

**The original documents are located in Box D20, folder “South High School Commencement Address, Grand Rapids, MI, June 16, 1966” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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*Miss Shepard - Honored graduates, members of the faculty - parents*  
SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS--JUNE 16, 1966

ONE OF THE THINGS I LOVE ABOUT AMERICA IS THAT IT'S  
PRETTY SENTIMENTAL. SO I DON'T FEEL AT ALL EMBARRASSED  
ABOUT SAYING THAT I FEEL A TUG AT MY HEARTSTRINGS WHEN-  
EVER I COME <sup>*to South Field*</sup> ~~HERE~~ TO TALK TO SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS.

I WAS GRADUATED FROM SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL IN 1931, <sup>*and even though that is a long time ago*</sup> ~~AND~~  
YOU CAN BE SURE THE OLD SCHOOL COLORS, THE GLORY OF THE  
RED AND THE BLUE, MAKE MY PULSE JUMP EVERY TIME I SEE  
THEM, JUST AS THEY DO YOURS.

WHEN I THINK BACK TO MY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION, I  
REMEMBER ALL THE EXCITEMENT, THE THRILL OF RECEIVING MY  
DIPLOMA, AND THE TINGE OF SADNESS THAT A HIGH SCHOOL  
STUDENT FEELS WHEN HE REALIZES THAT HE PROBABLY WON'T




BE SEEING MUCH OF MANY OF THE PEOPLE HE WENT TO SCHOOL WITH FROM THAT TIME FORWARD.

BUT ON COMMENCEMENT NIGHT, TOO, I RECALL THAT MOST OF MY CLASSMATES WERE THINKING ABOUT THE FUN THEY WERE GOING TO HAVE AFTER THE CEREMONY. THEY WERE HARDLY TINGLING WITH EXCITEMENT OVER WHAT THE SPEAKER OF THE EVENING MIGHT SAY. IF THEY TALKED AT ALL ABOUT THE COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS THEY WERE ABOUT TO HEAR, IT WAS TO WHISPER: "I SURE HOPE HE DOESN'T TALK TOO LONG."

I DO HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU TONIGHT, AND I THINK IT'S ONE YOU WILL WANT TO HEAR--BUT I, TOO, HOPE IT WON'T TAKE VERY LONG TO DELIVER IT.

YOUR NATURAL ITCHINESS TO BE OUT AND DOING REMINDS ME OF AN EXPERIENCE ANOTHER CONGRESSMAN HAD JUST THIS LAST



MEMORIAL DAY. HE WAS TO BE THE MAIN SPEAKER AT MEMORIAL DAY SERVICES IN HIS HOME TOWN. WHEN HE ARRIVED AT THE PLACE FOR THE CEREMONY, THE PROGRAM CHAIRMAN HANDED HIM A NOTE. THE NOTE SAID: "OUR MEMORIAL DAY PROGRAM INCLUDES A TALK BY THE MAYOR, A RECITATION BY A STUDENT, YOUR SPEECH AND THEN THE FIRING SQUAD."

I HOPE WHAT I HAVE TO SAY TO YOU THIS EVENING DOES NOT PROMPT YOU TO SAY, "HE SHOULD BE SHOT AT SUNRISE."

THIS IS A GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY CLASS. YOU 253 GRADUATING SENIORS HAVE THE DISTINCTION OF BELONGING TO THE 50TH CLASS TO BE GRADUATED FROM SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL.

THIS IS SO VERY APPROPRIATE, BECAUSE NOT ONLY IS YOUR SENIOR YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL A GOLDEN YEAR WHICH WILL SHINE





FOREVER IN YOUR MEMORY BUT YOU ARE ENTERING UPON A GOLDEN AGE IN HISTORY.

IT IS A GOLDEN AGE FOR YOU BECAUSE IT IS NEW-MINTED WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR THOSE JUST BEGINNING THEIR CAREERS AND IT IS A GOLDEN AGE FOR YOU BECAUSE IT IS THE AGE OF YOUTH IN AMERICA.

SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE DECIDED SOME TIME AGO WHAT YOU WANT OUT OF LIFE WHILE OTHERS ARE STILL ASKING THEMSELVES, "WHAT DO I WANT TO BE?"

SOMETIMES, OF COURSE, THE WHEELS TURN AND A MAN WINDS UP IN A JOB HE NEVER EVEN DREAMED ABOUT AS A BOY.

