

Patriotism

Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism

Martha Nussbaum

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*When anyone asked him where he came from, he said, "I am a citizen of the world."
Diogenes Laertius (Life of Diogenes the Cynic)*

In Rabindranath Tagore's novel, *The Home and the World*, the young wife Bimala, entranced by the patriotic rhetoric of her husband's friend Sandip, becomes an eager devotee of the Swadeshi movement, which has organized a boycott of foreign goods. The slogan of the movement is Bande Mataram, "Hail Motherland." Bimala complains that her husband, the cosmopolitan Hindu landlord Nikhil, is cool in his devotion to the cause:

And yet it was not that my husband refused to support Swadeshi, or was in any way against the Cause. Only he had not been able whole-heartedly to accept the spirit of Bande Mataram. 'I am willing,' he said, 'to serve my country; but my worship I reserve for Right which is far greater than my country. To worship my country as a god is to bring a curse upon it.'

Americans have frequently supported the principle of Bande Mataram, giving the fact of being American a special salience in moral and political deliberation, and pride in a specifically American identity and a specifically American citizenship a special power among the motivations to political action. I believe, with Tagore and his character Nikhil, that this emphasis on patriotic pride is both morally dangerous and, ultimately, subversive of some of the worthy goals patriotism sets out to serve -- for example, the goal of national unity in devotion to worthy moral ideals of justice and equality. These goals, I shall argue, would be better served by an ideal that is in any case more adequate to our situation in the contemporary world, namely the very old ideal of the cosmopolitan, the person whose primary allegiance is to the community of human beings in the entire world.

My articulation of these issues is motivated, in part, by my experience working on international quality-of-life issues in an institute for development economics connected with the United Nations. It is motivated, as well, by the renewal of appeals to the nation, and national pride, in some recent discussions of American character and American education. In a by now well-known op-ed piece in *The New York Times* (13 February 1994), philosopher Richard Rorty urges Americans, especially the American left, not to disdain patriotism as a value, and indeed to give central importance to "the emotion of national pride" and "a sense of shared national identity." Rorty argues that we cannot even criticize ourselves well unless we also "rejoice" in our American identity and define ourselves fundamentally in terms of that identity. Rorty seems to hold that the primary alternative to a politics based on patriotism and national identity is what he calls a "politics of difference," one based on internal divisions among America's ethnic, racial,

religious, and other sub-groups. He nowhere considers the possibility of a more international basis for political emotion and concern ...

... One might wonder how far the politics of nationalism really is from the "politics of difference." *The Home and the World* is a tragic story of the defeat of a reasonable and principled cosmopolitanism by the forces of nationalism and ethnocentrism. I believe that Tagore sees deeply when he sees that at bottom nationalism and ethnocentric particularism are not alien to one another, but akin -- that to give support to nationalist sentiments subverts, ultimately, even the values that hold a nation together, because it substitutes a colorful idol for the substantive universal values of justice and right. Once one has said, "I am an Indian first, a citizen of the world second," once one has made that morally questionable move of self-definition by a morally irrelevant characteristic, then what, indeed, will stop one from saying, as Tagore's characters so quickly learn to say, "I am a Hindu first, and an Indian second," "I am an upper-caste landlord first, and a Hindu second." Only the cosmopolitan stance of the landlord Nikhil -- so boringly flat in the eyes of his young wife Bimala and his passionate nationalist friend Sandip -- has the promise of transcending these divisions, because only this stance asks us to give our first allegiance to what is morally good -- and that which, being good, I can commend as such to all human beings. Or so I shall argue.

Proponents of nationalism in politics and in education frequently make a thin concession to cosmopolitanism. They may argue, for example, that although nations should in general base education and political deliberation on shared national values, a commitment to basic human rights should be part of any national educational system, and that this commitment will in a sense serve to hold many nations together. This seems to be a fair comment on practical reality; and the emphasis on human rights is certainly necessary for a world in which nations interact all the time on terms, let us hope, of justice and mutual respect.

