

Statement by President

Following is a transcript of a statement by President Johnson yesterday at the White House, as recorded by The New York Times:

Mr. Chief Justice, my fellow Americans.

Once again the heart of America is heavy. The spirit of America weeps for a tragedy that denies the very meaning of our land. The life of a man who symbolized the freedom and faith of America has been taken.

But it is the fiber and the fabric of the Republic that's being tested. If we are to have the America that we mean to have, all men of all races, all regions, all religions must stand their ground to deny violence its victory in this sorrowful time and in all times to come.

Last evening, after receiving the terrible news of Dr. King's death, my heart went out to his family and to his people—especially to the young Americans who I know must sometimes wonder if they are to be denied a fullness of life because of the color of their skin.

I called the leaders of the Negro community and the white community and the judiciary and the legislative and the executive branches of our national Government and the leaders of our city halls throughout the nation, throughout the night, and asked them to come here to the White House and meet with me this morning.

We have been meeting together this morning. And no words of ours and no words of mine can fill the void of the eloquent voice that has been stilled.

But this I do believe deeply. The dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has not died with him. Men who are white, men who are black, must and will now join together as never in the past to let all the forces of divisiveness know that America shall not be ruled by the bullet but only by the ballot of free and of just men.

In these years we have moved toward opening the way of hope and opportunity and justice in this country. We have rolled away some of the stones of inaction and of indifference and of injustice.

Our work is not yet done but we have begun and we must move with urgency and with resolve and with new energy in the Congress and in the courts and in the White House and the statehouse and the city halls of the nation, wherever there is leadership—political leadership, leadership in the churches, in the homes, in the schools, in the institutions of higher learning—until we do overcome.

I have asked the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the leadership of the Congress and the Congress to receive me at the earliest possible moment. They are in adjournment over the weekend but I would hope that could be no later than Monday evening in the area of 9 o'clock for the purpose of hearing the President's recommendations and the President's suggestions for action—constructive action instead of destructive action—in this hour of national need.

I did not understate the case last Sunday evening when I talked of the divisiveness that was tearing this nation apart. But together, a nation united and a nation caring and a nation concerned and a nation that thinks more of the nation's interest than we do of any individual self-interest or political interest—that nation can and shall and will overcome.

I have issued a proclamation to the people of the United States which I shall read.

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

A Proclamation

To the people of the United States:

The heart of America grieves today. A leader of his people—a teacher of all people—has fallen.

Martin Luther King Jr. has been struck down by the violence against which he preached and worked.

Yet the cause for which he struggled has not fallen. The voice that called for justice and brotherhood had been stilled—but the quest for freedom, to which he gave eloquent expression, continues.

Men of all ages, all religions, all regions must join together in this hour to deny violence its victory—and to fulfill the vision of brotherhood that gave purpose to Martin Luther King's life and works.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Lyndon B. Johnson, President of the United States, do call upon all Americans to observe Sunday next, the seventh day of April, as a day of national mourning throughout the United States. In our churches, in our homes, and in our private hearts, let us resolve before God to stand against divisiveness in our country and all its consequences.

I direct that until interment the flag of the United States shall be flown at half-staff on all buildings, grounds and naval vessels of the Federal Government in the District of Columbia and throughout the United States and its territories and possessions.

I also direct that the flag shall be flown at half-staff for the same length of time at all United States embassies, legations, consular offices, and other facilities abroad, including all military facilities and naval vessels and stations.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty-eight and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and ninety-second.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON.

That concludes the proclamation.

Thank you, my fellow Americans.

4-6-68
NYT