FOR INSTANCE, THERE'S THE FELLOW WHO CAME BACK TO HIS HOME TOWN AFTER BEING GONE FOR 25 YEARS AND ASKED ONE OF



THE NATIVES ABOUT A CLASSMATE OF HIS.

"YOU MEAN JIM BROWN, THAT KID WHO WAS GOING TO MAKE A MILLION?"

"YES, WHATEVER HAPPENED TO HIM?"

"WELL," SAID THE NATIVE, "JIM HAD A GAS STATION FOR A WHILE BUT IT WENT BROKE. THEN HE ATTENDED ACCOUNTING SCHOOL BUT HE COULDN'T MAKE A LIVING AT THAT. SO HE WENT BACK TO SCHOOL AND STUDIED LAW BUT HE FAILED AT THAT, TOO."

"GOLLY, THAT'S TOO BAD." THE RETURNEE SAID. "JIM WAS QUITE A GUY, VERY POPULAR. I'M SORRY TO HEAR HE'S SUCH A FAILURE."



"FAILURE, MY FOOT," THE OLDTIMER EXCLAIMED. "HE'S OUR CONGRESSMAN, NOW."

SO, YOU SEE, YOU DON'T ALWAYS KNOW HOW THINGS ARE GOING TO TURN OUT FOR YOU.

BUT I DO KNOW THIS--YOU YOUNG PEOPLE ARE TREMENDOUSLY FORTUNATE BECAUSE THERE IS SO MUCH MORE POTENTIAL IN YOUR WORLD, SO MUCH MORE <sup>hope and expectation</sup> CHALLENGE THAN THERE WAS IN MY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION WORLD OF 35 YEARS AGO.

THERE IS A SLANG EXPRESSION THAT GOES: "YOU'VE GOT IT MADE."

I DON'T KNOW IF ANYONE REALLY EVER HAS IT MADE, BUT IF ANYONE DOES THEN IT IS YOU YOUNG PEOPLE.



I HAVE A KIND OF SECRET AND I'M ALMOST AFRAID TO TELL IT TO YOU. IT'S ONLY A SECRET FOR YOU BECAUSE I DON'T THINK YOU KNOW IT. BUT, BELIEVE ME, THE POLITICIANS KNOW IT AND IT IS THIS. YOU YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE THE POWER *now & in the future.*

I DON'T MEAN YOU HAVE THE POWER TO JUMP AND RUN WHERE WE OLD PEOPLE BEGIN PUFFING AFTER WE CLIMB A LONG FLIGHT OF STAIRS. I MEAN YOU SOON WILL HAVE THE POWER TO PRETTY MUCH RUN THIS COUNTRY. YOU WILL HAVE THE VOTING POWER TO MAKE GOVERNMENTS--LOCAL, STATE AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT--DO WHAT YOU WANT IF YOU USE THAT POWER.

*simple mathematics -*

THE REASON IS ~~THAT~~ *have the potential to take over* THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY ~~ARE TAKING OVER.~~ RIGHT NOW HALF OF THE POPULATION OF





THIS COUNTRY IS UNDER 25 YEARS OF AGE. BY 1970, THREE  
OUT OF FIVE AMERICANS WILL BE LESS THAN 25 YEARS OLD.  
BY 1970, OURS WILL BE THE YOUNGEST COUNTRY IN THE FREE  
WORLD.

THAT MEANS THE POLITICIANS <sup>must</sup> ~~ARE GOING TO HAVE TO~~  
<sup>they have no choice</sup>  
LISTEN TO YOU--AND THEY SHOULD.

THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN MUCH TALK ABOUT THE WISDOM OF  
AGE. THERE IS, OF COURSE, SOME TRUTH IN THIS BECAUSE A





MAN LEARNS FROM EXPERIENCE AND HE DRAWS UPON THAT EXPERIENCE AS HE SEEKS TO SOLVE NEW PROBLEMS.

BUT I HAVE BEEN LITERALLY AMAZED IN TALKING WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF 1966 TO FIND OUT HOW MUCH MORE THEY KNOW THAN PEOPLE THEIR AGE DID WHEN I WAS A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT. IT ISN'T SIMPLY THAT THERE HAS BEEN A KNOWLEDGE EXPLOSION. WE KNOW THAT IS SO IN THIS AGE OF THE ATOM, THE MISSILE, AND THE MOON ROCKET. BUT WE KNOW, TOO, THAT TODAY'S YOUNG PERSON IS EAGER AND ALERT AND BURNING TO LEARN.

