



Hubert Humphrey

Vice Presidential Nomination Acceptance Address



delivered 4 June 1964, DNC, Atlantic City, NJ

AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio

Mr. Chairman, Mr. President, my fellow Democrats, my fellow Americans:

I proudly, and humbly accept your nomination.

Will we ever be able to forget this unbelievable, this moving, this beautiful, this wonderful evening? What a challenge to every person in this land, to live up to the goals and the ideals of those who have gone before us, and have charted the course of our actions. I was deeply moved last night. I received a singular tribute from a friend and a great President, a tribute that I shall never forget, when I pray to Almighty God, that I shall have the strength and the wisdom to measure up to the confidence and the trust that has been placed in me. And please let me say thank you, thank you my fellow Democrats.

I believe that I know President Johnson as well as any man, so let me tell you about him. I have known for 16 years his courage, his wisdom, his tact, and his persuasion; his judgment and his leadership. But I shall never forget those hours, and those days of tragedy and crisis last November that we once again relive tonight when a dear and wonderful friend, and a great President, was taken from us; and another step forward without a falter, without a moment of hesitation, or a moment of doubt. I was among those that he called to his side. He asked us, "we the people," Republicans and Democrats alike, Americans all, for our help. And I say, thank God that John Fitzgerald Kennedy was the patriot that he was; that he had the foresight, that day in Los Angeles, to provide for his country. And thank God for this country and for the peace of the world that President Kennedy had the wisdom to choose a Lyndon Johnson as his Vice President.



I'm sure you remember these words: "Let us continue." Those simple and direct words of President Johnson reached the hearts of our people. Those words rallied them, lifted them, and unified them. In this world, disaster is ever but a step away. There is no margin for error. The leader of the free world, the leader of American democracy, holds in his hands the destinies, not only of his own people, but holds in his hands the destinies of all mankind. Yes, yes the President of United States must be a man of calm and deep assurance who knows his country and who knows his people. Above all, he must be a man of clear mind and of sound judgment; and a man who can lead, a man who can decide, a man of purpose and conviction; and Lyndon Johnson is that man.

He is a man with the instincts of the teacher who would rather persuade than to compel; who would rather unite than divide. President Johnson is respectful of the traditions of the presidency and he understands the compelling need for restraint in the use of the greatest power ever assembled by man.

In President Johnson's hands, our people know that our power is for justice. In his hands our people know that our power is for peace. And in his hands our people know that our power is for freedom. President Johnson has helped to make the Democratic Party the only truly national party and this very convention demonstrates our strong and our abiding unity and brotherhood.

And what a contrast. What a contrast with the shambles at the Cow Palace in San Francisco. What a contrast with that incredible spectacle of bitterness, of hostility, of personal attack. The American people have seen the contrast. The American people do have a clear choice and I predict their choice will be Lyndon Johnson in November.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once spoke of the two parties which divide the state: the Party of hope, my fellow Democrats, and the Party of memory. They renew their rivalry, he said, from generation to generation. This contest between the Party of hope and the Party of memory lies at the very heart of this coming campaign. During the last few weeks, shrill voices have tried to lay claim to the great spirit of the American past. But they long for a past that never was. In their recklessness, in their radicalism, they distort the American Conservative tradition. Yes, those who have kidnapped the Republican Party have made it, this year, not a party of memory and sentiment but one of stridency, of unrestrained passion, of extreme and radical language.

And by contrast, which is clear to all, under the leadership of President Lyndon Johnson, the Democratic Party stands today as the champion of great causes, as the Party of purpose and conviction, as the Party of national unity and as the Party of hope for all of mankind.

Now let me document my case. Above all the contrast between the democratic leadership and that of the Goldwater Party is sharp and decisive on the question of peace and security. For 25 years, my fellow Americans, both parties held the conviction that politics should stop at the water's edge; that we must be united in the face of our enemies, and we must be united in support of our allies and our friends.



And I say here tonight to every American, to every friend of freedom: Woe to that party, or that spokesman, that turns its back upon bipartisan foreign policy: Woe to those who are willing to divide this nation, and beware of those who cast false doubts upon our great strengths.

What great problems there are to solve: problems to control the awesome power of the nuclear age; to strengthen the grand alliance with Europe; to continue the task of building a strong and prosperous and united hemisphere under the alliance for progress; to assist our friends in Asia and Africa in preserving their freedom and promoting their progress; and to defend and extend freedom throughout the world.

