

# THE VOICE OF OUR LEADERS

**The Presidents of the United States of  
America**

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# PRESENTS THE REVOLT OF HIS OFFICERS

President George Washington  
March 15, 1783





**“YOU WILL GIVE ONE MORE  
DISTINGUISHED PROOF OF UNEXAMPLED PATRIOTISM AND PATIENT  
VIRTUE RISING SUPERIOR TO THE PRESSURE OF THE MOST COMPLICATED  
SUFFERINGS.”**



## INTRODUCTION

At the close of the Revolutionary War in America, a perilous moment in the life of the fledgling American republic occurred as officers of the Continental Army met in Newburgh, New York, to discuss grievances and consider a possible insurrection against the rule of Congress. • They were angry over the failure of Congress to honor its promises to the army regarding salary, bounties and life pensions. The officers had heard from Philadelphia that the American government was going broke and that they might not be compensated at all. • On March 10, 1783, an anonymous letter was circulated among the officers of General Washington's main camp at Newburgh. It addressed those complaints and called for an unauthorized meeting of officers to be held the next day to consider possible military solutions to the problems of the civilian government and its financial woes. • General Washington stopped that meeting from happening by forbidding the officers to meet at the unauthorized meeting. Instead, he suggested they meet a few days later, on March 15th, at the regular meeting of his officers. • Meanwhile, another anonymous letter was circulated, this time suggesting Washington himself was sympathetic to the claims of the malcontent officers. • And so, on March 15, 1783, Washington's officers gathered in a church building in Newburgh, effectively holding the fate of America in their hands. • Unexpectedly, General Washington himself showed up. He was not entirely welcomed by his men, but nevertheless, personally addressed them.

**Gentlemen:** By an anonymous summons, an attempt has been made to convene you together; how inconsistent with the rules of propriety, how unmilitary, and how subversive of all order and discipline, let the good sense of the army decide.

Thus much, gentlemen, I have thought it incumbent on me to observe to you, to show upon what principles I opposed the irregular and hasty meeting which was proposed to have been held on Tuesday last—and not because I wanted a disposition to give you every opportunity consistent with your own honor, and the dignity of the army, to make known your grievances. If my conduct heretofore has not evinced to you that I have been a faithful friend to the army, my declaration of it at this time would be equally unavailing and improper. But as I was among the first who embarked in the cause of our common country. As I have never left your side one moment, but when called from you on public duty. As I have been the constant companion and witness of your distresses, and not among the last to feel and acknowledge your merits. As I have ever considered my own military reputation as inseparably connected with that of the army. As my heart has ever expanded with joy, when I have heard its praises, and my indignation has arisen, when the mouth of detraction has been opened against it, it can scarcely be supposed, at this late stage of the war, that I am indifferent to its interests.

But how are they to be promoted? The way is plain, says the anonymous addresser. If war continues, remove into the unsettled country, there establish yourselves, and leave an ungrateful country to defend itself. But who are they to defend? Our wives, our children, our farms, and other property which we leave behind us. Or, in this



# OUR CHILDREN



state of hostile separation, are we to take the two first (the latter cannot be removed) to perish in a wilderness, with hunger, cold, and nakedness? If peace takes place, never sheathe your swords, says he, until you have obtained full and ample justice; this dreadful alternative, of either deserting our country in the extremist hour of her distress or turning our arms against it (which is the apparent object, unless Congress can be compelled into instant compliance), has something so shocking in it that humanity revolts at the idea. My God! What can this writer have in view, by recommending such measures? Can he be a friend to the army? Can he be a friend to this country? Rather, is he not an insidious foe? Some emissary, perhaps, from New York, plotting the ruin of both, by sowing the seeds of discord and separation between the civil and military powers of the continent? And what a compliment does he pay to our understandings when he recommends measures in either alternative, impracticable in their nature?

I cannot, in justice to my own belief, and what I have great reason to conceive is the intention of Congress, conclude this address, without giving it as my decided opinion, that that honorable body entertain exalted sentiments of the services of the army; and, from a full conviction of its merits and sufferings, will do it complete justice. That their endeavors to discover and establish funds for this purpose have been unwearied, and will not cease till they have succeeded, I have not a doubt. But, like all other large bodies, where there is a variety of different interests to reconcile, their deliberations are slow. Why, then, should we distrust them? And, in consequence of that distrust, adopt measures which may cast a shade over that



glory which has been so justly acquired; and tarnish the reputation of an army which is celebrated through all Europe, for its fortitude and patriotism? And for what is this done? To bring the object we seek nearer? No! most certainly, in my opinion, it will cast it at a greater distance.

