

REMARKS OF HUBERT H. HUMPHREY III

MINNESOTA STATE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ASSOCIATION

Minneapolis, Minnesota

October 28, 1977

It is an honor for me to be with you this evening. My father had hoped to be able to be here himself, but as you know, that was not possible.

No issue is closer to my father's heart than the one with which many of you struggle each day. From his days as Mayor of Minneapolis, through the civil rights battles of the 1950's and 1960's, to the fight for human rights at home and abroad in this decade, the concern for the provision of an equal chance in life for all our citizens has been uppermost in his priorities.

So, I am pleased to be with you and to accept on my father's behalf, your first "Annual Achievement Award for Outstanding Contributions By A Public Official to the Course of Providing Equal Opportunity in Employment for Minorities and Females." Moreover, I want to express his personal gratitude to all of you in the Minnesota State Affirmative Action Association for the great work you are doing.

We Americans have always had our eyes fixed on the future. The most distinguishing mark of American character since the first colonists arrived on this continent has been a profound faith in our ability to create a better life for ourselves and for future generations. Our progress as a nation has been a constant process of becoming, of constant motion and growth, of evolving aspirations and ideals, and of pragmatic efforts to make them real.

What was declared in 1776 was not the fullness of American freedom, but the common privilege of laboring for its fulfillment under a government that was our own -- and that task will never be finished. Each generation has its own summons to the cause of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Your response to that summons is a career dedicated to the principles of equal opportunity -- of equal justice for all in the workplace.

The record of America in the last 200 years reflects the gradual evolution of individual liberty, an idea that was revolutionary at its birth and remains so today.

The American dream is simply a metaphor for the creation of a truly open society.

Such a society is one in which men and women are free to develop their talents and to pursue their dreams. You are the catalysts who will hasten the day when we can truly claim to be an open society without the shadow of hypocrisy hanging over these very words.

The open society for which we strive is based on the idea, set forth in our Declaration of Independence, of the inherent dignity of every human being, endowed by our Creator with certain rights that cannot be taken away.

This emphasis on the dignity and rights of all men and women as individuals is what gives sense and reason to the system of government we call democracy. Without it, people become things to be manipulated and controlled, rather than respected as democracy requires.

Respect for the dignity and rights of all human beings -- the notion that "all men and women are created equal" and are thus entitled to equal treatment under the law -- is a very recent development in the history of the human race. Even in this, the greatest of all democracies, the ideals stated in the Declaration of Independence, as you know so well, are not yet fully reflected in our social, economic and political life.

In the last 200 years we have only gradually extended the franchise and other civil rights and liberties to include the poor and women, as well as racial and ethnic minorities. The extension of full economic rights for all, justice in the marketplace of talent and human energy, is centerstage in the struggle today for human rights in America.

Painfully slow as our progress might appear in hindsight, we have come a long way, and with your leadership we shall move forward. We shall overcome.

As Americans, we have been summoned to the cause of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Like our forebearers, we must be willing to experiment and to risk failure in order to see our ideals become realities in the lives of our citizens.

We must be willing to make some sacrifices now in order to protect and preserve what we most cherish in American life for the benefit of future generations.

We must accept the burdens of leadership as the strongest nation of the free world and set a good example for adhering to our principles both at home and abroad.

This is the challenge: to continue to chart our progress by the liberation of the human spirit and to work for its fulfillment. This is the promise of America. This is the promise of your work in affirmative action. This is the commitment to principle that makes America the greatest reason for hope among mankind.

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October 26, 1977

Minnesota State Affirmative  
Action Association  
P.O. Box 15041  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55415

Dear Friends:

I deeply regret not being with you in person tonight to accept the honor you bestow upon me. There is nothing in my public life of which I am prouder than the civil rights and equal opportunity struggles in which I took part. And, there is nothing in my private life of which I am prouder than the young man who will accept this honor for me tonight -- my son -- Senator Hubert H. Humphrey III.

I have witnessed great progress in the effort to assure every citizen the full exercise of his or her rights since the 1940's. We have had great victories in the Congress, great victories in the courts. But laws and decisions don't necessarily mean quality education, decent neighborhoods, first rate medical care, good jobs and adequate family income. The focus of the struggle for full civil rights and equal opportunity is in the American marketplace. And, your role is central to the success of this second wave assault on discrimination and prejudice.

The Minnesota State Affirmative Action Association can lead the way in providing economic justice on the job to all our citizens. I pledge my full support for every one of you in your important work.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,

Hubert H. Humphrey

REMARKS OF HUBERT H. HUMPHREY III

MINNESOTA STATE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ASSOCIATION

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

OCTOBER 28, 1977

IT IS AN HONOR FOR ME TO BE WITH YOU THIS EVENING. MY FATHER HAD HOPED TO BE ABLE TO BE HERE HIMSELF, BUT AS YOU KNOW, THAT WAS NOT POSSIBLE.

NO ISSUE IS CLOSER TO MY FATHER'S HEART THAN THE ONE WITH WHICH MANY OF YOU STRUGGLE EACH DAY. FROM HIS DAYS AS MAYOR OF MINNEAPOLIS, THROUGH THE CIVIL RIGHTS BATTLES OF THE 1950'S AND 1960'S, TO THE FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AT HOME AND ABROAD IN THIS DECADE, THE CONCERN FOR THE PROVISION OF AN EQUAL CHANCE IN LIFE FOR ALL OUR CITIZENS HAS BEEN UPPERMOST IN HIS PRIORITIES.

SO, I AM PLEASED TO BE WITH YOU AND TO ACCEPT ON MY FATHER'S BEHALF, YOUR FIRST "ANNUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS BY A PUBLIC OFFICIAL TO THE COURSE OF PROVIDING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN EMPLOYMENT FOR MINORITIES AND FEMALES." MOREOVER, I WANT TO EXPRESS HIS PERSONAL GRATITUDE TO ALL OF YOU IN THE MINNESOTA STATE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ASSOCIATION FOR THE GREAT WORK YOU ARE DOING.