But is it sufficient? As students here grow up, is it sufficient for them to learn that they are above all citizens of the United States, but that they ought to respect the basic human rights of citizens of India, Bolivia, Nigeria, and Norway? Or should they, as I think -- in addition to giving special attention to the history and current situation of their own nation -- learn a good deal more than is frequently the case about the rest of the world in which they live, about India and Bolivia and Nigeria and Norway and their histories, problems, and comparative successes? Should they learn only that citizens of India have equal basic human rights, or should they also learn about the problems of hunger and pollution in India, and the implications of these problems for larger problems of global hunger and global ecology? Most important, should they be taught that they are above all citizens of the United States, or should they instead be taught that they are above all citizens of a world of human beings, and that, while they themselves happen to be situated in the United States, they have to share this world of human beings with the citizens of other countries? I shall shortly suggest four arguments for the second conception of education, which I shall call cosmopolitan education. But first I introduce a historical digression, which will trace cosmopolitanism to its origins, in the process recovering some excellent arguments that originally motivated it as an educational project.

II

Asked where he came from, the ancient Greek Cynic philosopher Diogenes replied, "I am a citizen of the world." He meant by this, it appears, that he refused to be defined by his local origins and local group memberships, so central to the self-image of a conventional Greek male; he insisted on defining himself in terms of more universal aspirations and concerns. The Stoics who followed his lead developed his image of the *kosmou politês* or world citizen more fully, arguing that each of us dwells, in effect, in two communities -- the local community of our birth, and the community of human argument and aspiration that "is truly great and truly common, in which we look neither to this corner nor to that, but measure the boundaries of our nation by the sun" (Seneca, *De Otio*). It is this community that is, most fundamentally, the source of our moral obligations. With respect to the most basic moral values such as justice, "we should regard all human beings as our fellow citizens and neighbors" (Plutarch, *On the Fortunes of Alexander*). We should regard our deliberations as, first and foremost, deliberations about human problems of people in particular concrete situations, not problems growing out of a national identity that is altogether unlike that of others. Diogenes knew that the invitation to think as a world citizen was, in a sense, an invitation to be an exile from the comfort of patriotism and its easy sentiments, to see our own ways of life from the point of view of justice and the good. The accident of where one is born is just that, an accident; any human being might have been born in any nation. Recognizing this, his Stoic successors held, we should not allow differences of nationality or class or ethnic membership or even gender to erect barriers between us and our fellow human beings. We should recognize humanity wherever it occurs, and give its fundamental ingredients, reason and moral capacity, our first allegiance and respect.

This clearly did not mean that the Stoics were proposing the abolition of local and national forms of political organization and the creation of a world state. The point was more radical still: that we should give our first allegiance to no mere form of government, no temporal power, but to the moral community made up by the humanity of all human beings. The idea of the world citizen is in this way the ancestor and source of Kant's idea of the "kingdom of ends," and has a similar function in inspiring and regulating moral and political conduct. One should always behave so as to treat with equal respect the dignity of reason and moral choice in every human being. It is this conception, as well, that inspires Tagore's novel, as the cosmopolitan landlord struggles to stem the tide of nationalism and factionalism by appeals to universal moral norms. Many of the speeches of the character Nikhil were drawn from Tagore's own cosmopolitan political writings

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... The Stoics stress that to be a citizen of the world one does not need to give up local identifications, which can frequently be a source of great richness in life. They suggest that we think of ourselves not as devoid of local affiliations, but as surrounded by a series of concentric circles. The first one is drawn around the self; the next takes in one's immediate family; then follows the extended family; then, in order, one's neighbors or local group, one's fellow city-dwellers, one's fellow countrymen -- and we can easily add to this list groupings based on ethnic, linguistic, historical, professional, gender and sexual identities. Outside all these circles is the largest one, that of humanity as a whole. Our task as citizens of the world will be to "draw the circles somehow toward the center" (Stoic philosopher Hierocles), making all human beings more like our fellow city dwellers, and so on. In other words, we need not give up our special affections and identifications, whether ethnic or gender-based or religious. We need not think of them as superficial, and we may think of our identity as in part constituted by them. We may and

should devote special attention to them in education. But we should work to make all human beings part of our community of dialogue and concern, base our political deliberations on that interlocking commonality, and give the circle that defines our humanity a special attention and respect.

