Box 1, Folder 16, National Conference on Religion and Race
statement [excerpts], 14 January 1963.
This interreligious conference on racial justice is already an historic event; it is yet to be determined whether it will be an event that will make history. Had this confrontation between Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, and Jews; Negroes and whites; North and South taken place 130 years ago, the course of our nation's history, the character of our present society, could have been radically altered for the better. The failure of religious leadership in the 1830s to confront in charity and in realism the evils of slavery, and the breakdown in communication within and between the religious communities, were among the primary factors leading to the tragic sundering of the nation through the Civil War.

While the union has been preserved, while the Emancipation Proclamation has become a shining part of our nation's heritage, and while more than a century of progress has been achieved in civil and human rights for the Negro and other minority groups, far too much of the legacy of bitterness, social distance, and inequality is still with us. Beneath the courtesies and rhetoric of much of present-day interrelationships between Negroes and whites, there surges deep feelings of frustration, animosity, and resentment.

The violent attacks against the white men epitomized in the writings of the Negro novelist James Baldwin, and the broad acceptance of the Black Muslim movement's racist ideology on the one hand, and,
on the other hand, the nativist, white supremacist demagoguery of the White Citizens Councils, abetted by the indifference and inaction of silent, "respectable" allies in the white community, are ingredients for a recipe that can only lead to a social explosion and national disunity - neither of which can we long endure and still remain an effective leader of the Western democratic community.

This conference must view the past of our interracial history as a guiding post, and not as a hitching post. It is the devout hope of the convenors of this conference and of the program committee that the delegates to this assembly will seek out in a profound and searching way the sources of our present interracial dilemmas. It is our earnest hope that they will undertake a hard-headed analysis of all the complex social, political, economic, legal, educational, and religious forces that contribute to the persistence of the desegregation crises that sap the spiritual and emotional vitality of our nation. Above all, we urge the delegates to seize every opportunity to bring into the open the submerged feelings, the seven-eighths of the iceberg beneath the surface, the deeper attitudes which are the psychological ground that so decisively influences how the Negro and white actually think about and behave toward each other. Unless this real communication is achieved, we will have failed in large measure this unique, indeed, unprecedented opportunity to translate into reality the principle of brotherhood under God that has been professed so piously and meaninglessly by so
many "good religious people."

Unless we face up to and do something radically constructive about overcoming our conventional misperceptions and distortions of each other's essential nature and integrity as individual human beings, rather than as stereotypes and abstract group symbols; unless we learn out of this experience to understand, to appreciate in depth, to love unconditionally each other in our full humanity we will not have come very far from those pre-Civil War days which found religious leadership so wanting, and indeed, bankrupt.

From my association with Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Jewish leadership, Negro and white alike, in the organization of this conference since its inception, and in the preparation for follow-up in local communities, I am persuaded that religious leaders today across the nation mean business. They are determined to assume moral leadership in this area as never before. They are increasingly seized with that Prophetic discontent that refuses to tolerate any longer the flagrant discriminations which are the secular debasements of the sacred image of God stamped in the personality of man. If I may borrow respectfully from the language of Catholic tradition, this conference is prepared to speak urbi et orbi, to the city and to the world.
NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RELIGION AND RACE
JANUARY 14-17, 1963 • CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 11, 1963

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National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice
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NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RELIGION AND RACE
ALREADY HISTORIC — WILL IT MAKE HISTORY?

The National Conference on Religion and Race "is already an
historic event, it is yet to be determined whether it will be an event
that will make history," according to Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, program
chairman.

His statement was released by the National Catholic Conference
for Interracial Justice, secretariat for the Conference, just before the
opening of the interreligious meeting on racial justice, January 14-17,
at Chicago's Edgewater Beach Hotel.

Rabbi Tanenbaum, of New York City, is director of the
Interreligious Department of the American Jewish Committee, and
a member of the Steering Committee of the historic Conference.
It is the first national conference on racial justice called by
the major faith groups in the U.S.

