attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce; and that
this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he
is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to
purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them, by murdering the
people upon whom he also obtruded them: thus paying off former
crimes committed against the "liberties" of one people, with crimes
which he urges them to commit against the lives of another." 3

Jefferson reported in his Notes the reason for the deletion of
the above passage. "(it) was struck out in complaisance to South
Carolina and Georgia, who had never attempted to restrain the
importation of slaves, and who on the contrary still wished to
continue it. Our Northern brethren also I believe felt a little
tender under those censures; for tho' their people have very few
slaves themselves yet they had been pretty considerable car-
rriers of them to others." 4

Apparently, many of the ideals that we claim to be celebrating
during this Bicentennial year, are ideals which we are superim-
posing in retrospect upon that earlier period in our nation's
past, and not those which were shared by the country's leaders
at the time. And human relations in this country are still
struggling to thaw out the inequalities frozen into our constitu-
tion and the early customs and practices of all of the institu-
tions.

Our problem has always been, and continues to be, the ease and
readiness with which we proclaim universal statements of
brotherhood, and just as easily practice the opposite in our
human relationships. If our next two hundred years are to be
any better than the past, we must learn to look honestly at our
history. As Vincent Harding has so well put it: "An American
history, which cannot contain the full story of the black pil-
grimage is no more worthy than an American society that can-
not bear the full and troublesome black presence in its midst." 5

We must look honestly at our past if we are serious about
making a new beginning in human relations. It seems that we
are always making "new beginnings" in human relations in this
country, and such a need reveals how deeply the rhetoric of
democracy and the reality of black inequality is locked into the
white American heart.

The country spent the first eight decades of its national exis-
tence trying to make democracy and slavery lie down together.
The next two decades were spent trying to decide what limited
roles would be permitted black people in the drama that is
America. The 1896 Plessy vs. Ferguson decision of the Supreme
Court and subsequent decisions over the next decade, seemed to
settle the issue once for all.

Racial discrimination and segregation were indeed felt to be
compatible with America's image of itself as the world's