



IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

# HARRY S. TRUMAN

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1949-1950

**Proclamation, 2824 – National Freedom Day, January**

25 “Whereas, near the end of the tragic conflict between the Northern and Southern States, the Congress adopted a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution which would outlaw slavery in the United States and in every place subject to its jurisdiction; and

“Whereas the resolution was signed by President Lincoln on February 1, 1865, and thereafter led to the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment to the constitution; and

“Whereas that Amendment is a corner stone in the foundation of our American traditions, and the signing of the resolution is a landmark in the Nation's effort to fulfill the principles of freedom and justice proclaimed in the first ten amendments to the Constitution; and

“Whereas, by a joint resolution approved June 30, 1948 (62 Stat. 1150), the Congress authorized the President to proclaim the first day of February of each year as National Freedom Day in commemoration of the signing of the resolution of February 1, 1865; and

“Whereas the Government and people of the United States wholeheartedly support the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948, which declares that ‘recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”

“Now, Therefore, I, Harry S. Truman, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate February 1, 1949, and each succeeding February 1, as national Freedom Day; and I call upon the people of the United States to pause on that day in solemn contemplation of the glorious blessings of freedom which we humbly and thankfully enjoy. ”



President Harry S. Truman delivering his Inaugural Address. Original photograph is from a photo album of inaugural events. January 20, 1949. Harry S. Truman Library & Museum. Photograph. Accession 64-1-55. <https://www.trumanlibrary.org>.

Harry S. Truman: Proclamation 2824 – National Freedom Day, January 25, 1949, Peters and Wooley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=87188>; “Truman Sets Feb. 1 As ‘Freedom Day,’” *New York Times*, 7/1/48. 1/

**Address at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Negro Women, Inc. , November 15**

“Thank you, Congressman [William L. ] Dawson. It is a pleasure to be introduced by a Congressman with whom I have worked so closely, and who is a real friend to all of us.

“Mrs. Bethune, Madame [Vijaya Lakshmi] Pandit, Dr [Ralph] Bunche, distinguished guests, and ladies and gentlemen:

“I am glad to be here with you tonight and to join with you in this observance of the fourth anniversary of the United Nations.

“I note also that this is the 14th annual meeting of the National Council of Women, and the last convention at which the founder-president, Mrs. Bethune, will preside.

“A significant feature of your conventions for many years has been an evening devoted to the furtherance of international good will and understanding. This was true when the United Nations was in its formative stage during the proceedings at Dumbarton Oaks, and again at the time of the San Francisco meeting when the United Nations Charter was adopted.

“Here in the United States, we have a special reason for the close and sympathetic interest with which we have followed the growth of the United Nations. In the early years of our own Federal Union, the separate States found it necessary to unite for mutual defense and the promotion of the common welfare. That was a hard task because local pride and local patriotism had led to the formation of regional blocs. Nevertheless, out of that first loose confederation of States our present Federal Union emerged, with a Constitution which has stood the test of time and has proved to be the instrument by which we have achieved the greatest welfare for the common man the world has ever seen.

“We are too apt to forget how long it took, and how difficult it was, to get the States to unite in the United States as we know it now. Let us not be too impatient at the seemingly slow progress we are now making toward the goal of world peace – a goal which, despite all difficulties, we shall certainly attain.

“In the course of time, I am sure that the same patience, the same tolerance, and the same respect for individual differences that enabled the thirteen States to become the United States of America, will lead to the fulfillment of the ideals expressed in the United Nations Charter.

“I am confident that the United Nations will grow to the point where national interests will be harmonized in a drive toward the great objectives of lasting peace and prosperity for all mankind.

“While the individual members of the United Nations are working to compose their differences by the peaceful processes of conciliation and negotiation, they are also moving vigorously toward the fulfillment of ideals which are deeply rooted in our own American history and tradition. Our own founding fathers were deeply concerned with the preservation of individual liberties under the Federal Union. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has formulated these principles in a great document which can apply to all the people of the earth – the Declaration of Human Rights.

“The American people have had a traditional policy for the administration of territories of the world not yet ready for self government. From the beginning, we have adopted the view that such territories as came into our possession were held by us as trustees, and that it was our duty to develop their economies and their political institutions to the point where their peoples, if they so desired, would be able to enter the family of nations on a basis of equal partnership.

“No other great nation in the history of the world has done such a thing as that.

“We welcome the recognition of this principle in the United Nations Charter, and are deeply interested in the encouragement it has provided to the political aspirations of many peoples. The great movement toward self-government, which is now going forward in many territories under United Nations auspices, is symbolized tonight by the presence of the United Nations Director of Trusteeship, Dr. Ralph Bunche.

“The United Nations is already receiving new strength from lands where peoples have achieved self-government under democratic institutions. The Government of India is already playing a leading role among the new nations of Asia, and I am delighted to see here tonight the gracious Ambassador of India, Madame Pandit.

“Political independence has little meaning if it is not accompanied by a full economic development. There are vast areas of the world today where whole populations do not have the bare necessities of life, even though their countries are rich in natural resources. Such countries need capital for economic development, and they need the benefits of modern technology and engineering. These needs cannot be met by the old colonialism with its fostering of political dependency and its economic exploitation. The economic growth of these underdeveloped areas must and will move forward in the interest of the peoples of those areas, and in accordance with the principles of democratic fair dealing. Such forward movement will serve not only the best interest of the more highly developed countries, but it will also serve the common interest of all nations in the continual improvement of the living standards of mankind. In these great enterprises, I know we shall have the continued support of the National Council of Negro Women.