THE SKY IS NO LONGER THE LIMIT. YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY HAVE NO BOUNDARIES, NO LIMITATIONS ON WHAT THEY CAN LEARN AND WHAT THEY CAN DO.

YOU HAVE THE POWER. YOU HAVE PHYSICAL POWER BECAUSE YOU ARE YOUNG; THE YOUNG NOW HAVE THE VOTING POWER; AND

THERE ARE NO LIMITS TO WHAT YOU CAN DO.

I SAID THAT A LITTLE BIT TOO <sup>too hurriedly</sup> ~~FAST~~. THERE ARE LIMITS,  
BECAUSE WITH POWER COMES RESPONSIBILITY.

IF YOU ARE 18 OR 19 YEARS YOUNG AND YOU FEEL AS THOUGH  
YOU CAN NEVER DIE, IT IS A GLORIOUS FEELING. BUT YOU MUST  
HOLD YOURSELF IN OR YOU WILL WASTE YOURSELF, DESTROY  
YOURSELF IN MEANINGLESS ACTIVITY.

IT'S FINE TO HAVE FUN, BUT HAVING FUN IS NOT THE BE-ALL  
AND END-ALL OF LIFE.

YOU MUST SET A GOAL FOR YOURSELF--TO BECOME ALL THAT  
YOU ARE CAPABLE OF BECOMING--AND THE FUN WILL TAKE CARE  
OF ITSELF.

THE MOST DIFFICULT TASK EVERYONE IN THIS WORLD FACES



IS THAT OF SELF-CONTROL.

YOU ENCOUNTER FRUSTRATIONS AND YOU WANT TO SMASH THINGS. IF YOU YIELD TO THAT IMPULSE, YOU SMASH NOT ONLY PHYSICAL OBJECTS OR OTHER PEOPLE BUT ALSO YOURSELF. THE SELF-DISCIPLINED PERSON MAY GET THE IMPULSE TO TRAMPLE OTHERS UNDERFOOT, BUT HE DOES NOT ACT ON IT. HE SEEKS OTHER MEANS OF GAINING HIS OBJECTIVE.

THOSE OF YOU WHO FEEL YOU HAVE A SPECIAL HANDICAP SHOULD NOT DESPAIR. SOME PEOPLE HAVE NOT LEARNED TO VALUE A MAN FOR WHAT HE IS. SOME PEOPLE STILL USE OUTMODED STANDARDS BASED ON BIAS OR UGLY PREJUDICE. BUT THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH, GIVING WAY TO THE NEW.

A NEW MORALITY IS DEVELOPING IN THIS COUNTRY IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RELATIONS.




THERE IS A NEW MORAL SENSE IN THE NATION, AND IT IS GROWING AS SURELY AS I AM STANDING HERE.

IT IS THE NEW MORALITY THAT PRODUCED THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACTS OF 1958, 1960 AND 1964 AND THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965. IT IS THE NEW MORALITY THAT MAKES AMERICA CRY OUT IN HORROR AND INDIGNATION WHEN ANY ONE INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP VIOLATES THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS. WE ALL CONDEMN THE SELF-APPOINTED GUNMEN OR ANY IRRESPONSIBLE MOB ACTION AGAINST THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS.

SOON, WE HOPE, THE NEW MORALITY WILL BE SO STRONG THAT RACIAL RADICALS ON BOTH SIDES WILL SHRINK FROM VIOLENCE.

ONE PRECEPT WE MUST ALWAYS REMEMBER. LAWLESS DISREGARD FOR THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS IS WRONG <sup>*-totally wrong*</sup> THIS IS TRUE WHETHER






THE LAW IS BROKEN IN DENIAL OF EQUAL RIGHTS OR IN PURSUIT  
OF EQUAL RIGHTS.

THERE IS A GREAT NEED IN AMERICA TODAY--A NEED FOR  
SELF-DISCIPLINE AND A NEW MORAL CLIMATE AT ONE AND THE  
SAME TIME, A NEED FOR EVERY PERSON TO SEE HIMSELF AS PART  
OF HUMANITY AND TO LIVE HIS LIFE IN COMPASSION FOR HIS  
FELLOW<sup>MAN</sup>, IN DEVOTION TO JUSTICE.

AS JOHN DONNE SAID: "NO MAN IS AN ISLAND, ENTIRE OF  
ITSELF; ...ANY MAN'S DEATH DIMINISHES ME, BECAUSE I AM  
INVOLVED IN MANKIND; AND THEREFORE NEVER SEND TO KNOW  
FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS; IT TOLLS FOR THEE."