For myself (and I take no merit in giving the assurance, being induced to it from principles of gratitude, veracity, and justice), a grateful sense of the confidence you have ever placed in me, a recollection of the cheerful assistance and prompt obedience I have experienced from you, under every vicissitude of fortune, and the sincere affection I feel for an army I have so long had the honor to command will oblige me to declare, in this public and solemn manner, that, in the attainment of complete justice for all your toils and dangers, and in the gratification of every wish, so far as may be done consistently with the great duty I owe my country and those powers we are bound to respect, you may freely command my services to the utmost of my abilities.

While I give you these assurances, and pledge myself in the most unequivocal manner to exert whatever ability I am possessed of in your favor, let me entreat you, gentlemen, on your part, not to take any measures which, viewed in the calm light of reason, will lessen the dignity and sully the glory you have hitherto maintained; let me request you to rely on the plighted faith of your country, and place a full confidence in the purity of the intentions of Congress; that, previous to your dissolution as an army, they will cause all your accounts to be fairly liquidated, as directed in their resolutions, which were published to you two days ago, and that they will adopt

the most effectual measures in their power to render ample justice to you, for your faithful and meritorious services. And let me conjure you, in the name of our common country, as you value your own sacred honor, as you respect the rights of humanity, and as you regard the military and national character of America, to express your utmost horror and detestation of the man who wishes, under any specious pretenses, to overturn the liberties of our country, and who wickedly attempts to open the floodgates of civil discord and deluge our rising empire in blood.

By thus determining and thus acting, you will pursue the plain and direct road to the attainment of your wishes. You will defeat the insidious designs of our enemies, who are compelled to resort from open force to secret artifice. You will give one more distinguished proof of unexampled patriotism and patient virtue, rising superior to the pressure of the most complicated sufferings. And you will, by the dignity of your conduct, afford occasion for posterity to say, when speaking of the glorious example you have exhibited to mankind, “Had this day been wanting, the world had never seen the last stage of perfection to which human nature is capable of attaining.”



# GEORGE WASH

## POST NOTES:

This speech was not very well received by his men. Washington then took out a letter from a member of Congress explaining the financial difficulties of the government.

After reading a portion of the letter with his eyes squinting at the small writing, Washington suddenly stopped. His officers stared at him, wondering. Washington then reached into his coat pocket and took out a pair of reading glasses. Few of them knew he wore glasses, and were surprised.

“Gentlemen,” said Washington, “you will permit me to put on my spectacles, for I have not only grown gray but almost blind in the service of my country.”

In that single moment of sheer vulnerability, Washington’s men were deeply moved, even shamed, and many were quickly in tears, now looking with great affection at this aging man who had led them through so much. Washington read the remainder of the letter, then left without saying another word, realizing their sentiments.

His officers then cast a unanimous vote, essentially agreeing to the rule of Congress. Thus, the civilian government was preserved and the experiment of democracy in America continued.



# THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

President Abraham Lincoln  
November 19, 1863





## INTRODUCTION

The Battle of Gettysburg occurred over three hot summer days, July 1 to July 3, 1863, around the small market town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It began as a skirmish but by its end involved 160,000 Americans and effectively decided the fate of the Union. • On November 19, 1863, President Lincoln went to the battlefield to dedicate it as a National Cemetery. The main orator, Edward Everett of Massachusetts, delivered a two-hour formal address. The president then had his turn. He spoke in his high, penetrating voice, and in a little over two minutes delivered this speech, surprising everyone by its brevity and leaving many quite unimpressed at first. • Over time, however, this speech with its ending – government of the People, by the People, for the People – has come to symbolize the definition of democracy itself.

# FOUR SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO



**Four score and seven years ago,our fathers brought forth on 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 cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot 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 that 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.

# EQUALITY

# FOR A DECLARATION OF WAR

President Franklin D Roosevelt  
December 8, 1941





**THE ATTACK** **YESTERDAY**  
ON THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS HAS CAUSED  
SEVERE DAMAGE TO AMERICAN NAVAL  
AND MILITARY FORCES.

