepping off, demanding, giving in, avoiding Children, moving through the labyrinth made by grownups' greed and guilt and fear. So we learned the dance that cripples the human spirit, we who were white and we who were colored . . . until the movements were reflexes and made for the rest of our life without thinking. Alas, for many white children, they were movements made for the rest of their life without feeling.

We clung to the belief . . . that our white skin made us "better" than all other people. And this belief comforted us, for we felt worthless and weak when confronted by Authorities who had cheapened nearly all that we held dear, except our skin color. There, in the Land of Epidermis, every one of us was a little king.

By the time I had learned that God is love I also knew that I was better than a Negro, that all black folks have their place and must be kept in it . . . that a terrifying disaster would befall the South if ever I treated a Negro as my social equal.

From the day I was born, I began to learn my lessons. . . . I learned to believe in freedom, to glow when the word *democracy* was used, and to practice slavery from morning to night. I learned it the way all of my southern people learn it: by closing door after door until one's mind and heart and conscience are blocked off from each other and from reality.

They who so gravely taught me to split my body from my mind and both from my "soul," taught me also to split my conscience from my acts and Christianity from southern tradition.

We fought hard against understanding, we tried to live in a fog, we could not bear to see what was becoming clearer each day: that race relations are part of the total human experience, not something history has set off in one corner of time.

I had learned that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that we might have segregated churches . . . that white southerners are a hospitable, courteous, tactful people who treat those of their own group with consideration and who as carefully segregate from all the richness of life "for their own good and welfare" thirteen million people whose skin is colored a little differently than my own.

The Southerner clings to two entirely antithetical doctrines, two legends, two histories. . . . He is, on the one hand, the proud citizen of a free society and, on the other, is committed to a society which has not yet dared to free itself of the necessity of naked and brutal oppression. He is part of a country which boasts that it has never lost a war; but he is also the representative of a conquered nation.

An old black man in Atlanta . . . looked into my eyes and directed me into my first segregated bus. . . . His eyes seemed to say that what I was feeling he had been feeling, at much higher pressure, all his life. But my eyes would never see the hell his eyes had seen. And this hell was, simply, that he had never in his life owned anything, not his wife, not his house, not his child, which could not, at any instant, be taken from him by the power of white people. . . . And for the rest of the time that I was in the South I watched the eyes of old black men.

JAMES BALDWIN, 1961

I was an immature 15-year-old. . . . I grew up in a segregated society and I thought that was the way it was and that's the way it should be. . . [Now I want] to be the link between the past and the future. I don't want to pass this along to another generation.

HAZEL BRYAN MASSERY, 1997

Photographed taunting Elizabeth Eckford at Little Rock in 1957

The Negroes' struggles and despairs have been like fertilizer in the fields of his humanity, while we, like protected children with all our basic needs supplied, have given our attention to superficialities.

SARAH PATTON BOYLE, 1962

Long ago I learned not to be proud I'm white, but I had never thought to be, as I am, ashamed.

SARAH PATTON BOYLE, 1962

Little Rock

When I watch news footage of the day we entered school guarded by the 101st soldiers, I am moved by the enormity of that experience. I believe that was a moment when the whole nation took one giant step forward.

We headed down a path from which there was no turning back, because when we thought of alternatives, the only option was living our lives behind the fences of segregation and passing on that legacy to our children.

MELBA PATILLO BEALS, 1994

What we know as the Civil Rights Movement was ignited by the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, which outlawed school segregation.

Three years later, after an egregious attempt, in the name of states' rights, to prevent the admission of nine black teenagers to Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, President Eisenhower ordered federal troops to escort the children to school through jeering and threatening crowds.

Throughout the ensuing school year, these incredibly courageous youngsters endured not only isolation and verbal taunts, but varying degrees of physical assault.

Forty years ago, a single image first seared the heart and stirred the conscience of our nation. . . . Elizabeth Eckford walked to this door for her first day of school, utterly alone. She was turned away by people who were afraid of change, instructed by ignorance, hating what they simply could not understand. And America saw her, haunted and taunted for the simple color of her skin, and in the image we caught a very disturbing glimpse of ourselves. PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON, (September 25) 1997

Does anybody really think we wanted to go to Central High School because we wanted to sit next to white people? We wanted to go to Central High School because they were getting Rhodes Scholarships there. We wanted equal access to opportunities.

