

## NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS DAY

by

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Thirty years ago President Eisenhower recommended and the Congress acted to create the United States Commission on Civil Rights. In an atmosphere tense with suspicions of forced integration and recognition that America faced perhaps its greatest challenge since the War of American Union in the need to correct injustices inflicted on blacks by state and federal policies of discrimination, President Eisenhower recommended a "reasonable and moderate response," designed to provide a means of resolving "a great educational problem that involves a moral" principle. The Commission was to assist in identifying the responsibilities "not of Massachusetts or Mississippi but of the United States," to "bring about better understanding and not to persecute anybody."

Since that positive and creative decision in the depths of the "bad old days," Congress has from time to time resolved, and the President proclaimed, the annual observance of National Civil Rights Day - a day designed in the words of the resolution, to recognize the importance of civil rights to all Americans. Today, August 12, 1987, is National Civil Rights Day.

Here we have a bedrock conservative issue if ever there was one. Living as we do in an era when some believe civil rights to be the privileged preserve of some, but not all Americans, we have cause to observe National Civil Rights Day with a plea to redeem Eisenhower's vision. The Preamble to our Constitution was drafted by Gouverneur Morris of Pennsylvania. But Morris's, "We The People" was more than one man's idea. As Patrick Henry correctly remarked, Morris did not speak merely in his name, nor in the name of the thirteen states, but in the name of all the people of the United States. "We The People" made pledges and promises to be redeemed not by special interests but by all the individuals comprising this great society. National Civil Rights Day reminds us of those pledges and promises, and that civil rights are the benchmarks not of oppression but of American citizenship.

Since the preamble was adopted, America has become a land of many races, and faiths. It remains, however, a land of one right for all - where the rule of law benefits every one and not one or some at the expense of others. Ours is a democratic land, where the idea of majority rule encompasses "justice for all." The majority is a sacred republican expedient, not a class or a caste. When Americans begin to speak of the majority, not as the voice of republican liberty, but as one group in opposition to other groups in our society, they are perverting our heritage. When defenders of a quota-ized society scornfully reject the claims of "the majority," they turn an icon of republicanism into a mere racial epithet. They pit race against race, men against women, faith against faith, without any means of reuniting them.

President Eisenhower said that his objective "was to prevent anybody illegally from interfering with any individual's right." His Commission was to contribute to this end by representing "the spectrum of American opinion," and would consist of persons of

such character and “national reputation that their opinions, convictions, and findings of fact will be respected by America.” Nothing less could provide a proper emphasis for the American principle that every individual’s rights are precious.

As National Civil Rights Day dawned in 1987, the Commission on Civil Rights was locked in a stranglehold by liberal Democrats. Slowly, the past four years, they have been choking off its life and this year threaten to kill it. Why do liberal Democrats in 1987 act the part of the obstructionists of 1957? Two words: Ronald Reagan. While the President is in office, they cannot control the commission, and stack it with their cronies. Unlike Eisenhower, they believe Civil Rights are not for all Americans but only for those interests who will push a liberal Democrat agenda. In 1957 the obstructionists forced a black woman to the back of the bus. In 1987 the obstructionists force even young black children to the back of the classroom, just to be able to save their notions of quotas and group interests for America. The Commission on Civil Rights would tell the truth about the liberal Democrat agenda. That is why they attempt to cut off funding and silence the Commission.

To keep America on the track of its ancient pledges and promises, we need to keep the spirit of Civil Rights for all alive. National Civil Rights Day should not pass unnoticed for as long as Americans’ civil rights are jeopardized by governmental indifference to the rights of individual Americans. If conservatives sleep now, while a Civil Rights Commission true to Eisenhower’s vision is being destroyed, we will awaken later, not to find that there is no longer a civil rights commission, and all Americans secure in their constitutional rights without distinctions of race, gender, or class. We will awaken to a new, liberal Democrat Commission on Civil Rights bent on dividing and punishing our Country until one day no one remembers, we were once “We the people of the United States.”