

Taped 12/8/67
To Dnc - From Louisville

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333 8750

How sorry I am that I could not be here to participate in this highly significant Symposium on the Urban Crisis.

I want to commend my good friend, John ~~Sengstacke~~ ^{Smitak}, for his leadership and foresight in bringing together a select group of business leaders to discuss some of the most challenging problems facing our urban communities throughout the country.

Your Symposium theme -- Economic Development - A Thrust for Identity -- is very relevant to our efforts, to our determination to face up to the urban crisis.

I address you as I addressed the National Businessmen's Council of New York recently. What I said to that group of business leaders ~~is applicable~~ ^{applies} to you.

The mood and the needs that characterize the American slums of today are similar to those we find in underdeveloped countries ~~all over the past colonial world~~ of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

People who have long suffered oppression are now claiming their place in the sun.

Like leaders all over the developing world, you have a dual role. ^LYou must speak for the needs and feelings of your community, keeping alive the ~~distinct~~ vision of a better future. ^LAt the same time, you must deal ~~pragmatically~~ ^{practically} and responsibly with the harsh realities of the present.

L The challenge before us is the economic development of the inner-city. L And there is a part for all of us to play.

I have challenged our major business leaders to take the initiative, to use their creative ingenuity in providing the technical skills and financial support necessary for Negroes interested in developing business enterprises in the inner-city.

L You, as leaders of your community, have a definite leadership role and responsibility, to take full advantage of the money, skill and goodwill which will be available to you within the American private sector.

L The Federal Government is willing to help, through a number of existing programs L But these programs are meaningless unless there is someone or some group who takes the initiative in relating and using them to meet the interests and needs of your own community.

L This you can do very well, because you have the background, the knowledge and understanding that would be important to us in accelerating the growth of Negro business entrepreneurship. You can be one of the vital links in this effort, interpreting to the government the best possible answers to the economic problems of your community.

In this way, you, as business leaders, can become the responsible voices of your communities, instead of abdicating to those who counsel hatred, violence, and destruction.

I pledge you my full support.

I am pleased to greet you in session and offer my congratulations to the Fellows of the Chicago Defender's Round Table of Commerce who will be inducted at this evening's ceremonies.

I look forward to working closely with you and John ~~Sengstacke~~ in converting some of the ideas and plans from healthy dialogue into reality.



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