This means, in educational terms, that the student in the United States, for example, may continue to regard herself as in part defined by her particular loves -- for her family, her religious and/or ethnic and/or racial community or communities, even for her country. But she must also, and centrally, learn to recognize humanity wherever she encounters it, undeterred by traits that are strange to her, and be eager to understand humanity in its "strange" guises. She must learn enough about the different to recognize common aims, aspirations, and values, and enough about these common ends to see how variously they are instantiated in the many cultures and many histories. Stoic writers insist that the vivid imagining of the different is an essential task of education; and that requires in turn, of course, a mastery of many facts about the different. Marcus Aurelius gives himself the following advice, which might be called the basis for cosmopolitan education: "Accustom yourself not to be inattentive to what another person says, and as far as possible enter into that person's mind" (VI.53). "Generally," he concludes, "one must first learn many things before one can judge another's action with understanding" ... I would like to see education adopt this cosmopolitan Stoic stance, however, I shall now return to the present day and offer four arguments for making world citizenship, rather than democratic/national citizenship, education's central focus.

III

1. Through cosmopolitan education, we learn more about ourselves. One of the greatest barriers to rational deliberation in politics is the unexamined feeling that one's own current preferences and ways are neutral and natural. An education that takes national boundaries as morally salient too often reinforces this kind of irrationality, by lending to what is an accident of history a false air of moral weight and glory. By looking at ourselves in the lens of the other, we come to see what in our practices is local and non-necessary, what more broadly or deeply shared. Our nation is appallingly ignorant of most of the rest of the world. I think that this means that it is also, in many crucial ways, ignorant of itself.

To give just one example of this -- since 1994 is the United Nations' International Year of the Family -- if we want to understand our own history and our choices where the structure of the family and of child-rearing are involved, we are immeasurably assisted by looking around the world to see in what configurations families exist, and through what strategies children are in fact being cared for. (This would include a study of the history of the family, both in our own and in other traditions.) Such a study can show us, for example, that the two-parent nuclear family, in which the mother is the primary homemaker and the father the primary breadwinner is by no means a pervasive style of child-rearing in today's world. The extended family, clusters of families, the village, women's associations -- all these groups and still others are in various places regarded as having major child-rearing responsibilities. Seeing this, we can begin to ask questions -- for example, how much child abuse there is in a family that involves grandparents and other relatives in child-rearing, as compared with the relatively isolated Western-style nuclear family; how many different structures of child care have been found to support women's work, and how well each of these is functioning. If we do not undertake this kind of educational

project, we risk assuming that the options familiar to us are the only ones there are, and that they are somehow "normal" and "natural" for the human species as such. Much the same can be said about conceptions of gender and sexuality, about conceptions of work and its division, about schemes of property holding, about the treatment of childhood and old age.

2. We make headway solving problems that require international cooperation. The air does not obey national boundaries. This simple fact can be, for children, the beginning of the recognition that, like it or not, we live in a world in which the destinies of nations are closely intertwined with respect to basic goods and survival itself. The pollution of third-world nations who are attempting to attain our high standard of living will, in some cases, end up in our air. No matter what account of these matters we will finally adopt, any intelligent deliberation about ecology -- as, also, about the food supply and population -- requires global planning, global knowledge, and the recognition of a shared future.

To conduct this sort of global dialogue, we need not only knowledge of the geography and ecology of other nations -- something that would already entail much revision in our curricula -- but also a great deal about the people with whom we shall be talking, so that in talking with them we may be capable of respecting their traditions and commitments. Cosmopolitan education would supply the background necessary for this type of deliberation.

3. We recognize moral obligations to the rest of the world that are real, and that otherwise would go unrecognized. What are Americans to make of the fact that the high living standard we enjoy is one that very likely cannot be universalized, at least given the present costs of pollution controls and the present economic situation of developing nations, without ecological disaster? We need to educate our children to be troubled by this fact. Otherwise we are educating a nation of moral hypocrites, who talk the language of universalizability but whose universe has a self-servingly narrow scope.

This point may appear to presuppose universalism, rather than being an argument in its favor. But here one may note that the values on which Americans may most justly pride themselves are, in a deep sense, Stoic values: respect for human dignity and the opportunity for each person to pursue happiness. If we really do believe that all human beings are created equal and endowed with certain inalienable rights, we are morally required to think about what that conception requires us to do with and for the rest of the world.