WE AMERICANS HAVE ALWAYS HAD OUR EYES FIXED ON THE FUTURE. THE MOST DISTINGUISHING MARK OF AMERICAN CHARACTER SINCE THE FIRST COLONISTS ARRIVED ON THIS CONTINENT HAS BEEN A PROFOUND FAITH IN OUR ABILITY TO CREATE A BETTER LIFE FOR OURSELVES AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. OUR PROGRESS AS A NATION HAS BEEN A CONSTANT PROCESS OF BECOMING, OF CONSTANT MOTION AND GROWTH, OF EVOLVING ASPIRATIONS AND IDEALS, AND OF PRAGMATIC EFFORTS TO MAKE THEM REAL.

WHAT WAS DECLARED IN 1776 WAS NOT THE FULLNESS OF AMERICAN FREEDOM, BUT THE COMMON PRIVILEGE OF LABORING FOR ITS FULFILLMENT UNDER A GOVERNMENT THAT WAS OUR OWN -- AND THAT TASK WILL NEVER BE FINISHED. EACH GENERATION HAS ITS OWN SUMMONS TO THE CAUSE OF "LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS." YOUR RESPONSE TO THAT SUMMONS IS A CAREER DEDICATED TO THE PRINCIPLES OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY -- OF EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL IN THE WORKPLACE.

THE RECORD OF AMERICA IN THE LAST 200 YEARS REFLECTS THE GRADUAL EVOLUTION OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY, AN IDEA THAT WAS REVOLUTIONARY AT ITS BIRTH AND REMAINS SO TODAY.

THE AMERICAN DREAM IS SIMPLY A METAPHOR FOR THE CREATION OF A TRULY OPEN SOCIETY.

SUCH A SOCIETY IS ONE IN WHICH MEN AND WOMEN ARE FREE TO DEVELOP THEIR TALENTS AND TO PURSUE THEIR DREAMS. YOU ARE THE CATALYSTS WHO WILL HASTEN THE DAY WHEN WE CAN TRULY CLAIM TO BE AN OPEN SOCIETY WITHOUT THE SHADOW OF HYPROCRISY HANGING OVER THESE VERY WORDS.

THE OPEN SOCIETY FOR WHICH WE STRIVE IS BASED ON THE IDEA, SET FORTH IN OUR DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, OF THE INHERENT DIGNITY OF EVERY HUMAN BEING, ENDOWED BY OUR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN RIGHTS THAT CANNOT BE TAKEN AWAY.

THIS EMPHASIS ON THE DIGNITY AND RIGHTS OF ALL MEN AND WOMEN AS INDIVIDUALS IS WHAT GIVES SENSE AND REASON TO THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT WE CALL DEMOCRACY. WITHOUT IT, PEOPLE BECOME THINGS TO BE MANIPULATED AND CONTROLLED, RATHER THAN RESPECTED AS DEMOCRACY REQUIRES.

RESPECT FOR THE DIGNITY AND RIGHTS OF ALL HUMAN BEINGS -- THE NOTION THAT "ALL MEN AND WOMEN ARE CREATED EQUAL" AND ARE THUS ENTITLED TO EQUAL TREATMENT UNDER THE LAW -- IS A VERY RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE HISTORY OF THE HUMAN RACE. EVEN IN THIS, THE GREATEST OF ALL DEMOCRACIES, THE IDEALS STATED IN THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, AS YOU KNOW SO WELL, ARE NOT YET FULLY REFLECTED IN OUR SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL LIFE.

IN THE LAST 200 YEARS WE HAVE ONLY GRADUALLY EXTENDED THE FRANCHISE AND OTHER CIVIL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES TO INCLUDE THE POOR AND WOMEN, AS WELL AS RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES. THE EXTENSION OF FULL ECONOMIC RIGHTS FOR ALL, JUSTICE IN THE MARKETPLACE OF TALENT AND HUMAN ENERGY, IS CENTERSTAGE IN THE STRUGGLE TODAY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN AMERICA.

PAINFULLY SLOW AS OUR PROGRESS MIGHT APPEAR IN HINDSIGHT,  
WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY, AND WITH YOUR LEADERSHIP WE SHALL MOVE  
FORWARD. WE SHALL OVERCOME.

AS AMERICANS, WE HAVE BEEN SUMMONED TO THE CAUSE OF "LIFE,  
LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS." LIKE OUR FOREBEARERS, WE  
MUST BE WILLING TO EXPERIMENT AND TO RISK FAILURE IN ORDER TO SEE  
OUR IDEALS BECOME REALITIES IN THE LIVES OF OUR CITIZENS.

WE MUST BE WILLING TO MAKE SOME SACRIFICES NOW IN ORDER  
TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE WHAT WE MOST CHERISH IN AMERICAN LIFE  
FOR THE BENEFIT OF FUTURE GENERATIONS.

WE MUST ACCEPT THE BURDENS OF LEADERSHIP AS THE STRONGEST  
NATION OF THE FREE WORLD AND SET A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR ADHERING  
TO OUR PRINCIPLES BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD.

THIS IS THE CHALLENGE: TO CONTINUE TO CHART OUR PROGRESS  
BY THE LIBERATION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT AND TO WORK FOR ITS  
FULFILLMENT. THIS IS THE PROMISE OF AMERICA. THIS IS THE  
PROMISE OF YOUR WORK IN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION. THIS IS THE  
COMMITMENT TO PRINCIPLE THAT MAKES AMERICA THE GREATEST REASON  
FOR HOPE AMONG MANKIND.

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