

Unedited transcript of the speech made to the American Institute of Architects in 1968

Whitney M. Young Jr.

Thank you, very much, President Durham.

Distinguished Co-Panelists, Mr. Brewer and Mr. Canty. I believe that the Governor was accurate, as he usually is—he still may be in the audience—and under any circumstances, I want to extend my greeting to one I regard as the nation's most socially sensitive and able chief administrator, and a long time personal friend.

I will not apologize for being presumptuous, as the Governor did. However, if I seem to repeat things you have heard before, I do not apologize, any more than I think a physician would apologize for giving inoculations. Sometimes we have to give repeated vaccinations, and we continue to do so until we observe that it has taken effect.

One need only take a casual look at this audience to see that we have a long way to go in this field of integration of the architects. I almost feel like Mr. Stanley looking for Dr. Livingston—in reverse—in Africa. I think I did see one and wanted to rush up and say: Dr. Livingston, I presume!

I also have another gripe. I'm not sure yet whether I will charge you formally with discrimination. If you're going to bring me this far across the country, why couldn't I have been assigned along with Mr. Brewer to speak at Honolulu instead of at the meeting in Portland?

I happened to have been in Honolulu. In fact, Governor McCall was with me. We stopped over there on our way back from Vietnam. My wife was worrying about my safety in Saigon only to have the newspapers come out where some enterprising photograph with a telescopic lens had caught Ambassador Lodge and myself surfing off the beach at Waikiki. I've had some difficulty in explaining that.

But I was impressed with Honolulu the short time we were there, and the great diversity that you see among the people; a real living democracy, diversity as far as homes are concerned, people all mixed together. I hope that you will just sort of go over there and concentrate on enjoying yourselves. Please don't take over there in what you've been, I think, a silent partner in developing in this country. Just leave them alone. They've done very well without our building and architecture.

I would like very much to speak to you as citizens and as a professional group, and simply as men and women.

Not so long ago a group of miners suddenly found themselves after an avalanche entombed unto their death in one of the diamond mines of South Africa, starving for food and thirsting for water and the need of spiritual comfort. Diamonds were worthless, and they slowly met their death.

So it is increasingly in our society today. We are skilled in the art of making war; we are unskilled in the art of making peace. We are proficient in the art of killing, particularly the good people; bad people are in no danger in this country. We are ignorant in the art of living. We probe and grasp the mysteries of atomic fission and unique and ingenious ways to handle brick and mortar and glass, and we most often forget such simple things as the Sermon on the Mount and the golden rule.

Somehow, there must be a place in our scheme of things for those broad human values which transcend our materialistic grasping and our values that are concentrated more around things and people, or else we shall find ourselves entombed in our diamond mine of materialism.

It would be the most naïve escapist who today would be unaware that the winds of change, as far as human aspirations are concerned, are fast reaching tornado proportions. Throughout our world society, and particularly in our own country, the disinherited, the disfranchised, the poor, the black are saying in no unmistakable terms that they intend to be in or nobody will be comfortably in.

Our choices are clear-cut: We can either engage in genocide and the systematic extermination of the black poor in this country and poor generally, and here we have an ideal model in Mr. Adolf Hitler; or we can engage in more formalized apartheid than we already have, and here we can use as our pattern Mr. Ian Smith in South Africa. Or we can decide that the American dream and promise and the Judeo-Christian ethic are more than rhetoric and a collection of nice clichés to be mouthed on Sunday morning and the Fourth of July, and that they are principles to be practiced, and here we can take as our model the Constitution and the Bible.

But the disinherited in our society today, unlike the past, are fully aware of the gap between their standard of living and the large majority of Americans. No longer are they the sharecroppers on farms and in rural areas where they have not the benefit of newspapers and radio. Today, for the most part, the poor live within a stone's throw of the affluent. They witness on their television sets and read in their newspapers and see

personally how the other half, or the other eighty per cent live. The poor no longer assume that their status is God-made. They no longer believe that they are congenitally and innately inferior because of their color or because of a condition of birth. The poor are fully aware today that their conditions are man-made and not God-decreed or constitutionally derived.

