

Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908-1973)

Remarks Before the National Convention Upon Accepting the Nomination

given on August 27, 1964

Chairman McCormack, my fellow Americans:

I accept your nomination.

I accept the duty of leading this party to victory this year.

And I thank you, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for placing at my side the man that last night you so wisely
5 selected to be the next Vice President of the United States.

I know I speak for each of you and all of you when I say he proved himself tonight in that great acceptance speech.
And I speak for both of us when I tell you that from Monday on he is going to be available for such speeches in all 50
States!

We will try to lead you as we were led by that great champion of freedom, the man from Independence, Harry S.
10 Truman.

But the gladness of this high occasion cannot mask the sorrow which shares our hearts. So let us here tonight, each of
us, all of us, rededicate ourselves to keeping burning the golden torch of promise which John Fitzgerald Kennedy set
aflame.

And let none of us stop to rest until we have written into the law of the land all the suggestions that made up the John
15 Fitzgerald Kennedy program. And then let us continue to supplement that program with the kind of laws that he would
have us write.

Tonight we offer ourselves--on our record and by our platform--as a party for all Americans, an all-American party for
all Americans. This prosperous people, this land of reasonable men, has no place for petty partisanship or peevish
prejudice. The needs of all can never be met by parties of the few. The needs of all cannot be met by a business party
20 or a labor party, not by a war party or a peace party, not by a southern party or a northern party.

Our deeds will meet our needs only if we are served by a party which serves all our people.

We are members together of such a party, the Democratic Party of 1964.

We have written a proud record of accomplishments for all Americans.

If any ask what we have done, just let them look at what we promised to do. For those promises have become our
25 deeds. And the promises of tonight I can assure you will become the deeds of tomorrow.

We are in the midst of the largest and the longest period of peacetime prosperity in our history. And almost every
American listening to us tonight has seen the results in his own life.

But prosperity for most has not brought prosperity to all. And those who have received the bounty of this land--who
sit tonight secure in affluence and safe in power--must not now turn from the needs of their neighbors.

30 Our party and our Nation will continue to extend the hand of compassion and the hand of affection and love to the old
and the sick and the hungry. For who among us dares to betray the command: "Thou shalt open thine hand--unto thy
brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land."

The needs that we seek to fill, the hopes that we seek to realize, are not our needs, our hopes alone. They are the needs
and hopes of most of the people.

35 Most Americans want medical care for older citizens. And so do I.

Most Americans want fair and stable prices and decent incomes for our farmers. And so do I.

Most Americans want a decent home in a decent neighborhood for all. And so do I.

Most Americans want an education for every child to the limit of his ability. And so do I.

Most Americans want a job for every man who wants to work. And so do I.

40 Most Americans want victory in our war against poverty. And so do I.

Most Americans want continually expanding and growing prosperity. And so do I.

These are your goals. These are our goals. These are the goals and will be the achievements of the Democratic Party. These are the goals of this great, rich Nation. These are the goals toward which I will lead, if the American people choose to follow.

45 For 30 years, year by year, step by step, vote by vote, men of both parties have built a solid foundation for our present prosperity. Too many have worked too long and too hard to see this threatened now by policies which promise to undo all that we have done together over all these years.

I believe most of the men and women in this hall tonight, and I believe most Americans, understand that to reach our goals in our own land, we must work for peace among all lands.

50 America's cause is still the cause of all mankind.

Over the last 4 years the world has begun to respond to a simple American belief: the belief that strength and courage and responsibility are the keys to peace.

Since 1961, under the leadership of that great President, John F. Kennedy, we have carried out the greatest peacetime buildup of national strength of any nation at any time in the history of the world.

55 I report tonight that we have spent \$30 billion more on preparing this Nation in the

4 years of the Kennedy administration than would have been spent if we had followed the appropriations of the last year of the previous administration.

I report tonight as President of the United States and as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces on the strength of your country, and I tell you that it is greater than any adversary. I assure you that it is greater than the combined might
60 of all the nations, in all the wars, in all the history of this planet. And I report our superiority is growing.

Weapons do not make peace. Men make peace. And peace comes not through strength alone, but through wisdom and patience and restraint.

And these qualities under the leadership of President Kennedy brought a treaty banning nuclear tests in the atmosphere. And a hundred other nations in the world joined us.

65 Other agreements were reached and other steps were taken. And their single guide was to lessen the danger to men without increasing the danger to freedom.

Their single purpose was peace in the world.

And as a result of these policies, the world tonight knows where we stand and our allies know where we stand, too. And our adversaries have learned again that we will never waver in the defense of freedom.

