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More Than Law

*Anthony J. Celebrezze**

In mid-1963, at hearings¹ on what was to become the Civil Rights Act of 1964, I expressed my regret that some 37 years prior to the end of the twentieth century we found it necessary to take up legislation that dealt with basic human rights. Today, nearly a decade later, I express a similar regret that those rights have not yet been realized for every citizen of this nation.

At those hearings, I noted the great irony of our having made astounding achievements in the physical sciences while failing to recognize the basic worth and universal dignity of every human being. Today, I observe the greater irony of our men walking on the moon's surface while equal opportunities in education and employment remain illusions to many.

To whom do we attribute these shortcomings? Through its enactment of the 1964 Act and subsequent amendments, Congress has provided the tools through which true equality can be realized for all citizens in the areas of public accommodations, public education, and employment opportunities. In applying and interpreting these provisions, the courts have generally endeavored to give full effect to the purposes envisioned by the drafters.

But neither the most carefully drawn statutory language nor the most noble judicial interpretations can achieve a goal that is so desperately dependent upon the attitudes of the people. Until the "self-evident" truth that all men are created equal is genuinely engrafted in the hearts of all of our men and women, the irony will persist—that in this land of unprecedented wealth and achievement, full equality has not yet been realized for all of its citizens.

America's future will depend upon our energy, our skill, and, above all, our faith in the principles upon which this nation was founded—principles that recognize the capacity of human beings, with moral and spiritual guidance, to realize their own best selves and thereby achieve a better world.

Above all, the months and years ahead will require more than mere competence, more than mere decency, more than acquiescence in the principles of freedom.

* Judge, United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.

1. See *Hearings on H.R. 7152 Before a Subcomm. of the House Comm. on the Judiciary*, 88th Cong., 1st Sess., ser. 4, pt. 2, at 1506 (1963).

They will require a quality of mind and heart that reaches outward in understanding and love to fellow human beings and reaches upward in devotion and faith to Almighty God and His purposes.