

509 West 121 Street  
New York 27, New York  
January 5, 1960

Mr. Warren Drew  
Public Relations Officer  
Gulf Oil Corporation  
17 Battery Place  
New York 4, New York

Dear Mr. Drew:

I would like to report an incident occurring on January 1st at a Gulf Service Station (2-1545-410) in Macon, Georgia.

My brother, my husband, my four year old daughter and I were driving through on a return trip from Tuskegee Institute, Alabama to New York City and stopped at this service station for gasoline. As the attendant filled the gas tank of the car, I took my daughter by the hand and went to the ladies rest room. Finding it locked, I stopped inside the station and asked the attendant for the key. He informed me that the rest room for "Colored" was in the back. I told him that it was not my custom to use "back" rest rooms, whereupon he took the key from the wall and turned his back on me.

Meanwhile, in "front" of the station, the attendant was busily providing the services for which he receives compensation and there was no discrimination encountered in securing these services--gasoline and oil. Apparently those concerned saw no incongruity in denying the normal courtesy facilities which go along with paid patronage.

Possibly I could forget this incident which on the surface might appear after all, an instance of discrimination encountered in the course of my private life which is of little concern to other people. Unfortunately, it is not thus so. Such instances are multiplied hundreds of thousands of times when one considers the large number of Negro motorists constantly on the nation's highways (foreign non-whites have also encountered prejudice, some of them important dignitaries of their countries), and the problem is not personal, but a serious one of considerable magnitude to all of us--whether we realize it or not.

I should emphasize, however, that I encountered no such incident at any of the other filling stations in the South--which I picked with care since I am aware that the discriminatory practices are still far too prevalent. The important allied fact, however, is that these are arbitrary practices and could be eliminated by all stations as easily as they have already been eliminated by some (seldom, for instance, have I encountered any unpleasant situations in the filling stations in North Carolina).

In this instance which I now cite, the discrimination occurred under the banner of the Gulf name and it is to the Gulf Oil Corporation that the injured customers look for retribution and amends. My brother has a Gulf

credit card (422089831); I have a Texaco card (and encountered no such incident at any Texaco stations). Incidentally, I am returning the sales ticket involved in this instance as my brother is requesting that he not be charged for this sale.

Meanwhile, let me return to some important factors implicit in this matter:

(1) The time has come, I think, for discriminatory practices of this nature against Negroes or any other American citizens to stop. The sit-in demonstrations in the South reveal the determination of Negroes that they will stop, I believe. The important thing which should be realized is that many such practices can be terminated by the simple act of termination and need not, indeed should not, be senselessly perpetuated until concentrated action on the part of a large number of people is necessary. Surely we are capable of voluntarily letting go of unjust practices without the ugly spectacle involved in being relentlessly forced to.

(2) There is a very important moral principle involved here and the shame of it is that attempts are made to ignore it. It would be bad enough if free services were denied certain individuals and groups in America. It is worst by far when companies or private operators have the sheer effrontery to collect for services rendered at the front door while shunting certain people to the rear when other facilities are desired.

(3) There is also a humanitarian principle involved. I cannot tell you what handicaps are endured by Negro motorists traveling through the South--often for long and weary miles--unable to be sure of finding adequate accommodations for taking care of the normal physiological functions of the body and for rest, relaxation, and refreshments. I venture to predict that it will not be too much longer before concentrated action is taken by Negro Americans to combat this evil which has held sway for far too long along the nation's highways.

(4) The important point to recognize is that so much <sup>of it</sup> is needless. One should not be forced to resort to group action because of discrimination. We can eradicate so many undesirable practices without fanfare. We can do something now toward precisely that end. This letter is an attempt to do something. On behalf of myself and the many other persons so discriminated against, I am writing this letter in an attempt to do something. I hope others will help, including your company which has the power to do so much.

In a recent report dealing with means to combat racial discrimination, the Ford Foundation's Fund for the Republic made, among other recommendations, the following:

Mobilize all citizens' groups concerned with discrimination to effect changes in law and conduct.

For the benefit of those immediately discriminated against, and for the future of America--as individuals and as groups, we must indeed do all we can. I am sending copies of this letter to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, to B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League, to the American

Civil Liberties Union, to Americans for Democratic Action, to the United States Department of Justice, and to the editor of New York's great liberal newspaper, THE NEW YORK POST, in the hope that these agencies, concerned as they are with the advancement of human rights and the securing of human liberties will be aware of this distressingly cruel and deeply dangerous practice.

Meanwhile I hope very much that on my next trip South, I will be able to stop at the Macon, Georgia Gulf Service Station at Spring & Riverside and receive normal courteous treatment. How very astonishing that I should have to make a point of insisting on it!

Sincerely yours,

(Mrs.) Jewell L. Gresham  
Doctoral Student  
Teachers College, Columbia University

enc.  
Sales ticket (\$3.68)

cc  
Gulf Service Station, Macon, Georgia  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People  
Dinah Birch  
American Civil Liberties Union  
Americans for Democratic Action  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Mr. James Wechsler, Editor, The New York Post