MELBA PATILLO BEALS, 1997

It was Little Rock that made racial equality a driving obsession in my life.
PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON, (September 25) 1997

All this pomp and circumstance and the presence of my eight colleagues does not numb the pain I feel at entering Central High School . . . a place that was meant to nourish us and prepare us for adulthood. But, because we dared to challenge the Southern tradition of segregation, this school became, instead, a furnace that consumed our youth and forged us into reluctant warriors.

MELBA PATILLO BEALS, 1994

The integration had stolen my sixteenth birthday. Later that night before I sobbed into my pillow, I wrote: *Please, God, let me learn how to stop being a warrior. Sometimes I just need to be a girl.*

MELBA PATILLO BEALS, 1994

The most important part of the Little Rock story was . . . the magnificent courage and dignity these young people displayed. . . . Their *action* did more to win the sympathy and support of democratic-minded white people than all the speeches about “tolerance” that have ever been made. . . . As they walk through Jim Crow barriers to attend school . . . the world rocks beneath their tread.

Dear children of Little Rock — you and your parents and the Negro people of your community have lifted our hearts and renewed our resolve that full freedom shall now be ours. You are the pride and the glory of our people, and my heart sings warm and tender with love for you.

PAUL ROBESON, 1958

The man of the year for 1958 is a 16-year-old boy. He is Ernest Green, the first Negro to graduate from Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. . . . In his hands a high school diploma becomes a banner of singular glory . . . The dim wonder of “book learning” in the minds of countless slaves who dared not touch a book for fear of flogging lies in that diploma. . . . And the dew of ancient pain moistened his diploma. . . . Ernest Green’s diploma is stamped with song and tied with a prayer.

LANGSTON HUGHES, 1958

The patter of their feet . . . is the thunder of the marching men of Joshua.

PAUL ROBESON, 1958

The civil rights movement

[Martin Luther King, Jr.] and everything that he represented, all the people whose names never made the history books, made it possible for me to stand and be who I am and take over ownership of my life.

OPRAH WINFREY, 1998

Racism, war, and poverty were anchors dragging on our society, preventing us from reaching our full potential, as if anchors from a nineteenth-century sailing ship had been attached to the space shuttle. We accepted the challenges of detaching those anchors.

ANDREW YOUNG, 1996

In 1955, the Civil Rights Movement was waiting in the wings of history when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat in a segregated bus. The ensuing bus boycott by the Negroes of Montgomery, Alabama, lasted more than a year and brought Martin Luther King, Jr., to the forefront of the struggle.

In the United States, on paper at least, the Constitution and Bill of Rights gave all Americans certain rights, including the vote and the right to be treated equally before the law. The Movement was about making those rights more than a piece of paper. PROJECT HIP-HOP, 1997

We should not lose our sense of how the civil rights movement happened . . . In blurring, or ignoring, the context of the struggle, the veneration of Martin Luther King becomes devoid of depth and context, and the ability to use his model to renew the struggle for a just and equitable society is lost. ANDREW YOUNG, 1996

Every single Negro who is worth his salt is going to resent any kind of slurs and discrimination because of his race Talk about "Communists stirring up Negroes to protest," only makes present misunderstanding worse than ever. Negroes were stirred up long before there was a Communist Party, and they'll stay stirred up long after the Party has disappeared — unless Jim Crow has disappeared by then as well. JACKIE ROBINSON, 1949

Racism, war, and poverty were heavy burdens, to challenge injustice was an easy burden.
ANDREW YOUNG, 1996

There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the blackness of corroding despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
(Letter) 1963

There *is* no reason that black men should be expected to be more patient, more forbearing, more farseeing than whites; indeed, quite the contrary.

JAMES BALDWIN, 1963

The idea of "gradualism" in taking measures to alleviate the evils of segregation, the absence of voting rights, and other forms of discrimination began to fall on deaf ears.

There is nothing in the . . . legal guarantees of our full citizenship rights, which says that the Constitution is to be enforced "gradually" where Negroes are concerned. "Gradualism" is a mighty long road. It stretches back 100 long and weary years, and looking forward it has no end.

PAUL ROBESON, 1958

Nearly a century after the Emancipation Proclamation, Negroes are still in many ways enslaved by our system, and few of their leaders can hear the expression "move too fast" applied to their aching crawl toward full citizenship without yearning to chastise the offender.

SARAH PATTON BOYLE, 1962

I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's greatest stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is . . . the white moderate . . . who paternalistically feels that he can set the timetable for another man's freedom.

