

Why I Participated In The March For Freedom

By C. W. Cranford

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When I first heard of the March for Freedom in Washington, I wondered what my own attitude toward it should be. I did not like the kind of coercion some Negro leaders wanted to bring upon Congressmen, and yet I was sympathetic to the Negroes' desire to receive a greater measure of the rights of which they are deserving as human beings, and that are guaranteed to them by the Constitution. As plans for the March developed into a great demonstration to dramatize the cause of civil rights, my question became, should I participate? After facing the question, knowing I would be criticized by some, I felt I must join the March. My conscience would not let me do otherwise.

I have been embarrassed, as have so many Christians, that churches, by and large, have been so silent, and have exercised so little leadership on behalf of the Negro's efforts to achieve greater civil rights. Instead of giving courageous leadership, the church has been timid and fearful. The letter written to certain clergymen by Martin Luther King from a Birmingham jail (which I consider to be one of the great Christian statements of our time), the restrained yet forthright criticism of the role of the churches in this matter by the Atlanta Editor, Ralph McGill, in his excellent recent book "The South and the Southerner," disturbed my conscience. Churches have been afraid to speak out. I myself have had all too little to say on this burning issue of our time. We have let other groups lead the way in

what is ultimately a moral question for it involves the treatment of our fellowman.

My participation in the March would make little difference, but at least I wanted my Negro friends to know I stood with them in their desire to live their lives free of the handicaps of discrimination. I decided to march under the banner of the National Council of Churches. I found myself in good company walking within talking distance of such Christian leaders as Dr. Ralph Sockman, Dr. Howard Thurman, Dr. Edwin Tuller and Mr. Harold Stassen. Ahead of us was a group of young people carrying a sign that read "Students of Southeastern Baptist Seminary, North Carolina." I wanted to get to these courageous students, but the crowd was too great for me to get through to them.

I would not take anything for the experience. Here was a group of people demanding their rights; people who had a right to air their grievances, and yet I was impressed by what seemed to be an almost complete absence of hate. The atmosphere was almost festive. There was a religious feeling in the throng. The songs sung were almost entirely hymns and Negro spirituals. Strangers tried to share their lunches with each other. It was a happy occasion. Negroes and whites were both impressed at the sheer size of the crowd. Everyone was impressed at the number of white people present (I estimated that at least a fifth of the crowd was white.) Everyone was impressed at the number of church groups represented. The Negro felt that churches were standing by him in his cause. Everyone was pleased at the orderliness of the crowd. Instead of swinging

clubs, policemen stood in lines eating lunches out of paper boxes. Even the weather cooperated. It was sunny and warm, but not one of Washington's hot sticky days. The program and speeches were impressive.

Politically I don't know what the result will be. It may not change many votes in Congress. It may even have deepened the resentment and resistance on the part of some Congressmen. Overall, however, people must have been impressed at the great number, white as well as colored, who are concerned about patterns of injustice in our land, and are determined that a new day shall come in human relations. When that day comes, I don't want the churches to be counted out as having been content to stand on the sidelines. I want it to be said that Christians did their part to lift America a little closer to the ideal for which we yearn when we say, "with liberty and justice for all." To that end, I am glad I shared with my colored brethren in what was surely one of their greatest hours.

Culbreth To Lead in Revival at Temple Hills

Dr. R. B. Culbreth, pastor of Metropolitan Baptist Church will speak in the Fall Revival of Temple Hills Baptist Church, September 23-27. Lynn B. Elmore, director of music at Temple Hills, will lead the large revival choir and will sing during the series. The minister of music at Metropolitan Church, John Kooistra, and several musical groups associated with him, will assist in the revival musical program.

The Revival will begin with a combined Sunday School Harvest Day-Morning Worship Service at 10:00 A.M. and will continue at 7:30 P.M. each night through Friday. The Training Union with Major Mitchell as director will be responsible for packing the pews each evening.

Over 2000 brochures have been distributed to the homes surrounding the church. A large weather balloon, advertising the services is floating above the church and may be seen a half-mile away. A prayer chain of members has been established to pray the entire twenty-four hours preceding the Revival.

Washington, D. C. (ABNS) — Included among the many American Baptists who participated in the March for Freedom on August 28, (above l. to r.) are Mrs. and Rev. A. King Boutwell, New Haven, Conn.; Mrs. Carl Tiller, Washington, D. C.; Matthew Guifreda, Valley Forge, Pa.; and Clarence Cranford, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church here, and past president of the American Baptist Convention.

The posters read: "We march for an end to police brutality," and "We march for civil rights, full employment, equal freedom."

