

REMARKS BY FRANCES HUMPHREY HOWARD  
PRESENTATION OF THE FIRST ANNUAL ELEANOR ROOSEVELT  
HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD TO SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY  
BY THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE  
Beverly Hills, California

December 10, 1977

Distinguished friends, it is a privilege to be here with you tonight to accept, on behalf of my brother, Hubert, your first annual Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award. To be accorded such an honor in the name of an exceptional and inspiring political figure, in her own right, is indeed a most moving and meaningful tribute.

Hubert asked me to express his deepest regret that he could not be with you tonight. He is in Washington gathering his strength for the upcoming battles on the Panama Canal Treaties, SALT, Foreign Aid, adequate health care, and employment opportunity for all Americans. However, he sends you his best and requested that I deliver the following message in his behalf. And I must warn you, it is vintage Hubert H. Humphrey.

"I am deeply honored by this award which is presented in the name of a woman who has served as such an inspiration and example to me throughout my public career.

"I think the poet and playwright, Archibald MacLeish, summed it up best when he said of Eleanor, in his 'Tribute to a Great American Lady,' a year after her death:

"...It was the long fight for a meaningful and common freedom that had her first and last commitment, and it is there that her voice and her presence are still most powerfully felt. They have not only strengthened the hands of those who believe in freedom, but served as well to keep the future of the whole great struggle open.'

"And this is what I want to talk to you about tonight, dear friends. The continuation of this great struggle for human rights and human dignity.

"We are all fully aware that the civil rights struggle of the 1950's and 1960's did not eradicate inequality and injustice from our society.

"That is why I believe the concept of the civil rights movement must be broadened to include the rights and opportunities that should be available to all disadvantaged groups in America.

"The struggle for civil rights is a struggle for the rights and privileges and duties of all Americans. And what do these rights include?

"-- The right to a meaningful life, free from poverty that today afflicts some 25 million Americans.

"-- The right to full and equal protection under the law -- an end to the double standard applied to many of those who are less privileged, where justice delayed can become justice denied.

"-- The right to productive and gainful employment -- for all our people, as a specific national goal toward whose achievement we will apply every possible private and public resource.

"-- The right to economic, political and social opportunity where progress toward realizing one's full potential will confront no artificial barrier of discrimination based on race, creed or sex.

"-- The right to a decent neighborhood.

-- The right to a life free from violence and terrorism.

-- The right to quality education at all levels, free from segregation.

-- The right to live in good health under a system that helps assure modern health care for all at the lowest possible cost.

-- The right to be free from hunger and malnutrition.

-- The right to opportunities for recreation and leisure, and

-- The right to a clean and wholesome environment.

"These rights belong to all American people. Without them there are no real civil or human rights.

"The new dimensions of civil rights are to be found in the living and working conditions of our people.

"This is our challenge, for if we cannot overcome the economic and social obstacles to the full participation of our citizens in our society, the hard-won political and civil rights of the last two decades will hold little meaning for millions of our people.

"Yet, this concern does not stop at our nation's shores. We cannot proclaim democracy, social and economic justice at home and abandon these principles abroad.

"We have made significant strides this year. Support of human rights has become a central tenet of American foreign policy.

"The only effective way to combat the tyranny of communism and the totalitarianism of the right is to battle for human and economic rights and democratic values.

"A sense of moral values should be an imperative of our foreign policy. Unless it is, we will find it difficult to gain the support of peoples around the world who look to us for spiritual and moral support in their struggles for freedom.

"While it is true that we don't have the right to interfere in the internal affairs of another country, this does not mean we should not remind the world that human rights are the highest priority of our government and our people, and that our policies will be directed accordingly.

"The message of the United States is not nuclear power. The message of the United States is a spiritual message. It is the message of human ideals; it is the message of the freedom of ideas, speech, press, the right to assemble, to worship, and the message of the freedom of movement of peoples.

"It is the message of the Bill of Rights. It is the message of the Declaration of Independence, where we boldly proclaimed to a world dominated by monarchs and tyrants that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, and among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

"This is the message of America. This is the source of our power. This is the source of our strength.

"I recognize and understand the common wisdom that the relations among nations demand a pragmatic trade-off of national self-interests, the maintenance of the balance of power, and compromises in easing tensions and in gaining and holding allies.

"However, in this delicate process of negotiation and accommodation, the United States government and our people must not neglect our basic principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms. These principles have formed the foundation of our government and have served as a beacon of hope for the rest of the world.

"To refrain from calling attention to these basic concerns only tarnishes the image of the United States. It diminishes our value system in the eyes of the global community. It undermines our own society and leaves us a weaker people.

"Here in the United States, we have the most heterogeneous mixture of races, religions and nationalities ever to coexist peacefully under the tent of democracy. And we are the world's oldest democracy, which has completed celebrating two centuries of freedom.

"I am an optimist. There is every reason to believe that our third century not only can be one of expanding freedom and opportunity for all Americans, but also one in which we can once again exercise leadership in the promotion of human rights worldwide.

"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.

"America will provide world leadership by drawing on its greatest strength -- the common sense of its people. And we will turn challenges into accomplishments and idealism, crises into opportunities, and problems into progress.

"And as we do, we will move closer to fulfilling the promise of America -- a life with dignity in the pursuit of happiness in a free society for our own people and for those throughout the world.

"As Franklin Delano Roosevelt so dramatically noted during one of the darker periods of our nation:

"'The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with a strong and active faith.'

"Again, I am deeply moved by this honor you have bestowed upon me. It is one I will cherish forever, Thank you, dear friends, thank you."

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