

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

ASSUMPTION COLLEGE

Worcester, Massachusetts

May 21, 1977

It is a privilege for me to be here with you today to participate in your Commencement.

I have known of Assumption College and its reputation for quality education for many years. As a former professor at a similar-sized private liberal arts college in Minnesota, I also am aware of the special kind of educational experience you offer to your students and I value it greatly.

Assumption also has an outstanding record of achievement in a field that is very close to my heart and a major element in my efforts throughout my career -- Social Rehabilitation. As a national center of excellence in Social Rehabilitation, you have made an important contribution in making whole and healthy, once again, lives that have been shattered by the tragedy of crime, delinquency, physical and mental handicaps, and the abuse of drugs and alcohol.

Your leadership in building a more solid base of mutual respect and understanding among people with differing religious beliefs also deserves public recognition. For as we have seen in Northern Ireland, Nigeria, Lebanon and elsewhere in recent years, tolerance and respect for those with other creeds is essential to liberty and freedom in a democracy.

Finally, I want to thank Assumption and Dr. George Doyle for the outstanding work he has done for me and the Joint Economic Committee. His work has helped to open our eyes to the changes occurring in China and their implications for the United States. He has drawn our attention to the threat to our competitive free enterprise system that exists because of our neglect of the needs of our smaller businesses.

I really am delighted to be with you. I love commencement addresses. This is one of those rare days when a speaker is expected to -- indeed must -- focus on the future -- yours and our nation's. And there is no subject I would rather discuss, particularly with young people. So let us think about the future for a few minutes today and reflect upon our most reliable guide to it -- our past and present.

For most of you graduating today, your personal awareness of our national institutions, our social and economic problems, and our political process goes back roughly eight to ten years. During that time our nation has suffered a series of traumatic experiences. These include:

- The worst recession since the Great Depression,
- The constant world-wide assault on Democratic institutions and human rights,
- A long, divisive, tragic and unpopular war,
- Corruption in government, industry and finance,
- The forced resignation of a Vice-President of the United States and of a President of the United States,
- and much more.

Against this background, the difficult and complex problems that confront America and the world sometimes appear overwhelming.

We ask ourselves:

-- How will we maintain and improve our standard of living in a world ever more limited in energy and material resources?

-- How will we provide rewarding work at decent wages to all of those who need it?

-- How will we meet the requirements for food for an ever more heavily populated world?

-- How will we meet the need for good housing, quality health care, and better educational opportunities without producing a raging inflation that destroys the living standards so many have worked so hard to achieve?

-- How will America preserve for its children and grandchildren the fragile beauty and priceless value of our environment?

-- How will we use our strength in the world to prevent nuclear holocaust and to reduce the unjust distribution of the world's abundance between nations?

-- How will we assure that the moral principles and social values that have held our families, our communities and our nation together for so long will provide the sound foundations needed for a stable society in a rapidly changing world?

Confronted with these problems, and mindful of our recent experience, it is not surprising that optimism and confidence are rather scarce in America today.

When things go wrong, we always hear from those who call for a totally new and different way. In fact, what is needed is a restatement and renewal of our basic and time tested values -- personal integrity, human compassion, truthfulness, public trust, hard work and perseverance.

So before we decide to give up on government by the consent of the governed or on the promise of America, consider Historian D.W. Brogan's citation of the contrast between democratic government and the non-democratic. The latter he observed, "is like a splendid ship, with all its sails set; it moves majestically on, then it hits a rock and sinks for ever. Democracy is like a raft. It never sinks, but damn it, your feet are always in the water."

Let me remind you of a little history. I think there is a convincing case that our experience is on the side of the optimists. It has never been easy and it never will be. But, you should remember that the "good old days" were never really that good.

Thirty-eight years ago I donned a cap and gown and marched to the podium at the University of Minnesota to receive my bachelor's degree.

The future we faced was filled with foreboding and our nation faced incredible problems.

-- Hitler was flexing his inhuman muscles in Europe, and the prospect of world war was real and present.