## INTRODUCTION

At 7:53 a.m. on Sunday, December 7, 1941, the first assault wave of Japanese fighter planes attacked the U.S. Naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, taking the Americans completely by surprise. • The first wave targeted airfields and battleships. The second wave targeted other ships and shipyard facilities. The air raid lasted until 9:45 a.m. Eight battleships were damaged, with five sunk. Three light cruisers, three destroyers and three smaller vessels were lost along with 188 aircraft. The Japanese lost 27 planes and five midget submarines which attempted to penetrate the inner harbor and launch torpedoes. • Three prime targets; the U.S. Pacific Fleet aircraft carriers, Lexington, Enterprise and Saratoga, were not in the harbor and thus escaped damage. • The casualty list at Pearl Harbor included 2,335 servicemen and 68 civilians killed, and 1,178 wounded. Over a thousand crewmen aboard the USS Arizona battleship were killed after a 1,760 pound aerial bomb penetrated the forward magazine causing catastrophic explosions. • News of the “sneak attack” was broadcast to the American public via radio bulletins, with many popular Sunday afternoon entertainment programs being interrupted. The news sent a shockwave across the nation, resulting in a tremendous influx of young volunteers into the U.S. Armed Forces. The attack also united the nation behind President Franklin D. Roosevelt and effectively ended the American isolationist movement. • On Monday, December 8th, President Roosevelt appeared before Congress and made this speech asking for a declaration of war against Japan, calling the previous day, “A date which will live in infamy.”

**Mr Vice President, Mr Speaker, members of the Senate and the House of Representatives:** Yesterday, December 7th, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that nation, and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific.

Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in the American island of Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And, while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost. In addition, American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

**DECEMBER  
7TH, 1941**



Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya. Last night Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong. Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam. Last night Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands. Last night the Japanese attacked Wake Island. And this morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has therefore undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense, that always will our whole nation remember the character of the onslaught against us.

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people, in their righteous might, will win through to absolute victory.

I believe that I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us.

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory and our interests are in grave danger.

With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph. So help us God.



**SO HELP  
US GOD.**

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7th, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.



## POST NOTES:

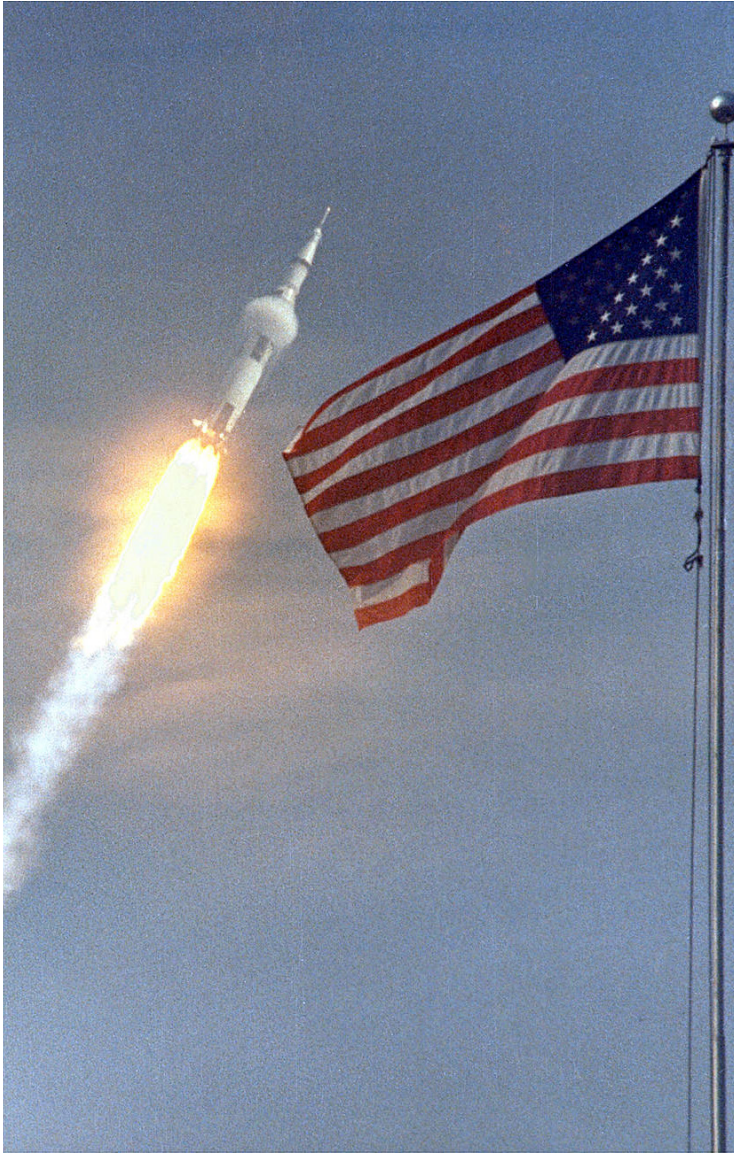
Three days later, December 11th, Japan's allies, Germany and Italy, both declared war on the United States. The U.S. Congress responded immediately by declaring war on them. Thus the European and Southeast Asian wars had become a global conflict with the Axis Powers; Japan, Germany, Italy and others, aligned against the Allied Powers; America, Britain, Soviet Russia and others.



