
144th Anniversary of the Emancipation Declaration

Chicago, IL (January 7, 2007) Celebrating the 144th anniversary of the Emancipation Declaration, R2P Convenor Richard Cooper addressed the members of the Progressive Community Church, The People's Church, Chicago.

CELEBRATING THE 144th JUBILEE SUNDAY

PROGRESSIVE COMMUNITY CHURCH, THE PEOPLE'S CHURCH
Chicago, Illinois

Sunday January 7 2007

ADDRESS BY RICHARD COOPER

Dear Reverend Martin, dear Brothers, dear Sisters,

I am extremely grateful for this opportunity to be with you to celebrate the 144th Jubilee Sunday of the Progressive Community Center, The People's Church. I am honored and humbled by the generosity of Reverend Martin's invitation to address this noble and caring assembly on this historic day. Dear Reverend Martin, Thank you.

Today is a day to celebrate the African American's heroic struggle for freedom. Your forefathers honorably vanquished a crippling injustice that stained our nation. Your ancestors' heritage is monumental, not only for the African American community, not only for America for that matter, but for the whole world. The legacy of this fight for freedom is the supremacy of Justice and the triumph of the universal dignity of man.

Yes indeed, today is a day to celebrate and to rejoice, by all means. It is a day to salute the extraordinary strength of the human spirit in the face of Injustice and to command the immense courage of a community that overcame the inhumanity of its oppressors, for the benefit of mankind.

But today is also a day to remember that, if left unguarded, evil can take possession of a man's soul. It is a day to acknowledge that we, as human beings, are capable of inflicting deadly torments on one another. It is a day to repent, because we too often succumb to indifference and ignore the terrible plight of other men, women and children that are abandoned to the cruelty of their torturers. It is a day to accept that winning one battle against Evil is just one step forward. It is not - and cannot be - the end of our fight for Justice and humanity. It is a day to believe again that goals that may at first have seemed out of reach can be achieved. It is a day not only to honor past efforts, but to embrace and perpetuate the legacy of abolitionists, those extraordinary visionaries that abhorred the evil of slavery. Today is a day to transcend our own history and our own nation. Today is a day to open our hearts and souls to the desperate cries and groans coming out of Africa - your "Mother Africa"; our "Mother Africa"; and other

desolate places around the world. Today is a day to be inspired by the majestic heritage of your forefathers and to embark on the glorious path that will lead to the abolition of the most barbarous and degrading crimes on earth: genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

We failed in Rwanda. In 1994, 800,000 civilians were exterminated in 100 days. The genocide involved thousands of murderers, countless accomplices. It destroyed and damaged millions of lives. It wrecked a whole society. And it stained humanity as a whole, because we, Brothers and Sisters, barricaded our hearts and abandoned these hundreds of thousands of men, women and children to their monstrous tyrants. We then trumpeted: "Never again."

Yet today, we are still failing Africa. In Darfur, as many as 300,000 civilians have died since the conflict ignited in early 2003, more than 2 million civilians have been displaced, at least 4 million people in Darfur are dependant on humanitarian assistance, on food and water to survive. In Northern Uganda, the Lord Resistance Army has, over the last twenty years, claimed the lives of thousands of civilians. These rebels are notorious for kidnapping children and forcing them to become rebel fighters or sex slaves. More than one-half-million people have been displaced by the fighting and are living in temporary camps, again at the mercy of the generosity of their fellowmen. In the Democratic Republic of Congo nearly 4 million people have been killed from war-related causes since 1998. These numbers are simply staggering. Can you feel the constant state of fear, can you sense the horrendous suffering inflicted by mutilations, abductions, rapes, tortures, murders on such a massive scale, on so many innocent men, women and children? Can you hear your brothers and sisters' anguish and their desperate cries for freedom and for Justice?

For too long we have remained bystanders as sheer barbarity wrecked various corners of our world. For too long we have been occasional witnesses, sincere yet superficial enemies of some of the most monstrous behaviors ravaging Africa and other parts of the world. For too long we have defaulted on our duty to uphold the lives of our fellowmen. It is time to live up to your ancestors' monumental heritage and to fight yet again for the supremacy of Justice and the triumph of the universal dignity of man.

The vision of a world free from mass atrocities is the next challenge for abolitionists. It is called upon us by the voices of the millions of souls lost to tyranny. And the victory over such Evil behaviors is closer than you may fathom.