Once again, that does not mean that one may not permissibly give one's own sphere a special degree of concern. Politics, like child care, will be poorly done if each thinks herself equally responsible for all, rather than giving the immediate surroundings special attention and care. To give one's own sphere special care is justifiable in universalist terms, and I think that this is its most compelling justification. To take one example, we do not really think that our own children are morally more important than other people's children, even though almost all of us who have children would give our own children far more love and care than we give other people's children. It is good for children, on the whole, that things should work out this way, and that is why our special care is good rather than selfish. Education may and should reflect those special concerns -- spending more time, for example, within a given nation, on that nation's history and politics. But my argument does entail that we should not confine our thinking to our own sphere -- that in making choices in both political and economic matters we should most seriously consider the right of other human beings to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and work to

acquire the knowledge that will enable us to deliberate well about those rights. I believe that this sort of thinking will have large-scale economic and political consequences.

4. We make a consistent and coherent argument based on distinctions we are really prepared to defend. Let me now return to the defense of shared values in Richard Rorty's *New York Time's* article. In his eloquent appeals to the common there is something that makes me very uneasy. On the one hand Rorty seems to argue well when he insists on the centrality to democratic deliberation of certain values that bind all citizens together. But why should these values, which instruct us to join hands across boundaries of ethnicity and class and gender and race, lose steam when they get to the borders of the nation? By conceding that a morally arbitrary boundary such as the boundary of the nation has a deep and formative role in our deliberations, we seem to be depriving ourselves of any principled way of arguing to citizens that they should in fact join hands across these other barriers.

For one thing, the very same groups exist both outside and inside. Why should we think of people from China as our fellows the minute they dwell in a certain place, namely the United States, but not when they dwell in a certain other place, namely China? What is it about the national boundary that magically converts people toward whom our education is both incurious and indifferent into people to whom we have duties of mutual respect? I think, in short, that we undercut the very case for multicultural respect within a nation by failing to make a broader world respect central to education. Richard Rorty's patriotism may be a way of bringing all Americans together; but patriotism is very close to jingoism, and I'm afraid I don't see in Rorty's argument any proposal for coping with this very obvious danger.

Furthermore, the defense of shared national values, as I understand it, requires appealing to certain basic features of human personhood that obviously also transcend national boundaries. So if we fail to educate children to cross those boundaries in their minds and imaginations, we are tacitly giving them the message that we don't really mean what we say. We say that respect should be accorded to humanity as such, but we really mean that Americans as such are worthy of special respect. And that, I think, is a story that Americans have told for far too long.

IV

Becoming a citizen of the world is often a lonely business. It is, in effect, as Diogenes said, a kind of exile -- from the comfort of local truths, from the warm nestling feeling of patriotism, from the absorbing drama of pride in oneself and one's own. In the writings of Marcus Aurelius (as in those of his American followers Emerson and Thoreau) one sometimes feels a boundless loneliness, as if the removal of the props of habit and local boundaries had left life bereft of a certain sort of warmth and security. If one begins life as a child who loves and trusts its parents, it is tempting to want to reconstruct citizenship along the same lines, finding in an idealized image of a nation a surrogate parent who will do one's thinking for one. Cosmopolitanism offers no such refuge; it offers only reason and the love of humanity, which may seem at times less colorful than other sources of belonging.

In Tagore's novel, the appeal to world citizenship fails -- fails because patriotism is full of color and intensity and passion, whereas cosmopolitanism seems to have a hard time gripping the imagination. And yet in its very failure, Tagore shows, it succeeds. For the novel is a story of

education for world citizenship, since the entire tragic story is told by the widowed Bimala, who understands, if too late, that Nikhil's morality was vastly superior to Sandip's empty symbol-mongering, that what looked like passion in Sandip was egocentric self-exaltation, and that what looked like lack of passion in Nikhil contained a truly loving perception of her as a person. If one goes today to Santiniketan, a town several hours by train from Calcutta, the town where Tagore founded his cosmopolitan university Vishvabharati -- whose name means "all the world" -- one feels the tragedy once more. For all-the-world university has not achieved the anticipated influence or distinction within India, and the ideals of the cosmopolitan community of Santiniketan are increasingly under siege from militant forces of ethnocentric particularism and Hindu-fundamentalist nationalism. And yet, in the very decline of Tagore's ideal -- which now threatens the very existence of the secular and tolerant Indian state -- the observer sees its worth. To worship one's country as a god is indeed to bring a curse upon it. Recent electoral reactions against Hindu nationalism give some grounds for optimism that this recognition of worth is widespread and may prove efficacious, averting a tragic ending of the sort that Tagore describes ...

