

21/ NOTES FOR BANQUET HONORING MR. JESSE TURNER

THEY ASKED ME TO STATE THE PURPOSE FOR THE GATHERING OF THIS AUGUST BODY. WELL, THAT SIMPLE. WE HAVE GATHERED HERE TO PAY TRIBUTE TO "MR CIVIL RIGHTS." I CALL HIM MR. CIVIL RIGHTS BECAUSE HE HAS STOOD IN THE CENTER OF THE BATTLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS IN MEMPHIS LIKE AN ARMED WARRIOR, LIKE A PLUMED KNIGHT; AND HE HAS NEVER LOWERED HIS ARMS TO DEFEAT. I CALL HIM MR. CIVIL RIGHTS BECAUSE HIS PHILOSOPHY HAS BEEN TO PROTEST AGAINST THOSE BUSINESSES WHO FIRES FIRST AND HIRES LAST AND NOT TO RETALIATE BY BURNING THEM DOWN, BUT TO LET THEIR DOORS RUST ON THE HINGES. I CALL HIM MR. CIVIL RIGHTS BECAUSE HE HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT DEMOCRACY CANNOT BE MUTILATED WHILE WE SIT BY PASSIVELY, SILENTLY, AND SUBMISSIVELY. I CALL HIM MR. CIVIL RIGHTS BECAUSE HE HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT A WIDE VARIETY OF ACTIONS WILL BE CONDUCTED SO THAT SOCIAL CALM CANNOT PREVAIL UNTIL OUR DEMANDS HAVE BEEN MET. I CALL HIM MR. CIVIL RIGHTS BECAUSE HIS TWO-FISTED LEADERSHIP HAS OPENED A LITTLE WIDER THE DOOR TO THE AMERICAN LITNEY IN WHICH IS NOURISHED AND ENGENDERED OUR LEGITIMATE HOPES AND DREAMS. I CALL HIM MR. CIVIL RIGHTS BECAUSE HE FIGHTS TO MAKE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AVAILABLE TO ALL SO THAT AN INSPIRING DEMOCRACY WILL CONSTITUTE THE DIVINE FIRE THAT WILL ILLUMINATE OUR PRESENTLY FEARFUL FUTURE.

EVEN WHILE HE WAS ON A MISSISSIPPI PLANTATION, HIS EYES WERE FIXED ON FAR HORIZONS. HIS MIND WAS DEDICATED TO A DREAM. HIS REACH WAS FOR THE UNREACHABLE STAR. HIS CHALLENGE WAS TO THE IMPOSSIBLE FORCE. I CALL HIM MR. CIVIL RIGHTS BECAUSE HE HAS BECOME AN IRRESISTABLE FORCE IN THIS COMMUNITY AND HIS CONQUESTS HAVE BEEN AS OFTEN AS HIS ENGAGEMENTS.