In September 2005, the United Nations General Assembly — that is every State in the world - unanimously adopted a declaration whereby each State accepted its Responsibility to Protect its populations from genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The declaration also emphasizes that if a State relinquishes its Responsibility to Protect — whether by will or lack of capacity - this responsibility must be borne by the international community that can decide to intervene as a last resort. The doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect was reaffirmed by the United Nations Security Council in April 2006. This historical declaration means that in the face of mass atrocities, every nation and thus every people on earth have pledged to be each others' keepers. Without fanfare and with little notice, the obsolete principles underlying the Westphalian ordering of world affairs have been dramatically rewritten. We, the United States of America, we, the American people, you, the African American community can no longer hide behind State sovereignty, a 400-years old shield, to excuse the shameful reflex and ongoing practice of remaining passive in the face of the most outrageous behaviors. The Responsibility to Protect is deeply embedded in the noblest values we all share. It is the founding principle of a new global moral compact that unites every country and every human being. The Responsibility to Protect promises that humanity will turn "never again" into reality. Let us embrace our Responsibility to Protect and let us start at home, driven by the great legacy of your ancestors.

The Responsibility to Protect needs to be carefully nurtured. And like every vision of a better world - perhaps all too easy to embrace - this grand principle needs to be turned into deeds. How can we, how should we protect populations from the most egregious behaviors wrecking human lives and shattering whole societies? I believe that the past several years teach us a few lessons about the strategy we must follow and the structure that needs to be put in place. Allow me to share with you the fruit of our reflections in this regard.

The world community, through the United Nations, owns The Responsibility to Protect. This is a fact. So the world

community, acting as a whole and with legitimacy, must be given the tools to implement this amazing principle, to turn the abolition of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity into reality.

Atrocity crimes are recurrent. This is another fact, a disgrace that we can no longer afford to live with. So we must establish rules and capacities that are standing, that are sustainable and that will stop once and for all the repeated eruption of fanatical hate. This might seem obvious to you, and it is indeed a familiar trait within democratic nations. We have a legislative, an executive and a judicial power. We have a territory governed by the rule of law. We have a system that enables us to live in peace and harmony. But at the international level, this system is still in its infancy. Every time a major crisis occurs, efforts to solve it start from scratch. These ad hoc answers are totally inefficient because they require that for a specific situation and at a certain point in time, the interests of the major powers - China, Russia, France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, are all aligned. And this is seldom the case. History has repeatedly proven and contemporary times unfortunately continuously attest to the fact that the lack of a standing mechanism will only prolong human disasters.

What kind of standing mechanism should we establish? We know that the use of force is a necessary component of the toolbox to prevent and stop atrocity crimes. In the face of mass atrocities against defenseless civilians perpetrated by ruthless tyrants, we cannot afford to neglect the elaboration of legitimate intervention mechanisms. But the war in Iraq tells us that our nation's military interventions will remain a largely unacceptable course of action for the years to come, so we need to look at "intervention" through other lenses. We must move away from "military intervention" and elaborate a more acceptable intervention mechanism. Because genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes are international crimes, and that those responsible for these crimes must be held accountable for the havoc they have brought on earth, the new lenses for looking at intervention should be those of a judicial approach. Our efforts must be driven by the supremacy of Justice and the triumph of the universal dignity of man. This is why we should empower the nascent international criminal justice system with the means to effectively intervene and arrest those indicted for the commission of atrocity crimes. Such a mechanism, legitimized by the independence and the impartiality of the justice system, and driven by our moral commitment to overcome barbarity takes the form of a standing global police force, an International Marshals Service that would constitute the deterrent and enforcement arm of the international criminal justice system.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, it is prophecies and rebels that make history. The emancipation of the African American slaves started, 144 years ago, with a Proclamation. Today, as we celebrate those prophets that truly believed that "All men are created equal"; today, as we acclaim those rebels that overcame the inhumanity of slavery for the benefit of mankind, let us aspire to the courage and high moral ground upheld by your ancestors, let us embrace our global connectedness with our Brothers and Sisters around the world, and let us free humanity from the sheer barbarity of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The prophecy has already been uttered by the international community: these crimes will be abolished. We all know this must be. We cannot afford to relegate the principle of the Responsibility to Protect to a set of enlightening words, an empty theory. What we need are for rebels against indifference and rebels against intolerance to gather and fulfill this prophecy. These rebels are the people who reject the horror of mass atrocities, wherever they occur. They are the people who believe that lofty ideals and high-mindedness must continue to drive the destiny of their community, of their country and of humanity. These rebels are the people who embrace their Responsibility to Protect any population from atrocity crimes. These rebels will turn a grand declaration into deeds. They will free humanity from hell on earth. These rebels are me … and you. The Responsibility to Protect is ours.

Thank you.