“Fourteen years ago, this organization was founded by Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, who is retiring this year. I am sure that Mrs. Bethune’s retirement as president of this organization will not mean her retirement from public life. That is something we should all hate to see. She brought to the National Youth Administration a conviction that its program much reach all young people regardless of race, religion, or color. She has been in the forefront of those who worked for better housing and for larger employment opportunities through improved training and through the extension of fair employment practices. Mrs. Bethune remained until recently the president of a unique educational institution, Bethune-Cookman College, which she founded and developed to serve Negro youth, and which stands as a monument to her vision, her energy, and her faith.



Van Vechten, Carl, photographer. Portrait of Mary McLeod Bethune. April 6, 1949. Photograph.  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2004662601/>.



“All of us who are here tonight have a deep interest in that great enterprise – the extension of freedom and opportunity to all our citizens without racial or religious discrimination. The people of this country have made, and we are making, progress in this cause. We are awakened as never before to the true meaning of equality – equality in the economic world. We are going to continue to advance in our program of bringing equal rights and equal opportunity to all citizens. In that great cause there is no retreat and no retirement, and I know Mrs. Bethune is going to stand by me as she has from the beginning.

“Mrs. Bethune, as you retire from the presidency of this organization, I join with your members in thanking you for your leadership, which will forever be an inspiration to those who seek to carry forward the noble purposes to which your life has been devoted.





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## Budget Message, January 15

### Remarks of the President to Members of the National Emergency Civil Rights Mobilization, January 17

“You don’t need to make that speech to me,[i] it needs to be made to Senators and Congressmen. Every effort is being made by the executive branch of the Government to get action on these measures. I have been working at them ever since I went to Congress. I went there in 1935, and that is a long time ago.

“We have made some progress. We haven’t made enough. We hope to make more. The passage of the resolution by the Rules Committee of the House the other day is a blow that is serious and backward looking. I am doing everything possible to have that motion beaten when it comes up for consideration on the floor of the House. Every effort is being made to get a vote on these measures in the Senate. The leader of the majority[ii] and the Vice President[iii] have assured me that they will eventually get a vote, if it takes all summer.

[i] The National Emergency Civil Rights Mobilization was held in Washington on January 15-17, 1950, where over four thousand members of fifty-eight national organizations met in Washington to lobby their lawmakers to support both President Truman’s civil rights program, including a permanent FEPC. Led by Roy Wilkins, acting NAACP executive secretary, who organized the NECRM, a delegation met with President Truman. As Wilkins began reading a statement, Truman interrupted him to declare that he “was firmly in their camp and he could count noses.” Jonas, *Freedom’s Sword*, 157. See also vol. III, :lxxviii-lxxxvi, 151, 153n.

[ii] Scott W. Lucas (1892-1968) (D-Ill. ) was the Senate Majority Leader.

[iii] Prior to his election in 1948 as vice president, Alben W. Barkley (D, Ky.) had been a longtime member of both the House and the Senate. See vol. IV, 852.

“I hope that when that vote is taken we will be in a better position to understand who our friends are, and who are not.

“This is a serious situation. This civil rights program, which I have sent to the Congress on every occasion that it has been possible to send it, is one that is necessary, if we are going to maintain our leadership in the world. We can't go on not doing the things that we are asking other people to do in the United Nations.

“I hope all of you will continue your hard work on the subject, and that you will make it perfectly plain to the Senators and Congressmen who represent your States and districts that action is what we want, and I think that is possibly the only way we can get action. ”

**President's Statement in Response to the Report of the Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, May 22**

"I have just received the report of the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services. For the past two years, this Committee has been working quietly to find ways and means to bring about true equality of opportunity for everyone in military service.

"I have followed its work closely, and I know that it has probed deeply into the problem, which is not a simple one, and has been careful to keep uppermost the need for military efficiency.

"As the Committee explored personnel practices in the armed services, the members of the staff worked in the closest possible consultation with the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. In fact, the consultation was so close and continuous that the Committee's recommendations grew naturally out of the joint discussions. The services have accepted all of the Committee's recommendations.

"It is, therefore, with a great deal of confidence that I learn from the Committee that the present programs of the three services are designed to accomplish the objectives of the President, and that as these programs are carried out, there will be, within the reasonably near future, equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services, with a consequent improvement in military efficiency.

“I attach the highest importance to this Committee’s assignment. In the Committee’s own words, equality of treatment and opportunity in the armed services is right, is just, and it will strengthen the Nation. That is true throughout our entire national life.

“Today, the free people of the world are looking to us for the moral leadership that will unite them in a common purpose. The free nations of the world are counting on our strength to sustain them as they mobilize their energies to resist Communist imperialism.

“We have accepted these responsibilities gladly and freely. We shall meet them with the sure knowledge that we can move forward in the solution of our own problems in accordance with the noblest of our national ideals—the belief that all men are created equal.

“Judge Fahy[i] and the members of his Committee have been unsparing in the time and energy they have devoted to their mission. Every American who believes sincerely in the language of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence owes them a debt of gratitude.

[i] Charles Fahy, formerly a federal judge, was chairman of the Committee on Equality of Treatment in the Armed Forces. See vol. IV, 692, and MacGregor, *Integration of the Armed Forces*, 314.

“This report is submitted as the United States Senate is considering a motion to take up a fair employment practices bill. The work of the President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services shows what can be accomplished by a commission in this admittedly difficult field. I hope the Senate will take this report into consideration as it debates the merits of FEPC, and that, as I urged in my State of the Union Message in January, it will permit this important measure to come to a vote.”



President Harry S. Truman (right) pictured with two unidentified men at the Grand Coulee Dam, Washington. May 11, 1950. Harry S. Truman Library & Museum. Photograph. Accession 59-60-2. <https://www.trumanlibrary.org>.

Truman, “Response to the Report of the Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services,” 5/22/50.” Peters and Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13503>.