The poor are also today quite conscious of how other people have managed to lift themselves out of the mire of injustice and poverty—whether it was the leaders of civil disobedience in the Boston Tea Party or the revolutionists in the American Revolution, or the labor movement, or the woman's suffrage movement, or the struggles of the Irish, Italians, Jews and what have you. They know the techniques that are sometimes today so glibly discredited are the same techniques that others have used in other periods of history when they found themselves similarly situated.

The poor today are determined. We ignore that at our peril. It is not a passing phenomenon of the moment. It is not a transitory thing like panty-raids or the swallowing of gold fish or crowding in telephone booths. This is a growing trend in our country. And any institution or any individual who feels that they are immune to confrontation or that they somehow will avoid being affected by this, I am afraid are guilty of indulging in smoking opium.

Now, there is one other factor that tends to accelerate and, if anything, complicates. The poor and disinherited of our society today have found strong allies. The allies are the young people of this country and of the world.

Young people whom I've had an opportunity to talk with in some 100 universities, colleges and high schools this year, and many in these last few weeks, who themselves are experiencing a degree of cynicism at best and contempt at worst for adult values, who can document with unerring accuracy the inconsistency in our society, the pervasive gap between what we practice and what we preach, who point at the tragic paradox of a society with a gross national product approaching one trillion dollars and yet would permit 20 percent of its people to live in squalor and in poverty; a society that willingly taxes itself to rebuild western Europe, to rebuild West Germany, spending billions of dollars—there are no slums today in West Germany; the slums are in the Harlems of our community where black people live who have been in this country four hundred years, whose blood, sweat and tears have gone to build this country, who gave it 250 years of free labor and another 100 years of cheap labor. They are the ones who live in the slums and who are unemployed.

These students point out how a budget of approximately \$140 million was spent last year; less than 20 percent for things that are esthetic, cultural and educational, for

health, education and welfare, and almost 70 percent was spent for weapons of destruction or defense against destruction.

No other country has quite this record of disproportionate expenditures. No other country ever dreamed of this great wealth.

We are not at a loss in our society for the know-how. We have the resources. We are at a loss for the will.

The crisis is not in our cities, ladies and gentlemen. The crisis is in our hearts, the kind of human beings we are. And I submit to you that if you are a mother or a father you are today being challenged either silently by young people or you will be challenged even more violently by them, but you are risking the respect of generations not yet adults and generations yet unborn.

Now, in this situation there are two or three, I think, positive aspects and possibilities that are present today that were not present in the past. One is that we are all today aware of the problem. The black person—and I make no apology for singling out the Negro, although I am fully aware that there are poor white people in Appalachia, poor Mexican-Americans, poor Puerto-Ricans and Indians. The Negro is a sort of symbol, the only involuntary immigrant in large numbers, sort of a symbol of it. I make really no apologies, but the Negro today is at least on the conscience of America. This is not to say that he loves it. Probably it is irritating to most people, a source of great unhappiness, but it is better to be hated than ignored.

The Negro has been largely the victim, not of active hate or active concern, but active indifference and callousness. Less than 10 percent of white Americans wanted to lynch Negroes, or 10 percent wanted to free them.

Our problem has been the big 80 percent, that big blob of Americans who have been so busy “making it,” getting ahead in their companies, getting a little house in the suburbs, lowering their golf scores, vying for admittance to the country club, lying about their kids’ I.Q. that they really haven’t had time to be concerned.

Our sin, then, is the sin of omission and not of commission, and into that vacuum have rushed the prophets of doom, the violent people, the vicious people who hate, and they have come all too often around the world to be the voice of America. But at least we recognize the existence of a problem. The communication is probably more candid, though more painful than ever before, and this is progress.