-- The nation was bitterly divided between those who said Europe's problems were its own and those who felt our survival as a democracy was at stake.

-- America remained in the grips of the Great Depression with an unemployment rate of over 17 percent, millions of people out of work, and an uncertain prospect of economic recovery.

-- A third of our nation was "ill-fed, ill-clothed and ill-housed."

-- Racial injustice was a fact of life for millions of our citizens, and religious bigotry was widespread in our land.

-- The opportunity to own your home, to send your children to college, to receive the best in health care, and to live a secure old age was limited to the fortunate few.

Yes, the problems we faced were great. Some of my classmates felt overwhelmed by them. They seemed to share the opinion expressed by the British novelist and skeptic Aldous Huxley when he observed:

"I have peered into the future, and it won't work!"

But most of us realized that our problems simply would not go away. And we were unwilling to live with the consequences of ignoring them.

Our generation was no more energetic, no more idealistic, no more courageous, and certainly no better prepared to deal with our challenges than you are with yours. We realized that our only option was to confront our challenges and to overcome them.

Every generation of Americans has faced up to its own crisis. We never have been a nation of quitters, and I see nothing in the character of this generation that makes me believe we have changed.

In the very beginning of our history, the first Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army was in the pay of the Spanish Emperor. At the same time, there were citizens who refused to pay their taxes. The movement for secession was underway virtually at the same moment that America was born.

And talk about corruption, just review the history of the 1870's and 1880's. This was a period of unprecedented plundering of public purse and public domain. The despoiling of our natural resources, the growth of unrestrained monopoly, and the exploitation of our working people, including child labor, was a national disgrace.

-- Imagine the life or death problems that faced the first settlers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

-- Imagine the fear and uncertainty of young people who came of age when Civil War threatened to rip us apart.

-- Imagine the trauma that plagued every new wave of immigrants who came to our shores to seek a better life for themselves and their families.

In every instance Americans have persevered, and America has been better for it. We always have managed to cling to our ideals while working pragmatically for progress toward their achievement. We have, as the British say, "muddled through" -- by trial and error -- to become a better nation. We have always been inspired by dreams and hopes.

But every generation of Americans has maintained its commitment to achieving our nation's goals. And each generation has moved us closer to fulfilling the promise of America -- a life with dignity in the pursuit of happiness for all our citizens in a free society.

Let me remind you of some of the progress we have made.

-- In 1939, when I received my degree after being forced by the Depression to leave the University for six years, only eight percent of our 23 year-olds had graduated from college. Today nearly 26 percent of this age group have done so.

-- In 1939, you could expect a new son or daughter to live for 62 years. Today their life expectancy is over 73 years.

-- In the 1940's and 1950's we debated the possibility of a strong national Civil Rights policy. Today we have it.

-- For decades we bemoaned the fate of the hungry child and the shamed parents of such deprived children. Today our Food Stamp and feeding programs for young and old have eliminated any excuse for such suffering and indignity.

-- For decades the retarded and mentally ill were closed off from society and institutionalized in human warehouses. Today these individuals are being brought back into our communities and our families where they belong.

-- For years we struggled to assure that poverty and old age would not prevent our people from receiving needed medical care. Today Medicare and Medicaid have provided a solution.

-- For many years we worked to devise a system to reduce the chances of nuclear or conventional war. Today we have made progress by negotiating a Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement, a Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

These are just a handful of indicators of the distance we have come. Certainly, many of these initiatives require improvement. But we have made progress and our nation is better.

There is good reason to be positive, even optimistic, about your future and that of our nation. True, America is not perfect, we have our problems, but as long as we have the courage to recognize them, we can correct them.

The true test of the strength of our democracy is our willingness to look at ourselves in the mirror, acknowledge that the dirty face we see is our own, and then clean it up. Remember, the only people who cannot be self-analytical or self-critical are the weak.

Adlai Stevenson put it very well when he said, "Democracy is not self-executing. We have to make it work, and to make it work we have to understand it. Democracy's need for wisdom will remain as perennial as its need for liberty. Not only external vigilance but unending self-examination must be the perennial price of liberty, because the work of self-government never ceases."