YOU ARE THE COMMUNITY LEADERS OF TOMORROW; YOU ARE  
THE YOUNG, THE POWERFUL. MAKE YOUR POWER FELT IN THE  
CAUSE OF JUSTICE, IN SERVICE TO OTHERS.





ASK YOURSELF WHAT LIFE MEANS TO YOU. IS IT IMPORTANT TO BE "HIP?" OR IS IT IMPORTANT TO DO SOMETHING WORTHWHILE WITH YOUR LIFE?

YOUR TEACHERS HERE AT SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL HAVE TRIED TO TEACH YOU TO THINK FOR YOURSELF. THIS IS VITAL IF YOU ARE TO BE A PERSON WHO COUNTS FOR SOMETHING.

I DON'T MEAN YOU SHOULD NEVER THINK LIKE OTHER PEOPLE. I MEAN YOU SHOULD NEITHER BE A KOOK WHO PRIDES HIMSELF ON BEING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS NOR BE A SHEEP WHO FOLLOWS OTHERS BLINDLY.


THEODORE ROOSEVELT WAS A GREAT INDIVIDUALIST, AN ADVOCATE OF THE STRENUOUS LIFE AND A BELIEVER IN THE FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT.



HE SUMMED UP HIS PHILOSOPHY IN JUST A FEW WORDS, AND  
HERE THEY ARE FOR YOU TO THINK ABOUT:

"IT IS NOT THE CRITIC WHO COUNTS, NOT THE MAN WHO  
POINTS OUT HOW THE STRONG MAN STUMBLED, OR WHERE THE DOER  
OF DEEDS COULD HAVE DONE THEM BETTER.

"THE CREDIT BELONGS TO THE MAN WHO IS ACTUALLY IN THE  
ARENA; WHOSE FACE IS MARRED BY DUST AND SWEAT AND BLOOD;  
WHO STRIVES VALIANTLY; WHO ERRS AND COMES SHORT AGAIN AND  
AGAIN; WHO KNOWS THE GREAT ENTHUSIASMS, THE GREAT DEVOTIONS;  
WHO SPENDS HIMSELF IN A WORTHY CAUSE; WHO, AT THE BEST,  
KNOWS IN THE END THE TRIUMPH OF HIGH ACHIEVEMENT; AND WHO,  
AT THE WORST, IF HE FAILS, AT LEAST FAILS WHILE DARING  
GREATLY."



THIS IS WHAT I ASK OF YOU--THAT YOU SHOULD DARE GREATLY IN THIS ONE LIFE YOU HAVE TO LIVE. SO LIVE THAT YOU CAN BE PROUD OF YOURSELF, CAN HOLD UP YOUR HEAD AND SEE THE SKY.

THIS IS THE FOURTH SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATING CLASS I HAVE SPOKEN TO AT COMMENCEMENT TIME. I FEEL SURE IT IS ONE OF THE BEST, BOTH IN LOOKS AND ABILITY.

UNLIKE SOME POLITICIANS, I AM GOING TO MAKE GOOD ON THE PROMISE I MADE ~~YOU~~ AT THE BEGINNING ~~OF MY TALK~~--NOT TO TALK TOO LONG.

I WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE YOU WITH THIS MESSAGE.

"IF THERE IS RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE HEART, THERE WILL BE BEAUTY IN THE CHARACTER.



IF THERE BE BEAUTY IN THE CHARACTER. THERE WILL BE  
HARMONY IN THE HOUSE.

IF THERE IS HARMONY IN THE HOUSE. THERE WILL BE ORDER  
IN THE NATION.

WHEN THERE IS ORDER IN THE NATION. THERE WILL BE PEACE  
IN THE WORLD."

-----THANK YOU----- *Congratulations - Good Luck - God bless you*

--END--





*Plz Return*

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS by REP. GERALD R. FORD at SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL, GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.

JUNE 16, 1966

One of the things I love about America is that it's pretty sentimental. So I don't feel at all embarrassed about saying that I feel a tug at my heartstrings whenever I come here to talk to South High School students.

I was graduated from South High School in 1931, and you can be sure the old school colors, the glory of the Red and the Blue, make my pulse jump every time I see them, just as they do yours.

