

Address in Convention Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 1, 1956
Dwight D. Eisenhower

Our time of national political debate is almost ended. The clamor of these days will soon subside. And your day of thoughtful decision swiftly nears.

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All the historic precedents, the soaring graphs, the staggering statistics—these measure size more than substance. And the largeness and greatness of our nation would be almost a mockery—without a matching greatness of heart and largeness of vision as we look out upon the world.

Of these greater things I speak to you tonight.

It seems to me right to do so here, in Philadelphia, where our forefathers defined the principles by which our nation was born and has ever lived.

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In such a world—at such a time---“a decent respect for the opinion of mankind”—in the words of our Declaration of Independence—requires that we state plainly the purposes we seek, the principles we hold.

In June of 1776, Richard Henry Lee, rising before the Continental Congress to move his resolution for American independence, declared: “The eyes of Europe are fixed upon us; she demands of us a living example of freedom.”

One hundred eighty years later, we know that the eyes of the world are fixed upon us. And we must ask ourselves: what kind of an example of freedom do we give to our age? What are the true marks of our America—and what do they mean to the world?

We are a people born of many peoples. Our culture, our skills, our very aspirations have been shaped by immigrants—and their sons and daughters—from all the earth. Sam Gompers from England, Andrew Carnegie from Scotland, Albert Einstein from Germany—and Booker T. Washington and Al Smith—Marconi and Caruso—men of all nations and races and estates—they have made us what we are.

Men like these—men by the millions—have deepened and defined our very understanding of what is true and just in the wide world from which they came.

We know—as our forefathers knew—the firm ground on which our beliefs must stand. Freedom is rooted in the certainty that the brotherhood of all men springs from the Fatherhood of God. And thus, even as each man is his brother's keeper, no man is another's master.

So it is that the laws most binding us as a people are laws of the spirit—proclaimed in church and synagogue and mosque. These are the laws that truly declare the eternal equality of all men, of all races, before the man-made laws of our land. And we are profoundly aware that—in the world—we can claim the trust of hundreds of millions of people, across Africa and Asia—only as we ourselves hold high the banner of justice for all.

We are—proudly—a people with no sense of class or caste. We judge no man by his name or inheritance, but by what he does—and for what he stands.

And so likewise do we judge other nations. The right of no nation depends upon the date of its birth or the size of its power. As there can be no second class citizens before the law of America, so—we believe—there can be no second-class nations before the law of the world community.

We –finally—look upon change, the every-unfolding future, with confidence rather than doubt, hope rather than fear. We, as a people, were born of revolution. And we have lived by change—always a frontier people, exploring—if not new wilderness—then new science and new knowledge.