70 The true courage of this nuclear age lies in the quest for peace.

There is no place in today's world for weakness. But there is also no place in today's world for recklessness. We cannot act rashly with the nuclear weapons that could destroy us all. The only course is to press with all our mind and all our will to make sure, doubly sure, that these weapons are never really used at all.

This is a dangerous and a difficult world in which we live tonight. I promise no easy answers. But I do promise this. I
75 pledge the firmness to defend freedom, the strength to support that firmness, and a constant, patient effort to move the world toward peace instead of war.

And here at home one of our greatest responsibilities is to assure fair play for all of our people.

Every American has the right to be treated as a 'person. He should be able to find a job. He should be able to educate his children, he should be able to vote in elections and he should be judged on his merits as a person.

80 Well, this is the fixed policy and the fixed determination of the Democratic Party and the United States of America.

So long as I am your President I intend to carry out what the Constitution demands--and justice requires--equal justice under law for all Americans.

We cannot and we will not allow this great purpose to be endangered by reckless acts of violence. Those who break the law--those who create disorder--whether in the North or the South--must be caught and must be brought to justice.

85 And I believe that every man and woman in this room tonight join me in saying that in every part of this country the law must be respected and violence must be stopped.

And wherever a local officer seeks help or Federal law is broken, I have pledged and I will use the full resources of the Federal Government.

Let no one tell you that he can hold back progress and at the same time keep the peace. This is a false and empty
90 promise. To stand in the way of orderly progress is to encourage violence.

And I say tonight to those who wish us well--and to those who wish us ill--the growing forces in this country are the forces of common human decency, and not the forces of bigotry and fear and smear.

Our problems are many and are great. But our opportunities are even greater.

And let me make this clear. I ask the American people for a mandate--not to preside over a finished program--not just
95 to keep things going, I ask the American people for a mandate to begin.

This Nation--this generation--in this hour, has man's first chance to build the Great Society--a place where the meaning of man's life matches the marvels of man's labor.

We seek a nation where every man can find reward in work and satisfaction in the use of his talents. We seek a nation where every man can seek knowledge, and touch beauty, and rejoice in the closeness of family and community.

100 We seek a nation where every man can, in the words of our oldest promise, follow the pursuit of happiness--not just security-but achievements and excellence and fulfillment of the spirit.

So let us join together in this great task.

Will you join me tonight in rebuilding our cities to make them a decent place for our children to live in?

Will you join me tonight in starting a program that will protect the beauty of our land and the air that we breathe ?

105 Won't you join me tonight in starting a program that will give every child education of the highest quality that he can take?

So let us join together in giving every American the fullest life which he can hope for. For the ultimate test of our civilization, the ultimate test of our faithfulness to our past, is not in our goods and is not in our guns. It is in the quality--the quality of our people's lives and in the men and women that we produce.

110 This goal can be ours. We have the resources; we have the knowledge. But tonight we must seek the courage.

Because tonight the contest is the same that we have faced at every turning point in history. It is not between liberals and conservatives, it is not between party and party, or platform and platform. It is between courage and timidity. It is between those who have vision and those who see what can be, and those who want only to maintain the status quo. It is between those who welcome the future and those who turn away from its promises.

115 This is the true cause of freedom. The man who is hungry, who cannot find work or educate his children, who is bowed by want--that man is not fully free.

For more than 30 years, from social security to the war against poverty, we have diligently worked to enlarge the

freedom of man. And as a result, Americans tonight are freer to live as they want to live, to pursue their ambitions, to meet their desires, to raise their families than at any time in all of our glorious history.

120 And every American knows in his heart that this is right.

I am determined in all the time that is mine to use all the talents that I have for bringing this great, lovable land, this great Nation of ours, together--together in greater unity in pursuit of this common purpose. I truly believe that we someday will see an America that knows no North or South, no East or West--an America that is undivided by creed or color, and untorn by suspicion or strife.

125 The Founding Fathers dreamed America before it was. The pioneers dreamed of great cities on the wilderness that they crossed.

Our tomorrow is on its way. It can be a shape of darkness or it can be a thing of beauty. The choice is ours, it is yours, for it will be the dream that we dare to dream.

I know what kind of a dream Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman and John F. Kennedy would dream if
130 they were here tonight.

And I think that I know what kind of a dream you want to dream.

Tonight we of the Democratic Party confidently go before the people offering answers, not retreat; offering unity, not division; offering hope, not fear or smear.

We do offer the people a choice, a choice of continuing on the courageous and the compassionate course that has
135 made this Nation the strongest and the freest and the most prosperous and the most peaceful nation in the history of mankind.

To those who have sought to divide us they have only helped to unite us.

To those who would provoke us we have turned the other cheek.

So as we conclude our labors, let us tomorrow turn to our new task. Let us be on our way!
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