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[EEOC Fifteenth Anniversary Speech]

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COMMENT OF DR. J. CLAY SMITH, JR.
COMMISSIONER, EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION
ON OCCASION OF THE
FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EEOC
DEPARTMENT OF STATE AUDITORIUM
WASHINGTON, D. C.

July 31, 1980

Colleagues and Friends:

Fifteen years ago the people of this vast and great nation, the Congress and the President, enacted the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law. It wasn't easy, but then few achievements are. The collective, bipartisan support that this, and subsequent amendments to this legislation have received, stand as a hallmark of the strength of this nation to heal the wounds left by generations of various forms of invidious discrimination.

While the legislation giving birth to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is fifteen years of age, the spirit of this legislation is as old as the citizen in this nation who first questioned the right of an employer or union to bar him/her from the workplace on the basis of race, sex, creed, colour or origin of birth. That cognitive rebellion was the spiritual birth of Title VII and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

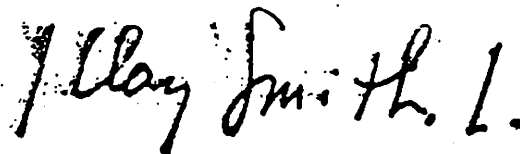
During occasions calling for pomp and ceremony, it is appropriate for us to measure our achievements. And, the measure of achievements of the EEOC have been extraordinary.

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Like all agencies who were, at one time or another 15 years of age, EEOC has had its ups-and-downs, and its share of the lumps. However, on this day, EEOC's shoulders are erect, its chin is stiff and its gait is marvelously in step with the present and the future.

From this day forward, let each of us people of good will, unions, employers, employment agencies and government agencies, work towards a time when we can celebrate the anniversary of a society free from injustice, free from racism, free from sexism and other classifications which restrict and undermine notions of liberty and productivity in the workplace.

We shall never forget the kindness, courage, strength, the dedication, tenacity, perseverance and the excellence of mind of Clarence Mitchell, Hubert Humphrey; Jacob Javits; Asa Phillip Randolph; Fannie Lou Hammer; Viola Liuzzo; Medgar Evers; Emmett Till; Charles Hamilton Houston; and Martin Luther King, Jr. - their legacy to civil rights is our future to civil and human rights.



J. Clay Smith, Jr.