

Gettysburg speech

Thank you.

It is a great honor to be here again. One should never bring a long speech to Gettysburg, so I shall be only two or three times as long as Mr. Lincoln.

I first met some of you eight years ago. We were all so worried about losing our democracy that we were willing to walk across the country and go to jail. You meet the nicest people in the Washington jail, by the way [that's where I met Lou and Patricia Hammann. *who are hosting me.*

Eight years ago we could not have imagined what our country was headed into.

We could not have imagined how many protests, how many marches, how many letters, phone calls, emails, posters, banners, and campaigns we were in for. We could not have imagined the amazing people who have come into our vision, for good and for ill. We could never in our wildest imaginings have come up with a story about how the US would attack countries at will based on phony propaganda, how we would become a country that tortures people, how we would become a country that spits on the grave of every patriot who lived or died for our freedoms under the Bill of Rights. Just those eight years ago, we could not have imagined stolen elections, an eviscerated and cowardly Congress, or eviscerated and cowardly national news organizations that refused to see and report the obvious, or editorial pages that refused to call for the obvious. It has been a remarkable time.

Before the Iraq invasion, you know many of us were on Capitol Hill trying

to talk sense into some people. The people who knew very well that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq were the arms inspectors. They were on Capitol Hill too, trying to talk sense into those people. Senators did not want to talk to them because the Senators knew very well what the truth was. They knew that, if we wanted to keep looking for those weapons, we only needed to put our inspectors back in. The inspectors were telling everyone that they then had the freedom to go anywhere and look at anything in Iraq. They only stopped looking because Mr. Bush called them home so he could have his little war. Those inspectors wanted to go back and keep looking.

Here's something you may not know or may have forgotten: Saddam Hussein, several weeks before our attack, invited our military to come in and look at anything they wanted to look at. They were invited to come in, fully armed, and look wherever they wanted. Our administration said no thank you. The incredible Mr. Richard Perle, who used to live next door to my late daughter in ^{Cherry} ~~Washington~~ ^{Char} and who didn't like my support van parked on the street when I arrived after my long walk, evidently, according to the New York Times of November 6, 2003, ^{park} went to London to meet on behalf of Mr. Bush with a representative of Iraq who made this offer. No thanks, was the silent response. How is that not treason against this nation and all who have died?

Men like John McCain knew all this. Men like John Kerry knew all this. In fact, ² ~~most~~ the people in Kerry's home state knew all this. They tried to get appointments with him to talk it over. He refused. Some, desperate for his attention, went to sit in at his office in Boston and were arrested. Bishops tried to get to him and offered to be arrested. He would not listen, because he already knew the truth and knew he would turn away from it in order to have a chance for the presidency. Of course, he thereby killed his chance for the

presidency. Millions of Americans marched to stop that attack because WE ALL KNEW. We all knew. We all did. The people who voted to go to war did so--sent young men and women to die, sent our bombs to fall on innocent families abroad--to better their chances to run for president. Was there ever a more cynical and unpatriotic act than that? Do their hands not drip with the blood of our children and the world's children? Indeed they do. And do we believe them when they now say they were fooled by Mr. Bush? That they had no idea that he would go to war with their vote, when the name of the bill was in fact the Joint Resolution to Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq? What does it say about them if they were fooled when millions of us were in the streets because we were not fooled?

I mention all this only to make the point that we have not exactly turned our country around with all our efforts. The same lobbyists who were swiveling in their chairs and blowing smoke rings around our Declaration of Independence are swiveling yet, blowing smoke yet. The same politicians who were selling out our poor and our middle class for their rich friends are still on the prowl, still selling us out at every opportunity. And now, when the great casino called Wall Street is toppling, corruption will allow our tax dollars to prop it up. The same harm that was being inflicted on our planet then is even more so today, with very little time left to save the day and save the night and the winter, spring, summer and fall.

And yet I see that these people who stood up and who marched and who were willing to go to jail to move America back into the brighter path have changed things. It is very hard to turn a great ship around when it is going fast in the wrong direction. But the ship has turned. I feel it. I see it in young faces.

Some of us have grown weary of trying to bring America around. Some have given up for a time. Some no longer see the point of standing on street corners with signs or making demands of their tone-deaf Congressmen. It is tiring and discouraging. The arrival of the young people in this election year are a great boost, ~~but it is tiring work, nevertheless.~~

And the biggest fights are still ahead? Indeed, the revolution we require is yet ahead ! a revolution away from coal and oil, away from corporate domination and corrupt governance, and toward a new way of living ! a way of living as neighbors, friends, people of the earth who are not the enemies of the earth, of nature. We are on that path now, though the road is hardly marked with yellow bricks.

Creative leadership is ~~not~~ the essential ingredient. We need leaders who can inspire the American people and the people of the world to move in new directions quickly. We need creative leaders who will so inspire the common man and woman that corrupt Congresses will have no ability to resist.

Creative leaders, honest election systems, an economy redesigned to make communities self-sufficient and healthier, and an education system designed to make all of us and our children the well-informed, bright, creative, interested and interesting people needed to run a democracy: these are the visions we must hold in the backs of our eyes now.

We have been running America for many decades with negative visualizations. You see it even in the movies. Before 9-11, all the big summer films were about aliens attacking the United States, and hero presidents jumping in jets to save us. The movies didn't bring on that history, but what we think and what we dream have an effect in the world. We have to make room in the world for what we dream of by actually dreaming it, by making space for it, by

making it imaginable to others through our own creative leadership in our own families and neighborhoods.

Let's not be tired. Let's not be old. Let's make a new beginning by getting together with our neighbors more often. How about next week? Let's plant some more vegetable gardens. Let's make some furniture or art. Let's fix up some bicycles. Let's get the whole neighborhood to go down to visit the local office of our elected people and get them on board or scare the hell out of them.

This is our democracy if we can keep it. This is a grand planet if we can save it. It really is up to us. Each person is the hero of the world, and, in saying that, I do not joke or exaggerate. Every one of you has the power to do this, to start something big ! and necessary ! and beautiful.

Thank you very much.