

9-6-1984

## Independence Rally Speech

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### Recommended Citation

Ferraro, Geraldine, "Independence Rally Speech" (1984). *Speeches*. 118.  
[https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/vice\\_presidential\\_campaign\\_speeches\\_1984/118](https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/vice_presidential_campaign_speeches_1984/118)

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TRUMAN HIGH SCHOOL

INDEPENDENCE, MO.

IT'S GREAT TO BE HERE IN INDEPENDENCE. THIS COUNTRY OWES A GREAT DEBT TO YOUR TOWN FOR SENDING US A GREAT PRESIDENT AND A STRAIGHT TALKER, LIKE HARRY TRUMAN.

IT'S ESPECIALLY NICE TO BE HERE AT TRUMAN HIGH SCHOOL. YOU'VE HAD A LOT OF SUCCESS IN THE CLASSROOM AND ON THE ATHLETIC FIELD. YOU SHOULD ALL BE PROUD OF HAVING A GREAT SPEAKER LIKE LAURA STANKE AS YOUR STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT. AND YOUR GIRL'S BASKETBALL AND VOLLEYBALL TEAMS HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HARD WORK LEADS TO SUCCESS.

IN FACT, THE ONLY BAD THING ABOUT BEING A STUDENT AT TRUMAN HIGH THIS YEAR IS THAT YOU'LL NEVER HAVE A CHANCE TO VOTE FOR TOM EAGLETON. IN THE LONG TRADITION OF MISSOURIANS, TOM HAS SHOWN ALL OF US IN WASHINGTON A THING OR TWO.

NOW, I DON'T WANT TO TURN YOU AGAINST ME RIGHT AWAY, BUT I HAVE TO CONFESS -- I USED TO BE A TEACHER. I TAUGHT SCHOOL IN NEW YORK CITY, WHILE I WENT TO LAW SCHOOL AT NIGHT. IT WAS HARD WORK, BUT LIKE YOU I WANTED TO MAKE SOMETHING OF MY LIFE, AND DO SOMETHING FOR A COUNTRY THAT HAD GIVEN ME SO MUCH.

I FEEL THOSE OLD TEACHING INSTINCTS COMING BACK TO LIFE THIS MORNING. I KNOW YOU ALL THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO GET OUT OF CLASS TO COME TO THIS ASSEMBLY, BUT I'D LIKE TO TAKE JUST A MINUTE TO TELL YOU WHY I THINK POLITICS, AND PARTICULARLY THIS ELECTION, ARE SO IMPORTANT.

WE ARE AT AN IMPORTANT CROSSROADS IN OUR NATION'S HISTORY. DECISIONS WE MAKE NOW WILL AFFECT US FOR THE REST OF THIS CENTURY.

FOR INSTANCE, WE NEED TO DECIDE WHAT KIND OF DEFENSE AND ARMS CONTROL POLICIES OUR COUNTRY WILL PURSUE. CERTAINLY EVERYONE WANTS PEACE. THERE'S NO ARGUMENT THERE. BUT TO KEEP THE PEACE WE CAN'T JUST SIT BACK, WE HAVE TO WORK AGAINST WAR. WE HAVE TO DECIDE IF OUR COUNTRY IS DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO STRENGTHEN OUR DEFENSES AND TO REDUCE THE RISK OF WAR.

WE LIVE IN INCREASINGLY TENSE TIMES. RIGHT NOW, THERE ARE AT LEAST THIRTEEN WARS AND CIVIL WARS BEING FOUGHT AROUND THE WORLD. IN KAMPUCHEA, AFGHANISTAN, THE HORN OF AFRICA, THE WESTERN SAHARA, CHAD AND ELSEWHERE, A TOTAL OF TWO MILLION PEOPLE ARE FIGHTING AND DYING AS YOU SIT HERE THIS MORNING.

TO THE SOUTH OF US, CENTRAL AMERICA HAS BECOME A LAND OF INSTABILITY. AND THE MID-EAST CONTINUES TO BE A REGION TORN APART.

