In 1961, the attorney general delivered a speech to the University of Georgia and brought the school's desegregation battle to the nation.

For the first time since becoming Attorney General, over three months ago, I am making something approaching a formal speech and I am proud that it is in Georgia ... They have told me that when you speak in Georgia you should try to tie yourself to Georgia and the South, and even better, claim some Georgia kinfolk. There are a lot of Kennedys in Georgia, but as far as I can tell, I have no relatives here and no direct ties to Georgia, except one. This state gave my brother the biggest percentage majority of any state in the union and in this last election that was even better than kinfolk.

We meet at this great university, in this old state, the fourth of the original thirteen, to observe Law Day. ... we know that if one man's rights are denied, the rights of all are endangered. In our country the courts have a most important role in safeguarding these rights. The decisions of the courts, however much we might disagree with them, in the final analysis must be followed and respected. If we disagree with a court decision and thereafter irresponsibly assail the court and defy its rulings, we challenge the foundations of our society ... Respect for the law — in essence that is the meaning of Law Day — and every day must be Law Day or else our society will collapse ... The hardest problems of all in law enforcement are those involving a conflict of law and local customs. History has recorded many occasions when the moral sense of a nation produced judicial decisions, such as the 1954 decision in Brown v. Board of Education, which required difficult local adjustments.

I have many friends in the United States Senate who are Southerners. Many of these friendships stem from my work as counsel for the Senate Rackets Committee, headed by Senator John McAllen of Arkansas, for whom I have the greatest admiration and affection.
In an integral part of all this is that we make a real effort to guarantee the right of all. This is perhaps the most difficult, delicate, and complex issue of the past 75 years. The decision we have made is a matter of law and we have respected the law by that decision. However, there is another, if not the main, issue of law by that decision was right. But my belief, I happen to believe that the right decision was right. But my belief...
The right to vote is the easiest of all rights to grant. The spirit of our democracy, the letter of our Constitution and our laws require that there be no further delay in the achievement of full freedom to vote for all. Our system depends upon the fullest participation of all its citizens.

The problem between the white and colored people is a problem for all sections of the United States. And as I have said, I believe there has been a great deal of hypocrisy in dealing with it. In fact, I found when I came to the Department of Justice that I need look no further to find evidence of this.

I found that very few Negroes were employed above a custodial level. There were 650 lawyers working in the Department of Justice in Washington and only 10 of them were Negroes. At the same moment the lawyers of the Department of Justice were bringing legal action to end discrimination, that same discrimination was being practiced within the department itself. At a recent review for the visiting leader of a new African state, there was only one Negro in the guard of honor. At the Bureau of the Budget, Negroes were used only for custodial work.

The federal government is taking steps to correct this.

Financial leaders from the East who deplore discrimination in the South belong to institutions where no Negroes or Jews are allowed, and their children attend private schools where no Negro students are enrolled. Union officials criticize Southern leaders and yet practice discrimination within their unions. Government officials belong to private clubs in Washington where Negroes, including ambassadors, are not welcomed even at mealtime.

My firm belief is that if we are to make progress in this area - if we are to be truly great as a nation, then we must make sure that nobody is denied an opportunity because of race, creed, or color. We pledge, by example, to take action in our own backyard - the Department of Justice - we pledge to move to protect the integrity of the courts in the administration of justice. In all this, we ask your help - we need your assistance.

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All of us might wish at times that we lived in a more tranquil world, but we don't. And if our times are difficult and perplexing, so are they challenging and filled with opportunity.

To the South, perhaps more than any other section of the country, has been given the opportunity and the challenge and the responsibility of demonstrating America at its greatest - at its full potential of liberty under law. You may ask, will we enforce the Civil Rights statutes?

The answer is: Yes, we will.

We also will enforce the antitrust laws, the antiracketeering laws, the laws against kidnapping and robbing federal banks, and transporting stolen automobiles across state lines, the illicit traffic of narcotics, and all the rest.

We can and will do no less.

I hold a constitutional office of the United States government, and I shall perform the duty I have sworn to undertake - to enforce the law, in every field of law and every region. We will not threaten, we will try to help. We will not prosecute, we will prosecute.

We will not make or interpret the laws. We shall enforce them vigorously, without regional bias or political slant.

All this we intend to do. But all the high rhetoric on Law Day about the noble mansion of the law, all the high-sounding speeches about liberty and justice, are meaningless unless people - you and I - breathe meaning and force into it. For our liberties depend upon our respect for the law. On December 13, 1889, Henry W. Grady of Georgia said these words to an audience in my home state of Massachusetts:

This hour little needs the loyalty that is loyal to one section and yet holds the other in enduring suspicion and estrangement. Give us the broad and perfect loyalty that loves and trusts Georgia alike with Massachusetts - that knows no South, no North, no East, no West, but endears with equal and patriotic love every foot of our soil, every state of our union. A mighty duty, sir, and a mighty inspiration, impels every one of us tonight to lose in patriotic consecration whatever estranges, whatever divides. We, sir, are Americans - and we shall stand for human liberty! Ten days later, Mr. Grady was dead, but his words live today. We stand for human liberty.

The road ahead is full of difficulties and discomforts. But as for me, I welcome the challenge. I welcome the opportunity, and I pledge my best effort - all I have in material things and physical strength and spirit to see that freedom shall advance and that our children will grow old under the rule of law.