America has not failed, we have not lost our way. We are just continuing to try our best to find a better way.

The story of America is not one of establishing an instant utopia. The story of America is not immediate and complete success. The story of America, to put it simply, is the struggle to do better.

When our Founding Fathers met in Philadelphia two hundred years ago, they gave us and the world a set of promises -- promises and hopes that would be sacred to us always as we moved toward a more perfect, not the perfect union. America is a promise and a hope in the minds and hearts of all those who cherish liberty, justice and opportunity.

We live by hope. We do not always get all we want when we want it. But we have to believe that someday, somehow, someday it will be better and that we can make it so.

You cannot tell a poor boy from a small country town on the plains of South Dakota who has had the opportunity to be a teacher, a mayor, a Senator and Vice President, that America is not a nation of promise.

You cannot tell a people whose ancestors were a handful of pioneers settling in a wild land, and descendants who have forged the most prosperous and successful democracy in history, that America is not a land of hopes, promises and opportunity.

So, as you look to your individual futures and our collective future, keep in mind the wise advice of Victor Hugo.

"The future has many names," he said. "For the weak, it is the impossible. For the faint-hearted, it is the unknown. For the thoughtful and the valiant, it is ideal. The challenge is urgent, the task is large, the time is now.

# # # #

Bishop Flanigan

Rabbi Klein

Father Bourke

Congressman Carly

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

President DePasquale - Pasquale

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

James Azar - (Senior)

ASSUMPTION COLLEGE

WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

Trustees - Administrators

Faculty MAY 21, 1977

Students

Parents

President Junior Class  
Jesse Michelak

# United States Senate

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## MEMORANDUM

### BOB HOPE QUOTE

Whenever I speak at a Commencement I recall the advice given to the Georgetown University graduates a few years ago by Bob Hope. As he looked out on the bright young people before him, contemplated the great challenges that confronted them, and the great promise the future held he said:

"My advice to you graduates about ready to go out in the world is this -- Don't do it !"



Basket Ball Teams - Greyhounds  
Assumption College

IT IS A PRIVILEGE FOR ME TO BE HERE WITH YOU TODAY TO PARTICIPATE IN YOUR COMMENCEMENT.

Graduates - listen to me  
offer a little -  
character -

I HAVE KNOWN OF ASSUMPTION COLLEGE AND ITS REPUTATION FOR QUALITY EDUCATION FOR MANY YEARS.

AS A FORMER PROFESSOR

AT A SIMILAR-SIZED PRIVATE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE IN MINNESOTA,

ALSO AM AWARE OF THE SPECIAL KIND OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

YOU OFFER TO YOUR STUDENTS AND I VALUE IT GREATLY.

ASSUMPTION ALSO HAS AN OUTSTANDING RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT

IN A FIELD THAT IS VERY CLOSE TO MY HEART AND A MAJOR ELEMENT

IN MY EFFORTS THROUGHOUT MY CAREER -- SOCIAL REHABILITATION, AS

Public Dr. Elias - Need of Soc Rehab  
Elias

A NATIONAL CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL REHABILITATION, YOU HAVE

MADE AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION IN MAKING WHOLE AND HEALTHY, ONCE

AGAIN, LIVES THAT HAVE BEEN SHATTERED BY THE TRAGEDY OF CRIME,

Dr. Doyle  
Tim  
Barnick  
'66

DELINQUENCY, PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HANDICAPS, AND THE ABUSE  
OF DRUGS AND ALCOHOL.

*and*

YOUR LEADERSHIP IN BUILDING A MORE SOLID BASE OF MUTUAL

RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING AMONG PEOPLE WITH DIFFERING RELIGIOUS

BELIEFS ALSO DESERVES PUBLIC RECOGNITION. ( FOR AS WE HAVE SEEN

IN NORTHERN IRELAND, NIGERIA, LEBANON AND ELSEWHERE IN RECENT

YEARS, TOLERANCE AND RESPECT FOR THOSE WITH OTHER CREEDS IS

ESSENTIAL TO LIBERTY AND FREEDOM IN A DEMOCRACY.

