

Module 08: Jackie Robinson, Civil Rights Leader?

Evidence 4: Telegram to President Johnson, 1967

A

Introduction

Reproduced below is a 1967 telegram from Jackie Robinson to President Johnson containing words of encouragement.

Document

[letterhead]

State of New York
Executive Chamber
Albany

Please Reply To
22 W. 55 th Street
New York 19, New York

April 18, 1967

Dear Mr. President:

First, let me thank you for pursuing a course towards Civil Rights that no President in our history has pursued. I am confident your dedication will not only continue, but will be accelerated dependent on the needs of all Americans.

While I am certain your faith has been shaken by demonstrations against the Viet Nam war, I hope the actions of any one individual does not make you feel as Vice President Humphrey does, that Dr. King's stand will hurt the Civil Rights movement. It would not be fair to the thousands of our Negro fighting men who are giving their lives because they believe, in most instances, that our Viet Nam stand is just. There are hundreds of thousands of us at home who are not certain why we are at war. We feel, however, that you and your staff know what is best and we are willing to support your efforts for an honorable solution to the war.

I do feel you must make it infinitely clear, that regardless of who demonstrates, that your position will not change towards the rights of all people; that you will continue to press for justice for all Americans and that a strong stand now will have great effect upon young Negro Americans who could resort to violence unless they are reassured. Recent riots in Tennessee and Cleveland Ohio is warning enough. Your concern based on causes and not on whether it will hurt the Civil Rights effort, could have a wholesale effect on our youth.

I appreciate the difficult role any President has. I believe, also, yours is perhaps most difficult any President has had. I hope God gives you the wisdom and strength to come through this crisis at home, and that an end to the war in Viet Nam is achieved very soon.

Again Sir, let me thank you for your domestic stand on Civil Rights. We need an even firmer stand as the issues become more personal and the gap between black and white Americans get wider.

Sincerely yours,
Jackie Robinson (signature)

The Honorable Lyndon B. Johnson
The President of the United States
The White House
Washington 25, D.C.

cc: Hon. Hubert H. Humphrey
Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller