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# ELEMENTARY SPEECH PATRIOTIC ORATION



2013–2014 ACSI STUDENT ACTIVITIES

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**Please note:** In an effort to make our speech meet selections more current and more meaningful to students, we are soliciting submissions for possible inclusion in future materials selections. If you wish to submit a selection, please use the ACSI Elementary Speech Meet Materials Submission Form in either the coordinator's or chairperson's handbook.

## Introduction

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## Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl

Wednesday, 13 January 1943

Dear Kitty,

Everything has upset me again this morning, so I wasn't able to finish a single thing properly.

It is terrible outside. Day and night more of those poor miserable people are being dragged off, with nothing but a rucksack and a little money. On the way they are deprived even of those possessions. Families are torn apart, the men, women, and children all being separated. Children coming home from school find that their parents have disappeared. Women return from shopping to find their homes shut up and their families gone.

The Dutch people are anxious, too; their sons are being sent to Germany. Everyone is afraid. And every night hundreds of planes fly over Holland and go to German towns, where the earth is plowed up by their bombs, and every hour thousands and thousands of people are killed in Russia and Africa. No one is able to keep out of it; the whole globe is waging war; and although it is going better for the Allies, the end is not yet in sight.

And as for us, we are fortunate. Yes, we are luckier than millions of people. It is quiet and safe here; and we are, so to speak, living on capital. We are even so selfish as to talk about "after the war," brighten up at the thought of having new clothes and new shoes, whereas we really ought to save every penny, to help other people, and save what is left from the wreckage after the war.

The children here run about in just thin blouses and clogs; no coat, no hat, no stockings, and no one helps them. Their tummies are empty, they chew an old carrot to stay the pangs, go from their cold homes out into the cold street, and when they get to school, find themselves in an even colder classroom. Yes, it has even gotten so bad in Holland that countless children stop the passers-by and beg for a piece of bread. I could go on for hours about all the suffering the war has brought, but then I would only make myself more dejected. There is nothing we can do but wait calmly as we can till the misery comes to an end. Jews and Christians wait, the whole earth waits; and there are many who wait for death.

Yours, Anne

—by *Pocketbooks of New York*

## Antislavery Convention Address

*Angelina and Sarah Grimke, sisters from South Carolina who moved to Philadelphia and became Quakers, were active in the abolitionist movement and were frequent lecturers on the evils of slavery and the right of women to speak and work publicly for social issues. In 1836 Angelina Grimke (1805–1879) caused a furor with her widely distributed pamphlet **An Appeal to the Christian Women of the South**, which was burned in South Carolina. The building in which she addressed an antislavery convention in May 1838 was surrounded by an angry mob and pelted with stones during her speech and consumed by fire a few days later.*

National Antislavery Convention  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: May 16, 1838

Do you ask, "What has the North to do with slavery?" Hear it, hear it! Those voices without tell us that the spirit of slavery is here and has been roused to wrath by our conventions; for surely liberty would not foam and tear herself with rage, because her friends are multiplied daily, and meetings are held in quick succession to set forth her virtues and extend her peaceful kingdom. This opposition shows that slavery has done its deadliest work in the hearts of our citizens. Do you ask, then, "What has the North to do?" I answer, cast out first the spirit of slavery from your own hearts, and then lend your aid to

convert the South. Each one present has a work to do, be his or her situation what it may, however limited their means or insignificant their supposed influence. The great men of this country will not do this work; the church will never do it. A desire to please the world, to keep the favor of all parties and of all conditions, makes them dumb on this and every other unpopular subject.

As a Southerner, I feel that it is my duty to stand up here tonight and bear testimony against slavery. I have seen it! I have seen it! I know it has horrors that can never be described. I was brought up under its wing. I witnessed for many years its demoralizing influences and its destructiveness to human happiness. I have never seen a happy slave. I have seen him dance in his chains, it is true, but he was not happy. There is a wide difference between happiness and mirth. Man cannot enjoy happiness while his manhood is destroyed. Slaves, however, may be, and sometimes are mirthful. When hope is extinguished, they say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

What is a mob? What would the breaking of every window be? What would the leveling of this hall be? Any evidence that we are wrong, or that slavery is a good and wholesome institution? What if the mob should now burst in upon us, break up our meeting, and commit violence upon our persons? Would that be anything compared with what the slaves endured? No, no; and we do not remember them, "as bound with them," if we shrink in the time of peril, or feel unwilling to sacrifice ourselves, if need be, for their sake. I thank the Lord that there is yet life enough left to feel the truth, even though it rages at it; that conscience is not so completely seared as to be unmoved by the truth of the living God.