And today, for the first time, we have the full attention and concern of the establishment in America, the decision makers, the top people—I'm talking about the Henry Fords, the Tom Watsons the George Romneys, the truly big people in your field and in the field of business and in government, the most enlightened governors, the most enlightened mayors, the most enlightened college presidents. Even the religious leaders are now beginning to decide that race relations are no longer a spectator sport and in their own enlightened self-interest they have to get involved.

This is important. Nothing in this country [is achieved] really until the so-called decision-makers and the power structure in the country decide that they had better get busy, and that's a very powerful ally.

A final positive thing is, I think, that we today are no longer in a quandary as to the extent of the problem and the cause. We've been now the beneficiaries of a President's Commission Report—the Kerner Commission— a group composed of predominantly white, respectable, conservative, responsible people who, when they started out, the first time they met as a group was to identify the conspirators who were causing the disorders and to suggest ways of suppression and control.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the final report. We invited these gentlemen to take a visit to the ghetto—more specifically, to a tenement house. They smilingly but naively agreed, and that was the beginning of a significant report.

We took these men into a typical tenement house, some 14 floors, and immediately they discovered that as sophisticated as our communications media happen to be, they still are not able to give all the dimensions of the situation—the dimension of smell, for example, feel or taste.

The minute these men walked into the building, they smelled the stench of urine. And why shouldn't they. Little 2- and 3-year old boys out in my neighborhood, just when they have to go to the bathroom, they can't make it into the house, go around to the bushes—sort of an accepted pattern. When you live in the 14-story tenement house with no elevator, little boys can't quite make it and do what little 2- and 3-year old boys do normally.

These men went up the stairs. They made it as far as the seventh floor; they weren't in the best of physical shape. We took them into a typical apartment with six people (including four children) living in two rooms. They saw the little 1-1/2 year-old with a shrunken stomach. All they had to eat that day was a bowl of cornflakes, and it was 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

They talked to the mother whose eyes were bloodshot because she had stayed awake all night trying to keep the rats from biting the children. They saw the rat holes, saw the roaches. Then they talked to the father—alienated, bitter, because he suffered the daily humiliation of not being able to support his children, not playing the role of father, not being able even to buy the kid an ice cream cone.

Repeated experiences like that left no choice except to, as we say, tell it like it is. This upset many Americans, accused of being racists, to be told in no uncertain language that, in fact, there is this gap between how some Americans live.

We are a proud people. We like to kid ourselves into believing that we are good Christians, good human beings; but it isn't true. These men were not starry-eyed liberals, not sentimental do-gooders. These were white conservatives.

I've always been told that white people were always right. I assume they're right. Rap Brown didn't write the report. The report was written by these people that you know as well as I know, that when good people want a social audit, you take it just as seriously as a fiscal audit that says you're in arrears and bankrupt, or a health audit that says you have tuberculosis and you wouldn't go out to see a mechanic and try to get him to dispute the claim.

We are a racist nation, and no way in the world could it be otherwise given the history of our country. Being a racist doesn't mean one wants to go out and join a lynch mob or send somebody off to Africa or engage in crude, vulgar expressions of prejudice. Racism is a basic assumption of superiority on the part of one group over another, and in America it had to happen because as a society we enslaved people for 250 years, and up until 1964 it was written into our laws and enforced by social custom—discrimination against human beings [meant] that a man because of the color of his skin couldn't go into a restaurant or hotel or be served in public places.

Now, there's no way in the world, unless we are more a nation of schizophrenics than I think, that we could have this kind of law tolerated and this kind of social custom and still have gone to church on Sunday and mouthed all those platitudes if we didn't honestly believe that some were superior to others. Racism reflects itself in many little ways—little to you, but big to some people.

A few years ago my wife and I finally managed to reach the point where we could hire a maid for one day a week. When she came into the house she introduced herself as Lucille. My wife said, "What is your last name?" and she said, "Fisher." So my wife said, "Mrs. Fisher, let's talk." And they talked and they decided they could stand each other, and she would go to work immediately.

