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Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at Whittier College

Edmund S. Muskie

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REMARKS BY SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE

WHITTIER COLLEGE

NOVEMBER 8, 1971

FIRST OF ALL, LET ME MAKE ONE THING PERFECTLY CLEAR . . .

THIS IS NOT THE ONLY PLACE RICHARD NIXON HAS BEEN THAT I WANT TO
GO . . .

I'M SURE YOUR SCHOOL TAKES GREAT PRIDE IN THE PRESIDENT
AND THE RECOGNITION HE HAS BROUGHT YOU. AND I ALSO UNDERSTAND
THAT SINCE HE'S BEEN HERE, YOU HAVE MADE MAJOR EFFORTS TO UPGRADE
YOUR POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT.

BY THE WAY, I THINK YOU OWE A SPECIAL DEBT OF GRATITUDE
TO ME. ALL RICHARD NIXON HAS PROMISED YOU IS A PRESIDENTIAL
LIBRARY . . . WHILE I'M WORKING HARD TO MAKE SURE THAT WHITTIER
COLLEGE ALSO HAS AN EX-PRESIDENT IN RESIDENCE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

I DID NOT COME TO WHITTIER COLLEGE TODAY TO MAKE A LONG
SPEECH. IN 1971, POLITICIANS MAKE TOO MANY SPEECHES AND TOO
LITTLE SENSE. AND THE TRADITION OF NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS IS STILL
TOO OFTEN A TRADITION OF EXPEDIENCY AND MANEUVERING AND GAME-PLAYING.

THAT'S WHY I OFTEN CHOOSE A QUESTION AND ANSWER FORMAT
ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES.

IT GIVES YOU A CHANCE TO JUDGE ME AS I AM, INSTEAD OF
FORCING YOU TO LOOK FOR THE HUMAN BEING BEHIND THE PREPARED
SPEECH. IF I AM HONEST, YOU WILL KNOW IT -- AND THAT WILL BE
GOOD FOR ME. AND IF I CAN ENCOURAGE YOU TO THINK BETTER OF
THE POLITICAL SYSTEM, THAT WILL BE GOOD FOR THIS COUNTRY.

BUT BEFORE WE TURN TO YOUR QUESTIONS, LET ME RAISE
MY OWN QUESTION ABOUT YOU AND YOUR GENERATION.

IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, I HAVE SPOKEN AT SIXTY OR SEVENTY
COLLEGES. EVERYWHERE, STUDENTS TELL ME ABOUT THEIR COMMITMENT
TO CHANGE . . . TO JUSTICE ABROAD AND AT HOME.

AT THE SAME TIME, PART OF WHAT I HAVE SEEN DISTURBS
ME. NOT BECAUSE YOUR GENERATION IS IMPATIENT ABOUT THE SHORTCOMINGS
OF OUR SOCIETY -- IMPATIENCE IS THE ONLY DECENT RESPONSE TO
THE HUMAN PAIN AND SUFFERING OF RECENT YEARS. BUT BECAUSE I
FIND THAT TOO OFTEN, THE STUDENTS WHO EXPECT THE RIGHT ANSWERS
ARE NOT ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS.

IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS, I HAVE HEARD ALMOST NO QUESTIONS
ON CAMPUS ABOUT THE DEEPEST WRONG OF THE AMERICAN CONDITION . . .
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, AND IF I HAD NOT STATED WHAT I BELIEVE
TO BE THE FACTS ABOUT BLACK POLITICAL INEQUALITY ON MY LAST
TRIP TO LOS ANGELES, I SUSPECT THAT I COULD HAVE GONE FROM
COLLEGE TO COLLEGE THIS FALL WITHOUT FACING ANY QUESTIONS
AT ALL ABOUT EQUAL RIGHTS.

YOU ARE CELEBRATED AS THE BEST GENERATION IN OUR HISTORY --
THE GENERATION THAT MAY FINALLY MAKE THE AMERICAN REALITY EQUAL
TO AMERICAN IDEALS.

SO ASK THE TOUGH QUESTIONS -- AS THE YOUNG DID ABOUT
THE LEGAL SEGREGATION OF THE EARLY 60S AND ABOUT A WAR FOUGHT,
NOT FOR A CAUSE, BUT FOR A MISTAKE.