We often hear the question asked: "What shall we do?" Here is an opportunity. Every man and every woman present may do something, by showing that we fear not a mob, and in the midst of revilings and threatenings, pleading the cause of those who are ready to perish. Let me urge everyone to buy the books written on this subject; read them and lend them to your neighbors. Give your money no longer for things which pander to pride and lust, but aid in scattering "the living coals of truth upon the naked heart of the nation," in circulating appeals to the sympathies of Christians in behalf of the outraged slave.

It was remarked in England that women did much to abolish slavery in her colonies. Nor are they now idle. Numerous petitions from them have recently been presented to the queen to abolish apprenticeship, with its cruelties, nearly equal to those of the system whose place it supplies. One petition, two miles and a quarter long, has been presented. And do you think these labors will be in vain? Let the history of the past answer. When the women of these states send up to Congress such a petition, our legislators will arise, as did those of England, and say: "When all the maids and matrons of the land are knocking at our doors, we must legislate." Let the zeal and love, the faith and works of our English sisters quicken ours; that while the slaves continue to suffer, and when they shout for deliverance, we may feel the satisfaction of "having done what we could."

—Angelina Grimke  
*Great American Speeches*

## Apologia by Christopher Columbus

*In 1492, when he stepped upon the shore of the little Caribbean island of San Salvador, Christopher Columbus ushered in a new age of exploration and settlement the likes which the world had never seen. He also greatly contributed to the providential perspective of American history—a view that asserts the directing hand of almighty God—though the publication of his Book of Prophecies some ten years later. This short excerpt gives a glimpse of that perspective and captures the essence of the Admiral of the Ocean Seas' extraordinary worldview.*

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At a very early age I went to sea and have continued navigating until today. The art of sailing is favorable for anyone who wants to pursue knowledge of this world's secrets. I have already been at this business for forty years. I have sailed all the waters which up to now, have been navigated. I have had dealings and conversation with learned people—clergymen and laymen, Latins and Greeks, Jews and Moors, and with many others of other sects.

I found our Lord very well disposed toward this, my desire, and he gave me the spirit for it. He prospered me in seamanship and supplied me with the necessary tools of astronomy, as well as geometry and arithmetic and ingenuity of manual skill to draw spherical maps which show cities, rivers and mountains, islands and ports—everything in its proper place.

I have seen and put into study to look into all Scriptures, cosmography, histories, chronicles, philosophy, and other arts, which our Lord has opened to understanding, so that it became clear to me that it was feasible to navigate from here to the Indies; and He unlocked within me the determination to execute the idea. And I came to the Sovereigns of Castile and Aragon with this ardor. All those who heard about my enterprise rejected it with laughter, scoffing at me. Neither the sciences which I mentioned, nor the authoritative citations from them, were of any avail. In only the sovereigns remained faith and constancy. Who doubts that this illumination was from the Holy Spirit? I attest that He, with marvelous rays of light, consoled me through the holy and sacred Scriptures, a strong and clear testimony, with forty-four books of the Old Testament, and four Gospels with twenty-three Epistles of those blessed Apostles, encouraging me to proceed, and, continually, without ceasing for a moment, they inflame me with a sense of great urgency.

Our Lord wished to perform the clearest work of providence in this matter—the voyage to the Indies to console me and others in this matter of the Holy Temple: I have spent seven years in the royal court arguing the case with many persons of such authority and learned in all the arts, and in the end they concluded that all was idle nonsense, and with this they gave up the enterprise; yet the outcome was to be the fulfillment of what our Redeemer Jesus Christ said beforehand through the mouth of the prophets.

And so the prophesy has been made manifest.

—*The Patriot's Handbook*

## Benjamin Franklin Speaks

*Mr. President:*

The small progress we have made after four or five weeks' close attendance and continual reasonings with each other—our different sentiments on almost every question, several of the last producing as many noes as ayes is, methinks, a melancholy proof of the imperfection of the human understanding. We in-deed seem to feel our own want of political wisdom, since we have been running about in search of it. We have gone back to ancient history for models of government, and examined the different forms of those republics which, having been formed with the seeds of their own dissolution, no longer exist. And we have viewed modern states all round Europe, but find none of their Constitutions suitable to our circumstances.

In this situation of this Assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illumine our understanding? In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger we had daily prayer in this room for divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in

our favor. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful Friend? Or do we imagine that we no longer need His assistance?

I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that “except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it.” I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel. We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded; and we ourselves shall become a reproach and byword down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing governments by human wisdom, and leave it to chance, war, and conquest.