( FINALLY, I WANT TO THANK ASSUMPTION AND DR. GEORGE DOYLE

FOR THE OUTSTANDING WORK HE HAS DONE FOR ME AND THE JOINT ECONOMIC

COMMITTEE <sup>*of the Congress*</sup> HIS WORK HAS HELPED TO OPEN OUR EYES TO THE CHANGES

OCCURRING IN CHINA AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES.

And, in a more recent study for the JEC, he

~~HE~~ HAS DRAWN OUR ATTENTION TO THE THREAT TO OUR COMPETITIVE FREE  
ENTERPRISE SYSTEM THAT EXISTS BECAUSE OF OUR NEGLECT OF THE NEEDS  
OF OUR SMALLER BUSINESSES.

~~Tom Barnette - Chicago, Ill~~

~~I REALLY AM DELIGHTED TO BE WITH YOU, I LOVE COMMENCEMENT~~

Commencement occasions  
~~ADDRESSES.~~ ~~THIS~~ IS ONE OF THOSE RARE ~~ONES~~ WHEN A SPEAKER IS

EXPECTED TO ~~INDEED~~ -- FOCUS ON THE FUTURE -- YOURS AND

OUR NATION'S. AND THERE IS NO SUBJECT I WOULD RATHER DISCUSS,

PARTICULARLY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE. So LET US THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE

FOR A FEW MINUTES TODAY AND REFLECT UPON OUR MOST RELIABLE GUIDE

TO IT -- OUR PAST AND PRESENT.

FOR MOST OF YOU GRADUATING TODAY, YOUR PERSONAL AWARENESS OF  
OUR NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, OUR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, AND

OUR POLITICAL PROCESS GOES BACK ROUGHLY EIGHT TO TEN YEARS.

and

DURING THAT TIME OUR NATION HAS SUFFERED A SERIES OF TRAUMATIC

EXPERIENCES. THESE INCLUDE:

↳ THE WORST RECESSION SINCE THE GREAT DEPRESSION,

↳ THE CONSTANT WORLD-WIDE ASSULT ON DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

AND HUMAN RIGHTS, -- (democracy an endangered species)

↳ -- A LONG, DIVISIVE, TRAGIC AND UNPOPULAR WAR,

↳ -- CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY AND FINANCE,

↳ -- THE FORCED RESIGNATION OF A VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED

STATES AND OF A PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

-- AND MUCH MORE.

↳ AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, THE DIFFICULT AND COMPLEX PROBLEMS

THAT CONFRONT AMERICA AND THE WORLD SOMETIMES APPEAR OVERWHELMING.

↳ Like a Tired Traveller - I sometimes wonder why we seem confused - uncertain and bewildered.

There are but a few questions that keep  
surfacing. <sup>-5-</sup>

↳ -- How will we maintain and improve our standard of living  
in a world ever more limited in energy and material resources?

↳ -- How will we provide rewarding work at decent wages to all  
of those who need it?

↳ -- How will we meet the requirements for food for an ever more  
heavily populated world?

↳ -- How will we meet the need for good housing, quality  
health care, and better educational opportunities without  
producing a raging inflation that destroys the living standards  
so many have worked so hard to achieve?

↳ -- How will America preserve for its children and grandchildren  
the fragile beauty and priceless value of our environment?

↳ How will we use our STRENGTH IN THE WORLD TO PREVENT  
NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST AND TO REDUCE THE UNJUST DISTRIBUTION OF THE  
WORLD'S ABUNDANCE BETWEEN NATIONS? *and,*

↳ -- How will we ASSURE THAT THE MORAL PRINCIPLES AND SOCIAL  
VALUES THAT HAVE HELD OUR FAMILIES, OUR COMMUNITIES AND OUR NATION  
TOGETHER FOR SO LONG, WILL PROVIDE THE SOUND FOUNDATIONS NEEDED FOR  
A STABLE SOCIETY IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD?

