

JOHN LEWIS, "SPEECH AT THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON" (28 AUGUST 1963)

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Abstract: John Lewis delivered a fiery speech at the March on Washington that attracted nearly as much attention as Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" oration. Although he had been forced to "tone down" his speech, Lewis still delivered a rousing message that effectively captured the militant spirit among many civil rights workers in the summer of 1963.

Key Words: John Lewis; March on Washington; civil rights movement; Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

On August 28, 1963, more than 250,000 people participated in the largest and most remembered civil rights demonstration in the United States--the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The speeches delivered by representatives of the ten civil rights, religious, and labor organizations that sponsored the March were the focal point of the event, with Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" oration becoming one of the most celebrated speeches in American history, pushing the others to the margins of our historical memory. While civil rights leader John Lewis's fiery address at the March did not approach King's in terms of eloquence, his speech is notable for its militancy, attracting nearly as much attention in its time. Even though Lewis was forced by other speakers at the March to "tone down" his rhetoric, he still delivered a powerful indictment of racial injustice and the politicians' failure to address the nation's chronic civil rights problems. Moreover, he called for a massive campaign of nonviolent direct action to bring down the system of racial segregation and discrimination in the South known as Jim Crow. When Lewis's speech is remembered at all, it is mostly among academic specialists, who tend to focus on the controversy that led to the censoring of the original version of the address. But Lewis's speech deserves to be more than just a sidebar to our knowledge about the March on Washington, a historical curiosity notable only for the controversy it created. By studying the life, times, and rhetoric of one of the heroes of the American civil rights movement, we can understand better the convictions and experiences of civil rights activists at a critical historical moment, the differences between the various civil rights organizations, the civil rights movement's uneasy relationship with white liberals, the nature of social protest as a form of political action, and the power and limitations of militant protest rhetoric. Specifically, Lewis's speech is remarkable as a compelling affirmation of grassroots civil rights activism, a forceful critique of moderation and American liberalism, a powerful expression of militancy, and a prescient articulation of the principle of equal voting

rights. That Lewis was only twenty-three years old at the time and was not considered to be an eloquent orator makes his rhetorical achievement even more extraordinary.

### *John Lewis's Early Political Activism*

One of the principal figures in the American civil rights movement, John Lewis was a leader in many of the major crusades for racial equality during the 1960s--the Nashville sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, the March on Washington, Freedom Summer, and the Selma voting rights campaign. A source of inspiration to many within the movement, Lewis was an activist "of singular purpose, unshakable in his beliefs, limitless in his faith." In awarding him its Profile in Courage Award for 2001, the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation praised Lewis for his "extraordinary courage, leadership, vision and commitment to universal human rights." And upon presenting Lewis with its prestigious Spingarn Medal in 2002, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) honored Lewis as "one of America's true champions of freedom."<sup>1</sup>

Lewis's racial consciousness developed at an early age. Lewis was born in rural Pike County, Alabama, on February 21, 1940. As a young boy, he complained regularly to his family about the economic exploitation they faced as black cotton farmers in the South and questioned the racist practices of the Jim Crow world in which he lived. As an adolescent, Lewis came to believe that African Americans did not have to accept racial oppression as their fate. In what Lewis describes as a turning point in his life, he heard the broadcast of a sermon by Martin Luther King, Jr. on a Sunday morning in 1955 in which King applied the tenets of Christianity to contemporary racial problems. As a result of King's words and the Montgomery bus boycott the young minister helped lead that year, Lewis came to feel that he had to take a stand against racial discrimination. Whereas his parents shouldered the burden of their race, made the best of it, and believed that "'decent' black folks stayed out of trouble," Lewis began to engage in small acts of resistance, such as circulating and submitting a petition to desegregate the Pike County Public Library. By the time he boarded a Greyhound bus headed for Nashville to attend American Baptist Theological Seminary in 1957, Lewis already was on the road to becoming an activist for human dignity and civil rights.<sup>2</sup>

While studying to become a preacher in Nashville, Lewis also solidified his belief in Christianity "as a rationale for social protest." His most influential teacher was not one of his seminary professors but rather James Lawson, a field secretary for the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), who led workshops on nonviolent resistance as it related to the struggle for racial justice. Lawson instructed students in the philosophy of nonviolence, civil disobedience, redemptive suffering, and Christian love. He also trained them in the practices of nonviolent direct action as a means of challenging Jim Crow, conducting mock protests in which students experienced and learned to cope with the harsh resistance they would face. Lawson staged dramatized sit-ins, for example, in which "store owners" and "hecklers" screamed racial epithets at the students performing the role of demonstrator, blew cigarette smoke in their faces, pulled their hair, pushed them around, and shoved them to the floor. The workshops emphasized that the demonstrators' suffering would be redemptive, but they did not minimize the suffering.

Above all, though, Lawson emphasized the moral and spiritual dimensions of the movement: their goal was to create a "Beloved Community," to help to bring the Kingdom of God to earth. Lewis's education was reinforced during a weekend retreat at Highlander Folk School in 1958, recommended to him by Lawson. Enlightened by the workshops on nonviolence and leadership and energized by the fellowship, Lewis "left Highland on fire." Lewis was deeply affected by Lawson's teaching and his experience at Highlander. According to fellow activist Mary King, he came to personify the spirit of nonviolence "[m]ore than anyone else in the movement."<sup>3</sup>

Beginning in 1959, Lewis participated in the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference's plan to desegregate the capital city's downtown. The first specific targets for their sit-in campaign were lunch counters at drugstores, department stores, and bus stations. Lewis wrote the handbook for the sit-ins, instructing participants in the dos and don'ts of the demonstrations and reminding them of their commitment to nonviolence and Christian love. Setting out with a flock of fellow protestors in mid-February 1960, Lewis initially was scared--despite his training with Lawson--of what might happen to him. But by focusing on his absolute certainty that what he was doing was right, Lewis found the courage of his convictions. Moreover, upon being arrested days later for his activism, Lewis came to feel radically empowered, emancipated, and proud. "Is this all they can do to us?" he thought. Like many of the students who formed the core of the Nashville movement, Lewis was more willing to challenge the white power structure than his parents' generation and more willing to engage in confrontational protest than the leaders of established civil rights groups. Following continued sit-ins, mass arrests, and an economic boycott, the Nashville protests were successful, and lunch counters began serving African American customers in May 1960. Lewis was pleased by this success but was keenly aware that so much work remained to be done, in Nashville and beyond.<sup>4</sup>