**“WE CHOOSE  
TO GO TO  
THE MOON”**

**President John F. Kennedy  
September 12, 1962**





## INTRODUCTION

On a very hot late summer's day in 1962, President Kennedy visited Rice University in Houston, Texas, and gave this speech outdoors in the football stadium. The President spoke in philosophical terms about the need to solve the mysteries of space, reaffirmed America's commitment to landing a man on the moon before the end of the 1960s and also defended the enormous expense of the space program. Along the way, the President made humorous mentions of the Rice-Texas football rivalry and the blazingly hot weather.

**President Pitzer, Mr Vice President, Governor, Congressman Thomas, Senator Wiley, and Congressman Miller, Mr Webb, Mr Bell, Scientists, Distinguished Guests,**

**and Ladies and Gentlemen:** I appreciate your president having made me an honorary visiting professor, and I will assure you that my first lecture will be very brief.

I am delighted to be here and I'm particularly delighted to be here on this occasion.

We meet at a college noted for knowledge, in a city noted for progress, in a state noted for strength, and we stand in need of all three, for we meet in an hour of change and challenge, in a decade of hope and fear, in an age of both knowledge and ignorance. The greater our knowledge increases, the greater our ignorance unfolds.

Despite the striking fact that most of the scientists that the world has ever known are alive and working today, despite the fact that this Nation's own scientific manpower is doubling every 12 years in a rate of growth more than three times that of our population as a whole, despite that, the vast stretches of the unknown and the unanswered and the unfinished still far outstrip our collective comprehension.

No man can fully grasp how far and how fast we have come, but condense, if you will, the 50,000 years of man's recorded history in a time span of but a half-century. Stated in these terms, we know very little about the first 40 years, except at the end of them advanced man had learned to use the skins of animals to cover them. Then about 10 years ago, under this standard, man emerged from his caves to construct other kinds of shelter. Only five years ago man learned to write and use a cart with wheels.





# GREAT ADVENTURES



Christianity began less than two years ago. The printing press came this year, and then less than two months ago, during this whole 50-year span of human history, the steam engine provided a new source of power. Newton explored the meaning of gravity. Last month electric lights and telephones and automobiles and airplanes became available. Only last week did we develop penicillin and television and nuclear power, and now if America's new spacecraft succeeds in reaching Venus, we will have literally reached the stars before midnight tonight.

This is a breathtaking pace, and such a pace cannot help but create new ills as it dispels old, new ignorance, new problems, new dangers. Surely the opening vistas of space promise high costs and hardships, as well as high reward.

So it is not surprising that some would have us stay where we are a little longer to rest, to wait. But this city of Houston, this state of Texas, this country of the United States was not built by those who waited and rested and wished to look behind them. This country was conquered by those who moved forward—and so will space.

William Bradford, speaking in 1630 of the founding of the Plymouth Bay Colony, said that all great and honorable actions are accompanied with great difficulties, and both must be enterprised and overcome with answerable courage.

If this capsule history of our progress teaches us anything, it is that man, in his quest for knowledge and progress, is determined and cannot be deterred. The exploration of space will go ahead, whether we join in it or not, and it is one of the great adventures of all

time, and no nation which expects to be the leader of other nations can expect to stay behind in this race for space.

Those who came before us made certain that this country rode the first waves of the industrial revolution, the first waves of modern invention, and the first wave of nuclear power, and this generation does not intend to founder in the backwash of the coming age of space. We mean to be a part of it—we mean to lead it. For the eyes of the world now look into space, to the moon and to the planets beyond, and we have vowed that we shall not see it governed by a hostile flag of conquest, but by a banner of freedom and peace. We have vowed that we shall not see space filled with weapons of mass destruction, but with instruments of knowledge and understanding.