That afternoon my two youngsters came home and Mrs. Fisher met them at the door and said, "Hello, I'm, Lucille." And my wife came in and said, "Marcia and Loren, this is Mrs. Fisher."

Mrs. Fisher followed her back into the kitchen and said, "You don't have to do that, I like to be called Lucille, it make me feel like a member of the family and I'm closer. I like that just fine."

And my wife said, "Mrs. Fisher, we are not doing this for you. Our youngsters do not call adult women of 45 or 50 years of age by their first name, and if they don't do it with anybody else, then we don't think they ought to do it with [you] unless they get the impression that you are different because of the kind of work you do. So we're trying to teach our youngsters to respect the dignity of human beings, regardless of what they do or the color of their skins."

About an hour later the phone rang. It was Mrs. Fisher's little five-year old son and he said, "Lucille there?" And my wife said, "There's no Lucille here."

And then she told Mrs. Fisher she thought it was her son and maybe she had better call him back, and she did, and the conference went like this: "Son, did you call?" "Yes, Mother, but they said there was no Lucille there." She said, "No, son, I'm not Lucille here; I'm Mrs. Fisher; I'm somebody."

Now, if you could have seen the expression on the face when she said this. This is just simple, elementary dignity.

Fifty percent of all the people in this country don't even pay their domestic's social security which they are required to do by law. Even though the people say they don't want it paid, don't want this kind of record, it is these people's only opportunity for insurance against old age, against illness in old age, and it is a moral thing to do. We pay both shares—ours and hers—because we are thinking about her and we are concerned about what will happen to her.

What I am really talking about here is your role and to realize it as a citizen, and it begins in the home. Dear Lord, let there be peace at home, and let it begin with me. A young man stood up in a meeting a couple of weeks ago and said—a white fellow, an SDS student, not like your young man, and he really blasted the white audience for their prejudice and bigotry and hypocrisy, and then ended up by saying, "So if it means we have to level down with them to achieve equality with all human beings, then white people must do this."

This is a racist statement. I pointed this out. The only reason he could think of leveling down, he was assuming that superiority relates to acquisition of material things, technology, money and clothes. It's conceivable that it might be a leveling upward, or it might be a bringing together on the one hand qualities of humaneness, compassion and style that this society needs a great deal of technology and money and material things. And so we are giving to each other.

If we are going to do anything about changing the individual, let us first admit that it is easier to have lived in a lepers colony and not acquired leprosy than to have lived in America and not acquired prejudice. You don't start changing until you first admit you have it.

Secondly, as a profession, you are not a profession that has distinguished itself by your social and civic contributions to the cause of civil rights, and I am sure this has not come to you as any shock. You are most distinguished by your thunderous silence and your complete irrelevance.

Now, you have a nice, normal escape hatch in your historical ethical code or something that says after all, you are the designers and not the builders; your role is to give people what they want.

Now, that's a nice, easy way to cop out. But I have read about architects who had courage, who had a social sensitivity, and I can't help but wonder about an architect that builds some of the public housing that I see in the cities of this country. How he could even compromise his own profession and his own sense of values to have built 35- or 40-story buildings, these vertical slums, and not even put a restroom in the basement and leave enough recreational space for about 10 kids when there must be 5,000 in the building. That architects as a profession wouldn't as a group stand up and say something about this, is disturbing to me.

You are employers, you are key people in the planning of our cities today. You share the responsibility for the mess we are in terms of the white noose around the central city. It didn't just happen. We didn't just suddenly get this situation. It was carefully planned.

