

(education meeting)

Thank you.

I expect you are interested in hearing from the candidates on education, but I will touch on several other issues as well.

You may have noticed over the years that it matters very little what the candidates say they will do. If they really delivered, we would not be asking for solutions to the same problems election after election.

When the newly elected arrive in office, they find that they have become tools of the status quo. That happens because they have sold their freedom to act when they took the status quo's money to get elected.

I am trying something different, which is to take no special interest money from any group--left, right or middle. Not a cent from an issue advocacy group, even from those with whom I heartily agree.

If what I am doing catches on, and if candidates can find ways to win, it will mean that leaders can lead again, and that we can begin to create a better world.

I can tell you how I would like to improve the schools, and the health care system and the environment and our social programs, but you know as well as I do that my one vote in the Senate would be overwhelmed by the other Senators who have long been bought and sold and whose votes are not their own and whose votes are certainly not connected in any real way with the needs of their constituents.

But here is what I believe. Our air should be fit to breath. Our water should not convey mercury into mothers' milk and into our children's brains. Our schools should not deaden the imaginations and the dreams of our children.

Indeed, our schools often look like prisons, and do not reflect the glory of human civilization that should be celebrated and transmitted in such

places. We know how to do that, for we have been to the best museums and the loveliest gardens, and it is not for lack of ideas or wisdom that it is not done for our children. Our national priorities are not with our children; The machinery of greed moves on wheels of fear, and our society is overwhelmed now with it. We are manufacturing fear by swatting every hornets' nest in every corner of the world, so that the merchants of fear may prosper at our expense and at our children's expense.

To argue over charter schools and other band-aids is not getting to the deeper issue of how we live with our young people and how we improve our future through them. The idealism, creativity and joy of youth are great natural resources of nature, that we despoil as we do our air and water.

Our health care system reflects the same orientation away from life and love, and we need not ask each other if the sick among us should be cared for. We know the answer in our hearts, and we cannot move the world toward our

wisdom and love so long as we permit political systems that run on greed and fear instead of love and ideas.

Now, you may think I have a dark view. I do not. I travel this nation, I walk through its housing projects and dark places, and I meet every year with tens of thousands of its dear, sweet people, who are filled with justice and love and great ideas for a better society. I have seen that they have ^{the} ~~to~~ power to reshape life around them simply by stepping forward and expressing their beliefs. They find they are not alone, and great things begin to move.

So our nation will move from leadership of the heart that will only after a time move our great parties and our great institutions. True leaders at the top would be useful, great souls to lead us with light and wisdom, but we find ourselves in a time when they are not there for us, and we are summoned to lead from where we are, from who we are, and that is not a bad thing to be so challenged and to find ourselves creating deep meaning for our lives.

My candidacy, as you must know, is not likely to succeed in the normal way. But I am in the example business, and I am telling you this morning that democracy is our little boat to the future, and we all must row. We all must run for office, help candidates, make speeches to express our hearts, and turn the ineffective system of occasional elections into the effective life of everyday organizing for our human needs.

I challenge you to step up to do what you know ~~what~~ must be done in our world. If I, at my age and infirmity, can express myself and move things along an inch or two, imagine what a roomful like this can do in the world.

Don't let anyone stop you.

Thank you.