

Module 08: Jackie Robinson, Civil Rights Leader?

Evidence 2: Draft Letter From Vice-President Nixon, 1960

A

Introduction

Reproduced below is a draft letter Vice-President Nixon wrote to Jackie Robinson in 1960.

Document

Draft

11/4/60 - - - - must be mailed out tonight air mail - special delivery to Hilton Hotel, Chicago

Dear Jackie:

In the last several weeks of the campaign, I have several times come into cities shortly after you have been there. Without exception, there have been a great many compliments on the appearances you have made and there is no question but that you are making an enormous contribution to our common cause.

Having just made my final swing into the south and the southwest, I am particularly pleased to add to the report I gave you when we chatted last in New York. In South Carolina, as I have done in almost every southern state, I repeated my position on civil rights and again there was applause. [Revised text: In almost every southern state, including S.C., where I have spoken I have made it clear where I stand on the need for equality under law for all our citizens.] As I told you before, this must be recognized as solid evidence of the progress we are making nationally in the civil rights field.

I am advised that my office in Washington has had a number of inquiries asking why I did not intervene in the Martin Luther King case. I know that some of these inquiries were prompted by the well known fact that I have frequently counseled with Dr. King and have a great respect for him. It is easy for one who is not in the Administration to make, what our good friend Joe Louis called a "grandstand play" but you and I know that real progress

in the civil rights field is best advanced by the day to day consistent application of the principles which we know are sound.

I, of course, have no way of knowing what the outcome will be in the election. Our people seem confident and I have attempted to state our case accurately and positively. Whatever the result, I do want you to know that your voluntary campaigning on my behalf has meant a great deal to both Pat and myself and she joins me in sending our warmest regards to you.