

JACKIE ROBINSON SAYS
By Jackie Robinson

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AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT-

Dear President Kennedy; All over the world, the headlines reported that you had shown your muscle and won an important victory.

You had won the battle, as they put it, against the barons of steel.

There are many people who think you looked heroic in this battle. There are others who claim that you abused the office of the Presidency and took upon yourself extraordinary powers which have struck fear in the hearts of big business.

We, ourselves, will not go into the subject of whether we feel you were right or wrong.

One thing is sure, You were definite, You were strong in your stand and you displayed a flash of anger and spunk which many people admired.

To make a long story short - you got angry.

When it was all over and you were declared the winner, you had no apologies for getting angry. You said you did it in the best interests of the nation.

We believe you believe that - and if you believe it, whether you were right or wrong, we have respect for you for standing up for your beliefs.

Mr. President, we wonder if you believe something else.

We wonder if you believe that it is in the best interests of the country, or in the best interests of our democracy, or in the best interests of world peace for a city like August, Georgia to become an armed camp because of racial tensions between white and colored citizens there.

We wonder if you believe that it is in the best interests of all which the free world holds dear for the police chief of this city to announce that he feels his force can keep trouble down but that he isn't quite sure there won't be horrible bloodshed.

We hold no brief for what happened in Augusta, Georgia where a white youth was killed after race feeling rose high because Negro citizens were publicly demonstrating for jobs better than porter or janitor jobs.

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We do not believe in violence as a solution to the problems of the Negro in this country.

But, with all due respect to the wonderful preachments of Dr. Martin Luther King, we do not believe that the Negro is going to continue to turn the other cheek when his children are denied schooling, his family is denied bread and butter, when he is denied the right to vote, to strike for advancement, to live where his desire urges him and his pocketbook entitles him.

Mr. President, don't you believe that the explosive situation in the South and the sneaky, covered up prejudice in the North are as damaging to the public interest, to democracy and to world peace as a \$6 raise in steel prices?

You have said you believe it. You said it in your campaign speeches. You said it in Presidential pronouncements. You have reflected it in your personal attitude and in the manner which you have been attempting to integrate the Negro into important positions in Government.

But talk it isn't enough, Mr. President. Talk is important, especially from the White House. But it isn't enough.

Without meaning to be impertinent, Mr. President, we have a suggestion. Why don't you wander off from all those advisors and FBI men; wander off somewhere where you can sit down, all alone - and think about the high cost of race prejudice - just as you thought about the threatened high cost of steel.

You know what, Mr. President? We believe that if you do that, you will get angry again. And wouldn't it be good for you to go down in history, not only as the President who won the battle against the steel barons but also as the President who won the battle against the bigots in this country who are working harder to destroy it from within than any foreign power is working to destroy it from without?

Why, Mr. President, why don't you get angry again?