

# **Honors Capstone in Speechwriting**

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# **Presidential Speechwriting in the Modern Presidency**

## **Introduction**

Presidential speechwriters have existed in some form since the birth of our nation.

George Washington solicited the help of James Madison and Alexander Hamilton in drafting his farewell address to the nation. Andrew Jackson used journalist Amos Kendall to draft his public statements. Even Abraham Lincoln, who is generally believed to have drafted his own speeches, borrowed several lines from Secretary of State William Seward for his first inaugural address.<sup>1</sup>

Judson Welliver, a literary clerk for President Warren Harding, is considered to be the first presidential speechwriter in the modern sense. His job was to help President Harding draft his remarks to the nation. While Harding was the first president to have a full-time speechwriter, he was certainly not the last. Only one president since Harding, Calvin Coolidge, has gone without a speechwriter on staff.<sup>2</sup>

For much of our nation's history, the role of presidential speechwriters has remained relatively secret. In fact, presidents went to great lengths to hide the fact that they used speechwriters. For example, John F. Kennedy and his speechwriter Ted Sorenson were almost finished drafting his first inaugural address when Kennedy boarded a plane to Washington. Yet in the presence of a reporter, Kennedy pretended to write the first draft of the speech in longhand just to give the impression that he was the speech's primary author.<sup>3</sup> After Johnson delivered his speech advocating passage of the Voting Rights Act, his advisors told journalists that the President had written the speech himself. In reality, the address was written by a speechwriter

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<sup>1</sup> Schlesinger, Robert. White House Ghosts. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 109 -110.

named Dick Goodwin.<sup>4</sup> It was President Nixon who broke the veil of secrecy and established the first formal White House speechwriting office, known at the time as the Writing and Research Department.<sup>5</sup>

Over time the role and importance of presidential speechwriters have increased as the demands of the presidency have increased. The arrival of radio, TV and now Internet has multiplied the opportunities for a President to be heard by the public and his need to respond to the media. President Hoover made about eight public appearances a month; Bill Clinton made about twenty-eight.<sup>6</sup> As the importance of communicating to the public has grown, so too has the importance of speechwriters.

The nature of the collaborative relationship between a president and his speechwriters has varied depending on the administration. By examining a president's use of speechwriters and his attitude towards communication, one gains a richer picture of the personality of the man and how he successfully or unsuccessfully managed the demands of the presidency. This paper will examine the relationship between presidents and their speechwriters during four modern presidential administrations.

### **President Gerald Ford**

On Friday, August 9, 1974, Gerald Ford delivered his first address as President of the United States. With the intent of distancing himself from the corrupt Nixon presidency, Ford stated the nine words for which he is most remembered: "My fellow Americans, our long national nightmare is over."<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately for Gerald Ford, his problems were just beginning.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 160 - 161.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 190 – 191.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 234.

For much of Ford's short presidency, his administration was plagued by staff infighting that diminished the quality of his speeches and the effectiveness of his governance.

Upon becoming President, Ford appointed Robert Hartmann, his long-time friend and vice-presidential Chief of Staff, to the position of Chief Counselor. Hartmann was a strong writer who knew the president well from his many years of service, yet Ford believed that Hartmann lacked the personality and organizational skills to be a successful Chief of Staff. As a result, Ford appointed Donald Rumsfeld to the position, and Richard Cheney was named Assistant to the President. In his position as Chief Counselor, Hartmann was placed in charge of the speechwriting office while Rumsfeld and Cheney remained focused on policy development. As a long-time friend and advisor to Ford, Hartmann felt snubbed by the appointment, and he saw Rumsfeld and Cheney as adversaries.<sup>8</sup> For much of Ford's presidency, the Hartmann and Rumsfeld/Cheney factions would fight for control over the content of the President's messages.

In manner ways, Hartmann's desire to increase his influence on Ford actually weakened the capacity of the speechwriting office. In order to guard his own influence on the content of speeches, Hartmann tried to keep his speechwriting staff isolated from the influence of Rumsfeld and Cheney. As a result, the speechwriting office became detached from policy development.<sup>9</sup> In the words of Ford speechwriter Aram Bakshian, "I had the feeling that as Hartmann's last fiefdom, the speechwriting department was losing connection with the senior level."<sup>10</sup>

The disconnect between speechwriting and policy development became evident after a speech Ford delivered at Ohio State University. Ford and Hartmann, working in concert, had decided to use the speech to introduce a new federal program intended to better align work and education. Unfortunately, no one ran the speech by the policy experts or staff at the Office of the

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<sup>8</sup> Butler, Patrick. Personal interview. 28 Apr. 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Butler.

<sup>10</sup> Schlesinger, 250.

