

## **THE GREAT LEGACY – Andrew Guerrero**

I speak here today with two goals in mind: to celebrate the Civil Rights Act and to continue the fight for equality. Fifty years ago, Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which ended legal segregation and prohibited discrimination in public facilities on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. The Civil Rights Act ended the Jim Crow system in the South which had made African-Americans second-class citizens in the United States. That is what the act accomplished on paper. But in life and spirit, the act completely changed the old customs of people's minds and hearts.

The legacy of the Civil Rights Act cannot be summed up in words. The legacy is too complex for that. We are the legacy of the Civil Rights Act. The legacy is when we all eat in nice mom and pop diner together; when we all enjoy attending a local park to play sports, have a picnic, and interact with each other in harmony; when we all reap the benefits of fair and equal citizenship; when we all live in peace without degrading and humiliating signs that read "white" and "colored" -- that is the legacy of Civil Rights Act.

However, the Civil Rights Act accomplished the bare minimum. The act ended segregation, but inequality lives and lives actively and well. The time has come for us to finish the dream of equality for all. When will we take action to stop the widening educational achievement gap? How will we stop the poverty rate from rising? Will we stop acting as lone individuals and start working together? The answers are quite simple. We can support Federal TRIO programs that assist minorities in their pursuit for higher education. We can encourage employers to hire more workers. We can all get along.

We can challenge and conquer all these issues. But it all depends on us. Random acts of kindness can harness change. The internet and social media sites can bring the issues of inequality to light and empower people to make a difference. We can work together with our Congress to improve equality in America. If we do as such, we will set off a chain reaction of action. We can... we must... we will make the dream of eliminating inequality, prejudice, intolerance, and discrimination of the Civil Rights Movement and Civil Rights Act... a reality.