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## National Civil Rights Day, 1987

*By the President of the United States of America*

### **A Proclamation**

As he journeyed to Washington, D.C., to assume the Presidency in 1861, Abraham Lincoln captured the essence of the American dream in a speech at Philadelphia's Independence Hall, the site where our Founders gathered 200 years ago to frame the Constitution whose bicentennial we now celebrate. Exercising his unique genius for profound thought in plain language, Lincoln said that "The great principle or idea" assuring our permanence as a nation is its promise "that all should have an equal chance."

The struggle to see that promise fulfilled has continued in our own era and, through the civil rights movement, has inspired new Federal laws that seek to guarantee that "equal chance" by prohibiting discrimination against any citizen on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, age, or handicap. We can be proud of the progress we have made in securing the civil rights of all Americans. Racial segregation has been proscribed. Employment discrimination is barred. Federal statutes now outlaw housing bias, safeguard every citizen's precious right to vote, and require that people with disabilities be provided accessibility and be treated without discrimination. The misguided few who use force or violence to interfere with others' enjoyment of their civil rights face swift and sure criminal prosecution.

Despite these steps forward, much still remains to be done to make Lincoln's promise a reality and to fulfill the dream shared by leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Susan B. Anthony, and Mary McLeod Bethune. The example of these Americans, and of so many other brave men and women, reminds us of the tasks that belong to each of us as citizens of this great Nation. We must work to see the civil rights laws strongly enforced and to ensure that every branch of government—at every level—renders justice to individuals without regard to race, sex, color, religion, nationality, or condition of handicap. In this way, we can move toward the day when the rights of every human being to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" are secured forever.

The Congress, by Public Law 99-482, has designated August 12, 1987, as "National Civil Rights Day" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this event. Twenty-four years ago this month, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led a march in Washington, D.C. to demonstrate the need for civil rights legislation. On this occasion let us pay tribute to his memory and to the memory of all those who fought for justice and equal opportunity before the law.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim August 12, 1987, as National Civil Rights Day. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this tenth day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twelfth.

*Ronald Reagan*