Management and Budget. When journalists called the OMB later that day to report on the policy proposal, the director had no idea about the program or its feasibility. Not surprisingly, the policy failed to gain ground and ultimately died a bureaucratic death.<sup>11</sup>

After a few more of these missteps, Rumsfeld instituted an elaborate clearance system for all speeches. This process would be used by subsequent administrations much to the chagrin of presidential speechwriters to come. The draft of each speech was passed around to all interested parties including advisors, government agencies and cabinet level staff. While the purpose was to identify areas of policy concern, many advisors could not refuse the opportunity to suggest a few lines for the President's speech. This only contributed to the cacophony of voices vying for influence over the President's rhetoric.<sup>12</sup> In many ways, this process also cemented the divide in responsibilities in the Ford Administration. While others provided the policy points, Hartmann and his speechwriters became mere wordsmiths.<sup>13</sup>

The internal conflict between the Hartmann and Rumsfeld/Cheney factions worsened over time. Eventually the two sides began giving the President competing speech drafts. For example, Hartmann prepared the first draft for Ford's 1975 State of the Union Address, but Rumsfeld and his colleagues disliked Hartmann's ideas. With just twenty-four hours left before the speech was to be delivered, Rumsfeld, Cheney and other advisors sat around a table cutting, pasting and rewriting portions of the speech. At around 9 pm that evening, both the Rumsfeld/Cheney draft and the Hartmann draft landed on the President's desk. Ford looked at both factions and said, "Go back and give me one speech, not two speeches."<sup>14</sup> When the two sides were unable to reach a compromise, Ford had to do it himself. He redrafted the speech with

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 237-238.

<sup>12</sup> Butler

<sup>13</sup> Schlesinger, 242.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 245.

the warring factions arguing on either side. Ford was up until four in the morning finishing the final draft.<sup>15</sup>

Ford speechwriter Patrick Butler believes that Hartmann deliberately delivered speeches to Ford at the last minute in order to minimize the ability of Rumsfeld and Cheney to make changes to their content. Ford seemed to value the competing visions he got from his speechwriters and staff, said Butler. Yet these internal conflicts meant speeches were usually finished at the last minute, which in turn diminished the quality of President Ford's addresses. In his Butler's opinion, Ford did not have enough time to adequately edit the speeches or to practice them aloud.<sup>16</sup>

Ford was angry after the fiasco with the 1975 State of the Union. He told Hartmann that important speeches should be submitted to him well in advance, and he told his aides that the infighting would be no longer tolerated.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, Ford's reprimand was not enough to quell the tensions. Ford was unable to control his top advisors, and the problem lingered on throughout the duration of his administration.

Rumsfeld and Cheney later brought in David Gergen to help them write Ford's speeches.<sup>18</sup> In the preparation for the 1976 State of the Union, it was déjà vu all over again. Hartmann and Milton Friedman prepared the first draft. Cheney disliked it, so he advised Gergen and Alan Greenspan to write a different draft. Both drafts arrived at Ford's desk at about the same time, and, again, Ford had to play arbiter.<sup>19</sup>

Ford's public rhetoric hit its high point in the series of speeches he delivered to commemorate the nation's bicentennial. The president saw these speeches as an opportunity to

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 245-246.

<sup>16</sup> Butler.

<sup>17</sup> Schlesinger, 246.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 251.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 255.

make a real impact with his rhetoric. The writing process for these speeches was much better orchestrated than usual. Hartmann directed each of the speechwriters to submit a series of one-page outlines for each of the six speeches. Hartmann also solicited outlines from outsiders and friends of the president. The president then chose his favorites to be drafted.<sup>20</sup> This new process produced excellent results. Ford had a clearer, more unified voice and more opportunity to improve his speech through practice.

Ford was not a natural orator. He never had any extensive training in public speaking. Ford often mispronounced and stumbled on difficult words, leading to his characterization as a “bumbling guy who just wandered into the White House.”<sup>21</sup> His mispronunciations, coupled with his physical foibles and falls became fodder for the new late night comedy show *Saturday Night Live*, which debuted in 1975. In the opinion of Butler, *Saturday Night Live* led to frivolous news coverage focusing on Ford’s physical and verbal mistakes. This coverage made the president look less capable and less presidential. Over time, Ford would improve his delivery by working with a speech coach.<sup>22</sup>

President Ford was at his best when he was delivering a candid explanation of a situation in plain language, explained Butler. Ford was committed to restoring credibility to the Presidency, and he felt that in order to do this, he should speak clearly and simply to the American people. He wanted to get past fancy rhetoric and “have a little straight talk among friends.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Smith, Craig R. Speechwriting in the Nixon and Ford White Houses. California State University, Long Beach. 1998. 3 May 2008 <<http://www.csulb.edu>>.