I, therefore, beg leave to move that, henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations be held in this assembly every morning as we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy in this city be requested to officiate in that service.

## The Declaration of Independence

*(Excerpts from Preamble and Conclusion)*

*On July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress, representing the thirteen original colonies of the United States, adopted a resolution unanimously declaring the colonies' independence from Great Britain. The document was penned by Thomas Jefferson.*

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### **PREAMBLE:**

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light

and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of government....

### **CONCLUSION:**

We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name and by the authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved; and that as free and independent States they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent States may of right do. And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.



## A Disappointed Woman

*Like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone (1818–1893) was a pioneering champion of women’s rights and was active as well in the temperance and abolitionist movements. Stone was well-known for her decision to retain her own name after marriage. She was a founder of the American Woman’s Suffrage Association and was editor of Boston’s Women’s Journal, assisted by her husband, Henry Brown Blackwell, and her daughter, Alice Stone Blackwell.*

*National Woman’s Rights Convention  
Cincinnati, Ohio; 1855*

The last speaker alluded to this movement as being that of a few disappointed women. From the first years to which my memory stretches, I have been a disappointed woman. When, with my brothers, I reached forth after the sources of my knowledge, I was reproved with “It isn’t fit for you; it doesn’t belong to women.” Then there was but one college in the world where women were admitted, and that was in Brazil. I would have found my way there, but by the time I was prepared to go, one was opened in the young state of Ohio—the first in the United States where women and Negroes could enjoy opportunities with white men. I was disappointed when I came to seek a profession worthy an immortal being— every employment was closed to me, except those of the teacher, the seamstress, and the housekeeper. In education, in marriage, in religion, in everything, disappointment is the lot of woman. It shall be the business of my life to deepen this disappointment in every woman’s heart until she bows down to it no longer. I wish that women, instead of being walking showcases, instead of begging of their fathers and brothers the latest and gayest new bonnet, would ask of them their rights.

The question of woman’s rights is a practical one. The notion has prevailed that it was only an ephemeral idea, that it was but women claiming the right to smoke cigars in the streets and to frequent bar-rooms. Others have supposed it a question of

comparative intellect; others still, of sphere. Too much has already been said and written about woman’s sphere. Trace all the doctrines to their source and they will be found to have no basis except in the usages and prejudices of the age. This is seen in the fact that what is tolerated in woman in one country is not tolerated in another. In this country women may hold prayer meetings, etcetera, but in Mohammedan countries it is written upon their mosques, “Women and dogs, and other impure animals, are not permitted to enter.” Wendel Phillips says, “The best and greatest thing one is capable of doing, that is his sphere.

I have confidence in the Father to believe that when He gives us the capacity to do anything He does not make a blunder. Leave women, then, to find their sphere. And do not tell us before we are born even, that our province is to cook dinners, darn stockings, and sew on buttons. We are told woman has all the rights she wants; and even women, I am ashamed to say, tell us so. They mistake the politeness of men for rights—seats while men stand in the hall tonight, and their adulations; but these are mere courtesies. We want rights. The flour merchant, the house builder, and the postman charge us no less on account of our sex; but when we endeavor to earn money to pay all these, then, indeed, we find the difference.... Women working in tailor shops are paid one third as much as men. Someone in Philadelphia has stated that women make fine shirts for twelve and a half cents apiece; that no woman can make more than nine a week, and the sum thus earned, after deducting rent, fuel, etcetera, leaves her just three and a half cents a day for bread. Female teachers in New York are paid fifty dollars a year, and for every such situation there are five hundred applicants. I know not what you believe of God, but I believe He gave yearnings and longings to be filled, and that He did not mean all our time should be devoted to feeding and clothing the body.

The present condition of woman causes a horrible perversion of the marriage relation. It is asked of a lady, “Has she married well?” “Oh yes, her husband

is rich." Woman must marry for a home, and you men are the sufferers by this; for a woman who loathes you may marry you because you have the means to get money which she cannot have. But when woman can enter the lists with you and make money for herself, she will marry you only for deep and earnest affection.

