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Office of the Vice President
Washington, D. C.

REMARKS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE
NATIONAL REPUBLICAN HERITAGE GROUPS COUNCIL LUNCHEON
MAYFLOWER HOTEL
WASHINGTON, D. C.

May 15, 1975

Walt Whitman said it best a hundred years ago: The United States of America is a nation of nations, born of immigrants, built by immigrants, fought for by immigrants, and beloved by its immigrant sons and daughters -- and all of us descended from them.

If this were not a Nation of refugees, political refugees, economic refugees, religious refugees, none of you would be out there today, and I would not be up here. This is a particularly important time to remember what we are, and from whence we came. It is an important time to remember it as members of our Party and as citizens of this Country.

Now, a new group of refugees is arriving on our shores -- the Vietnamese. Measured by past tidal waves of immigration to this Country, they are a trickle, about as many arrivals as would have passed through Ellis Island in a month, 60 years ago.

Nothing should make us prouder as Americans than the help and the hope held out to these people by the President of the United States. Nothing should make us prouder than the positive actions of the Congress of the United States towards these latest seekers of freedom. Nothing more truly reflects this Nation's character than those Americans who have said, as you arrive here today, so did our parents, our grandparents and our great grandparents arrive here filled with their hopes, too. And so we say, "Welcome to America".

Yes, we can understand the fears and the resistance toward newcomers that surface especially in a period of economic distress. That can happen with any people. But, it is the spirit of helping, of caring, of compassion, of sharing that has traditionally characterized the American people. And we see this spirit alive today in the thousands of offers, to help find jobs, to help find homes, to help build new lives for these latest arrivals. In their turn, they will help make America a better land, just as our forebears did.

Let us never forget, the Statue of Liberty carries a torch of freedom, not a stop sign. The words inscribed on her pedestal read "give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free". And, if that torch were ever to go out, something noble and beautiful and unique about America would go out, too.

We became a great Nation because we held the door open wide to a new life -- and to fresh opportunity for millions. We would not have become a great Nation if we had followed a policy of rigid exclusion towards others. And there is a priceless lesson for the Republican Party in America's ethnic experience. The Republican Party must also hold the door open wide to a broad range of Americans. People of widely differing backgrounds must feel they can find a home for their hopes, concern for their problems, commitment for their strivings, within the Republican Party.

A monolithic viewpoint is simply a luxury that the Republican Party cannot afford, not if we want to continue to lead America and serve the people. And we do expect to continue to lead America and to serve the people. The Republican Party must derive its strength from diversity, just as the Nation does. Our strength is that we are many peoples, while, at the same time, we are, one Nation, indivisible, a living symbol of liberty, justice and opportunity for all.

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