I went back recently and looked at ads when they first started building subdivisions in this country. The first new subdivision—easy access to town, good shopping centers, good schools, no Negroes, no Jews allowed—that was the first statement. Then they decided in New York that that was cutting the market too close, so they said the next day, "No Negroes allowed." And then they got cute when they thought everybody had

the message, and they said “restricted, exclusive neighborhood, homogenous neighborhood.” Everybody knows what those words mean. Even the Federal Government participated. They said [there] must be compatible neighborhoods for FHA mortgages, homogenous neighborhoods. The Federal Government participated in building the nice middle-class housing in the suburbs, putting all the public housing in the central city.

It took a great deal of skill and creativity and imagination to build the kind of situation we have, and it is going to take skill and imagination and creativity to change it. We are going to have to have people as committed to doing the right thing, to inclusiveness, as we have in the past to exclusiveness.

You are also here as educators. Many of you are in educational institutions. I took the time to call up a young man who just finished at Yale and I said “What would you say if you were making the speech I’m supposed to make today?” Again, not quite as sedate and as direct as your young student here because he did have some strong observations to make. He did want you to become more relevant; he did want you to begin to speak out as a profession, he did want in his own classroom to see more Negroes, he wanted to see more Negro teachers. He wanted while his classwork was going on for you somehow as educators to get involved in the community around you.

When you go to a city—Champagne-Urbana, the University of Illinois is about the only major institution and within two or three blocks are some of the worse slums I have seen in the country. It is amazing how within a stone’s throw of the School of Architecture you have absolutely complete indifference—unless you have a federal grant for research, and even then it’s to study the problem.

I hope you accept my recommendation for a moratorium on the study of the Negro in this country. He has been dissected and analyzed, horizontally and vertically and diagonally. Thank you, very much. And if there are any further studies—I’m not anti-intellectual—I hope we’ll make them on white people. And that instead of studying the souls of black people we’ll be studying the souls of white people; instead of the anatomy of Watts, we’ll do an anatomy of Cicero, an anatomy of Bronxville.

What’s wrong with the people in these neighborhoods? Why do they want—themselves just one generation removed from welfare or in many cases just one generation within the country, where they have come here sometimes escaping hate and have come here and acquired freedom—why do they want to turn their backs and say in Cicero, “Al Capone can move in, but Ralph Bunche can’t?” Why are they so insecure? Why do people want to live in these bland, sterile, antiseptic, gilded ghettos, giving sameness

to each, compounding mediocrity in a world that is 75 percent nonwhite, in a world where in 15 minutes you can take a space ship and fly from Kennedy to South Africa? Why would anybody want to let their children grow up in this kind of situation?

I think this kind of affluent peasant ought to be studied. These are people that have acquired middle-class incomes because of strong labor unions and because they are living in an unprecedented affluent period. But in things esthetic and educational and cultural, they leave a lot to be desired. They wouldn't know the difference between Karl Marx and Groucho Marx.

This is where our problem is. We can move next door to Rockefeller in Tarrytown, but I couldn't move into Bronxville. Any white pimp or prostitute can move into Bronxville. A Jewish person could hardly move into Bronxville, incidentally.

As a profession, you ought to be taking stands on these kinds of things. If you don't as architects stand up and endorse Model Cities and appropriations, if you don't speak out for rent supplements or the housing bill calling for a million homes, if you don't speak out for some kind of scholarship program that will enable you to consciously and deliberately seek to bring in minority people who have been discriminated against in many cases, either kept out because of your indifference or couldn't make it—it takes seven to ten years to become an architect— then you will have done a disservice to the memory of John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Bob Kennedy and most of all, to yourselves.

You are part of this society. It is not easy. I am not suggesting the easy road, but the time has come when no longer the kooks and crackpots speak for America. The decent people have to learn to speak up, and you shouldn't have to be the victim to feel for other people. I make no pretense that it is easy.