↳ CONFRONTED WITH THESE PROBLEMS, AND MINDFUL OF OUR RECENT  
EXPERIENCE, IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT OPTIMISM AND CONFIDENCE ARE  
RATHER SCARCE IN AMERICA TODAY. *and,*

↳ WHEN THINGS GO WRONG, WE ALWAYS HEAR FROM THOSE WHO CALL  
FOR A TOTALLY NEW AND DIFFERENT WAY — *a quick*

*+ sure fix!*

IN FACT, WHAT IS NEEDED IS A RESTATEMENT AND RENEWAL OF OUR

BASIC AND TIME TESTED VALUES -- PERSONAL INTEGRITY, HUMAN

COMPASSION, TRUTHFULNESS, PUBLIC TRUST, HARD WORK, AND PERSEVERENCE.

↳ SO BEFORE WE DECIDE TO GIVE UP ON GOVERNMENT BY THE CONSENT

OF THE GOVERNED OR ON THE PROMISE OF AMERICA, CONSIDER HISTORIAN

D.W. BROGAN'S CITATION OF THE CONTRAST BETWEEN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT

AND THE NON-DEMOCRATIC. ↳ THE LATTER HE OBSERVED, "IS LIKE A

SPLENDID SHIP, WITH ALL ITS SAILS SET; IT MOVES MAJESTICALLY ON,

THEN IT HITS A ROCK AND SINKS FOR EVER. ↳ DEMOCRACY IS LIKE A RAFT.

IT NEVER SINKS, BUT DAMN IT, YOUR FEET ARE ALWAYS IN THE WATER."

↳ LET ME REMIND YOU OF A LITTLE HISTORY. ↳ I THINK THERE

IS A CONVINCING CASE THAT OUR EXPERIENCE IS ON THE SIDE OF

THE OPTIMISTS.

IT HAS NEVER BEEN EASY AND IT NEVER WILL BE. ~~But you should~~

~~and~~ REMEMBER THAT THE "GOOD OLD DAYS" WERE NEVER REALLY THAT GOOD.

THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS AGO I DONNED A CAP AND GOWN AND MARCHED TO THE PODIUM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA TO RECEIVE MY BACHELOR'S DEGREE.

THE FUTURE WE FACED WAS FILLED WITH FOREBODING AND OUR NATION FACED INCREDIBLE PROBLEMS.

*take a look at these problems, just for openers -*

HITLER WAS FLEXING HIS INHUMAN MUSCLES IN EUROPE, AND THE PROSPECT OF WORLD WAR WAS REAL AND PRESENT.

THE NATION WAS BITTERLY DIVIDED BETWEEN THOSE WHO SAID EUROPE'S PROBLEMS WERE ITS OWN AND THOSE WHO FELT OUR SURVIVAL AS A DEMOCRACY WAS AT STAKE.

↳ AMERICA REMAINED IN THE GRIPS OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION  
WITH AN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE OF OVER 17 PERCENT, MILLIONS OF PEOPLE  
OUT OF WORK, AND AN UNCERTAIN PROSPECT OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY.

↳ *at least*  
-- A THIRD OF OUR NATION WAS "ILL-FED, ILL-CLOTHED AND  
ILL-HOUSED."

↳ RACIAL INJUSTICE WAS A FACT OF LIFE FOR MILLIONS OF OUR  
CITIZENS, AND RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY WAS WIDESPREAD IN OUR LAND.

↳ THE OPPORTUNITY TO OWN YOUR HOME, TO SEND YOUR  
CHILDREN TO COLLEGE, TO RECEIVE THE BEST IN HEALTH CARE, AND TO  
LIVE A SECURE OLD AGE WAS LIMITED TO THE FORTUNATE FEW.

↳ *That's the way it was - and*  
~~YES, THE PROBLEMS WE FACED WERE GREAT.~~ SOME OF MY

CLASSMATES FELT OVERWHELMED BY THEM.

