

THE UNITED STATES
COMMISSION ON
CIVIL RIGHTS
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NEWS RELEASE

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RIGHTS COMMISSION URGES LEADERS OF BOTH PARTIES TO CONVENE SUMMIT
THAT COULD END INFLAMMATORY RACIAL TACTICS IN ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights urged leaders of both parties last Friday to take decisive action before the 1992 elections "to prevent the use of irresponsible campaign tactics that only serve to divide the nation along racial lines."

In identical letters delivered to the President and leaders of the U.S. House and Senate, the Commission noted that racial tensions and hate crimes in the nation's schools, workplace and streets appear to be increasing, and that relieving those tensions and curbing such crimes must become a national priority.

"The use of inflammatory racial rhetoric in political campaigns will only fan the flames of racial division and distrust," the letter said. "With the strong moral authority of your offices, your repudiation of such tactics by any candidate or campaign committee will be a major step in responsibly dealing with this problem," it said. The letter was released today at a press conference called by Commission Chairman Arthur A. Fletcher in Atlanta during the annual convention of the National Urban League.

The letter urged the President and congressional leaders "to convene a summit conference, comprised of major public officials from Federal, State and local government, the media, and private citizens, to address this issue and to prepare guidelines for proper conduct." The goal of such a summit "should be to forcefully establish, in the eyes of both candidates and the public, that the injection of racial animosity into a campaign should not, and will not, be tolerated," the letter said.

Fletcher pointed out that "the Commission worked hard at getting the contents of this letter right. It's not about censorship or political correctness or coercion. It's about ending destructive, divisive racial stereotyping in this nation's public life, especially in political campaigns, by having our national leaders take the moral high ground on this issue without delay."

He also noted that "the Commission is bipartisan and reflects various racial and ethnic perspectives. Men, women, the aged and the disabled are represented. And all eight Commissioners bought into every word in our letter. The issue is that important."

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent Federal agency. Arthur A. Fletcher is Chairman; Charles Pei Wang is Vice Chairman. William B. Allen, Carl A. Anderson, Mary Frances Berry, Esther G.A. Buckley, Blandina Cardenas Ramirez and Russell G. Redenbaugh serve as commissioners. Wilfredo J. Gonzalez is staff director.