We do have today the best possibility of generalizing and rationalizing around the issue that you ever had. You have riots and shouts of black power and anybody looking for an excuse to cop out in this can use it, but I insist that if you believe in equality then we have as much right to have crackpots, no reason why white people should have a monopoly. If we have been able to put up all these years with the Ku Klux Klan, with burning and lynching, with the George Lincoln Rockwells, with the White Citizens Councils, with slaveowners, and still don't generalize about all white people. Why should white people generalize about all Negroes on the basis of a few? All Negroes didn't riot in Watts. All Negroes didn't riot in Newark. One out of three in Newark were whites, and one out of five in Watts, and that's why there was more violence in Newark. White people are more experienced.

We don't generalize. A man sat on the plane with me, and he and his wife had a couple of martinis. She fell asleep, and he leaned over and said: Mr. Young, my wife and I are great liberals, we love your people very much, but we have a problem. We would like to invite a colored couple into our home, and he took another sip of liquor and made it more magnanimous, two or three couples but my wife doesn't feel comfortable around colored people. I hope you won't be offended, he said, but what can we do about the problem?

I said I'm not offended, I know perfectly well what you mean. Most people feel odd and uncomfortable and inferior even around Ralph Bunche—Phi Beta Kappa, Nobel Prize Winner, cosmopolite, traveled all over the world. Most people would ask a stupid question and get an elementary response, and I said maybe the Urban League could help you recruit some of the below-average Negroes that your wife would feel more comfortable with.

It's the same business of generalizing—no such thing as a black is a black man, a white is a white man. We have our right to an Adam Clayton Powell if the Irish have the right to a Curley. He would make Adam Clayton Powell the epitome of political morality. Nobody generalizes about the Italians because of the appearance of a disproportionate number in the Mafia. Nobody indicts all of them. Nobody indicts all white men because a white man killed President Kennedy, or Martin Luther King, or a white man stands in a tower in Texas and kills 14 people, or a white man assaults and kills eight nurses in Chicago. They didn't call him "white." We called him "sick." And that's what they were. With the Negroes, it's "the black man."

We fall victims to clichés like "law" and "order." The best example we've ever had of order in this world was that created by Adolf Hitler with his Gestapo and his police. We got perfect order. There was no dissent—goose stepping all over the place—and he used that order to bring about the death of 14 million people, 6 million of them in ovens. There will never be order without justice. And the first prerequisite for order in this society is that there must be justice and the women would still be disorderly in this country if they hadn't gotten the right to vote, and the workers would have torn it apart if they didn't have the Wagner Act, and America would still be fighting England if we had not won the war.

We must have justice. Civil disobedience and lawlessness has been practiced not by black people in this society but by white people who denied the laws of God and the laws of the Constitution.

When a Wallace stands up and talks about law: Who was more lawless, engaged in more civil disobedience than that man? Who stands in the doorway of the courts and constantly berates the Supreme Court of the United States? Talk about respect for law and order! We who have been the victims of the most unscrupulous practices by merchants, by landlords, by employers, by public officials, we know something about lawlessness.

When you talk about crime, talk about the syndicate boss who lives downtown; and he's white and responsible for the dope and the prostitution and the numbers racket that causes 60 percent of the crime in the ghetto. Talk about the guy who charges too much interest rates, or the guy who makes people pay \$500 for a \$175 television set.

The people who talk about neighborhood schools—Mrs. Hicks—you know what they mean. They want little segregated neighborhoods. Now we make the big deal, neighborhood schools, and you can go to the same schools and you see these same people bussing their kids to private schools, or three hundred miles away to prep school if they've got the money. They don't really like the neighborhood that well. But now it has become the new code word for racism in fact.

Finally, let me dwell on your role as men, because I think this probably more basic than anything. Sure, you're architects. You're a lot of things—you're Republicans, Democrats and a few John Birchers. You're a good many things but you're a man and you're a father. I would hope that somehow you would understand that this issue, more than any other of human rights, today separates the phony from the real, the man from the boy, more than anything else.