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Orthodox and Jews; Negroes and whites; North and South taken place
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Rabbi Tanenbaum said that the Conference on Religion and Race must view the past as a guiding post. It is the devout hope of the conveners - the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations of the National Council of Churches; the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference; and the Social Action Commission of the Synagogue Council of America -- and of the program committee that the delegates to the Conference will seek out

-more-
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"Unless we face up to and do something radically constructive about overcoming our conventional mis-perceptions and distortions of each other's essential nature and integrity as individual human beings, rather than as stereotypes and abstract group symbols, unless we learn out of this experience to understand, to appreciate in depth, to love unconditionally each other in our full humanity we will not have come very far from those pre-Civil War days which found religious leadership so wanting, and indeed, bankrupt.

"From my association," said Rabbi Tanenbaum, "with Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Jewish leadership, Negro and white alike, in the organization of this Conference since the days of its inception, I am persuaded that religious leaders today across the country mean business. They are determined to assume moral leadership in this area as never before. They are increasingly seized with that Prophetic discontent that refuses to tolerate any longer the flagrant discriminations which are the secular debasements of the sacred image of God stamped in the personality of man. If I may borrow respectfully from the language of Catholic tradition, this Conference is prepared to speak 'urbi et orbi', to the city and to the world."

Characterized by the United Press International (UPI) recently as "one of the nation's leading Rabbis," Rabbi Tanenbaum was recently named a consultant to the Pius XII Religious Education Resource Center in Monroe, Michigan, one of the major research centers for religious education materials.
Urges Civic Role for Religion

Rabbi Says Churches Must Prevent 'Idolatry' Growth

BY GEORGIE ANNE GEVER

A rabbi has warned that the churches and synagogues must prevent the development of a civic religion that is a danger to modern idolatry.

At the same time, the abdication of the churches marks the growth of a civic religion of national non-traditional religion which must inevitably culminate in a political 'idolatry,' the rabbi said.

RABBI ADLFR of Congregation Shaarey Zedek, Baltimore, Md., said at Tuesday's sessions at the Edgewater Beach Hotel that government today is reaching into areas in which it gives political and moral expression to values long cherished by religion. These values include human welfare, human dignity, peace, equity and justice, he said.

Because of this, Rabbi Adlfr said: "Government today is far more than a political instrumentality. It helps define and direct the group-life of its people in many instances of their lives as individuals."

He warned "where the ultimate business or state or economic system or a political party or any phase of life which true religion views as relative the end result must be idolatry.""*

IN ENTERING the public arena, he added, the churches become involved in a series of face dangers. If religion becomes involved, it may cease to be religion and become yet another pressure group," he said.

But he argued "Religion working alongside of secular agencies devoted to racial justice need not be reduced to a status of an agency of the group or a social work program as long as it holds before it the high goal of its own purpose and nature."

On the other hand, he said, "religion must never be, in dealing with a specific issue, a problem 'draw its ecclesial ideals robes about it and show sanctuaries' when it is a tangled or entangled.""

Rabbi Adler has been chaplain of the United Auto Workers union public relations staff which works on the same ethics and practices. His presentation was featured in the conference session on "The Relation Church and Synagogue to New Community Forces."

Tells Church's Role in Racial Shifts

N.Y. Speaker Cites Danger Of Adamant 'Status Groups'

BY RICHARD Y. STOUT

The problem facing racially changing communities in large cities such as Chicago is organized religion's most significant challenge, a New York human relations expert said here Tuesday.

The church's potential because of its own failures or those of the congregation, he said at the National Conference on Religion and Race in the Edgewater Beach Hotel. He declared: "The race (whether religious or not) burdens the barriers of race and social class and (and) bind this nation together in one spiritual community."

Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, left, president of Morehouse College, Atlanta, Ga., conference chairman, and the Rev. Andrew Schweizer, Lutheran Human Relations of America, Valley Forge, Pa., discuss "role at the conference."

ON THE OTHER hand, some churches are remiss in not more actively asserting the moral right of new minorities in a neighborhood to try to seek power be said.

"There is nothing more exhilarating than to see people taking the first stumbling steps toward freedom they are in fact forming one of our great facts of life," said Dodson.

"Too often significant religious leaders are reduced to the position of the priests during the events in Little Rock - to call a prayer meeting and to pray that God's Will be done.

But, he said, "the facts are the God of freedom is the God of the race and the race is not only the God of the race but the God of freedom and the God of the poor.""