When I think back to my high school graduation, I remember all the excitement, the thrill of receiving my diploma, and the tinge of sadness that a high school student feels when he realizes that he probably won't be seeing much of many of the people he went to school with from that time forward.

But on commencement night, too, I recall that most of my classmates were thinking about the fun they were going to have after the ceremony. They were hardly tingling with excitement over what the speaker of the evening might say. If they talked at all about the commencement address they were about to hear, it was to whisper: "I sure hope he doesn't talk too long."

I do have a message for you tonight, and I think it's one you will want to hear--but I, too, hope it won't take very long to deliver it.

Your natural itchiness to be out and doing reminds me of an experience another congressman had just this last Memorial Day. He was to be the main speaker at Memorial Day services in his home town. When he arrived at the place for the ceremony, the program chairman handed him a note. The note said: "Our Memorial Day program includes a talk by the mayor, a recitation by a student, your speech and then the firing squad."

I hope what I have to say to you this evening does not prompt you to say, "He should be shot at sunrise."

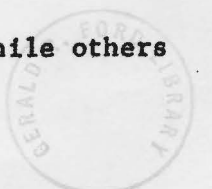
This is a golden anniversary class. You 253 graduating seniors have the distinction of belonging to the 50th class to be graduated from South High School.

This is so very appropriate, because not only is your senior year in high school a golden year which will shine forever in your memory but you are entering upon a golden age in history.

It is a golden age for you because it is new-minted with opportunities for those beginning their careers, and it is a golden age for you because it is the age of youth in America.

Some of you may have decided some time ago what you want out of life while others are still asking themselves, "What do I want to be?"

(MORE)





Sometimes, of course, the wheels turn and a man winds up in a job he never even dreamed about as a boy.

For instance, there's the fellow who came back to his home town after being gone for 25 years and asked one of the natives about a classmate of his.

"You mean Jim Brown, that kid who was going to make a million?"

"Yes, whatever happened to him?"

"Well," said the native, "Jim had a gas station for a while but it went broke. Then he attended accounting school but he couldn't make a living at that. So he went back to school and studied law but he failed at that, too."

"Golly, that's too bad," the returnee said. "Jim was quite a guy, very popular. I'm sorry to hear he's such a failure."

"Failure, my foot," the oldtimer exclaimed, "He's our congressman, now."

So, you see, you don't always know how things are going to turn out for you.

But I do know this--you young people are tremendously fortunate because there is so much more potential in your world, so much more challenge than there was in my high school graduation world of 35 years ago.

There is a slang expression that goes, "You've got it made." I don't know if anyone really ever has it made, but if anyone does then it is you young people.

I have a kind of secret, and I'm almost afraid to tell it to you. It's only a secret for you because I don't think you know it. But, believe me, the politicians know it and it is this: You young people have the power.

I don't mean you have the power to jump and run where we old people begin puffing after we climb a long flight of stairs. I mean you soon will have the power to pretty much run this country. You will have the voting power to make governments--local, state and the federal government--do what you want if you use that power.

The reason is that the young people in this country are taking over. Right now half of the population of this country is under 25 years of age. By 1970, three out of five Americans will be less than 25 years old. By 1970, ours will be the youngest country in the Free World.

That means the politicians are going to have to listen to you--and they should.

There has always been ~~much~~ talk about the wisdom of age. There is, of course, some truth in this because a man learns from experience and he draws upon that experience as he seeks to solve new problems.

But I have been literally amazed in talking with the young people of 1966 to find out how much more they know than people their age did when I was a high school student. It isn't simply that there has been a knowledge explosion. We know that is so in this age of the atom, the missile, and the moon rocket. But we know, too, that today's young person is eager and alert and burning to learn.

(MORE)

The sky is no longer the limit. Young people today have no boundaries, no limitations on what they can learn and what they can do.

You have the power. You have the physical power because you are young; the young now have the voting power; and there are no limits to what you can do.

I said that a little bit too fast. There are limits--because with power comes responsibility.

If you are 18 or 19 years young and you feel as though you can never die, it is a glorious feeling. But you must hold yourself in or you will waste yourself, destroy yourself in meaningless activity.

It's fine to have fun, but having fun is not the be-all and end-all of life.

You must set a goal for yourself--to become all that you are capable of becoming--and the fun will take care of itself.

The most difficult task everyone in this world faces is that of self-control. You encounter frustrations and you want to smash things. If you yield to that impulse, you smash not only physical objects or other people but also yourself. The self-disciplined person may get the impulse to trample others underfoot, but he does not act on it. He seeks other means of gaining his objective.