For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with a piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." It has been a tranquilizing thalidomide, relieving the emotional stress for a moment, only to give birth to an ill-formed infant of frustration.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., (Letter) 1963

We were trying to transform America, not triumph over white folk.

ANDREW YOUNG, 1996

Martin Luther King, Jr., adopted Gandhi's principles of nonviolence. Participants in marches and demonstrations were trained to refrain from any physical response no matter how brutal the provocation.

Out of the new unity and action vast monuments of dignity were shaped, courage was forged and hope took concrete form.

For the first time in his history the Negro . . . gained manhood in the nation that had always called him "boy."

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
1967

The "I Have a Dream" speech is really a message of hope, whose effect was to comfort the disturbed, but not without disturbing the comfortable.

BERNICE A. KING, 1993

Society needs nonviolent gadflies to bring its tensions into the open and force its citizens to confront the ugliness of their prejudices and the tragedy of their racism.

Lacking sufficient access to television, publications and broad forums, Negroes have had to write their most persuasive essays with the blunt pen of marching ranks. . . . More white people learned more about the shame of America, and finally faced some aspects of it, during the years of nonviolent protest than during the century before.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., 1967

I was living in Montgomery, Alabama, during the bus boycott . . . When I heard [Reverend King] was gonna get out of jail, me and some other white women wanted to see this smart-aleck nigger. I'm so thankful I went down there that day because I might have gone all my life just the way I was. When I saw all those people beating up on him and he didn't fight back, and didn't cuss like I would have done, and he didn't say anything, I was just turned upside down.

PEGGY TERRY, 1992

When white freedom riders were brutalized along with blacks, a sigh of relief went up from the black masses, because the blacks knew that white blood is the coin of freedom in a land where for four hundred years black blood has been shed unremarked and with impunity.

ELDRIDGE CLEAVER, 1968

Martin Luther King, Jr.: The peaceful warrior [1929-1968]

Above all, he brought a new and higher dimension of human dignity to black people's lives. CORETTA SCOTT KING, 1983

The bullet that killed him . . . did incalculable damage to the United States of America. BOB HERBERT, 1998

A thoughtful man and one of deep personal faith, his conscience called him into action for the soul of our Nation. He mobilized thousands of other brave and principled Americans — black and white, renowned and unknown — and began a crusade for justice that continues today. In sit-ins, marches, demonstrations, and boycotts, he and many others met violence with nonviolence and ignorance with determination. . . Pouring out his life in service, Dr. King made enormous and lasting contributions to improve the lives of millions of his fellow Americans. PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON, 1998

By superimposing the image of the black preacher on the image of Gandhi, by adding songs and symbols with concrete significance in Black America, King transformed a spontaneous local protest [in Montgomery, Alabama] into a national passive resistance movement with a method and an ideology.

LERONE BENNETT, JR., 1987

Martin had the ability to make us feel as if we were more than our daily selves, more than we had been — a part of a beautiful and glorious vision that was enabling us to transcend ourselves. It was a marvelous quality he had, not ever fully captured on the printed page or in recordings, to lift the people to

another place so that they could almost feel themselves moving. . . . The Nobel [Peace] Prize was more than a personal award . . . It was an acknowledgment of the struggles of all black Americans for survival and achievement during the long, arduous, and difficult century since emancipation. ANDREW YOUNG, 1996

King's continuing significance to African-American people is that he and others . . . represented the very best within ourselves. Young African-American[s] . . . can take special pride in the memory of Martin, because through study and commitment to the continuing fight for equality, they will become "new Martins." MANNING MARABLE, 1997

Martin Luther King, Jr.: From his three classics

Letter from the Birmingham Jail August 1963

An individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and willingly accepts the penalty by staying in jail to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the very highest respect for law.

I have heard numerous religious leaders of the South call upon their worshippers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the *law*, but I have longed to hear white ministers say, "Follow this decree because integration is morally *right* and the Negro is your brother."

I Have a Dream Speech, August 1963

The life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination; one hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity.

When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which ev-

ery American was to fall heir. . . . It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check . . . which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

I've Been to the Mountaintop Speech, April 1968

The nation is sick. Trouble is in the land. Confusion all around. . . But I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough, can you see the stars.

We are determined to gain our rightful place in God's world. . . We are saying that we are determined to be men. We are determined to be people. We are saying that we are God's children. And that we don't have to live like we are forced to live.

