

*United Nations*

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**ECONOMIC  
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**CONSEIL  
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MEMORANDUM CONCERNING THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN

May 13, 1946

Mrs. Roosevelt:

I am transmitting herewith informally for your information, a copy of a memorandum concerning the Commission on Human Rights handed to Mr. Chester Williams of the U. S. Delegation to the United Nations, by the National Council of Negro Women.

(Signed) Durward V. Sandifer

United States Representative  
to the United Nations

MEMORANDUM CONCERNING THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN

1. Composition of Commission

It is the considered opinion of the National Council of Negro Women that the membership of the Commission on Human Rights should include distinguished and well known persons from various countries represented in the United Nations. The work of the Commission will prove most difficult for the reason that it deals with intangibles.

Matters of human rights and civil rights are matters of relationships between individual citizens or groups of citizens and their governments. Under the United Nations Charter, as it now stands, neither the Commission or any arm of the United Nations may interfere in these matters unless the situation is such as to threaten the peace and security of the world. It therefore follows that the only sanctions to the work of the Commission and such conventions as they may ultimately recommend are moral ones. It is therefore important that the membership of the Commission be composed of men and women of such outstanding distinction and reputation that they have earned the respect not only of the various peoples of the world but of their governments. It is easy to recognize the fact that such persons would have more influence in carrying out the aims of the charter on this question than bureaucrats or other persons appointed by and responsible to their respective governments.

Should the temporary Commission adopt this plan which seems to represent the concensus among America's leading organizations, the National Council of Negro Women would like to suggest the name of Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, its Founder-President, to be considered for appointment to this most important Commission. We have sought the opinion of various authorities on International Affairs and

have been told that Mrs. Bethune's reputation, qualities of leadership and high moral standards, peculiarly fit her for this important work.

## 2. Duties of the Commission

In its preliminary stages it is obvious that the Commission must study the Constitution of the various members of the United Nations, their attitudes and policies toward women and all minorities within their jurisdiction and eventually formulate a set of conventions which may in the final analyses become a Bill of Rights for the protection of such minorities.

In addition it seems to us that the Commission is faced with a continuing duty which is that of a sentinel. It is entirely possible that as a result of injustices and mistreatment, minority groups in one country may join in common cause with similarly abused and disaffected persons in other countries in revolt against the injustices meted out to them, thereby endangering the peace and security of the world. It is therefore important that the Commission continuously watch the pulse beat of peoples everywhere so that no religious, racial or economic group shall be deprived of their human or civil rights to the extent that they shall have just cause for such action. If there is any such danger the Commission should speedily advise the Security Council in order that its powers may be invoked.

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