Those of you who feel you have a special handicap should not despair. Some people have not learned to value a man for what he is. Some people still use outmoded standards based on bias or ugly prejudice. But the old order changeth, giving way to the new.

A New Morality is developing in this country in the field of human relations. There is a new moral sense in the nation, and it is growing as surely as I am standing here.

It is the New Morality that produced the Civil Rights Acts of 1958, 1960 and 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. It is the New Morality that makes America cry out in horror and indignation when any one individual or group violates the rights of others. We all condemn the self-appointed gunmen or any irresponsible mob action against the rights of others.

Soon, we hope, the New Morality will be so strong that racial radicals on both sides will shrink from violence.

One precept we must always remember. Lawless disregard for the rights of others is wrong. This is true whether the law is broken in denial of equal rights or in pursuit of equal rights.

There is a great need in America today--a need for self-discipline and a new moral climate at one and the same time, a need for every person to see himself as part of humanity and to live his life in compassion for his fellow, in devotion to justice.

(MORE)

As John Donne said: "No man is an island, entire of itself; ...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

You are the community leaders of tomorrow; you are the young, the powerful. Make your power felt in the cause of justice, in service to others.

Ask yourself what life means to you. Is it important to be "hip?" Or is it important to do something worthwhile with your life?

Your teachers here at South High School have tried to teach you to think for yourself. This is vital if you are to be a person who counts for something.

I don't mean you should never think like other people. I mean you should neither be a kook who prides himself on being completely different from others nor be a sheep who follows others blindly.

Theodore Roosevelt was a great individualist, an advocate of the strenuous life and a believer in the fight for the right.

He summed up his philosophy in just a few words, and here they are for you to think about:

"It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better.

"The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly."

This is what I ask of you--that you should dare greatly in this one life you have to live. So live that you can be proud of yourself, can hold up your head and see the sky.

This is the fourth South High School graduating class I have spoken to at commencement time. I feel sure it is one of the best, both in looks and ability.

Unlike some politicians, I am going to make good on the promise I made you at the beginning of my talk--not to talk too long.

I would like to leave you with this message:

"If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character.

If there be beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the house.

If there is harmony in the house, there will be order in the nation.

When there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world."

----Thank you----





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Those of you who feel you have a special handicap should not despair. Some people have not learned to value a man for what he is. Some people still use outmoded standards based on bias or ugly prejudice. But the old order changeth, giving way to the new.

A New Morality is developing in this country in the field of human relations. There is a new moral sense in the nation, and it is growing as surely as I am standing here.

It is the New Morality that produced the Civil Rights Acts of 1958, 1960 and 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. It is the New Morality that makes America cry out in horror and indignation when any one individual or group violates the rights of others. We all condemn the self-appointed gunmen or any irresponsible mob action against the rights of others.

Soon, we hope, the New Morality will be so strong that racial radicals on both sides will shrink from violence.

One precept we must always remember. Lawless disregard for the rights of others is wrong. This is true whether the law is broken in denial of equal rights or in pursuit of equal rights.

There is a great need in America today--a need for self-discipline and a new moral climate at one and the same time, a need for every person to see himself as part of humanity and to live his life in compassion for his fellow, in devotion to justice.

(MORE)

As John Donne said: "No man is an island, entire of itself; ...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

You are the community leaders of tomorrow; you are the young, the powerful. Make your power felt in the cause of justice, in service to others.

Ask yourself what life means to you. Is it important to be "hip?" Or is it important to do something worthwhile with your life?

Your teachers here at South High School have tried to teach you to think for yourself. This is vital if you are to be a person who counts for something.

I don't mean you should never think like other people. I mean you should neither be a kook who prides himself on being completely different from others nor be a sheep who follows others blindly.

Theodore Roosevelt was a great individualist, an advocate of the strenuous life and a believer in the fight for the right.

He summed up his philosophy in just a few words, and here they are for you to think about:

"It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better.

"The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly."

This is what I ask of you--that you should dare greatly in this one life you have to live. So live that you can be proud of yourself, can hold up your head and see the sky.

This is the fourth South High School graduating class I have spoken to at commencement time. I feel sure it is one of the best, both in looks and ability.

Unlike some politicians, I am going to make good on the promise I made you at the beginning of my talk--not to talk too long.

I would like to leave you with this message:

"If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character.

If there be beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the house.

If there is harmony in the house, there will be order in the nation.

When there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world."

----Thank you----