“Other Mountains,”
Baccalaureate Sermon at Alabama State College

Delivered at Alabama State College for baccalaureate sermon on May 15, 1955

1 Rugged Individualism and national isolationism
2 The mountain of meadocry in our various fields of endeavor
3 The mountain of hate and bitterness

AD CSKC Sermon file, folder 78, “Keep Moving From This Mountain”

1 In a 2 May 1955 letter, Alabama State College president H. Council Trenholm invited King to serve as the baccalaureate minister for the college’s May commencement (in Papers 2 550–551) and also asked Martin and Coretta King to be dinner guests at his home prior to the ceremony. The day after the event, King’s father boasted in a letter to J. Raymond Henderson, “They tell me he swept. He is already in great demand” (in Papers 2 556–557).
2 In his 1960 Founder’s Day address at Atlanta’s Spelman College, King spoke of four symbolic mountains that must be surmounted if civilization is to survive. He described “the mountain of hatred and violence” that could be overcome with the use of “nonviolent resistance” and “the love ethic of Jesus Christ” (King, “Keep Moving from This Mountain,” Address at Spelman College on 10 April 1960, in Papers 5 411–417).

“The Peril of Superficial Optimism in the Area of Race Relations”

[19 June 1955?]

In this outline for a speech before an afternoon meeting of the Montgomery National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) King warns against complacency in the fight against prejudice in the United States and around the world. For “so long as one spark of prejudice lies latent in the heart of any white American, there is a possibility for it to develop into a flame of intolerance.”

1 Montgomery NAACP secretary Rosa Parks’s notes about the meeting mirrored the points made in this outline. According to Parks’s notes, Dexter church clerk Robert D. Nesbitt introduced King, commenting, “He is a great asset to Montg” by activity in everything for the betterment of the community. He has launched an intensive campaign in the church for NAACP membership and voters” (Rosa Parks, Minutes, Mass meeting at First C.M.E. Church, 19 June 1955)
We have come a long way in race relations in the last few years. (Use analogy of Football game)\(^2\)

A In Education
B In better economic status
C In social integration Segregation is dying. He is dying hard, but there is no doubt that his corpse awaits him
D All who have contributed to these advances should be praised
   (1) NAACP
   (2) Inconspicuous groups
   (3) Sincere and ethically minded whites

But the danger facing the American Negro is that because of these astounding advances he will become complacent and feel that the overall problem is solved. And with the further assertion that that which is not solved will move inevitably toward solution. We might fall victims to the cult of inevitable progress.

We must be realistic realizing that the problem might creep back into the window at any time.

So long as one spark of prejudice lies latent in the heart of any white American, there is a possibility for it to develop into a flame of intolerance at the unpredictable moments.

We must not become so complacent that we forget the struggles of other minorities. We must unite with oppressed minorities throughout the world (Africa & Asia).

We must be concerned because we are a part of humanity. Whatever affects one affects all. Science has so drafted time and place distance in chains that the has become a literal neighborhood.

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\(^2\) On another occasion, King elaborated “To use an analogy at this point, since the turn of the century we have brought the football of civil rights to about the fifty-yard line. And now we are advancing in the enemy’s territory. The problem for the next few years will be to get the ball over the goal line. Let’s not fool ourselves; this job will be difficult. The opposition will use all the power and force possible to prevent our advance. He will strengthen his line on every hand. But if we place good leaders in the back field to call the signals and good fellows on the line to make the way clear, we will be able to make moves that will stagger the imagination of the opposition. Some mistakes will be made, yes, the ball might be fumbled, but for God’s sake, recover it! Teamwork and unity are necessities for the winning of any game” (King, “The Negro Past and Its Challenge for the Future,” Address at Twelfth Baptist Church, 1951–1954).

\(^3\) King elaborated on a “realistic position” on race relations in “The ‘New Negro’ of the South” in Behind the Montgomery Story, Address on 17 May 1956” (June 1956, in Papers 3 280–286).