A woman undertook in Lowell to sell shoes to ladies. Men laughed at her, but in six years she has run them all out and has a monopoly of the trade. Sarah Tyndale, whose husband was an importer of china and died bankrupt, continued his business, paid off his debts, and has made a fortune and built the largest china warehouse in the world. Mrs. Tyndale, herself, drew the plan of her warehouse, and it is the

best plan ever drawn. A laborer to whom the architect showed it, said: "Don't she know e'en as much as some men?" I have seen a woman at manual labor turning out chair legs in a cabinet shop, with a dress short enough not to drag in the shavings. I wish other women would imitate her in this ... The widening of a woman's sphere is to improve her lot. Let us do it, and if the world scoff, let it scoff—if it sneer, let it sneer—but we will go on emulating the example of the sisters Grimke and Abby Kelley. When they first lectured against slavery they were not listened to as respectfully as you listen to us. So the first female physician meets many difficulties, but to the next the path will be made easy.

—Lucy Stone  
*Great American Speeches*

## Essays to Do Good by Cotton Mather

*One of the most brilliant and prolific of the early colonists, Cotton Mather was the scion of a prominent family of academics and clerics. His more than three hundred published works, spanning an astonishing array of subjects and disciplines, helped to establish the substantive cultural tenor of the Massachusetts colony. Perhaps his most famous book, *Essays to Do Good*, excerpted here, reiterated Governor Winthrop's call for America to be a beacon light of charity and grace to the world.*

Such glorious things are spoken in the oracles of our good God, concerning them who devise good, that a book of good devices may very reasonably demand attention and acceptance from them that have any impressions of the most reasonable religion upon them. I am devising such a book; but at the same time offering a sorrowful demonstration, that if men would set themselves to devise good, a world of good might be done, more than there is in this present evil world.

It is very sure the world has need enough. There needs abundance to be done, that the great God and His Christ may be more known and served in the world; and that the errors which are impediments to the acknowledgment wherewith men ought to

glorify their Creator and Redeemer may be rectified. There needs abundance to be done, that the evil manners of the world, by which men are drowned in perdition, may be reformed; and mankind rescued from the epidemical corruption and slavery which has overwhelmed it. There needs abundance to be done, that the miseries of the world may have remedies and abatements provided for them; and that miserable people may be relieved and comforted.

The world has according to the computation of some, above seven hundred millions of people now living in it. What an ample field among all these, to do good upon! In a word, the kingdom of God in the world, calls for innumerable services from us. To do such things is to do good. Those men devise good, who shape any devices to do things of such a tendency, whether the things be of a spiritual importance, or of a temporal.

You see, the general matter, appearing as yet, but as a chaos, which is to be wrought upon. Oh! that the good Spirit of God may now fall upon us, and carry on the glorious work which lies before us.

—*The Patriot's Handbook*

## A Father's Prayer

Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak, and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid; one who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble and gentle in victory.

Build me a son, whose wishes will not take the place of deeds; a son who will know Thee—and that to know himself is the foundation stone of knowledge.

Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort, but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here let him learn to stand up in the storm; here let him learn compassion for those who fail. Build me a son whose heart will be clear, whose

goal will be high, a son who will master himself before he seeks to master other men, one who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past.

And after all these things are his, add, I pray, enough of a sense of humor so that he may always be serious, yet never take himself too seriously. Give him humility so that he may always remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, and the meekness of true strength.

Then I, his father, will dare to whisper, "I have not lived in vain."

—General Douglas McArthur

## The Gettysburg Address

November 19, 1863

Four-score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here,

have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to the cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

—Abraham Lincoln

## **“Give Me Liberty, or Give Me Death!”** (1775 Address to the House)

MR. PRESIDENT: No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as the abilities of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and therefore, I hope that it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen, if, entertaining as I do, opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve. This is no time for ceremony. The question before the House is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery ... Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offence, I should consider myself as guilty of treason toward my country, and of an act of disloyalty towards the majesty of heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.

Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren, till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, the things, which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst and to provide for it ... If we wish to be free—if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending—if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained, we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left us!

They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance, by lying supinely on our backs, and hugging the delusive phantom of hope until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak, if we make proper use of the means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat, but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable—and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come!

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry peace—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!

—Patrick Henry

## I Have a Dream *(Excerpts)*

*Dr Martin Luther King, Jr, delivered this speech at the Lincoln Memorial, in Washington, DC, on August 28, 1963. He was speaking to a huge crowd of people who had marched into Washington in support of civil rights legislation.*

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I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood; I have a dream— . . . That my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character; I have a dream today. . . .

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, and rough places will be made plane and crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day ... This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning, "My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring," and if America is to be a great nation— this must become true.

So let freedom ring—from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire, let freedom ring; from the mighty mountains of New York, let freedom ring—from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania! Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado! Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California! But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia! Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring, and when this happens. . . .

When we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we are free at last!"

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Inaugural Address of John F. Kennedy *(Excerpt)*

In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe.