It's all right to talk about "long white robes over yonder," in all of its symbolism. But ultimately people want some suits and dresses and shoes to wear down here. It's all right to talk about "streets flowing with milk and honey," but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and his children who can't eat three square meals a day.

The power and effectiveness of the Movement came from the combination of individual courage, strength in numbers, and the belief in the moral and political righteousness of the cause.

There is nothing more majestic than the determined courage of individuals willing to suffer and sacrifice for their freedom and dignity.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., 1958

Sparks from the flames of Birmingham leaped from ghetto to ghetto, igniting inflammable material that had been gathering for years, welding Negroes into a great black mass of livid indignation.

LERONE BENNETT, JR., 1964

They are not fighting *people*, they are fighting a past that bars them from a life of freedom and responsibility. For them, only the uncreated future counts: they know they must help make it. LILLIAN SMITH, 1961

If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
(Letter) 1963

The moment the blacks were let into the white world — let out of the voiceless and faceless cages of their ghettos, singing, walking, talking, dancing, writing, and orating *their* image of America and of Americans — the white world was suddenly challenged to match its practice to its preachments.

ELDRIDGE CLEAVER, 1968

I stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial [on August 28, 1963] looking toward the Washington Monument . . . There were three hundred thousand people there and everybody felt the same way. . . for that suspended, isolated few hours in time there was more love in that mall than the world has ever known. The galvanizing of what the civil rights movement was about occurred on that day.

SAMMY DAVIS, JR., 1989

The movement was the canvas upon which we painted the rest of our lives.

MARGARET BURNHAM, 1998

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
(April) 1967

Just when the Movement had achieved most of its basic civil rights goals and was turning toward the problem of economic inequality, it was derailed by the Vietnam War. Only after much soul-searching did Martin Luther King, Jr., decide to follow his conscience and speak out against the war though it meant diverting attention from the Movement and its war on poverty. Dr. King was assassinated a year later.

The civil rights movement was a time when we thought: Maybe now it will finally happen. Maybe now our country will finally grow up, come to terms with this race mess. But it seems like the momentum was lost when the Vietnam War happened. It was like all the energy of the young people, and the focus of the country, got shifted away from civil rights.

BESSIE DELANY, 1993

A few years ago . . . it seemed as if there was real promise of hope for the poor — both black and white . . . Then came the build-up in Vietnam and I watched the program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube.

The bombs in Vietnam explode at home; they destroy the hopes and possibilities for a decent America. . . . I am disappointed with our failure to deal positively and forthrightly with the triple evils of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism. We are presently moving down a dead-end road that can only lead to national disaster.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., (April) 1967

The modern civil rights revolution succeeded in establishing a mainstream taboo against overt prejudice and bigotry, but it was far less successful in creating an enduring consensus about the role of government in combating them.

CHRISTOPHER EDLEY, JR.
1996

I marched with Martin Luther King, but I was too young to really know what was going on, how bad it really was. . . . It's really amazing to realize what those people went through to enable us, within my lifetime, to have what we should have had anyway. Now it's all changing.

ANITA HERBERT, 1992

In light of how much of the Movement's "unfinished business" remains, we see the Movement as ongoing, as something in which we can take part.

PROJECT HIP-HOP, 1997

The splintering of the nonviolent Movement after Dr. King's murder was followed by an escalation of urban rioting, the rise to leadership of more militant activist leaders, and a white and conservative backlash that unraveled much of the progress that had been made.

After centuries of bloodshed and assaulted personhood, uncompensated toil and disdained talent, brave marches and protracted court cases, the American curtain in the 1960s was finally falling on de jure racial discrimination. But while this benchmark stride was seen as an important first step by many African-Americans, it was seen as an epoch-ending step by many whites.

RANDALL ROBINSON, 1998

By 1966, the walls of overt racial segregation in the South, encrusted with almost a century of regional law, had almost completely crumbled. . . . As the outer crust of American racism and oppression was falling away, deeper, more recalcitrant patterns of discrimination lay exposed before us: the very nerve and bone structure of American racism.

ANDREW YOUNG, 1996

The changes wrought by the struggles, court decisions, protests, and legislation of the decade did leave a lasting mark on American culture and society. . . . But . . . for the most part . . . civil rights leaders have felt that their energies in recent decades have been spent holding onto the gains of the past.

ALAN AXELROD / CHARLES PHILLIPS, 1992

We are afraid we might end up here with a mouthful of Civil Rights and an empty stomach.

WHITNEY M. YOUNG, JR., 1964