



UNITED STATES  
COMMISSION ON  
CIVIL RIGHTS

1121 Vermont Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20425

**REMARKS BEFORE THE  
North Carolina State Advisory Committee to the  
United States Commission on Civil Rights**

27 October 1988  
Winston-Salem, North Carolina  
by

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Chairman

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Before I say anything else, permit me to take notice of a very disturbing phenomenon of recent days. The election campaign has turned ugly and dangerous. For the Commission on Civil Rights it matters little what one candidate says of another, or what promises are made or broken. This independent Commission takes no part in election-year politics. It is the task of this Commission, and therefore of its Commissioners, however, to take notice of developments in our society which seriously threaten to erode or advance the cause of civil rights, and which particularly embitter or ameliorate race relations. Race hatred is so destructive a passion in society in general that we have been charged by Congress and the President to stigmatize it wherever it appears. The sting of conscience is the help-mate of constitutionalism in our republic.

These days race hatred is being cultivated consciously and irresponsibly by presidential candidates and their surrogates. That is an outrageous deed which every sincere friend of this country ought loudly to condemn. No excuse can justify it—not desperation, not cold-blooded realism. Our country's entire future hinges on our ability to cultivate the reality of a consistently receding and eventually vanishing racism. We can never afford to soften the appearance of racism, like the bashful Jew-hater who speaks loosely of anti-semitism. Whoever seeks to manipulate those passions for partisan advantage, whoever divides this country by race or caste, announces himself enemy to this country's future happiness. Whoever stirs that witchly brew concocts bitter potions of enmity and resentment that can only be digested slowly, if at all, and if not violently spewed up, then ultimately expelled at great pain to many individuals and to the country at large.

Candidates and their surrogates may have no consciences—but this country does. And I call upon the candidates and their surrogates to check their base appeals to race hatred today, or prepare to answer for it tomorrow.

This is not a light matter I speak of. Candidates and their surrogates who will cry up race hatred amid the tinder piled up by the Brawley case and like events are no better than the man whom Justice Holmes caught yelling fire in a crowded theatre. The politicians are even worse, for they light fires in crowded theatres!

The facts about which I speak are known to all. Until the last two weeks, Willie Horton was known to us as twice a murderer. Most people asked to know and suffer no more. Then, slowly, we began to hear that Horton had a “black sounding name.” Next, more boldly, he was declared to be black. Then, all caution cast to the wind, it was said that the problem, the evil of Horton, was precisely that he was black, not that he was twice a murderer! This insidious, deliberate appeal to racial divisiveness has ill-served our country.

In my official capacity I have nothing to say about the merits of the debate over furlough programs. But I do say, let the debate go on without trying to deconstruct the society! What is the politician so blind as to imagine that he may rise from the ashes of his country?

Angel Medrano was a threat to society because of his passions for drugs, rape, and murder—until it became convenient to accuse folk who might wish to punish him, or even to remove him from society, with being anti-hispanic.

Who so blind that cannot see, the real point of these pious accusations of racism have one purpose only—namely to exploit racial hatred for electoral advantages. To create racial tensions, while affecting the posture of condemning them! No Wallaceite was ever so accomplished at this art as we have witnessed of late.

Well, enough is enough! I repeat what I have said already. The candidates and their surrogates must put a stop to this today—or they must be made to answer for it tomorrow!