WE ALL REMEMBER THE TRAGEDY OF LEBANON. OUR LEADERS MADE A MISTAKE AND OVER 250 YOUNG MEN PAID FOR IT WITH THEIR LIVES. WE MUST DO EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER TO MAKE SURE YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS WILL NEVER GO TO WAR.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE CONVENTIONAL WARS ARE NOT OUR ONLY THREAT TODAY. THE MOST SERIOUS THREAT WE FACE IS THE ARMS RACE. OVER THE LAST TWENTY YEARS, BOTH THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE ADDED THOUSANDS OF NEW WEAPONS TO OUR STOCKPILES. AND WE ARE NOT MORE SAFE AFTER ALL THAT. WE ARE LESS SAFE. WE HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER WE WILL END THE ARMS RACE NOW, OR LET IT SPIN OFF INTO SPACE. THIS ELECTION WILL DECIDE WHICH COURSE WE TAKE.

ANOTHER DECISION WE MUST MAKE THIS YEAR IS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR ECONOMY. OUR ECONOMY IS CHANGING AT THE FASTEST PACE IN HISTORY. COMPUTERS, ELECTRONICS, AND EVEN ROBOTS, ARE CHANGING THE WORKPLACE AND MAKING ENORMOUS DEMANDS ON THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE OF WORKERS.

HOW ARE WE GOING TO MEET THAT CHALLENGE? WE MUST HAVE THE TEACHERS AND THE SCHOOLS NECESSARY TO TRAIN PEOPLE FOR LIFE IN A NEW WORLD. JUST TO WALK IN THE DOOR OF MANY COMPANIES, YOU NEED MORE KNOWLEDGE THAN MOST OF YOUR PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS EVER NEEDED.

MOST OF YOU WON'T WORK AT THE SAME JOB YOUR WHOLE CAREERS. YOU WILL NEED TO LEARN NEW SKILLS AND GAIN NEW KNOWLEDGE QUICKLY. AND WE NEED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS THAT CAN MEET THAT CHALLENGE.

THE WAY WE MEET THAT CHALLENGE WILL BE DECIDED BY THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION. AS WILL THE ALL IMPORTANT QUESTION OF OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERYONE WHO WANTS TO WORK HARD. FOR EVERYONE OF YOU THAT HAS A PRIVATE DREAM.

I WAS LUCKY TO GROW UP IN A SOCIETY THAT REWARDED HARD WORK WITH SUCCESS. AND I WANT TO MAKE SURE WE KEEP THE DOORS OPEN TO EVERYONE.

FINALLY, YOU HAVE TO DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT FROM YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS. HARRY TRUMAN ONCE WROTE TO HIS WIFE, BESS, "IF I CAN'T PLAY SQUARE, I WON'T PLAY." WILL WE CONTINUE TO INSIST THAT OUR LEADERS PLAY SQUARE? THAT THEY TELL US THEIR PLANS AND GIVE US STRAIGHT TALK? THAT'S A DECISION YOU HAVE TO MAKE AS VOTERS.

ALL OF THESE VITAL DECISIONS ARE MADE IN ELECTIONS. IF YOU DON'T VOTE, SOMEBODY ELSE IS DECIDING WHAT KIND OF WORLD YOU LIVE IN. SOMEBODY ELSE IS DECIDING HOW WE PURSUE

PEACE AND PREPARE TO DEFEND OURSELVES. SOMEBODY ELSE IS DECIDING WHAT OUR ECONOMY WILL DO, AND WHETHER OPPORTUNITIES ARE OPEN TO EVERYONE OR ARE THE PRIVILEGE OF A FEW WEALTHY INDIVIDUALS.

THOSE ARE DECISIONS YOU SHOULD MAKE FOR YOURSELF. IF YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH TO VOTE, THEN REGISTER AND VOTE ON NOVEMBER 5TH. IF YOU'RE NOT OLD ENOUGH TO VOTE, THERE'S STILL A LOT YOU CAN DO. STUDY THE ISSUES, STUDY THE CANDIDATES, THEN GO TO WORK FOR ONE. HELP YOUR FAVORITE CANDIDATE GET ELECTED IN NOVEMBER. OUR DEMOCRACY DEPENDS ON PARTICIPATION, AND PARTICIPATION DEPENDS ON EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR WARM RECEPTION AND NOW I'D BE GLAD TO TAKE YOUR QUESTIONS.

END