Soon after the sit-ins, Lewis joined the Freedom Rides--a campaign organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to test compliance with the Supreme Court's 1960 ruling in *Boynton v. Virginia*, which banned segregation in waiting rooms, lunch counters, and restrooms for interstate passengers. Though every rider was chosen for his or her commitment, Lewis's "quiet courage" stood out. When the riders first encountered serious trouble--at the bus terminal in Rock Hill, South Carolina--Lewis walked without hesitation right into a mob of angry whites without fear, ready to accept his fate. Lewis was beaten severely for challenging Jim Crow in Rock Hill and again in Montgomery, Alabama, where he stood his ground before hundreds of angry whites, ultimately being knocked unconscious. In addition, he was arrested in Birmingham, Alabama, and later in Jackson, Mississippi--after which he spent over a month in jail, including two weeks in the Magnolia state's notorious Parchman Prison Farm. Throughout the Freedom Rides, Lewis also demonstrated his capacity for leadership, helping to organize the campaign after CORE national director James Farmer decided to cancel it. During the subsequent rides he participated in, he acted as a spokesman and team leader for the group. Lewis saw the overall campaign as a success, as it focused national attention on segregation in the South and forced the federal government to enforce the *Boynton* decision. The campaign also demonstrated that the younger generation of civil rights activists was willing to confront segregation head-on. The Freedom Rides enhanced the power of a new civil rights organization, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), of which Lewis was a founding

member. Furthermore, the Freedom Rides escalated the aggressive spirit of Lewis and many of the other students, intensifying their commitment to push and provoke.<sup>5</sup>

During the next two years, Lewis participated in important but less dramatic direct action campaigns. Back in Nashville, he continued his leadership in the movement to fully desegregate downtown. And in Cairo, Illinois, he led protests against segregated theaters, restaurants, hotels, and swimming pools.

At this time, Lewis also became a central figure in SNCC. He was elected to its executive coordinating committee during the summer of 1962, and SNCC's chairman the following June, which required him to move to Atlanta. Many regarded his election as "a bit of a fluke," as he had not sought the position and seemed a bit out-of-step with many of the organization's activists. Lewis had not been involved extensively in the community organizing activities in the deep South that had become the main preoccupation of SNCC staff members. Whereas SNCC had been an organization of nonviolent activists seeking to appeal to the nation's conscience (like Lewis), it was becoming a cadre of organizers seeking to mobilize African Americans to force the federal government to use its powers to achieve civil rights goals. In addition, some old members and many new members did not share Lewis's philosophy of nonviolence or his strong religious convictions. But the fact that he had been beaten and jailed so many times earned him a large measure of respect, leading to his election as a compromise candidate who appeared more militant than he actually was. Drawing upon his conviction, courage, and experience, Lewis served as "the most pragmatic, down-to-earth leader SNCC ever had."<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps SNCC would not have elected Lewis had they known that one week later he would represent the organization in a meeting with President John F. Kennedy and that in less than ten weeks, he would speak at the March on Washington. Everyone knew Lewis spoke with a stammer, had difficulty pronouncing some words, and in general was not particularly articulate. Lewis characterized his own speech as marked by a "thick tongue," but fellow Nashville activist Curtis Murphy put it more colorfully, claiming that Lewis talked like he had "a load of manure in his mouth." Furthermore, Lewis was terrified of public speaking. But once Lewis began speaking, he loved the connection he felt with an audience and became a passionate and earnest--if not exceptionally eloquent--orator for the ideas he advocated.<sup>7</sup>

### *The March on Washington*

In the months leading up to the March on Washington, organized resistance to segregation in the United States was transformed from a series of intermittent local campaigns into a broad-scale revolt. The best-known campaign took place between April and May 1963 in Birmingham, Alabama, where activists organized sit-ins, marches, and an economic boycott to challenge racial discrimination in "the most segregated city in America." Violent retaliation against the demonstrators in Birmingham helped expose the depths of Southern racism: Widely disseminated images of law enforcement officials attacking peaceful demonstrators with police dogs and fire hoses capable of stripping the bark from a tree helped arouse the conscience of many white Americans. Yet Birmingham was just one campaign among many. The enemies of Jim Crow organized sit-ins and marches against segregated restaurants, movie theatres, hotels, pools, and skating rinks in Baltimore and Cambridge, Maryland; Greensboro, North Carolina; Knoxville, Tennessee; New York, New York; St. Augustine, Florida; and Savannah, Georgia. They

carried out economic boycotts against segregationist merchants in Danville, Virginia; Gadsen, Alabama; Jackson, Mississippi; and Plaquemine, Louisiana. They conducted voter registration drives in Greenwood, Mississippi; Selma, Alabama; and Americus, Georgia. They protested against discriminatory employment practices in Las Vegas, Nevada, and Seattle, Washington.<sup>8</sup> Unlike the March on Washington, most of these campaigns involved the use of nonviolent direct action. By blatantly defying segregationist laws and injunctions against demonstrations, civil rights activists were able to exact some concessions from local businesses and governments and to attract national attention to the plight of African Americans.

Despite these achievements, participating in the campaigns took a toll on civil rights workers, instilling in them a mixture of hope and frustration. They were subjected to violence; imprisonment; destruction of their homes, businesses, churches, and meeting places; threats; economic retaliation; and harassment--all in the service of breaking down a few racial barriers in a place where they still would be treated as second-class citizens. Following the murder of NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers in Jackson, Mississippi, for example, activists struck an agreement with city officials that was highlighted by the appointment of a handful of black policemen to patrol black neighborhoods. And in response to the Jackson protests and their negligible achievement, state troopers, the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, and the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission organized to prevent further civil rights activism and fissures in the barricade separating the races. While many civil rights activists were hopeful that the U.S. Congress might pass legislation to outlaw segregation and voter discrimination, they also wanted the Justice Department to protect them during their battle against Jim Crow. Members of SNCC--including John Lewis, who led a turbulent protest campaign in Nashville during May 1963--especially were worn down by the retaliation against their grass-roots campaigns. Many became particularly frustrated with the Kennedy administration, believing the Justice Department lacked a real commitment to prosecute cases of violence against civil rights workers and was more interested in maintaining the appearance of public order than in racial justice. President Kennedy's strong civil rights speech on June 11 helped renew the hope for some SNCC activists that the federal government would take decisive action to end segregation; such hope, however, was tinged with skepticism. That the omnibus civil rights bill sent to Congress a week later did not expand the Justice Department's power to intervene in civil rights cases in the South frustrated many SNCC workers and convinced them of the need for further legal action and political pressure.