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Cosmopolitanism

Bruce Robbins

"In the course of my life", Joseph De Maistre observed, "I have seen Frenchmen, Italians, Russians; but man I have never met." De Maistre's snubbing of "man" is still remembered often, and usually with satisfaction. But the propriety of this snub has never seemed so open to doubt. Even if one could assume that the abstract universal "man" is vague and ungraspable, recent history has made it difficult to pretend that this abstraction can be neatly opposed to particular nationalities, assumed to be palpable and real. Those Frenchmen whom the 19th century De Maistre has seen with his own eyes: are we sure they weren't Alsatians of uncertain allegiance and identity? Could it be that his Russians were not really Russians at all, but Ukrainians or Georgians, Chechens or Abkhazians whose day of national recognition had not yet arrived? Nationality, it would appear, is also an artifice, a fragile historical generalization rather than a given fact of nature. And precisely because France and Russia must be acknowledged to be abstractions, it is harder and harder to avoid at least a nodding acquaintance with "man," who is nothing but a more unruly, less institutionally grounded abstraction.

This devious line of argument expresses some of my ambivalence about Martha Nussbaum's essay "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" and the arguments of its numerous critics. In part because of my own discomfort with the universal "man", I did not set out with overwhelming sympathy for Nussbaum's cosmopolitan project, the project of educating people into a primary allegiance to what she calls 'the worldwide community of human beings'. According to this Stoic and Kantian ideal, there could be only one cosmopolitanism, one "world citizenship", for there is only one 'worldwide community of human beings'. Paradoxically, then, Nussbaum could only defend the rest against the West by means of an unrepentant reassertion of Western philosophical universalism.

I warmed somewhat to Nussbaum's argument, however, for two reasons. The first was a sense of sneaky incoherence in positions that base their counter-appeal on the unquestionable self-

evidence of the particular. After all, it is not just an abstract, universal “man”, but very particular groups of non-citizens who can be treated as if they were not there, and are still treated as if they were not there, because of an intellectual code that prides itself on recognizing only particulars. A second reason for putting my doubts on hold was seeing what massive hostility that argument provoked. The many critiques of Nussbaum's cosmopolitanism are most interesting because they reveal an emergent form of American nationalism.

To the rest of the world, American nationalism may still seem first and foremost a hypocritical version of idealist universalism. Its primary associations are with the borderless-world globalism, at once capitalist and electronic, that hypes McDonald's and MTV along with free markets and carefully selected human rights. But recently there has been a retrenchment, a circling of the wagons, a scaling-down of American nationalism in the direction of Realpolitik. These days there are many American policy-makers and media pundits who no longer bother to pretend that what's good for us is good for the world. With a menacing modesty, they are now content to champion one national interest against all others. The mood is neo-medieval. And with a silent bow in the direction of post-modernism, the leftist intellectuals attacking Nussbaum seem to say that if there is indeed no metalanguage, no metadiscourse – and hence no position outside or above the melee – they must make no judgments. In fact, this limitation on thought turns out to have unexpected benefits for the world's most powerful nation, which can present itself as just another tiny particular locked in battle with a tyrannical, totalizing universalism. Hence another paradox: faced with criticism of their country from the outside, liberal *and* rightist intellectuals can claim the protection that the cultural Left has accorded to smaller and more vulnerable collectivities ...

Philosophy Now

Why Democracy Needs Patriotism

Charles Taylor

Charles Taylor is Canada's most internationally recognized philosopher. He is a professor emeritus at McGill University in Montreal (cross-appointed in the philosophy and political science departments) and twice ran losing federal election campaigns (as the NDP candidate) against Pierre Elliot Trudeau.

