

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE ARTHUR A. FLETCHER
(At the Thursday Luncheon Group, Washington, D.C., June 1. 1995)

It is not often that we have the opportunity to meet face to face with someone who has spent over half a century fighting to make life better for all of us. This is precisely what we are privileged to do today with our guest speaker.

Perhaps the first time he publicly took a stand against racial discrimination was in 1943 when he refused to have his photograph published in his school graduation book. The standard procedure at that time in his Kansas school was to put photographs of all of the black students in the back of the book.

Young Arthur Fletcher took a stand based on principles. Through the years, the fire of his early determination was continually fueled by more attempts to retard and even set back any progress achieved in race relations in America.

After more than 50 years of watching him fight for what is right, only a fool would dare to think that the fire in Arthur Fletcher will ever be quenched as long as there is a breath of life in him.

All of us know about the Supreme Court decision on Brown versus Board of Education. What you might not know is the fact that when that case was filed in Topeka, Kansas, Arthur Fletcher was a young genius at the genesis of its creation.

In the years that followed, his work made him both recognized and respected. He held numerous positions where he could fight for the rights of minorities. The list of his accomplishments is long and distinguished.

I will mention only a few. Because of his knowledge, dedication, strong work ethic, and his determination to make America live up to its constitutional mandates, he was appointed as Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment Standards in 1969.

Later, he was United States Alternate Delegate to the United Nations when George Bush was U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Subsequently, he was appointed Chairman of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. He still serves on that Commission.

Mr. Fletcher recognized that despite the fact that fair employment laws had been passed, and despite a lot of lip service that was being given to affirmative action, absolutely no progress was ever going to be made unless it was enforced.

He embarked on a battle that earned him the title of "Father of the Affirmative Action Enforcement Movement."

He is determined to make Affirmative Action work. The fire of determination that was sparked in that Kansas school over 50 years ago is still burning -- even blazing, as he sheds light on the subject.

He cuts through the deliberate confusion some self-serving people have created about Affirmative Action. In doing so, he exposes the eight biggest lies told about Affirmative Action.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is with a sense of deep personal pride that I present to you, the Honorable Arthur A. Fletcher, a true civil rights leader whose relentless efforts have benefitted all of us.