The March on Washington often is seen as a culmination of the protests that took place during the spring and summer of 1963. And in a sense, it was. Civil rights leaders seized an opportunity to make an unequivocal appeal to a nation sobered by the widespread violence of the previous months. The March afforded activists the opportunity to feel in a tangible way that they were part of a broader movement for racial justice and to display their force to the entire country. It helped reinvigorate many civil rights workers' sense of hope and reenergized them for the struggle ahead. But to see the March only as a peaceable expression of the revolutionary spirit of 1963 is to overlook the sense of skepticism and disappointment that some activists also brought with them. Such a view also neglects the fact that prior to the March, many activists planned to use the confrontational protest methods of the previous few months to wrest concessions from the federal government. That marchers were dissuaded

from expressing their discontent and prohibited from engaging in nonviolent direct action at the national level is a key context for understanding John Lewis's speech.

In order to secure the participation and support from a variety of civil rights, labor, and religious organizations, planning the March involved compromise. Initially, the Negro American Labor Council (NALC) planned to picket the White House to demand a solution to the problem of black unemployment; SCLC intended the March to include sit-ins in the halls of the Capitol to urge the passage of a strong civil rights bill; and SNCC envisioned sit-ins outside the Justice Department to protest its handling of civil rights workers. But as a concession to the more moderate civil rights and religious groups also sponsoring the March, each organization abandoned its plans for nonviolent direct action. Indeed, by the time the March was announced publicly in July, the leaders of the "Big Six" civil rights organizations<sup>9</sup>--had agreed to remove civil disobedience from the agenda. As the March approached, organizers focused on securing the participation of hundreds of thousands of marchers to serve as symbols of their demand for "jobs, dignity, and freedom," as "evidence of the need for the federal government to take effective and immediate action to deal with the national crisis of civil rights." In their aim "to focus nationwide attention on the plight of millions of Negro Americans" through a huge display of numbers, the March organizers gave short shrift to the sense of immediacy and of individual agency that came through participating in nonviolent direct action campaigns.<sup>10</sup> They also neglected political objectives that could be realized more quickly, without legislation or executive orders. As result of the compromises made to pull off a massive public demonstration, many observers and participants mistakenly came to believe that its sole motive was to demonstrate support for the Kennedy administration's civil rights bill.<sup>11</sup>

By the time of the March, then, participants had been cast in a somewhat passive role. Though the marchers actively participated in a procession from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial, their picket signs were printed with pre-approved slogans disseminated by Bayard Rustin, the deputy director of the March.<sup>12</sup> And for most of the event, the participants served as an audience for the official speakers, who interpreted the meaning of their presence. Indeed, once organizers excised civil disobedience from the agenda, the speeches by the leaders of the March came to be the event's focal point.

Members of SNCC especially were opposed to the passive role in which demonstrators had been cast: indeed, some eventually decided against attending the march due to its moderate character and restrictive rules. Yet the core leaders of SNCC still sought to make the most of the opportunity of having their chairman on the national stage. Since the opportunity to express its swelling militancy and discontent through nonviolent direct action had been eliminated, SNCC focused on expressing those sensibilities through John Lewis's speech. Lewis drafted a short address, beginning in late August: Though his draft proclaimed the suffering experienced under Jim Crow, much of the text recounted the suffering SNCC field secretaries experienced during their campaigns in the South. After Lewis completed his draft, the core leaders of SNCC met at their Atlanta headquarters several days before the March to revise it. The resulting speech was more caustic in its tone, as his colleagues' pent-up desire for militant nonviolent direct action was channeled into more strident rhetorical action. Lewis struggled to check the rhetorical expression of his fellow activists' scorn toward the Kennedy administration, Jim Crow, and gradualism. Yet the speech text he took to Washington contained passages penned by others that assailed the White House, proclaimed activists would "burn Jim Crow to

the ground," and called for "radical social, political and economic change."<sup>13</sup> A collective tirade, the address was more militant than March leaders expected from Lewis--and more than they ultimately would accept.

### *Lewis's Speech*

During an event commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the March on Washington, Lewis--now a U.S. congressman from Georgia--admitted that he and fellow SNCC members "got sort of carried away" when drafting his speech.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the original text exhibited neither caution nor attention to detail. It is expressive--often angrily so--and confrontational. It lacks cohesion and a consistent voice. It is inconsistent in its form of address. Roughly speaking, Lewis's prepared speech featured two sections: (1) a trenchant critique of the federal government and President Kennedy's civil rights bill; and (2) a rallying call for a militant, nonviolent social revolution. That the text lacks a clear structure and consistent voice is unsurprising: A committee had drafted the speech, informally. That it is acerbic is also unsurprising: SNCC members were not permitted to express their pent-up militancy through civil disobedience at the March, so they channeled it into Lewis's speech. That it was censured by the other leaders of the March may also be unsurprising: To many, his rhetoric did not merely get "carried away," it was downright radical.

In the hours leading up to the climax of the March on Washington, Lewis's address became a significant point of contention. Upon reading an advance copy on the eve of the March, several of the chairmen of the March became irritated by the speech's rhetoric--particularly its militant content and tone. For example, the National Council of Churches representative Eugene Carson Blake and NAACP executive secretary Roy Wilkins protested that Lewis's use of the terms "black masses" and "revolution" smacked of Communism. In addition, United Auto Workers president Walter Reuther objected to the speech's derision of the Kennedy administration's civil rights bill. And each March chairman found inflammatory--and therefore unacceptable--a passage declaring that civil rights workers would "march through the South . . . the way Sherman did." The organizing manual for the March had emphasized that the rally at the Lincoln Memorial would "speak out to Congress and the nation with a single voice."<sup>15</sup> But Lewis's voice would be a dissonant one. His prepared remarks were contrary to the moderate tone of the March, which obliged speakers to "keep the rhetoric within bounds."<sup>16</sup> The chairmen demanded that Lewis "tone down" his sharp remarks. Lewis resisted. Archbishop Patrick O'Boyle claimed he would not deliver the invocation for the March unless Lewis changed his speech. Lewis resisted. The Justice Department planned to pull the plug on the sound system if Lewis criticized the administration or stirred militancy among the crowd. Lewis resisted. Finally, just hours before the speeches were schedule to commence, Lewis capitulated in response to a personal plea for unity by two of his personal heroes, A. Philip Randolph and Martin Luther King, Jr. Lewis then hurried to prepare a revised address. After participating in the opening activities of the March, Lewis and SNCC executive secretary James Forman huddled behind the statue of the Great Emancipator at the Lincoln Memorial to finish the speaking copy on a portable typewriter, completing their work barely in advance of Lewis's designated speaking time. Television viewers who tuned into Lewis's speech learned of the controversy from CBS News anchorman Roger Mudd. But the audience present for the Lincoln

Memorial program was unaware of the controversy that nearly disrupted a high-water mark of the civil rights movement.