THEY SEEMED TO SHARE THE OPINION EXPRESSED BY THE BRITISH  
NOVELIST AND SKEPTIC ALDOUS HUXLEY WHEN HE OBSERVED:

"I HAVE PEERED INTO THE FUTURE, AND IT WON'T WORK!"

↳ BUT MOST OF US REALIZED THAT OUR PROBLEMS SIMPLY WOULD NOT  
GO AWAY, AND WE WERE UNWILLING TO LIVE WITH THE CONSEQUENCES  
OF IGNORING THEM.

*— and I'm sure you  
would agree that*

↳ OUR GENERATION WAS NO MORE ENERGETIC, NO MORE IDEALISTIC,  
NO MORE COURAGEOUS, AND CERTAINLY NO BETTER PREPARED TO DEAL WITH  
OUR CHALLENGES THAN YOU ARE WITH YOURS. ↳ WE REALIZED THAT OUR  
ONLY OPTION WAS TO CONFRONT OUR CHALLENGES AND TO OVERCOME THEM.

↳ EVERY GENERATION OF AMERICANS HAS FACED UP TO ITS OWN CRISIS.

↳ WE NEVER HAVE BEEN A NATION OF QUITTERS, AND I SEE NOTHING IN THE  
CHARACTER OF THIS GENERATION THAT MAKES ME BELIEVE WE HAVE CHANGED.

*Our history is filled with trouble, disasters,  
violence, corruption, war & struggle.*

*Geo Washington at Valley Forge*  
*Troops going home 11- — U.S. Capital Moved*  
*14 times by 1800*

↳ IN THE VERY BEGINNING OF OUR HISTORY, THE FIRST CHIEF OF  
STAFF OF THE U.S. ARMY WAS IN THE PAY OF THE SPANISH EMPEROR.

↳ AT THE SAME TIME, THERE WERE CITIZENS WHO REFUSED TO PAY THEIR  
TAXES. ↳ THE MOVEMENT FOR SECESSION WAS UNDERWAY VIRTUALLY AT

THE SAME MOMENT THAT AMERICA WAS BORN. *The negotiation of*  
~~THE DOCTRINE OF MANIFEST DESTINY COMPELLED US TO LAUNCH A WAR TO EXPAND OUR DOMAIN.~~  
*the treaty ending the war with Britain*  
*was stoned*

↳ AND TALK ABOUT CORRUPTION, JUST REVIEW THE HISTORY OF THE

1870'S AND 1880'S. ↳ THIS WAS A PERIOD OF UNPRECEDENTED PLUNDERING

OF PUBLIC PURSE AND PUBLIC DOMAIN. ↳ THE DESPOILING OF OUR NATURAL  
RESOURCES, THE GROWTH OF UNRESTRAINED MONOPOLY, AND THE EXPLOITATION

OF OUR WORKING PEOPLE, INCLUDING CHILD LABOR, WAS A NATIONAL  
DISGRACE.

↳ -- IMAGINE THE LIFE OR DEATH PROBLEMS THAT FACED THE FIRST  
SETTLERS IN THE MASSACHUSETTS BAY COLONY.

↳ IMAGINE THE FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO  
CAME OF AGE WHEN CIVIL WAR THREATENED TO RIP US APART.

↳-- IMAGINE THE TRAUMA THAT PLAGUED EVERY NEW WAVE OF  
IMMIGRANTS WHO CAME TO OUR SHORES TO SEEK A BETTER LIFE FOR  
THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES.

*But* IN EVERY INSTANCE AMERICANS HAVE PERSEVERED, AND AMERICA  
HAS BEEN BETTER FOR IT. WE ALWAYS HAVE MANAGED TO CLING TO OUR  
IDEALS WHILE WORKING PRAGMATICALLY FOR PROGRESS TOWARD THEIR  
ACHIEVEMENT. WE HAVE, AS THE BRITISH SAY, "MUDDLED THROUGH" --  
BY TRIAL AND ERROR -- TO BECOME A BETTER NATION. WE HAVE ALWAYS

BEEN INSPIRED BY DREAMS AND HOPES — *and blessed with*  
*resources and a vital, energetic, restless*  
*people.*

EVERY GENERATION OF AMERICANS HAS MAINTAINED ITS  
COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVING OUR NATION'S GOALS.