ON THE OTHER hand, some churches are remiss in not more actively asserting the moral right of new minorities in a neighborhood to try to seek power be said.

Dodson said churches in Chicago were trying to bring sociologists to judgment on this issue, "It's a man's most dangerous myth."

CHICAGO DAILY NEWS

January 15, 1963
Meyer Urges All-Faith Bias Action

By Donald M. Schwartz
Albert Cardinal Meyer, archbishop of the Roman Catholic archiepiscopate of Chicago, called on the three great religious denominations Monday to meet with action the pressing problems of racial discrimination.

Cardinal Meyer speaking here at the National Conference on Religion and Race in Chicago. The archbishop's keynote address, "Religion-Racial Conference Gets Kennedy Pledge," was held in the Edgewater Beach Hotel.

Meyer's speech dealt with the need for action on the part of religious leaders and the public to address the issues of racial discrimination.

Religious leaders were urged to take a stand against discrimination and to work towards unity and understanding.

The conference was held in the Edgewater Beach Hotel, with attendees from various religious groups.

The keynote address was followed by a panel discussion featuring prominent religious leaders.

The conference was organized by the National Council of Churches to promote understanding and cooperation among religious groups.

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Here's Program For Conference On Religion, Race

(All sessions in the Edgewater Beach Hotel)

Monday

3 30 p.m.—Opening plenary session
Speaker: Dr. Abraham J. Heschel, professor of ethics and Jewish mysticism, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York.

8 p.m.—Plenary session
Speaker: Rabbi Judah M. Bloch, president of the Synagogue Council of America.
Subject: "The Nature of the Challenge to a Religious America."

Tuesday

9 30 a.m.—Plenary session
Speaker: Dr. Franklin H. Lithell, professor of church history, Chicago Theological Seminary.
Subject: "The Challenge of the Religious Community in Race Relations—The Social, Historic, Cultural Setting."

10 30 a.m.—Four simultaneous forums
Forum I—The Inner Life of the Church and Synagogue
Speaker: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.
Subject: "The Challenge to the Churches and Synagogues.
Speaker: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

12 30 p.m.—Luncheon session
Speaker: Rabbi Judah M. Bloch, president of the Synagogue Council of America.
Subject: "The Nature of the Challenge to a Religious America."

1 p.m.—Luncheon session
Speaker: Gov. Otto Kerner of Illinois
Mayer Richard J. Daley of Chicago

2 45 p.m.—Work groups meet
7 p.m.—Banquet session
Speaker: Rabbi Sargent Shriver Jr., director of Peace Corps.

Wednesday

9 30 a.m.—Work groups meet
2 30 p.m.—Work groups meet
6 p.m.—Reception sponsored by Chicago Host Committee

Thursday

9 30 a.m.—Plenary session
Speaker: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.
Subject: "The Challenge to the Churches and Synagogues."

2 45 p.m.—Closing plenary session
Adoption of "Declaration of Conscience."

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CHICAGO DAILY NEWS
January 14, 1963

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CHICAGO TRIBUNE
January 14, 1963
Rev. King Urges Boycott by Churches to Fight Bias

A nationally known leader of a movement that set out to fight for economic boycott by churches and synagogues against racial discrimination in employment.

The movement has come to the fore after the arrest of 11 leaders of the church and synagogue movement in the Montgomery, Ala., bus boycott several years ago.

Speaker at Conference

The speaker was Martin Luther King Jr., the Negro who began his Gandhian movement in the Montgomery, Ala., bus boycott several years ago.

Sargent Shriver Jr., the director of the peace corps, spoke at the conference dinner last night. He said, "If we do not prevent terrorism, we shall have a battle of ideologies that will make the cold war look like a picnic." The Rev. King, who heads the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, told the audience that the Negro is not a hostage of the Negro community.

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Black Muslims Challenge

The extremist Black Muslims of this country, who preach Negro supremacy, cannot help the nation's problems, he said.

Some Muslims do not come out of this air. The movement is indicative of a mood of the Negroes in this country. We condemn the Black Muslims and the Negro supremacy of Negro supremacy, he said.

He described the National Conference on Religion and Race—the first national meeting of the Negro— as a meeting of the Negro and Jewish faiths as the most significant and historic ever held in this country for attacking racial injustice.

Hills Apal by Bias

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