Ironically, this controversy over violating the implicit rules for the March's rhetoric was triggered by following the rules. Lewis seems to have been the only "Big Ten" speaker who followed March deputy director Bayard Rustin's requirement that each speaker submit an advance copy of his address. Had Lewis played it close to his chest, he could have delivered the uncensored version of his speech.

Lewis later downplayed the controversy, declaring that the revision was merely a change in "the wording of the speech" and that he was able to "maintain the original tenor of the speech without sacrifice." Prominent historians have claimed the "[t]extual changes were trivial."<sup>17</sup> But in point of fact, the address Lewis delivered on August 28 was not simply a "toned down" version of the original. While the militant language indeed was subdued in the revision of Lewis's speech, the most significant changes were to its content. Most notably, Lewis's original text decried the White House's civil rights bill as "too little and too late," but the revised speech expressed support for the bill--albeit "with great reservations" (2). In addition, the original text's scathing indictment of the Kennedy administration--embodied in the interrogation, "I want to know, 'Which side is the federal government on?'"--is reduced by the revision to a critique of the Justice Department's indictment of civil rights workers in Albany, Georgia. Lastly, and most significantly, the revision altered the very meaning of Lewis's speech as an act of social protest: Whereas the original text was a call for a more radical social revolution (It proclaimed, for example, "The revolution is at hand, and we must free ourselves of the chains of political and economic slavery. . . . We will not wait for the President, the Justice Department, nor Congress, but we will take matters into our own hand."), the revised speech was instead a militant demand for civil rights.<sup>18</sup> In sum, the revision was a significantly different address than Lewis had intended to deliver.

But if Lewis just needed to "tone down" his rhetoric to appease some of the other March leaders, why was the revised text so significantly altered in its rhetoric? The most likely explanation is that when freed from the oversight of his coordinating committee fellows, Lewis wrote a speech that reflected his own convictions in greater measure. Whereas many of SNCC's leaders viewed nonviolent direct action merely as a means to achieve their goals, Lewis was committed to nonviolence both as a tactic and philosophy. Whereas many of SNCC's leaders viewed President Kennedy as a hypocrite to be exposed, Lewis was hopeful, seeing him as an idealist who could be pushed and prodded into action.<sup>19</sup> The revised text more accurately expressed Lewis's convictions on these issues, which also put his message more in line with that of the other speakers.

Even so, Lewis's address was the most militant of the March--and not just in its tone. It was not the only speech, however, to express criticism of the president's civil rights bill, to convey outrage at the federal government's handling of civil rights violations in the South, or to call for a massive crusade for freedom and equality. So what distinguished Lewis's speech? Above all, Lewis spoke to and for the grass-roots civil rights workers and the local people,<sup>20</sup> those members of black communities willing to put their bodies on the line to bring about racial justice. He gave voice--in a simple and direct manner--to the injustices they suffered, their frustrations, and their impatience. He also gave voice to their hope that the tides were turning against Jim Crow and that the swelling civil rights activism of 1963 would fundamentally change

American race relations. That Lewis expressed their raw sentiments without trying to channel them into a petition for moderate political action made his address more militant. As the defining quality of Lewis's rhetoric, this expression deserves close attention.

From the start, Lewis's message was different. Unlike most of the other speakers, whose addresses began by lauding the March itself as an accomplishment, Lewis began by warning against self-satisfaction. In one of the few moments in which his use of the pronoun "we" represented identification with his immediate audience, Lewis criticized: "We march today for jobs and freedom. But we have nothing to be proud of" (1). Soon after, he implicitly questioned the value of the March by claiming, "We [now taken to mean the members of SNCC in attendance] come here today with a great sense of misgiving" (1). Why was Lewis uneasy about participating in the March? Because, he implied, it meant being removed from the front lines of the struggle--the grass-roots campaigns, which often resulted in being put "in jail on trumped-up charges" (1)--in order to help the local people, including, for example, the "sharecroppers in the Delta of Mississippi," who suffered economic injustice. By identifying with the concerns of grass-roots folks rather than the marchers or the civil rights, labor, and religious organizers, Lewis marked himself as a militant. For the members of SNCC, to be a militant meant being on the front lines of the civil rights struggle, organizing local people into a force to be reckoned with, and working in local communities to bring about a fundamental social, political, and economic transformation of American society.

That militancy was expressed plainly in the subsequent passages of his speech, which criticized President Kennedy's omnibus civil rights bill. Though Lewis conveyed qualified support for the bill, in stark contrast to the first version of his address, the heart of the original critique remained. Whereas other speakers at the March (i.e., Walter Reuther and Roy Wilkins) framed their appraisal of the president's bill in terms of helping to strengthen it, Lewis focused on its shortcomings in the areas of voting rights, fair employment, and federal protection for civil rights activists. He humanized the struggle for racial justice by exposing the bill's failure to address the concrete sufferings of the local people and the grass-roots civil rights workers. Lewis indicted the bill for failing to help "the citizens of Mississippi, of Alabama and Georgia who are qualified to vote but lack a sixth-grade education" (3) and for failing to "ensure the equality of a maid who earns five dollars a week" (3). But Lewis's sharpest indictment related to SNCC's central frustration--the federal government's failure to protect civil rights workers from violence and incarceration. His claim that the bill would do "nothing to protect the young children and old women who must face police dogs and fire hoses in the South while they engage in peaceful demonstrations" (2) aimed to touch all of his listeners, who almost certainly had seen images of such violence from the Birmingham demonstrations. But most of Lewis's critique appealed mainly to listeners personally involved in or connected to grass-roots campaigns. He claimed the bill would not "protect the citizens of Danville, Virginia who must live in constant fear of a police state" (2) or "SNCC field secretaries in Americus, Georgia, who face the death penalty for engaging in peaceful protests" (2). Lewis's indictment here was especially salient to the community organizers within SNCC and CORE. The civil rights campaigns in Danville and Americus (organized at the grass-roots level by SNCC and CORE) had been especially promising: Local blacks had gathered new resolve in the summer of 1963 to fight discrimination. But those campaigns waned following vicious attacks by police and local whites, mass arrests, and the draconian use of Civil War and Reconstruction-era treason laws to