AND EACH GENERATION HAS MOVED US CLOSER TO FULFILLING THE  
PROMISE OF AMERICA -- A LIFE WITH DIGNITY IN THE PURSUIT OF  
HAPPINESS FOR ALL OUR CITIZENS IN A FREE SOCIETY.

{ LET ME REMIND YOU OF SOME OF THE PROGRESS WE HAVE MADE.

-- IN 1939, WHEN I RECEIVED MY DEGREE AFTER BEING FORCED BY  
THE DEPRESSION TO LEAVE THE UNIVERSITY FOR SIX YEARS, ONLY EIGHT  
PERCENT OF OUR 23 YEAR-OLDS HAD GRADUATED FROM COLLEGE. { TODAY  
NEARLY 26 PERCENT OF THIS AGE GROUP HAVE DONE SO.

{ -- IN 1939, YOU COULD EXPECT A NEW SON OR DAUGHTER TO LIVE  
FOR 62 YEARS. TODAY THEIR LIFE EXPECTANCY IS OVER 73 YEARS.

{ -- IN THE 1940'S AND 1950'S WE DEBATED THE POSSIBILITY OF  
A STRONG NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS POLICY. TODAY WE HAVE IT.

↳ -- FOR DECADES WE BEMOANED THE FATE OF THE HUNGRY CHILD  
AND THE SHAMED PARENTS OF SUCH DEPRIVED CHILDREN. ↳ TODAY OUR  
FOOD STAMP AND FEEDING PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG AND OLD HAVE ELIMINATED  
ANY EXCUSE FOR SUCH SUFFERING AND INDIGNITY.

↳ -- FOR DECADES THE RETARDED AND MENTALLY ILL WERE CLOSED  
OFF FROM SOCIETY AND INSTITUTIONALIZED IN HUMAN WAREHOUSES. ↳ TODAY  
educated, trained and  
THESE INDIVIDUALS ARE BEING BROUGHT BACK INTO OUR COMMUNITIES, and  
OUR FAMILIES WHERE THEY BELONG.

↳ -- FOR YEARS WE STRUGGLED TO ASSURE THAT POVERTY AND OLD AGE  
WOULD NOT PREVENT OUR PEOPLE FROM RECEIVING NEEDED MEDICAL CARE.  
TODAY MEDICARE AND MEDICAID HAVE PROVIDED A SOLUTION.

↳ -- FOR MANY YEARS WE WORKED TO DEVISE A SYSTEM TO REDUCE  
THE CHANCES OF NUCLEAR OR CONVENTIONAL WAR.

↳ TODAY WE HAVE MADE PROGRESS BY NEGOTIATING A STRATEGIC ARMS  
LIMITATION AGREEMENT, A LIMITED NUCLEAR TEST BAN TREATY AND A  
NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY.

↳ THESE ARE JUST A HANDFUL OF INDICATORS OF THE DISTANCE  
WE HAVE COME. ↳ CERTAINLY, MANY OF THESE INITIATIVES REQUIRE

IMPROVEMENT. ↳ BUT WE HAVE MADE PROGRESS AND OUR NATION IS BETTER.

↳ THERE IS GOOD REASON TO BE POSITIVE, EVEN OPTIMISTIC, ABOUT  
YOUR FUTURE AND THAT OF OUR NATION. ↳ TRUE, AMERICA IS NOT PERFECT,

WE HAVE OUR PROBLEMS, BUT AS LONG AS WE HAVE THE COURAGE TO  
RECOGNIZE THEM, WE CAN CORRECT THEM.

↳ THE TRUE TEST OF THE STRENGTH OF OUR DEMOCRACY IS OUR  
WILLINGNESS TO LOOK AT OURSELVES IN THE MIRROR, ACKNOWLEDGE THAT  
THE DIRTY FACE WE SEE IS OUR OWN, AND THEN CLEAN IT UP.