Now the trumpet summons us again—not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need—not as a call to battle, though embattled we are—but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, “rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation”—a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself.

Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, north and south, east and west, that can assure a more fruitful life for all mankind? Will you join in that historic effort?

In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation.

## Letter to Governor George Clinton

*George Washington*  
Valley Forge, 16 February, 1778

Dear Dear Sir:

It is with great reluctance I trouble you on a subject which does not properly fall within your province; but it is a subject that gives me more distress than I have felt since the commencement of the war; and which loudly demands the most zealous exertions of every person of weight and authority who is interested in the success of our affairs; I mean the present dreadful situation of the army, for want of provision, and the miserable prospects before us, with respect to the future.

It is more alarming than you will probably realize; for, to form a just idea of it, it were necessary to be

The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it—and the glow from that fire can truly light the world.

And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.

My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us here the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God’s work must truly be our own.

—*John F. Kennedy*  
*35th President of the United States (1961)*

on the spot. For some days past, there has been little less than a famine in camp. A part of the army has been a week without any kind of meat, and the rest three or four days. Naked and starving as they are, we cannot but admire the incomparable patience and fidelity of the soldiery, that they have not been, ere this, excited by their suffering to a general mutiny and dispersion. Strong symptoms, however, of discontent have appeared in particular instances; and nothing but the most active efforts, everywhere, can long avert so shocking a catastrophe.

Our present sufferings are not all. There is no foundation laid for any adequate relief hereafter. All the magazines provided in the state of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland, and all the immediate additional supplies they seem capable

of affording, will not be sufficient to support the army more than a month longer, if so long. Very little has been done at the eastward, and as little to the south-ward; and whatever we have a right to expect from those quarters must necessarily be very remote, and is, indeed, more precarious than could

be wished. When the before-mentioned supplies are exhausted, what a terrible crisis must ensue, unless all the energy of the Continent shall be exerted to provide a timely remedy!

—Open Court Publishing Company

## Men of Color, to Arms!

*Frederick Douglass, born a slave, escaped to the North at age nineteen and became involved in the antislavery movement. He became a great lecturer and an agent of the American Antislavery Society. During the Civil War he, and other black leaders, urged black men to enlist as soldiers in the Union Army. After the war, he assumed many political offices and advocated constitutional reform to grant equal citizenship rights regardless of race or color.*

By every consideration which binds you to your enslaved fellow-countrymen, and the peace and welfare of your country; by every aspiration which you cherish for the freedom and equality of yourselves and your children; by all the ties of blood and identity which make us one with the brave black men fighting our battles in Louisiana and in South Carolina, I urge you to fly to arms, and smite with death the power that would bury the government and your liberty in the same hopeless grave. I wish I could tell you that the state of New York calls you to this high honor. For the moment her constituted authorities are silent on the subject. They will speak by and by, and doubtless on the right side; but we are not compelled to wait for her. We can get at the throat of treason and slavery through the state of Massachusetts. She was first in the War of Independence; first to break the chains of her slaves; first to make the black man equal before the law; first to admit colored children to her common schools, and she was first to answer with her blood the alarm cry of the nation, when its capital was menaced by rebels.

Massachusetts now welcomes you to arms as soldiers. She has but a small colored population from which to recruit. She has full leave of the general government to send one regiment to the war, and she has undertaken to do it. Go quickly and help fill up the first colored regiment from the North. I am authorized to assure you that you will receive the same wages, the same rations, the same equipments, the same protection, the same treatment, and the same bounty, secured to the white soldiers. You will be led by able and skillful officers, men who will take especial pride in your efficiency and success. They will be quick to accord to you all the honor you shall merit by your valor, and see that your rights and feelings are respected by other soldiers. I have assured myself on these points and can speak with authority. More than twenty years of unswerving devotion to our common cause may give me some humble claim to be trusted at this momentous crisis. I will not argue. To do so implies hesitation and doubt, and you do not hesitate. You do not doubt. The day dawns; the morning star is bright upon the horizon! The iron gate of our prison stands half open. One gallant rush from the North will fling it wide open, while four millions of our brothers and sisters shall march out into liberty. The chance is now given you to end in a day the bondage of centuries, and to rise in one bound from social degradation to the plane of common equality with all other varieties of men.