prosecute demonstrators.<sup>21</sup> Civil rights organizers feared that without federal protection from violence and prosecution, their primary means of effecting political change would be rendered ineffective. As CORE national director James Farmer put it in his message for the March, the grass-roots activists put stock in nonviolent direct action as the means "of breaking down barriers all over the country in jobs, in housing, in schools, in public places."<sup>22</sup> Whereas Farmer appealed only to the hope in nonviolent direct action campaigns that activists brought to the March, Lewis also expressed their frustrations and fears--symbolized by the omission of a provision to protect civil rights workers (known as Title III) in the president's civil rights bill.

After criticizing the civil rights bill, Lewis's speech becomes even more militant, as he questioned the political establishment. Two sentences that offended several of the March organizers ("I want to know, which side is the federal government on?" and "We cannot depend on any political party, for both the Democrats and the Republicans have betrayed the basic principles of the Declaration of Independence") were excised from his original text. And his critique of political leaders as immoral and exploitative was softened by adding that "[t]here are exceptions" (5). But Lewis still condemned both political parties for their racist leaders (i.e., Mississippi Senator James O. Eastland and Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater) and interrogated both parties' commitment to enacting meaningful civil rights measures. Lewis asked: "Where is the party that will make it unnecessary to march on Washington" (5)? He also indicted the federal government for implicitly siding with segregationists instead of protecting civil rights workers from violence. His repetition of the phrase, "What did the federal government do" (6), was intended as a stinging indictment of the Justice Department. Lewis specifically mentioned the Albany Movement, a particularly distressing campaign for SNCC: Civil rights workers there were victims of a fierce campaign of police brutality and--in the case of nine leaders--of a federal indictment for conspiracy to obstruct justice. Indeed, SNCC members had conducted sit-ins at the Justice Department on the eve of the March on Washington to protest the indictments. Lewis was not the only civil rights leader at the March outraged by the federal government's inaction; NAACP, SCLC, and CORE activists participated in the Albany campaign and suffered violence, too. But armed with his fiery rhetorical questions, Lewis castigated political parties and institutions in a way that no other March speaker presumed to do.

Lewis's speech became especially animated at this point. Perhaps he got worked up by interrogating the political establishment: SNCC members tended to pride themselves on their moral authenticity, especially in contrast to compromising politicians. Perhaps he was emboldened by the audience's cheers in response to his interrogations. Whatever the case, Lewis's heated delivery came to match the militancy of his words. When Lewis began the next section of his speech with the claim, "To those who have said, 'Be patient and wait,' we have long said that we cannot be patient" (7), he was nearly shouting.

In an emphatic voice, Lewis served notice that Africans Americans no longer will be patient and declared that the activists' long history of suffering justified their impatience. Though Lewis and Carmichael had excised the sentence, "Patience is a dirty and nasty word," from the original speech text, Lewis still did not mince words. In a key passage from this section of the address, Lewis posed a question that both interrogated white listeners and expressed the discontent felt by black activists: "How long can we be patient" (7)? Then Lewis made it clear that the answer is "no longer" by stating baldly the marchers' demands: "We want our freedom, and we want it now" (7). Lewis was not the only speaker at the March to emphasize

urgency. Roy Wilkins exclaimed "We want freedom now!" near the start of his address. But whereas Wilkins's speech expressed the idea merely as a slogan, Lewis presented it as a legitimate desire authorized by the incarceration and violence suffered by civil rights workers. Martin Luther King, Jr. urged listeners to recognize "the fierce urgency of now" and to avoid "the tranquilizing drug of gradualism."<sup>23</sup> But whereas King's speech presented these ideas about patience and time as part of a broader, more abstract historical argument for racial justice, Lewis's claims about patience and time were more visceral. He warned against gradualism and emphasized immediate action by expressing African Americans' deeply felt desires forcefully: "We do not want our freedom gradually, but we want to be free now!" (7)

Similar sentiments had been expressed during the weeks leading up to the March. For example, columnists for African American newspapers proclaimed that the "Negro masses have turned their backs" on moderation and gradualism and "will no longer brook any fooling around with our freedom." Most journalists and civil rights leaders, though, explained blacks' impatience in historical terms, emphasizing that African Americans had "been denied their rights for 300 years" and had "been patient for hundreds of years."<sup>24</sup> In contrast, Lewis made African Americans' sense of impatience personal. The blacks to whom and for whom he spoke were impatient, Lewis suggested, because of the indignities they suffered and the frustrations they felt personally--not due to their appreciation of the historical injustices of American democracy. Lewis did not build an argument for "freedom now" on the basis of the long-standing injustices that justified blacks' impatience. Rather, he affirmed the impatience of many African Americans--especially grass-roots civil rights workers and the local people--by expressing their pent-up frustrations so assertively.

By the time of Lewis's address, most liberal whites understood that African Americans were impatient in their demands for equal rights. For example, by 1963, calls for patience had disappeared from the progressive magazine *The Christian Century*. And in his landmark civil rights address to the nation on June 11, 1963, President Kennedy had gone so far as to ask whites to empathize with African Americans' impatience regarding the slow progress of racial justice: "Who among us would then be content with the counsels of *patience* and delay?"<sup>25</sup> For his white liberal audience, then, Lewis's emphasis on urgency functioned primarily as a reminder.

