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Recommended Citation

Northside Reporter (Jackson, Miss.), "May 1 Is Law Day In America" (1964). *Clippings*. 253.
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May 1 Is Law Day In America

Friday, May 1, will be observed as "Law Day" in America.

Communists throughout the world on the same day will hold their traditional May Day Celebration designed to impress other nations with their military might and power.

The contrast is great. In our own country we use Law Day to point up the differences in the two systems of government—the democratic system of our Federal Republic, and the totalitarian system of communism which purports to be a political party or philosophy, but actually is an international conspiracy.

Our democratic, American system stresses we are a nation of laws—not men. This fact was never more eloquently illustrated to the peoples of the world than in the tragedy which claimed the life of our late, great President John F. Kennedy. There was never a moment of doubt who would take over, never a thought of a coup or overthrow of our government. There was instant, orderly transition of power by constitutional process.

Under the democratic system based on law, to which we adhere in this North American continent, all men are guaranteed equal rights under the law—even those who despise our system, including Communists themselves. There are citizens — including some Mississippians — who do not understand how this system operates.

These are the people who do not give others what they want for themselves—the right to do their own thinking, especially if those thoughts lead to disagreement with prevailing, popular public opinion. These people do not recognize the right of dissent accorded in a democratic society. They want absolute conformity to the status quo, or silence.

Such citizens do the democratic system a great injustice. They should realize they are killing the climate of freedom which is absolutely necessary if this great nation is to survive as a bastion and defender of freedom in the world.

* * * *

If the right to disagree is taken away, in Mississippi or anywhere else in the nation, then freedom is lost, and we will be little better off than the Communists.

When we lose our freedom it is gone and the result is the same, no matter who or what took it away—whether it is the laws passed by a Mississippi legislature, or extremist groups such as the white Citizens' Councils and the Ku Klux Klan, or the Federal government, or finally an organized conspiracy of Communists. The result is the same. Our freedom is gone. We have a totalitarian system, not democracy.

* * * *

If our liberty and freedom are to be preserved and our system of constitutional law is to prevail, then our laws must be respected and obeyed by everyone—governors, as well as ordinary citizens.

Every time an American takes the law into his own hands, however justified he may feel, he poses a real threat to our free society and American system. And he becomes a threat to every home and citizen.

Of course, in order for laws to be respected and hence obeyed, they must be fair and just to all. They must be honestly enforced and ad-

ministered by courts with complete integrity. The constitutional guarantee of equality under law demands it.

In states where laws are discriminatory, where they are enforced with bias and justice is dispensed in courts that are less than fair and equitable, the citizens of those states should seek repeal or modification of such laws. But it should be done in a lawful manner—and peacefully. Not on the streets with kicking, screaming mobs, shouting down the President of the United States, or under a flaming cross in terror on a countryside road.

* * * *

Historically, many Mississippi Courts and others in the South as well, have not discharged their responsibilities with absolute integrity—and it is largely for that reason that many frustrated and disillusioned Negroes have taken to the streets in demonstrations which now threaten the peaceful existence of this nation.

The white, extremist groups in Mississippi, who would ignore completely the pleas for justice of our own God-loving, peaceful, law-abiding Negroes in the state are as much responsible for present conditions as the most arrogant and irresponsible Negroes in the nation, those now disowned by their national organizations.

In fact, had it not been for these white groups with their stated policy of "massive resistance," a basic tenet of the Citizens' Council faith, and for the stalling, delaying tactics carried out by local and state officials under their inspiration, the white and Negro people of good will in Mississippi would have long since settled this conflict—and the state could now be engaged in more constructive things. Indeed, it is probable that the militant, activist Negro movement would have never been born in the nation without the continued resistance offered by the Citizens' Council leadership in the South and resulting events.

It is a matter of record that the NAACP sought redress of wrongs through the courts—and they have historically carried the burden for the Negro's quest for freedom. But the courts stalled and delayed—and the young Negroes took to the streets. The NAACP was too moderate, too slow for them, after 100 years.

These are not popular truths—but they should be recognized by white Mississippians who too long have refused to look at the truth.

* * * *

It is also time to recognize the fact that in trying to deny and withhold that which is not ours to deny, equal rights under the law to our fellow citizens, we are giving aid and comfort not only to those who say the free American system won't work—but to the Communists themselves, who would destroy both us and our system. We are playing right into their hands.

The time has come when the American Dream must be made to work for all—and it is to that principle and goal we must dedicate ourselves and our allegiance — one nation, under God indivisible, with true liberty and justice for all.

This is what America and "Law Day" means to us.

What does it mean to you?