Yet the vows of this Nation can only be fulfilled if we in this Nation are first, and, therefore, we intend to be first. In short, our leadership in science and industry, our hopes for peace and security, our obligations to ourselves as well as others, all require us to make this effort, to solve these mysteries, to solve them for the good of all men, and to become the world's leading space-faring nation.

We set sail on this new sea because there is new knowledge to be gained, and new rights to be won, and they must be won and used for the progress of all people. For space science, like nuclear science and all technology, has no conscience of its own. Whether it will become a force for good or ill depends on man, and only if the United States occupies a position of pre-eminence can we help decide whether this new ocean will be a sea of peace or a new terrifying theater of war. I do not say that we should or will go unprotected against the hostile misuse of space any more than



# MARGARET HAMILTON



THE WOMAN BEHIND

THE EXPEDITION

we go unprotected against the hostile use of land or sea, but I do say that space can be explored and mastered without feeding the fires of war, without repeating the mistakes that man has made in extending his writ around this globe of ours.

There is no strife, no prejudice, no national conflict in outer space as yet. Its hazards are hostile to us all. Its conquest deserves the best of all mankind, and its opportunity for peaceful cooperation many never come again. But why, some say, the moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask why climb the highest mountain? Why, 35 years ago, fly the Atlantic? Why does Rice play Texas?

We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too.

It is for these reasons that I regard the decision last year to shift our efforts in space from low to high gear as among the most important decisions that will be made during my incumbency in the office of the Presidency.

In the last 24 hours we have seen facilities now being created for the greatest and most complex exploration in man's history. We have felt the ground shake and the air shattered by the testing of a Saturn C-1 booster rocket, many times as powerful as the Atlas which launched John Glenn, generating power equivalent to 10,000 automobiles with their accelerators on the floor. We have seen the site where five F-1 rocket engines, each one as powerful as all eight

engines of the Saturn combined, will be clustered together to make the advanced Saturn missile, assembled in a new building to be built at Cape Canaveral as tall as a 48 story structure, as wide as a city block, and as long as two lengths of this field.

Within these last 19 months at least 45 satellites have circled the earth. Some 40 of them were made in the United States of America and they were far more sophisticated and supplied far more knowledge to the people of the world than those of the Soviet Union.

The Mariner spacecraft now on its way to Venus is the most intricate instrument in the history of space science. The accuracy of that shot is comparable to firing a missile from Cape Canaveral and dropping it in this stadium between the 40 – yard lines.

Transit satellites are helping our ships at sea to steer a safer course. Tiros satellites have given us unprecedented warnings of hurricanes and storms, and will do the same for forest fires and icebergs.

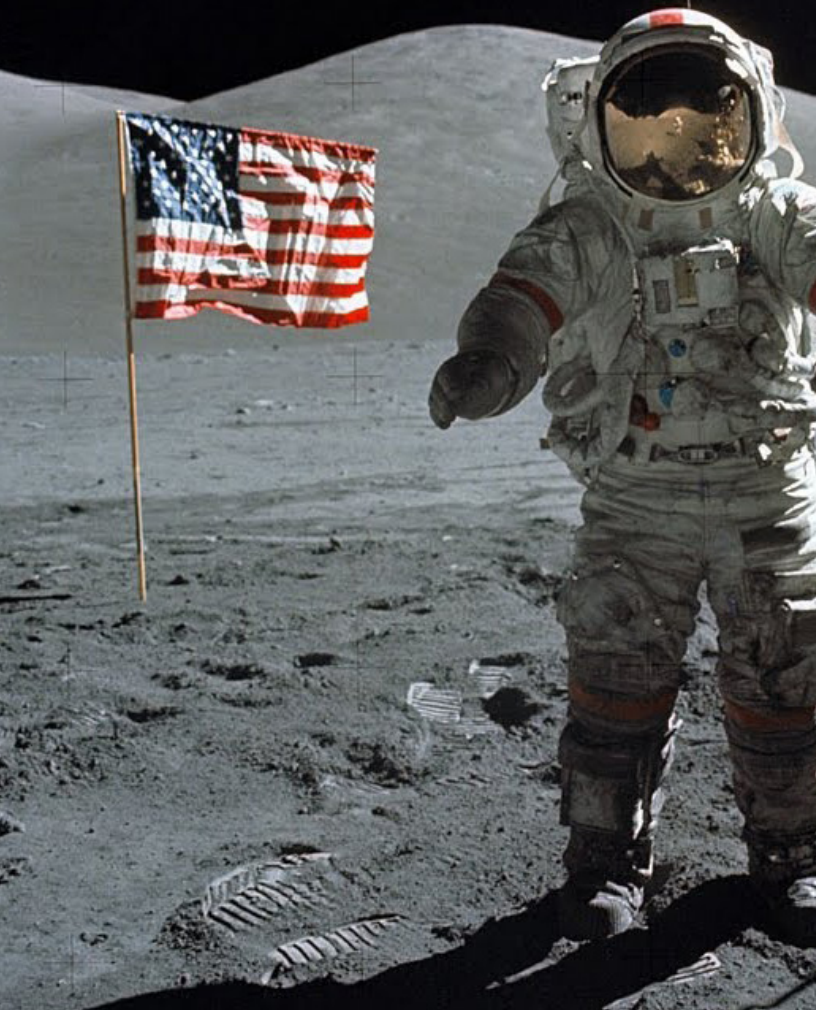
We have had our failures, but so have others, even if they do not admit them. And they may be less public.