For many white Americans, however, Lewis's message about urgency functioned differently. Although African Americans rightly were impatient with the slow pace of racial change, many whites felt that lots of changes had come about too quickly. In just the two years prior to the March on Washington, the Civil Rights Act of 1960 had become law, interstate travel had been desegregated, the University of Mississippi was desegregated, the president had signed an executive order regarding equal employment and another regarding fair housing, and a constitutional amendment to eliminate the poll tax had passed Congress and been sent to the states for ratification. Many whites wondered aloud why blacks couldn't slow down. To be sure, some whites who urged blacks to "go slow" were segregationists who hoped to preserve Jim Crow through delay tactics. But others were moderates who genuinely felt "that while the drive for Negro equality [was] a justifiable movement, in the last year the Negroes have been pushing too hard and too fast." Lewis's militant expression did not address this moderate concern. Though some black militants hoped "some of the Negroes' sense of urgency [would] rub off on the white moderates" who attended or followed the March, neither of the

more militant speakers at the March--John Lewis and Floyd McKissick (who delivered CORE director James Farmer's message)--made an effort to get them to understand or share African Americans' feelings of impatience.<sup>26</sup> In the absence of such rhetorical action, Lewis's speech likely functioned to reinforce many white moderates' sense that grassroots civil rights activists were angry and unreasonable.

In contrast to the sentiments of white moderates, increasing numbers of blacks felt that civil rights leaders were moving too slow and "had lapsed into moderation."<sup>27</sup> Lewis may not have persuaded moderates to change their perceptions about the pace of racial justice, but he effectively served notice that at least some civil rights activists were not going to slow down. The sense of urgency he communicated may not have resonated with many of his listeners, but it resonated with black militants.<sup>28</sup> And in contrast to the moderate civil rights speakers at the March who affirmed blacks' rising sense of urgency more cautiously, Lewis urged his listeners to take their frustration and impatience to the streets.

The final section of Lewis's address is a powerful rallying cry for militant nonviolent direct action--even though it is less militant than the unedited version of the address. As previously noted, radical lines calling for demonstrators to "march through the South . . . the way Sherman did," burning "Jim Crow to the ground" were excised from earlier drafts. Lewis further softened the prepared text by stating, "[W]e will march with the spirit of love and with the spirit of dignity that we have shown here today" (9). Still, Lewis's remarks remain militant because he called on black activists to inspire a revolution in American society.

Continuing in an animated delivery style, Lewis urged listeners "to get into this great revolution sweeping this nation" (8). He emphasized that "the black masses are on the march" and "will not stop" until "true freedom comes" (8). He declared that activists will succeed, that their opponents "will not stop this revolution" (9). He called for a massive campaign of nonviolent direct action, should Congress fail to pass "meaningful civil rights legislation" (9). He suggested that regardless of legislative action, activists will break apart the "segregated South" and fashion a genuine democracy out of the pieces (9). And finally, he demanded that Americans wake up to the fact that civil rights activists will not be turned around, that the system of Jim Crow will not continue.

The conclusion to Lewis's speech highlights its distinctive character in the context of the March on Washington. His address shared A. Philip Randolph's message that blacks "should be prepared to take to the streets" and James Farmer's call for "militant peaceful demonstrations." But Lewis also kept company with Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young, the two most moderate black speakers at the March: His is the only other speech by an African American that urged Congress to pass a strong civil rights bill. And even as he expressed the desire of many other SNCC leaders to cause a collapse of Southern society and build anew from the ruins, Lewis used language consistent with the "Beloved Community" idiom of his hero Martin Luther King, Jr. Lewis's conclusion was not just an unusual amalgam of sentiments expressed by speakers of different sensibilities, however; it was in fact rather distinctive. Lewis's ending did not share the formal tone or propositional logic of the perorations to Randolph's and Farmer's messages. Lewis did not make the ultimate point of his appeal the passage of civil rights legislation, thus parting ways with Wilkins and Young. And though both speakers delivered emotionally climactic endings, Lewis evoked a feeling that nonviolent direct action would bring about true freedom that contrasted with King's proclamation that freedom would come "somehow," "one day."<sup>29</sup>

The qualities that distinguished Lewis's conclusion were the same qualities that distinguished his entire speech. It was emotionally raw, wearing its outrage on its sleeve. It was not imploring or entreating but rather demanding and confrontational. Perhaps above all, it communicated a sense of power.

When A. Philip Randolph first introduced Lewis as a speaker, the crowd had a noticeably mixed reaction. But whereas many of the speakers bored the audience with "dull" and "overlong" speeches, the "crowd liked Lewis." Indeed, King biographer David Lewis claims that the SNCC chairman's address "had only slightly less impact upon the crowd than Martin's."<sup>30</sup> His speech was powerful in large part because it functioned to affirm the feelings of grassroots civil rights workers, the local people, and their supporters. Lewis's speech did not relate to the central goals of the March that emerged during the compromises to organize the event: To petition for civil rights legislation and to demonstrate unity among civil rights activists. But the leaders of SNCC had not shared those goals from the start. Indeed, their primary goals for Lewis's speech were to express their frustrations with the federal government, to castigate mainstream liberals and moderates for their measured approach to racial problems, and to reject a timid and unassertive form of social protest (on which they believed most civil rights organizations relied). On those terms, Lewis's speech was a success. Moreover, SNCC was able to communicate the even more radical message Lewis was forced to change for his speech: Many newspaper and magazine reporters had picked up the advance, unedited copy, and printed excerpts from that message as if it were the one Lewis actually had delivered.

### *The Legacy of Lewis's Speech*

Though vastly overshadowed in history by Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, Lewis's is the only other speech from the March on Washington with a solid historical legacy of its own. Mostly, though, the speech is remembered for what it wasn't. Nearly every history of the civil rights movement or biography of its central figures makes mention of the radical passages Lewis removed from his original text, focusing on the controversy surrounding the revision of his address.<sup>31</sup> That Lewis was pressured to revise his message is historically significant: It reminds us that the civil rights movement was not a monolithic social movement but rather was comprised of different organizations with distinctive philosophies, tactics, and styles. Scholars and students now have access to both the original and edited versions of Lewis's address, which helps us understand what was unspeakable at the March, due to the compromises needed in the organization of the event. Context is a significant aspect of any speech's legacy. And in the case of Lewis's speech, its history reveals that his words were not fully his own; rather, they represented the beliefs of the core leaders within SNCC, most of whom--ironically--refused to attend the March on Washington.