—Frederick Douglass

## Motion for Prayers in the Convention

*Motion made June 28, 1787*

Mr. President,

... In this Situation of this Assembly, groping, as it were, in the dark to find Political Truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illuminate our Understandings? In the Beginning of the Contest with Britain, when we were sensible of Danger, we had daily prayers in this Room for the Divine Protection. Our Prayers, Sir, were heard; — and they were graciously answered. All of us, who were engaged in the Struggle, must have observed frequent Instances of a superintending Providence in our Favour. To that kind Providence we owe this happy Opportunity of Consulting in Peace on the means of establishing our future national Felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? or do we imagine we no longer need its assistance? I have lived, Sir, a long time; and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this Truth, that GOD governs in the Affairs of Men. And if a Sparrow cannot fall to the Ground without His Notice, is it

probable that an Empire can rise without His Aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the Sacred Writings that “except the Lord build the House, they labour in vain that build it.” I firmly believe this; and I also believe, that, without his concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political Building no better than the Builders of Babel; we shall be divided by our little, partial, local Interests, our Projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a Reproach and a Bye-word down to future Ages. And, what is worse, Mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate Instance, despair of establishing Government by human Wisdom, and leave it to Chance, War, and Conquest.

I therefore beg leave to move, That henceforth Prayers, imploring the Assistance of Heaven and its Blessing on our Deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to Business; and that one or more of the Clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that Service.

—by Benjamin Franklin

## On Women’s Rights

*Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) was born a slave in New York State and was emancipated by that state in 1828. She traveled throughout the North preaching religion, abolitionism, and women’s rights. In 1850 she attended the First National Women’s Rights Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts, and the following year she spoke at the Ohio Women’s Rights Convention. Her words were transcribed by Frances Gage, the convention’s organizer, and printed in the 1878 edition of the Narrative of Sojourner Truth.*

Ohio Women’s Rights Convention  
Akron, Ohio; 1851

Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that ‘twixt the Negroes of the South and the women at the

North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon.

But what’s all this here talking about? That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place. And ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm. I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me. And ain’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well. And ain’t I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen them most all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain’t I a woman?



Then they talk about this thing in the head; what's this they call it? ("Intellect," whispered someone near.) That's it honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or Negroes' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint and yours hold a quart wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little half-measure full?

Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a women. Where did your Christ come from?

Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again. And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.

Obliged to you for hearing on me, and now old Sojourner ain't got nothing more to say.

—Sojourner Truth  
*Great American Speeches*

## Robert C. Byrd

*On June 27, 1962, as a United States Senator from West Virginia, delivered a message in Congress just two days after the Supreme Court declared prayer in schools unconstitutional:*

Inasmuch as our greatest leaders have shown no doubt about God's proper place in the American birth-right, can we, in our day, dare do less? ...

In no other place in the United States are there so many, and such varied official evidences of deep abiding faith in God on the part of Government as there are in Washington ...

Every session of the House and the Senate begins with prayer. Each house has its own chaplain. The Eighty-third Congress set aside a small room in the Capitol, just off the rotunda, for the private prayer and meditation of members of Congress. The room is always open when Congress is in session, but it is not open to the public. The room's focal point is a stained glass window showing George Washington kneeling in prayer. Behind him is etched these words from Psalm 16: 1, "Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put my trust."

Inside the rotunda is a picture of the Pilgrims about to embark from Holland on the sister ship of the Mayflower, the Speedwell. The ship's revered

chaplain, Brewster, who later joined the Mayflower, has open on his lap the Bible. Very clear are the words, "the New Testament according to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." On the sail is the motto of the Pilgrims, "In God We Trust, God With Us."

The phrase "In God We Trust" appears opposite the President of the Senate, who is the Vice President of the United States. The same phrase, in large words inscribed in marble, backdrops the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Above the head of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court are the Ten Commandments, with the great American eagle protecting them. Moses is included among the great lawgivers in Herman A. MacNeil's marble sculpture group on the east front. The crier who opens each session closes with the words, "God save the United States and this Honorable Court."

Engraved on the metal on the top of the Washington Monument are the words: "Praise be to God." Lining the walls of the stairwell are such biblical phrases as "Search the Scriptures," "Holiness to the Lord," "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Numerous quotations from Scripture can be found within its (the Library of Congress') walls. One reminds each American of his responsibility to his

Maker: “What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with thy God” (Micah 6:8).

Another in the lawmaker’s library preserves the Psalmist’s acknowledgment that all nature reflects the order and beauty of the Creator, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1). And still another reference: “The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not” (John 1:5).

Millions have stood in the Lincoln Memorial and gazed up at the statue of the great Abraham Lincoln. The sculptor who chiseled the features of Lincoln in granite all but seems to make Lincoln speak his own words inscribed into the walls.

