

## Letter from A. Philip Randolph to New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, June 5, 1941

June 5th, 1941

Honorable Fiorello H. LaGuardia  
Mayor of New York City  
City Hall  
New York, N.Y.

My dear Mr. Mayor:

Because the Negro people have not received their just share of jobs in national defense, and our young men have not been integrated into the armed forces of the Nation, including the Army, Navy, Air Corps, and Marine, on a basis of equality, some of the Negro leaders have formulated plans and set up the necessary machinery in the various sections of the country for the purpose of mobilizing from ten to fifty thousand Negroes to march on Washington in the interest of securing jobs and justice in national defense and fair participation and equal integration into the Nation's military and naval forces.

This movement has been initiated by officers of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Urban League, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the Young Men's Christian Association branch of the Harlem Community, the Negro Labor Committee of New York, the Elks and a number of other groups.

A Call for the march, to take place July 1st is signed by Walter White of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Reverend William Lloyd Imes of the Presbyterian Church of Harlem, Frank R. Crosswaith, Chairman of the Negro Labor Committee of New York, Layle Lane, Vice-President of the American Federation of Teachers, Richard Parrish, President of the Negro College Students of New York, Dr. Rayford Logan, Chairman of the National and State Committees for the Participation of Negroes in National Defense, Henry K. Craft, Secretary of the 135th Street branch of the YMCA, J. Finley Wilson, Grand Exalted Ruler of the Independent Benevolent Order of the World, Reverend Adam C. Powell, Jr. of the Abyssinian Baptist Church of Harlem and the undersigned.

March-On-Washington local committees are being set up throughout the country with a view to recruiting the marchers and carrying out the general program in the interest of developing an all-out total demonstration of the Negro people for full participation in the national defense program.

A week prior to the march on Washington, plans have been developed to stage marches in various cities in the interest of urging the Mayors and City Councils to memorialize the President to issue an executive order to abolish discrimination in national defense and all departments of the Federal Government.

Following the march in Washington, the program includes a great rally at the Monument of Abraham Lincoln, because of its historical symbolism in relation to the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, for the liberation of the Negroes from chattel slavery.

As an humanitarian and idealist, who has captured the hearts of the peoples of the world for your constructive vision and matchless statesmanship, and as one of the few great living champions of the cause of democracy and liberty, I, in the name of the aforementioned committee, wish to request Your Honor to address a delegation of Negro citizens who will march to the City Hall, June 27th, in the forenoon to request you to memorialize President Roosevelt to issue an executive order to abolish discrimination in all departments of the Federal Government and national defense.

I want to assure you, Mr. Mayor, that the Negroes of America are deeply stirred over the question of their receiving equal opportunity to share in the benefits and responsibilities and duties and sacrifices incident to this great and tremendous national effort to build a defense machinery for the protection of our own country and to safeguard the cause of democracy.

I am sure that nothing has arisen in the life of the Negro since Emancipation which has gripped their hearts and caught their interest and quickened their imagination more than the girding of our country for national defense without according to them the recognition and opportunity as citizens, consumers and workers they feel justified in expecting.

I, therefore, cannot too strongly stress and urge you, as a leader of vision, to honor this occasion with your presence and message.

Kindly accept my great personal esteem and appreciation for your interest and cooperation for the cause of the advancement of the Negro people for America and the historic role you are playing to create a better world for all mankind.

Respectfully yours,

A. Philip Randolph, Director