To be sure, we are behind, and will be behind for some time in manned flight. But we do not intend to stay behind, and in this decade, we shall make up and move ahead.

The growth of our science and education will be enriched by new knowledge of our universe and environment, by new techniques of learning and mapping and observation, by new tools and computers for industry, medicine, the home as well as the school. Technical institutions, such as Rice, will reap the harvest of these gains.



# ARMSTRONG



And finally, the space effort itself, while still in its infancy, has already created a great number of new companies, and tens of thousands of new jobs. Space and related industries are generating new demands in investment and skilled personnel, and this city and this state, and this region, will share greatly in this growth. What was once the furthest outpost on the old frontier of the West will be the furthest outpost on the new frontier of science and space. Houston, your city of Houston, with its Manned Spacecraft Center, will become the heart of a large scientific and engineering community. During the next 5 years the National Aeronautics and Space Administration expects to double the number of scientists and engineers in this area, to increase its outlays for salaries and expenses to \$60 million a year; to invest some \$200 million in plant and laboratory facilities; and to direct or contract for new space efforts over \$1 billion from this center in this city.

To be sure, all this costs us all a good deal of money. This year's space budget is three times what it was in January 1961, and it is greater than the space budget of the previous eight years combined. That budget now stands at \$5,400 million a year—a staggering sum, though somewhat less than we pay for cigarettes and cigars every year. Space expenditures will soon rise some more, from 40 cents per person per week to more than 50 cents a week for every man, woman and child in the United States, for we have given this program a high national priority—even though I realize that this is in some measure an act of faith and vision, for we do not now know what benefits await us. But if I were to say, my fellow citizens, that we shall send to the moon, 240,000 miles away from the control station in Houston, a giant rocket more than 300 feet tall, the length



of this football field, made of new metal alloys, some of which have not yet been invented, capable of standing heat and stresses several times more than have ever been experienced, fitted together with a precision better than the finest watch, carrying all the equipment needed for propulsion, guidance, control, communications, food and survival, on an untried mission, to an unknown celestial body, and then return it safely to earth, re-entering the atmosphere at speeds of over 25,000 miles per hour, causing heat about half that of the temperature of the sun—almost as hot as it is here today—and do all this, and do it right, and do it first before this decade is out—then we must be bold.

I'm the one who is doing all the work, so we just want you to stay cool for a minute. (laughter)

However, I think we're going to do it, and I think that we must pay what needs to be paid. I don't think we ought to waste any money, but I think we ought to do the job. And this will be done in the decade of the Sixties. It may be done while some of you are still here at school at this college and university. It will be done during the terms of office of some of the people who sit here on this platform. But it will be done. And it will be done before the end of this decade.

And I am delighted that this university is playing a part in putting a man on the moon as part of a great national effort of the United States of America.

Many years ago the great British explorer George Mallory, who was to die on Mount Everest, was asked why did he want to climb it. He said, "Because it is there."

Well, space is there, and we're going to climb it, and the moon and the planets are there, and new hopes for knowledge and peace are there. And, therefore, as we set sail we ask God's blessing on the most hazardous and dangerous and greatest adventure on which man has ever embarked.

Thank you.