“. . . That this Nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

## Robert E. Lee to His Son

You must study to be frank with the world. Frankness is the child of honesty and courage. Say just what you mean to do, on every occasion, and take it for granted that you mean to do right. If a friend asks a favor, you should grant it, if it is reasonable; if not, tell him plainly why you cannot; you would wrong him and wrong yourself by equivocation of any kind.

Never do a wrong thing to make a friend or keep one; the man who requires you to do so is dearly purchased at the sacrifice. Deal kindly but firmly with all your classmates; you will find it the policy which wears best. Above all, do not appear to others what you are not.

If you have any fault to find with anyone, tell him, not others, of what you complain; there is no more dangerous experiment than that of undertaking to be one thing before a man’s face and another behind his back. We should live, act, and say nothing to the injury of anyone. It is not only for the best as a matter of principle, but it is the path of peace and honor.

At the opposite end, on the north wall, his Second Inaugural Address alludes to “God,” the “Bible,” “providence,” “the Almighty,” and “divine attributes.”

It then continues: As was said 3000 years ago, so it still must be said, “The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”

On the south banks of Washington’s Tidal Basin, Thomas Jefferson still speaks:

“God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever.”

[These words of Jefferson are] a forceful and explicit warning that to remove God from this country will destroy it.

—*From America’s God and Country*

In regard to duty, let me, in conclusion of this hasty letter, inform you that nearly a hundred years ago there was a day of remarkable gloom and darkness—still known as “the dark day”—a day when the light of the sun was slowly extinguished, as if by an eclipse.

The Legislature of Connecticut was in session, and as its members saw the unexpected and unaccountable darkness coming on, they shared in general awe and terror. It was supposed by many that the last day—the day of judgement—had come. Someone, in the consternation of the hour, moved an adjournment.

Then there arose an old Puritan legislator, Davenport, of Stamford, and said that, if the last day had come, he desired to be found at his place doing his duty, and therefore moved that candles be brought in, so that the House could proceed with its duty.

There was quietness in that man’s mind, the

quietness of heavenly wisdom and inflexible willingness to obey present duty. Duty, then, is the sublimest word in our language. Do your duty in all things like the Old Puritan. You cannot do more; you should never wish to do less. Never let your mother

or me wear one gray hair for any lack of duty on your part.

—Taken from *Of America, Series II*

## **A Solemn Hour** *(Excerpt)*

*By radio on May 19, 1940, Winston C. Churchill addressed the people of Great Britain, bringing them up to date regarding the German army's advance to overtake Europe, the battles in France, and the nearness of those battles to the British Isles.*

Is not this the appointed time for all to make the utmost exertions in their power?

Our task is not only to win the battle—but to win the war. After this battle in France abates its force, there will come the battle for our island—for all that Britain is and all that Britain means. That will be the struggle. In that supreme emergency we shall not hesitate to take every step, even the most drastic, to call forth from our people the last ounce and last inch of effort of which we are capable. The interest of property, the hours of labor—now nothing compares to the struggle for life and honor, for right and freedom, to which we have vowed ourselves.

I have received from the Chiefs of the French Republic the most sacred pledges that whatever happens they will fight to the end, be it bitter or be it glorious. Nay, if we fight to the end, it can only be glorious.

Having received His Majesty's commission, I have formed an administration of men and women of every party and of almost every point of view. We have differed and quarreled in the past, but now one bond unites us all: to wage war until victory is won and never to surrender ourselves to servitude and shame, whatever the cost and the agony may be.

If this is one of the most awe-striking periods in the long history of France and Britain, it is also beyond doubt the most sublime. Side by side, unaided except by their kith and kin in the great Dominions, and by the Wide Empires which rest beneath their shield—side by side, the British and French people have advanced the rescue, not only of Europe, but mankind from the foulest and most soul-destroying tyranny which has ever darkened and stained the pages of history. Behind them, behind the armies and fleets of Britain and France—gather a group of shattered states and bludgeoned races: the Czechs, the Poles, the Norwegians, the Danes, the Dutch, the Belgians—upon all of whom the long night of barbarism will descend unbroken even by a star of hope, unless we conquer, as conquer we must—as conquer we shall.

Today is Trinity Sunday. Centuries ago words were written to be a call and a spur to the faithful servants of truth and justice. "Arm yourselves, and be ye men of valor, and be in readiness for the conflict; for it is better for us to perish in battle than to look upon the outrage of our nation and our altars. As the Will of God is in Heaven, even so, let it be."