REMEMBER, THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO CANNOT BE SELF-ANALYTICAL OR  
SELF-CRITICAL ARE THE WEAK,

↳ ADLAI STEVENSON PUT IT VERY WELL WHEN HE SAID, "DEMOCRACY  
IS NOT SELF-EXECUTING. ↳ WE HAVE TO MAKE IT WORK, AND TO MAKE IT  
WORK WE HAVE TO UNDERSTAND IT. ↳ DEMOCRACY'S NEED FOR WISDOM  
WILL REMAIN AS PERENNIAL AS ITS NEED FOR LIBERTY. ↳ NOT ONLY  
EXTERNAL VIGILANCE BUT UNENDING SELF-EXAMINATION MUST BE THE  
PERENNIAL PRICE OF LIBERTY; ~~BECAUSE~~ ↳ THE WORK OF SELF-GOVERNMENT  
NEVER CEASES."

↳ AMERICA HAS NOT FAILED, WE HAVE NOT LOST OUR WAY. ↳ WE ARE  
JUST CONTINUING TO TRY OUR BEST TO FIND A BETTER WAY.

↳ THE STORY OF AMERICA IS NOT ONE OF ESTABLISHING AN INSTANT  
UTOPIA. ↳ THE STORY OF AMERICA IS NOT IMMEDIATE AND COMPLETE SUCCESS.

↳ THE STORY OF AMERICA, TO PUT IT SIMPLY, IS THE STRUGGLE TO

DO BETTER — Progress, not Perfection!  
~~A~~

↳ WHEN OUR FOUNDING FATHERS MET IN PHILADELPHIA TWO HUNDRED

YEARS AGO, THEY GAVE US AND THE WORLD A SET OF PROMISES -- PROMISES

AND HOPES THAT WOULD BE SACRED TO US ~~AS~~ AS WE MOVED TOWARD A

MORE PERFECT, NOT THE PERFECT UNION. ↳ AMERICA IS A PROMISE AND A

HOPE IN THE MINDS AND HEARTS OF ALL THOSE WHO CHERISH LIBERTY,

JUSTICE AND OPPORTUNITY.

↳ WE LIVE BY HOPE. ↳ WE DO NOT ALWAYS GET ALL WE WANT WHEN WE

WANT IT. ↳ BUT WE HAVE TO BELIEVE THAT SOMEDAY, SOMEHOW, SOMEWAY

IT WILL BE BETTER AND THAT WE CAN MAKE IT SO.

#  
YOU CANNOT TELL A POOR BOY FROM A SMALL COUNTRY TOWN ON THE

PLAINS OF SOUTH DAKOTA WHO HAS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE A TEACHER,

A MAYOR, A SENATOR AND VICE PRESIDENT, THAT AMERICA IS NOT A NATION  
OF PROMISE.

↳ YOU CANNOT TELL A PEOPLE WHOSE ANCESTORS WERE A HANDFUL OF  
PIONEERS SETTLING IN A WILD LAND, AND DESCENDANTS WHO HAVE FORGED  
THE MOST PROSPEROUS AND SUCCESSFUL DEMOCRACY IN HISTORY, THAT  
AMERICA IS NOT A LAND OF HOPES, PROMISES AND OPPORTUNITY.

↳ SO, AS YOU LOOK TO YOUR INDIVIDUAL FUTURES AND OUR COLLECTIVE  
FUTURE, KEEP IN MIND THE WISE ADVICE OF VICTOR HUGO.

"THE FUTURE HAS MANY NAMES," HE SAID. "FOR THE WEAK, IT IS  
THE IMPOSSIBLE. ↳ FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED, IT IS THE UNKNOWN. ↳ FOR THE  
THOUGHTFUL AND THE VALIANT, IT IS IDEAL. ↳ THE CHALLENGE IS URGENT,  
THE TASK IS LARGE, THE TIME IS NOW."

*There you have it—  
go to it!*



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