# ON THE CHALLENGER DISASTER

President Ronald Regan  
January 28, 1986





## INTRODUCTION

On a crisp winter's morning in Florida, January 28, 1986, the Space Shuttle Challenger was launched with seven persons aboard, including Christa McAuliffe, a 37-year-old teacher from New Hampshire, who was to be the first ordinary citizen in space. The flight began at 11:38 a.m. and ended just 73 seconds later in an explosion apparently caused by a failure in the joint between the two lower segments of the right solid rocket motor. The explosion caused the complete structural breakup of the Space Shuttle, killing all seven crew members. The disaster was witnessed live on TV by many thousands of school children watching McAuliffe venture on what she had described as "the ultimate field trip." That evening, President Ronald Reagan consoled the Nation from the Oval Office.



**Ladies and Gentlemen,** I'd planned to speak to you tonight to report on the state of the Union, but the events of earlier today have led me to change those plans. Today is a day for mourning and remembering. Nancy and I are pained to the core by the tragedy of the shuttle Challenger. We know we share this pain with all of the people of our country. This is truly a national loss.

Nineteen years ago, almost to the day, we lost three astronauts in a terrible accident on the ground. But, we've never lost an astronaut in flight; we've never had a tragedy like this. And perhaps we've forgotten the courage it took for the crew of the shuttle; but they, the Challenger Seven, were aware of the dangers, but overcame them and did their jobs brilliantly. We mourn seven heroes: Michael Smith, Dick Scobee, Judith Resnik, Ronald McNair, Ellison Onizuka, Gregory Jarvis, and Christa McAuliffe. We mourn their loss as a nation together.

For the families of the seven, we cannot bear, as you do, the full impact of this tragedy. But we feel the loss, and we're thinking about you so very much. Your loved ones were daring and brave, and they had that special grace, that special spirit that says, 'Give me a challenge and I'll meet it with joy.' They had a hunger to explore the universe and discover its truths. They wished to serve, and they did. They served all of us.

We've grown used to wonders in this century. It's hard to dazzle us. But for twenty-five years the United States space program has been doing just that. We've grown used to the idea of space, and perhaps we forget that we've only just begun. We're still pioneers. They, the members of the Challenger crew, were pioneers.

And I want to say something to the schoolchildren of America who were watching the live coverage of the shuttle's takeoff. I know it is hard to understand, but sometimes painful things like this happen. It's all part of the process of exploration and discovery. It's all part of taking a chance and expanding man's horizons. The future doesn't belong to the fainthearted; it belongs to the brave. The Challenger crew was pulling us into the future, and we'll continue to follow them.

I've always had great faith in and respect for our space program, and what happened today does nothing to diminish it. We don't hide our space program. We don't keep secrets and cover things up. We do it all up front and in public. That's the way freedom is, and we wouldn't change it for a minute. We'll continue our quest in space. There will be more shuttle flights and more shuttle crews and, yes, more volunteers, more civilians, more teachers in space. Nothing ends here; our hopes and our journeys continue. I want to add that I wish I could talk to every man and woman who works for NASA or who worked on this mission and tell them: "Your dedication and professionalism have moved and impressed us for decades. And we know of your anguish. We share it."

There's a coincidence today. On this day 390 years ago, the great explorer Sir Francis Drake died aboard ship off the coast of Panama. In his lifetime the great frontiers were the oceans, and a historian later said, 'He lived by the sea, died on it, and was buried in it.' Well, today we can say of the Challenger crew: Their dedication was, like Drake's, complete.

The crew of the space shuttle Challenger honored us by the manner in which they lived their lives. We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them, this morning, as they prepared for the journey and waved goodbye and 'slipped the surly bonds of earth' to 'touch the face of God.'

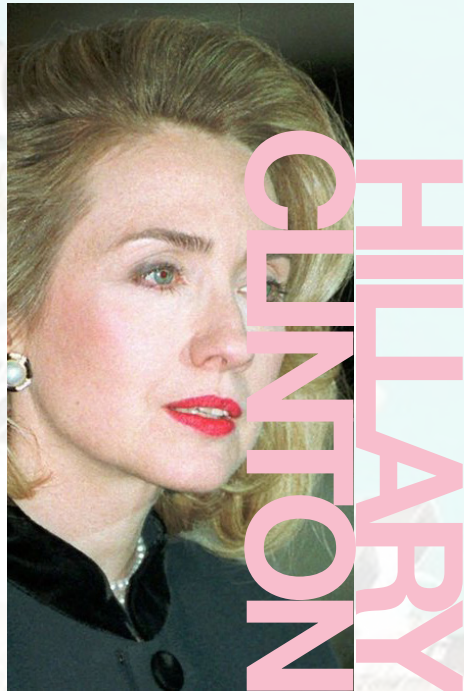
Thank you.