Baseball's Rickey solved the problem of attitudes and how long it takes. I agree with you that it takes a long time to change attitudes. Doesn't take any time to change them overnight. When he brought Jackie Robinson to the Dodgers, there was this ballplayer who said I'm not going to play with that "nigger." He thought Rickey would flap like most employers. I imagine most architects thought he would say that he'd pull away. But he didn't know Rickey very well. Rickey was kind. He said, "Give him three or four days." Well, at the end of a few days, Robinson had five home runs, stolen many bases and this fellow was reassessing his options. He could go back to Alabama and maybe make \$20 a week picking cotton, or stay there with the Dodgers and continue to work and, now it looked like Jackie would get him into the World Series and a bonus of \$5,000, which he did. The only color he was concerned with was green.

We see it happening in Vietnam. White boys from Mississippi in Vietnam develop more respect and admiration for their black sergeant in one week because they too have

made their own assessment and have decided to be liberal white boys from Mississippi instead of a dead white bigot. They're interested in survival and the sergeant is skilled in the art of surviving, and they say "Mr. Sergeant"—changed overnight.

Why is it that the best example of American democracy is found in the muck and mire of Vietnam? Why is it that the greatest freedom the black man has is the freedom to die in Vietnam; and as they die, why do his loved ones, their kids and their wives and their mothers have to fight for the right to buy a house where they want to?

There is something wrong with that kind of society.

I do want to relate one last story. Mel Batten, who is the chairman of the board of J.C. Penney, about four months ago was having breakfast with his kids, one girl 21 and a boy 23, and they asked what he was going to do that week. He said, "I'm going out with Whitney Young and I have a series of luncheons in some three or four cities. I'm hosting these, and I'm going around talking about expanding employment opportunities for Negro citizens and giving money to the Urban League. (Incidentally, I don't want to miss that plug: You also are distinguished by the fact that I bet we have fewer architects and fewer architectural firms contributing to the national Urban League than any group in the country. That is probably my fault and I apologize—you have not been solicited. Next time it will be your fault.)

But when he told those kids what he was going to do, his boy said, "You're going to do what?" He repeated it to him. And the boy said, "You mean you're not going to maximize the profits of J.C. Penney today! You're not going out this week to undercut Woolworth's; you're not going out to see if you can get something a little cheaper and increase the margin of profits of some product?" And the father answered, "No." The 21-year-old daughter, without saying a word, ran over and hugged and kissed him with tears in her eyes. He said to me, "I never had as much respect and affection and admiration from my kids than I had in that one moment."

Here is a man who gives his children everything—sports cars, big allowances, clothes, big tuition. That isn't what counts. They take that for granted. Here is a man who suddenly became a man with guts concerned about other human beings. Here is a man who is willing to stand up and be counted. That's what these kids care about.

You talk about communication with these kids; they tell you why you don't communicate. They tell me you are inconsistent. You tell them they shouldn't smoke, drink and pet because everybody else does, that you have your own value systems, stand up for what you believe in, do what you know is right. Then, they say "My mother and my dad never do. They never lift their finger to let a black man in business at the top level,

never try to get a Negro into the neighborhood, into the club or church. They just go along.”

I submit to you that this is a mistake in your role as a parent and as a human being. If you cannot identify with the kind of thing I described, that the Kerner Commission saw—it happens even today in this country—if you can’t as a mother and as a father, you are in worse shape than the victims.

So, what’s at stake then is your country, your profession, and you as a decent civilized human being. Anatole France once said, “I prefer the error and enthusiasm to the indifference of wisdom.” For a society that has permitted itself the luxury of an excess of callousness and indifference, we can now afford to permit ourselves the luxury of an excess of caring and of concern. It is easier to cool a zealot than it is to warm a corporation.

An ancient Greek scholar was once asked to predict when the Greeks would achieve victory in Athens. He replied, “We shall achieve victory in Athens and justice in Athens when those who are not injured are as indignant as those who are.”

And so shall it be with this problem of human rights in this country.

Whitney M. Young, Jr. gave this speech as a keynote address at the 1968 AIA Convention in Portland, Oregon.