

Notable Quotes: The Struggle for the Right to Vote

If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost.

Aristotle (c. 340 B.C.)

I contend that woman has just as much right to sit in solemn counsel in conventions, conferences, associations and general assemblies, as man—just as much right to sit upon the throne of England or in the Presidential chair of the United States.

Angelina Grimke (1837)

I have never had a feeling, politically, that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence.

Abraham Lincoln (c.1858)

Among freemen there can be no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet, and...they who take such appeal are sure to lose their case and pay the cost.

Abraham Lincoln (c.1859)

Here, in the first paragraph of the Declaration [of Independence], is the assertion of the natural right of all to the ballot; for how can “the consent of the governed” be given, if the right to vote be denied?

Susan B. Anthony (1873)

Every voter ought not merely to vote, but to vote under the inspiration of a high purpose to serve a nation.

Calvin Coolidge (1924)

Here in America we are descended in blood and spirit from revolutionist and rebels—men and women who dare to dissent from accepted doctrine. As their heirs, we may never confuse honest dissent with disloyal subversion.

Dwight D. Eisenhower (1954)

We march in the name of the Constitution, knowing that the Constitution is on our side. The right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances shall not be abridged. That's the First Amendment.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (c.1963)

"All my life I believed that white power could and would draw the line whenever and wherever it wanted and there was absolutely nothing black people do about it."

J.L. Chestnut (1965)

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"Ballots or Bullets." "If white people realize what the alternative is, perhaps they would be more willing to listen to Dr. King."

Malcolm X (1965)

"I am not going to have a bunch of (racial slur) walking along a highway in this state as long as I'm governor."

Governor George C. Wallace (1965)

"We was infuriated. We had decided we were going to get killed or we was going to be free. "

Albert Turner

"I don't see how President Johnson can send troops to Vietnam . . . and can't send troops to Selma, Alabama."

John L. Lewis (1965)

"The tear gassing and beating of Negroes in Selma, Alabama, yesterday . . . upon orders of Governor Wallace clearly dramatizes . . . that Negroes are not respected . . . and are treated worse than cattle."

Rev. Fred L Shuttlesworth

"You have two minutes to disperse. " " May we have a word with you, Major?" "There is no word to be had." (Sixty five seconds later) "Troopers advance."

Major Jim Cloud, Alabama State Trooper and Rev. Hosea Williams (1965)

". . . the black men and women who stood at Pettus Bridge did not resist or throw stones; they were gassed, clubbed and beaten at random as they sought only . . . to register and vote. "

Congressman Carleton J. King, Conservative Republican, New York

" The right to protest should be commensurate with the enormity of the wrongs that are being protested and petitioned against. In this case, the wrongs are enormous. The extent of the right to demonstrate against these wrongs should be determined accordingly."

Judge Frank M. Johnson (1965)

"Their cause must be our cause, too. It is not just Negroes, but all of , who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we shall overcome."

President Lyndon B. Johnson (1965)

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"... however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long, because truth pressed to the earth will rise again."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. , March 25, 1965.

America has always been about rights.... While many nations are based on a shared language or ethnic heritage, Americans have made rights the foundation of their national identity.

J. Jackson Barlow (1987)

" The beatings did not stop at the bridge. They chased us back into the housing projects and back to Brown Chapel and First Baptist and harassed us all night."

Joann Bland (2005)

At times history and fate meet at a single time in a single place to shape a turning point in man's unending search for freedom. So it was at Lexington and Concord. So it was a century ago at Appomattox. So it was last week in Selma, Alabama. There is no Negro problem. There is no southern problem. There is no northern problem. There is only an American problem. Many of the issues of civil rights are very complex and most difficult. But about this there can and should be no argument. Every American citizen must have the right to vote...Yet the harsh fact is that in many places in this country men and women are kept from voting simply because they are Negroes... No law that we now have on the books...can insure the right to vote when local officials are determined to deny it... There is no Constitutional issue here. The command of the Constitution is plain. There is no moral issue. It is wrong--deadly wrong--to deny any of your fellow Americans the right to vote in this country. There is no issue of States' rights or National rights. There is only the struggle for human rights.

President Lyndon B. Johnson (1965)