Studying the censoring of Lewis's speech raises important issues about the politics of social protest. Some degree of compromise is necessary, of course, for political coalitions. The March on Washington would not have been such a monumental event (over 250,000 people attended) without significant compromises among the various civil rights, labor, and religious organizations. John Lewis revised his speech for the sake of a unified public front, but his compromise made the civil rights coalition appear more unified than it actually was. In fact, this symbolic unity caused greater divisiveness, as SNCC members were outraged that their

spokesman had been censored. Being barred from doing what they wanted (engaging in acts of civil disobedience as part of the March) was bad enough for many members. But being stopped from saying what they wanted was too much to take. Some members of SNCC's core leadership group castigated Lewis and Forman for capitulating, and the event caused a fracture within SNCC and between the organization and other civil rights groups.<sup>32</sup>

An important lesson to be learned by studying Lewis's speech is that the meaning of protest is not restricted to social change; for most activists, protest also constitutes a powerful form of self expression. Compromises about protest tactics often are difficult to broker, but most activists realize they can be necessary and beneficial in the end. But being pressured to compromise what you say makes most people feel they are compromising what they believe and who they are.

Analyzing the rhetorical character of Lewis's speech yields insight into the strengths and limitations of militant protest rhetoric as a form of political communication. Lewis's refusal to beseech the government for the civil rights to which African Americans were entitled communicated power and strength: This militancy appealed to grassroots activists and local people involved in the struggle for racial justice. That sense of power and strength affirmed those listeners' convictions and their involvement in the cause. But Lewis's militancy also repelled some agents of political change supportive of civil rights initiatives, including the White House and some white moderates in Congress. Lewis did not present a persuasive appeal crafted to gain political support, even though SNCC wanted action from the president, the Justice Department, and the Congress. Instead, he castigated politicians for their lack of commitment and principles. To the extent that Lewis's speech failed to advance SNCC's political goals in 1963, it was because the address failed to transform black militancy into a compelling rationale for political action. By crafting a speech that was militant above all else, members of SNCC were unable (and to some extent unwilling) to make the fundamental change they sought in American society seem persuasive to an audience of moderate politicians. Indeed, a significant effect of Lewis's speech was to reinforce the White House's tendency to treat SNCC as a politically marginal group of fanatics. During a meeting of the president and his advisers less than one month after the March on Washington, President Kennedy dismissed SNCC as "a very radical group" with "an investment in violence."<sup>33</sup>

Ultimately, the civil rights legacy of Lewis's speech is not the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the political fulfillment of President Kennedy's civil rights bill with which the March on Washington became strongly identified. Rather, its legacy is the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project (also known as Freedom Summer) and the voting rights campaigns it inspired. Frustrated at the March, SNCC leaders immediately began planning a campaign of the kind foreshadowed in Lewis's speech. For the grassroots activists and local people moved by his message, a massive campaign to force the federal government to deal with the problem of voter discrimination was an opportunity to enact their reinvigorated commitment to militant nonviolent direct action. A line from the speech at the March--one penned by Lewis himself--became a rallying cry for the Summer Project: "One man, one vote" (3). As spoken by Lewis, the phrase was a declaration of principle, a statement of purpose, and a battle cry. SNCC adopted the expression as its official slogan after the March,<sup>34</sup> and it became a stock-in-trade phrase among grassroots civil rights workers. The decisive 1965 voting rights campaign in Selma, Alabama, was seen by SNCC organizers as a battle ground for their "One man, one vote" crusade. At a mass meeting on

March 9, 1965, Lewis deployed the slogan in a speech that aimed to rally activists and remind the American people of their goal: "We have been saying for a long time, "one man, one vote."<sup>35</sup> To the extent Lewis's speech has a legacy in law, it is the Voting Rights Act of 1965, not the civil rights bill with which his speech was begrudgingly associated in the summer of 1963. Inspired by the militant message that Lewis had expressed so forcefully at the March on Washington, grassroots workers and local people were able to create conflict that helped compel the federal government to enact the Voting Rights Act, arguably the most important civil rights law in American history.

As a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, John Lewis has continued to fight against the types of discrimination he decried in his speech at the March on Washington. For example, in 2006 he supported the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, and two years later he introduced legislation to bolster the employment discrimination provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. His rhetoric on behalf of voting rights is especially significant, as many citizens are uninformed about the discriminatory practices that continue to dilute minority voting in the United States.<sup>36</sup> Lewis's call for Americans to end unfair election practices and "rededicate ourselves to ensuring that every eligible American . . . can cast a ballot and have it counted"<sup>37</sup> is a continuation of the "One man [sic], one vote" message that Lewis proclaimed nearly fifty years ago.

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 Notes

<sup>1</sup> See: David Halberstam, *The Children* (New York: Fawcett, 1998), 238; and "Congressman John Lewis to Receive 87th Spingarn Medal," *New Crisis*, May/June 2002, 58.

<sup>2</sup> John Lewis and Michael D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 55-59.

<sup>3</sup> See: Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 21; Lewis and D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, 90; and Mary King, *Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement* (New York: William Morrow, 1987), 186.

<sup>4</sup> Halberstam, *The Children*, 105-106, 39-40; Lewis and D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, 105-106.

<sup>5</sup> See: Raymond Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 121-122, 477-478; Halberstam, *The Children*, 256, 61; and Lewis and D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, 177.

<sup>6</sup> See: Halberstam, *The Children*, 445; King, *Freedom Song*, 182; Carson, *In Struggle*, 95; and David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 75-76.

<sup>7</sup> See: Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 261; Halberstam, *The Children*, 67; and Lewis and D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, 45.

<sup>8</sup> Just a few of the civil rights campaigns are highlighted here. In 1963, the Justice Department reported that there were 1,122 civil rights demonstrations in 220 cities between May 20 and August 8 alone. Edwin Guthman to Robert F. Kennedy, August 15, 1963, Papers of Burke Marshall, Box 31, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA (hereafter, JFKPL).

<sup>9</sup> The so-called "Big Six" civil rights leaders and their organizations were: A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP); James Farmer, national director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE); Whitney Young, executive director of the National Urban League; Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); Martin Luther King Jr., president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); and John Lewis, chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). CORE and SNCC were the most militant organizations, with a focus on grassroots activism. SCLC organized aggressive nonviolent direct action campaigns but also coordinated with (and sometimes capitulated to) the federal government--which sometimes made it the scorn of the two more militant organizations. The NAACP and especially, the Urban League were moderate civil rights organizations, particularly in terms of their tactics. The BSCP was labor organization for African Americans with big ambitions in regard to promoting racial equality. Its rhetoric and tactics often were militant, but it did not organize grassroots civil rights demonstrations. The other sponsors of the March were: the National Council of Churches (represented by its vice chairman on religion and race, Eugene Carson Blake), the United Automobile Workers (represented by its president, Walter Reuther), the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice (represented by its president, Matthew

Ahmann), and the American Jewish Conference (represented by its chairman, Joachim Prinz). In varying degrees and senses, each of these organizations was moderate. The National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice was the only one to organize grassroots activities, though clergyman affiliated with the National Council of Churches often participated in civil rights demonstrations in the South.