## Temperance and Women's Rights

*From 1851 Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) were partners in the combined crusader for women's suffrage, abolitionism, and temperance. In the earlier years Stanton, unlike Anthony, was busy raising a large family; she nevertheless served as president of the Women's State Temperance Society in New York and spoke publicly on these important issues.*

Women's State Temperance Society Convention  
Rochester, New York; 1853

We have been obliged to preach women's rights because many, instead of listening to what we had to say on temperance, have questioned the right of a woman to speak on any subject. In courts of justice and legislative assemblies, if the right of the speaker to be there is questioned, all business waits until that point is settled. Now, it is not settled in the mass of minds that woman has any rights on this foot-stool, and much less a right to stand on an even pedestal with man, look him in the face as an equal, and rebuke the sins of her day and generation. Let it be clearly understood, then, that we are a woman's rights society; that we believe it is woman's duty to speak whenever she feels the impression to do so; that it is her right to be present in all the councils of church and state. The fact that our agents are woman settles the question of our character on this point.

Again, in discussing the question of temperance, all lecturers, from the beginning, have made mention of the drunkards' wives and children, of widow's groans and orphans' tears. Shall these classes of sufferers be introduced but as themes for rhetorical flourish, as pathetic touches of the speaker's eloquence? Shall we passively shed tears over their condition, or by giving them their rights, bravely open to them the doors of escape from a wretched and degraded life? Is it not legitimate in this to discuss the social degradation, the legal disabilities of the drunkard's wife? If in showing her wrongs, we prove the right of all womankind to the elective franchise; to a fair representation in the government; to the right in criminal cases to be tried by peers of her own choosing—shall it be said that we transcend the bounds of our subject? If in pointing out her social degradation, we show you how the present laws outrage the sacredness of the marriage institution; if in proving to you that justice and mercy demand a legal separation from drunkards, we grasp the higher idea that a unity of soul alone constitutes and sanctifies true marriage, and that any law or public sentiment that forces two immortal, highborn souls to live together as husband and wife, unless held there by love, is false to God and humanity.

—Elizabeth Cady Stanton  
*Great American Speeches*

## The Whistle

*You will hear it said many times that experience is a hard teacher. It can also be a good teacher, as this story shows. Benjamin Franklin was one of the wise men of his time. He realized that what we amount to in later life is largely the result of the kind of habits we form when we are young. This story is about one of the lessons he learned as a boy, and you can see how it influenced his life. Perhaps there are lessons that you are learning today or have already learned that will affect your future as much as the lesson of "the whistle" affected Franklin's life.*

When I was a child of seven years old, my friends, on a holiday, filled my pocket with coppers. I went directly to a shop where they sold toys for children, and being charmed with the sound of a whistle, that I met by the way in the hands of another boy, I voluntarily offered and gave all the money for one. I then came home, and went whistling all over the house, much pleased with my whistle, but disturbing all my family.

My brothers and sisters, and cousins, understanding the bargain I had made, told me I

had given four times as much for it as it was worth; put me in mind what good things I might have bought with the rest of the money; and laughed at me so much for my folly, that I cried with vexation, and the reflection gave me more chagrin than the whistle gave me pleasure.

This, however, was afterward of use to me, the impression continuing on my mind; so that often, when I was tempted to buy some unnecessary thing, I said to myself, Don't give so much for the whistle; and I saved my money.

As I grew up, came into the world, and observed the actions of men, I thought I met with many, very many, who gave too much for the whistle.

When I saw another fond of popularity, constantly employing himself in political bustles, neglecting his own affairs, and ruining them by neglect, "He pays, indeed," said I, "too much for his whistle." If I knew a miser, who gave up every kind of comfortable living, all the pleasure of doing good to others, all the esteem of his fellow-citizens, and the joys of benevolent friendship, for the sake of accumulating wealth, "Poor man," said I, "you pay too much for your whistle."

When I met with a man of pleasure, sacrificing every laudable improvement of the mind, or of his fortune, to mere corporeal sensations, and ruining his health in their pursuit, "Mistaken man," said I, "you are providing pain for yourself, instead of pleasure; you give too much for your whistle."

If I see one fond of appearance, or fine clothes, fine houses, fine furniture, fine equipages, all above his fortune, for which he contracts debts, and ends his career in a prison, "Alas!" say I, "he has paid dear, very dear, for his whistle."

When I see a beautiful, sweet-tempered girl married to an ill-natured brute of a husband, "What a pity," say I, "that she should pay so much for a whistle."

In short, I conceive that great part of the miseries of mankind are brought upon them by the false estimates they have made of the value of things, and by giving too much for their whistles.

—by Benjamin Franklin

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