

Cleveland, Ohio, March 8, 1949

Think of Cleveland, or Minneapolis, or Pittsburgh as a proving ground--a proving ground for instruments of amity and understanding. Essentially, that is the role of the community in the development of a nationally non-discriminatory society.

Because discriminatory practices are initiated in the communities of America, it is the communities that must provide the key to amity and understanding. Poetically-worded laws may be passed in the Congress of the United States, but those laws can be naked illusions unless Cleveland is behind them, and Minneapolis, and St. Louis, and every other community in the nation. We need community action to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that a national policy of non-discrimination works.

And what does non-discrimination offer? What are its selling points?

It is economical. When people of different racial, religious, and nationality groups have both the opportunity and the incentive to develop and use their full skills, an increase in production results.

Expenditures of public funds for relief, public health services and the correction of delinquency and crime are reduced.

The increased purchasing power of minority groups means an increased market for the products of other workers and business concerns--more business and better business. The standard of living of all families steps up. More refrigerators, more cars, more education, more recreation.

The children of minority groups enter the arena, better-fed, better cared for, adequately educated. They take their place in a complex society, equipped with the tools to make their valuable contribution.

Every hour, every day, more and more people comeingle. As they see each other at work, at play, the myths and the antagonisms and the stereotypes associated with races and religions wear away and the similarities between all men are recognized.

Morally, we relieve ourselves of a burden of guilt. We abandon hypocrisy, the hypocrisy of a nation founded for freedom, but fertile in prejudice.

Moreover, a policy of non-discrimination builds a strong fort against the propaganda of totalitarians. An economically comfortable people who can embrace justice are invulnerable to totalitarian ideologies. They cannot be enticed into the brotherhood of misery.

This is the community's stake in a non-discriminatory society. These are the things which accrue, which must accrue in every community to create a pattern which will do justice to our American heritage.



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