# I AM PROFOUNDLY SORRY

President Bill Clinton  
December 11, 1998





## INTRODUCTION

This speech was given by President Bill Clinton to reporters in the Rose Garden of the White House on Friday, December 11, 1998, at 4:11 p.m., just minutes before the House Judiciary Committee voted to pass its first article of impeachment. • The House impeachment proceedings marked the culmination of a long chain of legal entanglements resulting from a sweeping investigation of the President by Independent Counsel Ken Starr as well as a private lawsuit concerning alleged sexual harassment committed by Clinton before he became President. • Additionally, the President had strongly denied, then later reluctantly admitted a relationship “that was not appropriate” with a young White House intern named Monica Lewinsky. The President’s initial denial had been staunchly defended by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, White House staffers, and various friends and supporters of the President—all of whom knew by now they had been duped.

LIKE ANYONE WHO HONESTLY FACES THE SHAME OF MY CONDUCT I WOULD GIVE ANYTHING TO GO BACK AND UNDO WHAT I DID.



**Good afternoon.** As anyone close to me knows, for months I have been grappling with how best to reconcile myself to the American people, to acknowledge my own wrongdoing and still to maintain my focus on the work of the presidency.

Others are presenting my defense on the facts, the law and the Constitution. Nothing I can say now can add to that.

What I want the American people to know, what I want the Congress to know is that I am profoundly sorry for all I have done wrong in words and deeds.

I never should have misled the country, the Congress, my friends or my family. Quite simply, I gave in to my shame. I have been condemned by my accusers with harsh words.

And while it's hard to hear yourself called deceitful and manipulative, I remember Ben Franklin's admonition that our critics are our friends, for they do show us our faults.

Mere words cannot fully express the profound remorse I feel for what our country is going through and for what members of both parties in Congress are now forced to deal with. These past months have been a torturous process of coming to terms with what I did. I understand that accountability demands consequences, and I'm prepared to accept them.

Painful as the condemnation of the Congress would be, it would pale in comparison to the consequences of the pain I have caused my family. There is no greater agony.

Like anyone who honestly faces the shame of wrongful conduct, I would give anything to go back and undo what I did.

But one of the painful truths I have to live with is the reality that



that is simply not possible. An old and dear friend of mine recently sent me the wisdom of a poet who wrote, “The moving finger writes and having writ, moves on. Nor all your piety nor wit shall lure it back to cancel half a line. Nor all your tears wash out a word of it.”

So nothing, not piety, nor tears, nor wit, nor torment can alter what I have done. I must make my peace with that.

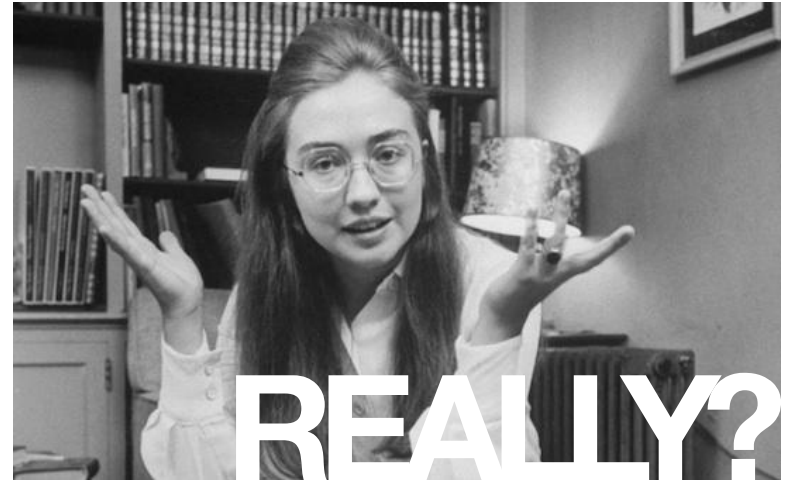
I must also be at peace with the fact that the public consequences of my actions are in the hands of the American people and their representatives in the Congress.

Should they determine that my errors of word and deed require their rebuke and censure, I am ready to accept that.

Meanwhile, I will continue to do all I can to reclaim the trust of the American people and to serve them well.

We must all return to the work, the vital work, of strengthening our nation for the new century. Our country has wonderful opportunities and daunting challenges ahead. I intend to seize those opportunities and meet those challenges with all the energy and ability and strength God has given me. That is simply all I can do—the work of the American people

Thank you very much.



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