<sup>10</sup> See: A. Philip Randolph, "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom," August 1, 1963, American Radicalism Vertical File, Special Collections Division, Michigan State University Libraries, East Lansing, MI; Organizing Manual No. 1, March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Papers of Bayard Rustin, Box 29, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (hereafter LC); and A. Philip Randolph to John F. Kennedy, August 13, 1963, White House Central Files, Box 375, JFKPL.

<sup>11</sup> A. Philip Randolph to Jacob Javits, Philip Hart, Emmanuel Celler, James Roosevelt and John Lindsay, July 31, 1963, Subject File, Papers of A. Philip Randolph, Box 26, LC.

<sup>12</sup> Bayard Rustin, "Signs to Be Carried on the Line of the March," August 21, 1963, March on Washington, 1963, Papers of Bayard Rustin, Box 28, LC.

<sup>13</sup> See: Lewis and D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, 204; and Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 869-874. All quotes from the original, prepared speech text are from: John Lewis, Text of Speech to Be Delivered at Lincoln Memorial, August 28, 1963, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, Martin Luther King Jr. Library and Archives, Atlanta, GA (hereafter, MLKLA).

<sup>14</sup> "1963 March on Washington: Lewis Looks Back," April 14, 2003, WGBH Forum, John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Boston, MA.

<sup>15</sup> Organizing Manual No. 2, March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Papers of Bayard Rustin, Box 29, LC.

<sup>16</sup> Halberstam, *The Children*, 644.

<sup>17</sup> See: John Lewis, Six Month Report to the Coordinating Committee, December 27, 1963, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, Series I, MLKLA; and Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 879.

<sup>18</sup> John Lewis, Text of Speech to Be Delivered at Lincoln Memorial, August 28, 1963.

<sup>19</sup> Lewis and D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, 239.

<sup>20</sup> The phrase "local people" is borrowed from John Dittmer's book of the same title. Dittmer notes that during the months preceding the March on Washington, many local African Americans "who had suffered quietly for generations gathered new strength and resolve, inspired by and inspiring the grass-roots leaders emerging in their midst." John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 173.

<sup>21</sup> See: Jay Gaidmore, *A Guide to the 1963 Danville Civil Rights Cases* (Richmond: The Library of Virginia, 1999); Simon Hall, "Civil Rights Activism in 1960s Virginia," *Journal of Black Studies* 38 (2007), 254; and Stephen G.N. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 173-174.

<sup>22</sup> James Farmer, Message to the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963, Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, Box 5, LC.

<sup>23</sup> See: Roy Wilkins, Remarks at the Lincoln Memorial Rally, August 28, 1963, Papers of Roy Wilkins, Box 56, LC ; and Martin Luther King, Jr., Address at the March on Washington,

August 28, 1963, Speeches Collection, Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA (hereafter, MLKPP).

<sup>24</sup> See: James L. Hicks, "Y'All Come," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 6, 1963; Alfred Duckett, "Impatient, Want Freedom Now," *Chicago Defender*, August 9, 1963, 12; and "Won't Call Off Protests, Racial Leaders Reply to JFK," *Chicago Defender*, June 28, 1963, 5.

<sup>25</sup> See: Mark G. Toulouse, "The Century and Civil Rights: Indirect Action," *Christian Century*, October 18, 2000, 1044-1047; and John F. Kennedy, "Radio and Television Report to the American People on Civil Rights," *Public Papers of the Presidents: John F. Kennedy, 1963* (Washington: GPO, 1964), 469.

<sup>26</sup> *Meet the Press*, NBC Television, August 25, 1963. Opinion polls suggested that in 1963 many Americans felt that the speed of racial integration was "too fast." One year later, however, polls suggested that opinions had changed--with nearly equal numbers believing that the pace of integration was "about right" as "too fast." See Hazel Erskine, "The Polls: The Speed of Racial Integration," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 32 (1968), 513-524. See also: "Freedom Now," *Liberation*, Summer 1963, 4. James Farmer did not attend the March, because he was wrongfully imprisoned for leading a civil rights demonstration in Plaquemine, Louisiana.

<sup>27</sup> Louis E. Lomax, "A Challenge to Negro Leaders," *Negro Digest*, July 1963, 8.

<sup>28</sup> See: "Seeds of Liberation: The First Wave," *Liberation*, September 1963, 6-7; and "Rights Speech Altering Charged," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 30, 1963, 12.

<sup>29</sup> See: A. Philip Randolph, Address at the March on Washington, August 28, 1963, Papers of A. Philip Randolph, Box 36, LC; and Farmer, Message to the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom; Martin Luther King Jr., Address at the March on Washington, August 28, 1963, Speeches Collection, MLKPP.

<sup>30</sup> See: Lucy G. Barber, *Marching on Washington: The Forging of an American Political Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 168; "Civil Rights," *Time*, September 6, 1963, 15; and David L. Lewis, *King: A Biography* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 224.

<sup>31</sup> See for example: Robert Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound: A History of America's Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Plume, 1991), 81; and David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow, 1986), 281-83.

<sup>32</sup> See: King, *Freedom Song*, 185; and Emily Stoper, *The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee: The Growth of Radicalism in a Civil Rights Organization* (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1989), 46.

<sup>33</sup> Audiotape 113.2, September 23, 1963, White House Meetings and Telephone Conversations: 1963-1963, President's Office Files, JFKPL.

<sup>34</sup> John Lewis, Oral History Interview, November 20, 1973, Southern Oral History Program Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC. "One man, one vote" replaced SNCC's more invitational slogan, "Come let us build a new world together." The change was symbolic of the organization's turn toward greater militancy.

<sup>35</sup> Roy Reed, "Dr. King Leads March at Selma," *New York Times*, March 10, 1965, 1.

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<sup>36</sup> See the findings section in: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Reauthorization of the Temporary Provisions of the Voting Rights Act* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2006).

<sup>37</sup> John Lewis, "Representative John Lewis on Voting Rights," January 19, 2010, retrieved from [http://www.democrats.org/news/blog/category/voting\\_rights/P8](http://www.democrats.org/news/blog/category/voting_rights/P8). (Accessed on July 15, 2010).