FOREWORD

Before I saw Neil Sullivan's book, I was indeed discouraged about school integration. My dream that one day in this country little black boys and girls and little white boys and girls would learn side by side in school had grown dim, as had many of my dreams of racial equality. At the rate school integration is progressing in the South, I figured that it will take 57 more years to bring it to accomplishment. I saw little more progress in the North where, although there is slightly more will and effort being applied to the problem, the task grows greater as the ghettos expand in impoverished, fenced-in numbers.

Then in May, 1967, I came to Berkeley to speak on the University of California campus and saw my friend, Dr. Sullivan. I heard his words and read in his book how, by a peaceful struggle through "the process of community change" as he calls it, total school integration in Berkeley, California, will hopefully be brought about by September, 1968. Hope returned to my soul and spirit.

I said as I addressed those 5,000 students, "There are times when you take a stand which is not safe nor politic nor popular. You take it because it is right." I was speaking of my opposition to the war in Viet Nam. Neil Sullivan, who also speaks out against our involvement in Viet Nam, is talking in this book about our deeper, our righteous, our non-violent struggle for democracy at home. His stand, like
that to which I am now giving my energy, is not safe, nor
politic nor popular. Only a few school superintendents the
country over have the stamina and the skill to undertake
the massive struggle for meaningful and full school inte-
gration.

But this Berkeley superintendent must win. He took his
stand first in Prince Edward County, Virginia, where,
against tremendous odds, he opened the Free Schools for
Negro children deprived of education for three years be-
cause the county refused to integrate. He took his stand
again in Berkeley where, just as he came in 1964, a strong
drive to recall board members who had taken the first step
in school integration was in progress. Three and one-half
years later he was able to say, “The Board of Education
has committed itself to total integration no later than Sep-
tember, 1968, and we shall make history on that day.”

I am proud to know that it is my fellow Negroes who
have pressed hardest for this victory supported by com-
mitted white parents. I am proud to know that they are
willing to take on the greater burden.

“Now is the time” they told Superintendent Sullivan
and he knew it well. I am honored that Dr. Sullivan has
thus entitled his book. I repeat again and again what I said
on that day of hope at the March on Washington, August
23, 1963, “Now is the time. Now is the time to make real
the promise of democracy.”

That promise has not been realized. We do not wait for
its fulfillment; we work for it night and day. I believe that
our schools must and can take the lead in this mighty
effort. I believe that leaders like Dr. Sullivan can point the
way.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

September 1967

Introduction

IT IS WITH DEEP FEELING that I name this book from the
words of Martin Luther King, Jr. His urgent plea “Now
is the time! Now is the time to make real the promise of de-
mocracy” has strengthened me as I have sought to fulfill
that promise in the public schools. At times of discourage-
ment I get out my record of the March on Washington in
1963, listen again to his ringing speech of hope, and am
heartened to continue the struggle.

I first met him in 1962. He was speaking in Great Neck,
Long Island, and I drove over to hear him from Old West-
bury-East Williston, Long Island, where I was Superin-
tendent of the school district. This evening marked the
beginning of a series of events that impelled me to join the
active fight for school integration. After he spoke, I asked
his advice about bringing some Negro children up to our
schools from Prince Edward County, Virginia—children
who had not been in school for three years due to the
county’s refusal to integrate. Our schools had been sending
clothing to Prince Edward, and textbooks for the use of
northern teachers who flew down during weekends and
vacations to give the children intervals of schooling.

Through Dr. King I later met Robert Kennedy, who, as
United States Attorney General, had been ordered by Presi-
dent Kennedy to find some way to reopen the schools for
Prince Edward County’s Negro children, and was in the
Now Is The Time:

Integration in the Berkeley Schools

by Neil V. Sullivan

with Evelyn S. Stewart

Foreword by Martin Luther King, Jr.

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