<sup>21</sup> Butler.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

According to Butler, Ford was the polar opposite of Ronald Reagan, the next president that will be addressed. “He didn’t want a show business quality to his speeches,” said Butler. “Ford would have shuddered at the thought of having his words chiseled in stone.”<sup>24</sup>

The highs and lows of the Ford presidency can be traced back to his speechwriting operations. When infighting between his advisers pinnacled, Ford’s addresses lacked the clear vision and voice the American public needed. When the speechwriting process worked smoothly for the bicentennial speeches, Ford’s rhetoric and his leadership reached a high point.

### **President Ronald Reagan**

President Ronald Reagan is known by the nickname “The Great Communicator.” Reagan was a gifted orator with a knack for using story and simple language to communicate with the American people. Despite Reagan’s success as a communicator, his administration was also plagued by internal divisions.

The Reagan staff was divided between “the pragmatists” and the “true believers.” The true believers were movement conservatives who, like Reagan, viewed U.S. foreign policy in moralistic black and white terms. Meanwhile, the pragmatists wanted to moderate the president’s vision and language for fear that it would damage the administration’s ability to engage in international diplomacy or to build consensus in Congress. This tension was most pronounced in the relationship between senior staff and speechwriters. The speechwriters saw themselves as guarding Reagan’s vision through bold rhetoric, while the senior staff tried to moderate the president stance and tone down the “red hot” language of his speeches.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Schlesinger, 316-318.



This division played out in the preparations for the speech Reagan gave before the National Association of Evangelicals in March of 1983. The speechwriters prepared a draft referring to the actions of the Soviet Union as “aggressive impulses of an evil empire.”<sup>26</sup> When the draft was passed around to senior advisors, many feared that this strident language would damage the ability of the President to negotiate a nuclear arms reduction with the Soviets. When Reagan speechwriter Anthony Dolan received the edited draft he had circulated, it had the “evil empire” section completely crossed out with the words “on orders of the West Wing.” Yet, much to the advisors’ frustration, the speech, with the language intact, found its way onto Reagan’s desk. The President ultimately decided to use the term “evil empire.” It would become one of his most memorable phrases.<sup>27</sup>

Unlike the Ford administration, the internal tensions in the Reagan administration did not manifest themselves in competing drafts or last minute edits, rather the tensions were institutionalized by way of the staff approval process. The speechwriter would generally collect research, write the speech and then staff it out to agencies for comment. This staffing process became quite an arduous task for writers who did not want to see their creations moderated or toned down by careful diplomats.<sup>28</sup> As Reagan speechwriter Josh Gilder put it, “You quickly understood there that writing a speech was a small part of your job.”<sup>29</sup> Navigating a speech through the staffing process was the other part of the job. This process took political skill, negotiations and compromise.

Peggy Noonan and other speechwriters developed tricks for navigating a speech through the staffing process. “There were times when I would write a whole speech with ‘red meat,’ but

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 327.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 327-328.

<sup>28</sup> Judge, Clark S. Personal interview. 22 Apr. 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Schlesinger, 343.

I'd really layer it thick in the fourth paragraph," said Noonan. "I would know that in staffing, they would fixate on that and leave the rest."<sup>30</sup>

It was the speechwriter's job to try to incorporate the comments and revisions he or she received via the staffing process. "Our job was to find a bridge between the camps and various forces," said Reagan speechwriter Clark Judge.<sup>31</sup> When there was contention about whether or not to moderate language, the president would make the final decision, said Judge. More often than not, the president stuck with his speechwriters' strong and possibly inflammatory language.<sup>32</sup>

Over the course of the administration, Reagan's speechwriters were granted less and less face-time with the President. However, this did not prove to be a major problem for them. Reagan had a clear ideology, voice and style that his speechwriters were able to capture, even if they could not meet with him in person. "We knew what he thought, we know why he thought it, we knew what his philosophy was, and we knew what his intentions were," said Noonan.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the diminishing access he granted to his writers, Reagan was still very involved in the speechwriting process. Reagan was known for his editing abilities, a skill he gained through his work as an actor. "In Hollywood, he was not known as a good script writer, but he was a good script doctor," said speechwriter Ken Khachigian. "He liked to make sure he put his imprint on everything he did." Reagan had a gift for shortening sentences, removing unnecessary words and creating bold, simple, memorable lines.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Judge.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> "Former Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan discusses her dealings with Ronald Reagan as his former speech writer." Dateline NBC 5 June 2004. NBC News. LexisNexis. 3 May 2008. <<http://www.lexisnexis.com>>.

<sup>34</sup> "Congressman Dana Rohrabacher talks about working for Ronald Reagan and the impact it had on him." NPR News Special Report 5 June 2004. National Public Radio. Lexis Nexis. 3 May 2008. <<http://www.lexisnexis.com>>.

Before joining politics, Reagan was an actor, union organizer, and General Electric spokesman.<sup>35</sup> Through these experiences, Reagan learned how to speak to a public and how to understand a public. “Reagan was an effective speaker because he had a good knowledge of the country and a good sense of what resonated with the country. He also had a great sensitivity to language that came from working in movies,” said Judge.