I agree with Martha Nussbaum in so many ways but sometimes she seems to be proposing cosmopolitan identity as an alternative to patriotism. If so, then I think this is a mistake. And that is because we cannot do without patriotism in the modern world.

This necessity can be seen from two angles. The most important is this: the societies that we are striving to create free, democratic, willing to some degree to share equally -- require strong identification on the part of their citizens. It has always been noted in the civic humanist tradition that free societies, relying as they must on the spontaneous supportive action of their members, need that strong sense of allegiance that Montesquieu called “vertu.” This is if anything even truer of modern representative democracies because they are also “liberal” societies, which

cherish negative liberty and individual rights. A citizen democracy can only work if most of its members are convinced that their political society is a common venture of considerable moment, and believe it to be of vital importance that they participate in the ways they must to keep it functioning as a democracy.

This means not only a commitment to the common project, but also a special sense of bonding among people working together in this project. This is perhaps the point at which most contemporary democracies threaten to fall apart. A citizen democracy is highly vulnerable to the alienation which arises from deep inequalities, and the sense of neglect and indifference that easily arises among abandoned minorities. That is why democratic societies cannot be too inegalitarian. But this means that they must be capable of adopting policies with redistributive effect (and to some extent also with redistributive intent). And such policies require a high degree of mutual commitment. If an outsider can be permitted to comment, the widespread opposition to the extremely modest proposal for a health plan in the United States doesn't seem to indicate that contemporary Americans suffer from too great a mutual commitment.

In short, the reason why we need patriotism as well as cosmopolitanism is that modern democratic states are extremely exigent common enterprises in self-rule. They require a great deal of their members, demanding much greater solidarity towards compatriots than towards humanity in general. We cannot make a success of these enterprises without strong common identification. And considering the alternatives to democracy in our world, it is not in the interest of humanity that we fail in these enterprises.

We can look at this from another angle. Modern states in general, not just democratic states, having broken away *from* the traditional hierarchical models, require a high degree of mobilization of their members. Mobilization occurs around common identities. In most cases, our choice is not whether or not people will respond to mobilization around a common identity -- as against, say, being recruitable only for universal causes -- but which of two or more possible identities will claim their allegiance. Some of these will be wider than others, some more open and hospitable to cosmopolitan solidarities. It is between these that the battle for civilized cosmopolitanism must frequently be fought, and not in an impossible (and if successful, self-defeating) attempt to set aside all such patriotic identities.

Take the example of India that Martha Nussbaum raises. The present drive towards Hindu chauvinism of the BJP comes as an alternative definition of Indian national identity to the Nehru-Gandhi secular definition of India. And what in the end can defeat this chauvinism but some reinvention of India as a secular republic with which people can identify? I shudder to think of the consequences of abandoning the issue of Indian identity altogether to the perpetrators of the Ayodhya disaster.

In sum, what I am saying is that we have no choice but to be cosmopolitans and patriots; which means to fight for the kind of patriotism which is open to universal solidarities against other, more closed kinds. I don't really know if I'm disagreeing with Martha Nussbaum on this, just putting her profound and moving plea in a somewhat different context. But this nuance is, I think, important.

Letter From Birmingham City Jail

Martin Luther King Jr.

Henry Thoreau, Mohandas Ghandi and Martin Luther King, Jr. are the best known representatives of the ideal of pacifism and political strategy of civil disobedience. This letter was written from an Alabama jail where King was imprisoned for an act of breaking a segregationist law. In reading this letter critically assess the idea that King is a great American patriot.

My dear Fellow Clergymen: While confined here in the Birmingham City Jail, I came across your recent statement calling our present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom, if ever, do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all of the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would be engaged in little else in the course of the day and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine goodwill and your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I would like to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms. I think I should give the reason for my being in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the argument of "outsiders coming in." I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every Southern state with head-quarters in Atlanta, Georgia ... Several months ago our local affiliate here in Birmingham invited us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct action program if such were deemed necessary ... So I am here, along with several members of my staff, because we were invited here. I am here because I have basic organizational ties here. Beyond this, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as ... the Apostle Paul left his little village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to practically every hamlet and city of the Graeco-Roman world, I too am compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my particular home town. Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere in this country.

