Joint Platform Proposals to the 1960 Democratic Party Platform Committee, Read by L. B. Thompson

L. B. Thompson, a representative of the March on the Conventions Movement, presented these proposals on behalf of King and Randolph to the Democratic Party's platform committee. On 11 July the Democrats adopted a civil rights plank that included an acknowledgment of the recent demonstrations in the South and a pledge to give the attorney general power to obtain injunctions against public officials accused of racial discrimination. Several of the following proposals paralleled those adopted by the platform committee.

JOINT PLATFORM PROPOSALS OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. AND A. PHILIP RANDOLPH CO-CHAIRMEN, MARCH ON THE CONVENTIONS MOVEMENT

To: The 1960 Democratic Party Platform Committee

(These proposals will be submitted to the Republican platform committee in Chicago. They will be read today by Mr. L. B. Thompson, personal representative of Rev. King and Mr. Randolph, and Los Angeles Chairman of the March on the Conventions Movement.)

We submit these proposals to this national convention on behalf of the Constitutional rights and human dignity of 18 million Negro Americans. We believe they are supported by the overwhelming majority of the American people of all races, creeds and colors and from every walk of life.

We urge your convention to adopt these proposals—which are truly minimal—to make them a part of your platform and to carry them into life. While these recommendations are limited to the matter of civil rights—which is the decisive domestic issue of our time—we are interested in seeing your convention adopt a

1. L. B. Thompson was a member of the Los Angeles branch of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. In Los Angeles, SCLC representative Maurice Dawkins delivered remarks before the Democratic Party Platform Committee on behalf of King, who was returning from a conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Introductory remarks to the 1960 Democratic Party platform committee, read by Maurice A. Dawkins, 7 July 1960).

2. Paul A. Smith and Richard E. Mays, eds., Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention and Committee (Washington, D.C.: National Document Publishers, 1964), pp. 64-74. In an interview conducted in his Los Angeles hotel suite, King expressed his approval of the Democratic Party's civil rights plank: "I think it's the most positive, dynamic and meaningful civil rights plank that has ever been adopted by either party and I'm sure if the party goes through with the implementation of it we will go a long, long way toward solving the civil rights problems of the United States." King criticized the Democrats' failure to be more specific while conceding that "at least it gives the impression that the party stands in sympathy with sit-in demonstration" (Bob Ingram, "Kennedy Out of Favor with Negro, King Says," Montgomery Advertiser, 14 July 1960).
socially progressive position on all other international and national issues before the American people.

We warn you, gentlemen, that platforms and promises are no longer sufficient to meet the just and insistent demands of the Negro people for immediate free and unconditional citizenship. The time has come for action—action not only by this convention and its candidates who may prove successful in the November elections. We insist upon action now by the present Federal Government, especially by its Executive and Legislative branches which are still in power and in session. It is well-known that the Republican Party is in control of the executive branch of the government and the Democratic Party, of the legislative. The Congress is scheduled to reconvene in August following the national conventions of both parties. We shall judge the seriousness and sincerity of the platforms and candidates which you approve in your July convention by what the Congress and the White House do in August: first, to guarantee the right of the Negro people in the deep South to vote in the 1960 elections; secondly, to stop the brutal terror against peaceful Negro citizens and their supporters in the deep South; thirdly, to enforce the 1954 Supreme Court decision against school segregation in September; and, fourthly, to uphold the lawful, peaceful and non-violent picketing of Negro students and their supporters who seek to exercise their constitutional rights.

Our proposals follow:

1) We demand that this convention go on record as fully endorsing the great, peaceful democratic sit-in movement in the South, led by the heroic Negro students, supported by increasing numbers of their white fellow students. This movement seeks not alone the constitutional rights of Negroes; but it aims at the moral regeneration of America. It should be endorsed by this convention both as to its non-violent methods and to its ennobling spirit. It is the responsibility of this convention and of its representatives in the federal government in Washington to speak out against, and to halt, the lawless terror, intimidation, brutality, false arrests and violence upon these students as they seek to exercise their constitutional rights against the degradation of segregation, discrimination and Jim Crow.

2) The 1960 elections will be a farce unless more than 10 million Negroes in the South have the opportunity to vote. We demand that this convention go on record for establishing a federal registration apparatus in the deep South, in which the victims—the Negro people—shall serve. This apparatus should be put into effect now for the 1960 elections—and not be postponed until after the elections when the Negro people will have been ef-

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3. On a typed draft of these proposals, King handwrote several minor changes that were not incorporated into the final version (Draft, “Proposals to both parties,” 1 July–7 July 1960). In the draft of this document, King struck out “demand” and handwrote “strongly urge.”