ASK ABOUT A SOCIAL SYSTEM IN WHICH THE SCHOOLS OF
NORTHERN CITIES ARE MORE SEGREGATED NOW THAN THEY WERE WHEN
THE SUPREME COURT OUTLAWED SEGREGATION SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO.

ASK ABOUT AN ADMINISTRATION WHICH PUTS A SOUTHERN
STRATEGY AHEAD OF HUMAN RIGHTS -- LEAVING HOUSING INTEGRATION
AND JOB OPPORTUNITY FAR BEHIND.

AND ASK ABOUT THE ADVOCATES OF LAWFUL INTEGRATION
OVERRULED, SABATOGED, UNDERMINED, AND HOUNDED FROM FEDERAL
OFFICE. DO YOU KNOW THE NAMES?

LEON PANNETTA -- FIRED BECAUSE HE WORKED FOR INTEGRATED
SCHOOLS . . .

JAMES ALLEN -- FIRED BECAUSE HE PLANNED TO FIGHT DE
FACTO AS WELL AS DE JURE SEGREGATION . . .

BILL TUTMAN -- FORCED TO RESIGN BECAUSE HE COULD NOT
ACCEPT DISCRIMINATION IN THE PEACE CORPS . . .

CLIFF ALEXANDER -- URGED TO RESIGN BECAUSE HE WAS SERIOUS
ABOUT HIS RESPONSIBILITY TO OPEN UP JOBS FOR MINORITY WORKERS . . .

AND BOB AFFELDT -- WHO RESIGNED AS A FAIR HOUSING
ADMINISTRATOR, SAYING THAT THE PRESIDENT IS "ACTIVELY OPPOSING"
THE LAW HE IS SUPPOSED TO ENFORCE.

FINALLY, ASK QUESTIONS CLOSE TO HOME, FOR THE FAULT IS NOT ONLY IN WASHINGTON, BUT IN CITIES AND INSTITUTIONS ACROSS THIS COUNTRY. WHY ARE THERE ONLY TWO CHICANOS IN THE CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY WHEN CHICANOS COMPRISE 15% OF THE STATE'S POPULATION? WHY IS IT STILL HARD FOR BLACKS AND CHICANOS TO FIND A PLACE TO LIVE NEAR THE PLACES WHERE THEY WORK OR STUDY? WHY IS LAW AND ORDER THOUGHT OF IN NEIGHBORHOODS JUST BLOCKS FROM HERE AS A BLACK VERSUS WHITE ISSUE -- WHEN BLACK WOMEN ARE FIVE TIMES AS LIKELY AS WHITE WOMEN TO BECOME THE VICTIMS OF A VIOLENT CRIME?

THOSE ARE THE QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE ASKING, AND YOU SHOULD RAISE THEM WITH YOUR VOTES AS WELL AS YOUR VOICES. IF TWELVE MILLION YOUNG AMERICANS REGISTER -- AND IF THEY GO TO THE POLLS ON ELECTION DAY -- WE CAN START TO WIPE OUT THE STATISTICS WHICH SHAME AMERICA.

THE FACT THAT BLACK CHILDREN HAVE AN 80% HIGHER
CHANCE OF DYING BEFORE THEIR FIRST BIRTHDAY.

THE FACT THAT A BLACK BREADWINNER IS 90% MORE
LIKELY TO BE UNEMPLOYED.

THE FACT THAT MINORITIES HAVE A SHARPLY REDUCED CHANCE
TO GO TO COLLEGE -- OR TO EARN \$10,000 A YEAR.

THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL RIGHTS WILL NEVER BE EASY.
THERE HAVE ALREADY BEEN SO MANY SETBACKS AND FRUSTRATIONS AND
DEFEATS. BUT WE CANNOT GROW TIRED -- AND WE CANNOT GIVE UP.
FOR IF WE CONTINUE TO SAY TO TOO MANY AMERICANS THAT THEIR
ONLY CHOICE IS BETWEEN CONFINEMENT TO A GHETTO AND CONFINEMENT
TO JAIL, WE WILL ENDANGER THIS COUNTRY FOR A CENTURY TO COME.

YOU HAVE THE VOTE -- AND YOU HAVE THE ENERGY. WILL YOU
HELP US TO DO BETTER?

THAT IS MY QUESTION -- AND NOW, I WOULD BE PLEASED TO
ANSWER YOURS.

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