You deplore the demonstrations that are presently taking place in Birmingham. But ... I would say in more emphatic terms that it is even more unfortunate that the white power structure of this city left the Negro community with no other alternative. In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: (1) collection of the facts to determine whether injustices are alive; (2) negotiation; (3) self-purification; and (4) direct action. We have gone through all of these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of police brutality is known in every section of this country. Its unjust treatment of Negroes in the courts is a notorious reality. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than any city in this nation. These are the hard, brutal, and unbelievable facts. On the basis of these conditions Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the political leaders consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiation. Then came the opportunity last September to talk with some of the leaders of the economic community. In these negotiating sessions certain promises were made by the merchants -- such as the promise to

remove the humiliating racial signs from the stores. On the basis of these promises Rev. Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to call a moratorium on any type of demonstrations. As the weeks and months unfolded we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. The signs remained. As in so many experiences of the past we were confronted with blasted hopes, and the dark shadow of a deep disappointment settled upon us. So we had no alternative except that of preparing for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and national community. We were not unmindful of the difficulties involved. So we decided to go through a process of self-purification. We started having workshops on non-violence and repeatedly asked ourselves the questions, "Are you able to accept blows without retaliating? Are you able to endure the ordeals of jail?"

We decided to set our direct action program around the Easter season, realizing that with the exception of Christmas, this was the largest shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic withdrawal program would be the byproduct of direct action, we felt that this was the best time to bring pressure on the merchants for the needed changes. Then it occurred to us that the March election was ahead, and so we speedily decided to postpone action until after election day. When we discovered that Mr. Connor was in the run-off, we decided again to postpone action so that the demonstrations could not be used to cloud the issues. At this time we agreed to begin our nonviolent witness the day after the run-off. This reveals that we did not move irresponsibly into direct action. We too wanted to see Mr. Connor defeated; so we went through postponement after postponement to aid in this community need. After this we felt that direct action could be delayed no longer. You may well ask, "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches, etc? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are exactly right in your call for negotiation. Indeed, this is the purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. I just referred to the creation of tension as a part of the work of the nonviolent resister. This may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word tension. I have earnestly worked and preached against violent tension, and there is a type of constructive nonviolent tension that is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need of having nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. So the purpose of the direct action is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. We, therefore, concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in the tragic attempt to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

One of the basic points in your statement is that our acts are untimely. Some have asked, "Why didn't you give the new administration time to act?" The only answer that I can give to this inquiry is that the new administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one before it acts. We will be sadly mistaken if we feel that the election of Mr. Boutwell will bring the millennium to Birmingham. While Mr. Boutwell is much more articulate and gentle than Mr. Connor, they are both segregationists dedicated to the task of maintaining the status quo. The hope I see in Mr. Boutwell is that he will be reasonable enough to see the futility of massive resistance to desegregation. But he will not see this without pressure from the devotees of civil

rights. My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. History is the long and tragic story of the fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups are more immoral than individuals. We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly I have never yet engaged in a direct action movement that was "well timed," according to the timetable of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with a piercing familiarity. This "wait" has almost always meant "never." It has been a tranquilizing thalidomide, relieving the emotional stress for a moment, only to give birth to an ill-formed infant of frustration. We must come to see with the distinguished jurist of yesterday that "justice too long delayed is justice denied." We have waited for more than three hundred and forty years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jet-like speed toward the goal of political independence, and we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward the gaining of a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say wait. But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize, and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an air-tight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her little eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see the depressing clouds of inferiority begin to form in her little mental sky, and see her begin to distort her little personality by unconsciously developing a bitterness toward white people; ... when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tip-toe stance never quite knowing what to expect next, and plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness" ; -- then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice ...

One may ask, "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws; there are just laws and unjust laws ... One has not only a legal but moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "An unjust law is no law at all." Now what is the difference between the two? ... An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality ... I hope you can see the distinction I am trying to point out. In no sense do I advocate evading or defying the law as the rabid segregationist would do. This would lead to anarchy. One who breaks an unjust law must do it openly, lovingly (not hatefully as the white mothers did in New Orleans when they were seen on television screaming "nigger, nigger, nigger") and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and willingly accepts the penalty by staying in jail to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the very highest respect for law ...