4. The Democratic Party adopted the following resolution, p. 72: “The peaceful demonstrations for first-class citizenship which have recently taken place in many parts of this country are a signal to all of us to make good, at long last the guarantees of the American Constitution.”
effectively disfranchised in this year’s election. Moreover, the entire federal apparatus should be drawn into guaranteeing the right of the Negro people in the South to vote.\(^5\)

3) We demand the enactment as the law of the land of Section III of the 1957 Civil Rights Bill authorizing the Federal Department of Justice to intervene to uphold the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in all public school systems.\(^6\) We recommend that 1961 be the target for completion of school integration in accordance with the Supreme Court decision of six years ago.\(^7\)

4) We demand that the President of the United States—the present incumbent and the newly-elected candidate—issue an executive order barring all discrimination in government employment, in all employment policies of firms doing business with the government and in all forms of public supported housing.\(^8\)

5) We demand that this convention go on record to pass at the next session of Congress an anti-lynch law with teeth in it.

6) We call upon your Party and National Convention to repudiate and condemn the segregationists, white supremacists, racists and Dixiecrats in your ranks—and to unseat and expel them. The Negro people nor any other democratic-minded Americans can have any confidence in a Party which seats a [Orval] Faubus or an [James] Eastland, or that contains within its ranks those who make alliances with such racists. We demand a pledge to unseat Senator Eastland from the United States Senate as being elected from the state of Mississippi where Negro citizens—the majority of the

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5. Adopted resolution, p. 72: “The Democratic Administration which takes office next January will therefore use the full powers provided in the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and 1960 to secure for all Americans the right to vote. . . . If these powers, vigorously invoked by a new Attorney General and backed by a strong and imaginative Democratic President, prove inadequate, then further powers will be sought. We will support whatever action is necessary to eliminate literacy tests and the payment of poll taxes as requirements for voting.”

6. In the draft, King crossed out “demand” and handwrote “earnestly request.” Section III was deleted from the 1957 Civil Rights bill shortly before its passage.

7. Adopted resolution, p. 72: “A new Democratic administration will also use its full powers—legal and moral—to ensure the beginning of good faith compliance with the Constitutional requirement that racial discrimination be ended in public education. . . . We believe that every school district affected by the Supreme Court’s school desegregation decision should submit a plan providing for at least first step compliance by 1963, which is the one hundredth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation . . . To facilitate compliance, technical and financial assistance should be given to school districts facing special problems of transition.”

8. Adopted resolution, p. 73: “The Democratic Administration will use its full executive powers to assure equal employment opportunities and to terminate racial segregation throughout federal services and institutions, and on all government contracts. The successful desegregation of the armed services took place through such decisive executive action under President Truman. Similarly the new Democratic Administration will take action to end discrimination in federal housing programs, including federally-assisted housing. To accomplish these goals will require executive orders, legal actions brought by the Attorney General, legislation, and improved Congressional procedures to safeguard majority rule.”
state's population—are disfranchised in violation of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments.

7) We demand that this convention go on record to uphold the second section of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which calls for the reduction of representation of states in accordance with their disfranchisement of qualified voters.

8) We demand that Section IV of Article IV of the U.S. Constitution be upheld guaranteeing every state a republican form of government. We submit that states in the deep South which disfranchise 40 to 52% of their populations do not have a republican form of government. Negroes are denied both the exercise of the vote and representation.

9) As an earmark of the fulfillment of these Constitutional rights, we demand that a Negro citizen be included as a full-fledged member of the Presidential cabinet. The lily-white exclusion of Negro citizens from the top policymaking levels of government must be ended. It is the source-pattern of white-supremacy state and city governments which exist in the 50 states of the Union.

10) We demand that this convention and its candidates take a clear moral stand against colonialism and racism of all kinds, everywhere, and especially in Africa where apartheid has led to the massacre of hundreds of people seeking only to live in freedom in their own land.9

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9. Adopted resolution, p. 73: "In this spirit, we hereby rededicate ourselves to the continuing service of the Rights of Man—everywhere in America and everywhere else on God’s earth." King may refer to the March 1960 massacre in Sharpeville, South Africa, against which he had protested (see King to Claude Barnett, 24 March 1960, pp. 399-400 in this volume).

Address at NAACP Mass Rally for Civil Rights

10 July 1960
Los Angeles, Calif.

On the eve of the Democratic National Convention, demonstrators marched to the convention site where they held a brief rally. King, Roy Wilkins, Adam Clayton Powell, and presidential hopeful John F. Kennedy were among those who addressed the marchers that day. Facing scattered boos because of his uneven record on civil rights, Kennedy told the audience that “the next President of the United States cannot stand above the battle, engaging in vague sermons on brotherhood."1 In this typescript of his remarks,