Now, my fellow Americans, these urgent problems demand reasoned solutions, not empty slogans; childlike answers cannot solve man-sized problems. These problems demand leadership that is prudent, restrained, responsible. They require a President who knows that Rome was not built in a day, but who also knows that the great edifice of western civilization can be brought down in ruins in one hour.

The American presidency is not a place for a man who is impetuous at one moment and indecisive the next; nor is it a place for one who is violently for something one day and violently opposed to it on the next; nor is it an office where statements on matters of major policy are so confusing and so contradictory that neither friend nor foe knows where he stands. And my fellow Americans it is of the highest importance that both friend and foe know that the American President means what he says and says what he means.

The temporary spokesman of the Republican Party is not only out of tune with the great majority of his countrymen, he is even out of step with his own Party. In the last three and a half years, most Democrats and Republicans have agreed on the great decisions our nation has made -- but not the Republican spokesman, not Senator Goldwater. He's been facing backward against the mainstream of American history.

Most Democrats and most Republicans in the United States senate, for example, voted for the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty -- but not the temporary Republican spokesman.

Most Democrats and Republicans in the Senate voted for an eleven and one half billion dollar tax cut for American citizens and American business -- but not Senator Goldwater.

Most Democrats and Republicans in the Senate, in fact four-fifths of the members of his own Party, voted for the Civil Rights Act -- but not Senator Goldwater.

Most Democrats and Republicans in the Senate voted for the establishment of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency that seeks to slow down the nuclear arms race among the nations -- but not the temporary Republican spokesman.

Most Democrats and most Republicans in the Senate voted last year for an expanded medical education program -- but not Senator Goldwater.



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Most Democrats and most Republicans in the Senate voted for education legislation -- but not Senator Goldwater.

Most Democrats and most Republicans in the Senate voted for the National Defense Education Act but not the temporary Republican spokesman.

And, my fellow Americans, most Democrats and most Republicans in the Senate voted to help the United Nations in its peace keeping functions when it was in financial difficulty -- but not Senator Goldwater.

Yes, yes my fellow Americans it is a fact that the temporary Republican spokesman is not in the mainstream of his Party. In fact, he has not even touched the shore.

Now I believe in the two-party system, but there must be two responsible parties. And there must be men who are equipped to lead a great nation as the standard bearers of the two parties. It is imperative that the leadership of the great parties move within the mainstream of American thought and philosophy. I pledge to this convention, I pledge to our great President, to all the American people my complete devotion to this task, to prove once again that the Democratic Party deserves America's affections and that we are indeed the party of hope for the American people.

So tonight let us here and now pledge that the campaign that we will wage will be worthy of our great President Johnson, and my fellow Americans let us hereby resolve and pledge tonight that that campaign will be worthy of the memory of the late and beloved President John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

While others may appeal to passions and prejudice, and appeal to fear and bitterness, we of the Democratic Party call upon all Americans to join us in making our country a land of opportunity for our young, a home of security and dignity for our elderly, and a place of compassion and care for our afflicted.

I say to those responsible and forward-looking Republicans, who put our country above their Party -- and there are thousands of them -- we welcome you to banner of Lyndon Banes Johnson. We welcome your support. Yes we extend a hand of fellowship. We ask you to join us tonight.

For this President, my fellow Americans is a President of all of the American people. e is the President in the great American tradition for labor and for business; no class conflict for the farm family that will receive the unending attention and care of this President. And for the city worker, for north and for the south, for east and for the west, this is our President. President Lyndon Johnson represents -- in fact, he is the embodiment of the spirit of national unity, the embodiment of national purpose, the man in whose hands we placed our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

I am proud to be the friend of this great President. And I am very proud that he has asked this convention to select me as his running mate.



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And I ask you, my fellow Americans, I ask you to walk with us, to work with us, to march forward with us, to help President Johnson build the "Great Society" for America of the future. Yes, "let us continue," let us, fellow Democrats and fellow Americans, let us go forward. Let us take those giant steps forward to which the President has called us, to end the shame of poverty, to end the injustice and prejudice and the denial of opportunity, to build the great society, and to secure the freedom of man and the peace of the world. We can do no less and to this tonight let us resolve to pledge our every effort.

Thank you.