According to Judge, Reagan had a deep understanding of the importance of public communication for a president. He understood how to use lower-profile speeches as opportunities to make news by proposing policy ideas or outlining his vision for America. Reagan also understood how to play to the media. He was strategic in this regard. He would schedule public addresses at the right time of day to ensure they would be picked up by the evening news. He also paid a lot of attention to developing the perfect sound bite.<sup>36</sup>

Reagan was a gifted communicator with a profound understanding of the power of words. Even though Reagan is remembered for his clear style and moving rhetoric, there was actually a great deal of conflict within his administration. Through the institutionalized process of staffing and through his own bold vision, Reagan was able to contain these disagreements in a way that proved productive, rather than destructive for his administration. As Clark Judge explained, the true believers “helped Reagan stake out his position. And where do the pragmatist come in? They helped Reagan cut his deals.”<sup>37</sup>

### **President George H.W. Bush**

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<sup>35</sup> “Peter Robinson talks about writing speeches for President Reagan.” NPR News Special Report 5 June 2004. National Public Radio. Lexis Nexis. 3 May 2008. <<http://www.lexisnexis.com>>.

<sup>36</sup> Judge.

<sup>37</sup> Schlesinger, 361.

“I am not President Reagan,” Bush told his speechwriters upon election. “I couldn’t be if I wanted to.”<sup>38</sup> This proved to be a prophetic statement. Throughout his administration, Bush and his advisors failed to place the same value on public communication as their predecessor had. Bush believed that his legacy would be defined by his decisions on policy, not by his public speaking.<sup>39</sup> According to Bush communications director David Demarest, Bush never bought the idea that a president’s success depended on his success as orator.<sup>40</sup> Bush failed to recognize the importance of speechmaking, and he paid the price for it with a one term presidency.

Following in the footsteps of President Reagan, Bush was very aware that he lacked the finesse and rhetorical gifts of his predecessor. In fact, he seemed to consciously distance himself from any language or style that was associated with Reagan. Bush liked for his speeches to be written in a clear, direct manner with short sentences. He detested flowery rhetoric, and speechwriters were often dismayed to find “too much rhetoric” scribbled on the drafts of their speeches. Reagan and his top officials wanted substance over style. Speechwriter Curt Smith recalled how he would receive edited drafts from the Oval Office with lines crossed out and the notation “Too much like Reagan. Take it out.” written in the margins.<sup>41</sup>

The lack of clout the speechwriters had with the President was evident by how he treated them. Bush’s speechwriters were not granted mess privileges. In the White House, lunch time in the mess was a missed opportunity for speechwriters to swap ideas with senior advisers. Bush’s writers also had limited access to the West Wing. There were only a handful of passes to get in and not enough to go around to all the speechwriters. This treatment demonstrated that the Bush administration did not value the role of public communication or its speechwriters.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 364.

<sup>39</sup> Schlesinger, 364.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 367-368.

According to former Bush speechwriter Mark Davis, the president downplayed the role of public communication and speechmaking during his administration. In Davis's opinion, Bush did not understand how to use speeches to his advantage. He and other speechwriters would encourage the President to use speeches to introduce bold policies ideas or important news developments. Instead, Bush would often informally divulge news to the media on the back of Air Force One or have James Baker discuss the information at a press conference.<sup>43</sup>

"Bush can be a good speaker, if he is interested in the topic," said Davis. This assertion is evident in the different approaches the president used for addressing foreign policy versus domestic policy speeches. Davis said Bush was very interested in foreign policy issues. For speeches addressing foreign policy, content ideas would originate from the President himself. Bush remained active throughout the drafting progress, changing a great deal of the speech during each subsequent edit.<sup>44</sup> Former speechwriter Curt Smith wrote both Bush's address to the Veterans of Foreign Wars and his "Just War" speech on January 28, 1991. Smith said he would come into the office each day to find several pages of type-written notes from the President. He estimated that over half of each speech was drafted by Bush.<sup>45</sup>

The process was far different for domestic speeches. The ideas for content would usually originate from domestic policy staff members or cabinet-level staff. The speechwriter would write the speech, staff it out, and then the president might take a weekend to look over it and make minor changes.<sup>46</sup> Bush provided very little input into these speeches.

Domestic policy concerns would ultimately lead to President Bush's electoral defeat. President Bush often appeared out of touch with and unsympathetic to the economic concerns of

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<sup>43</sup> Davis, Mark. Personal interview. 22 Apr. 2008.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Schlesinger, 382.

<sup>46</sup> Davis.

the average American. Bush's approval ratings continued to decline throughout his administration. The reason, as Bill Clinton stated, "It's the economy, stupid."

Bush's public speaking was plagued by several problems. The President was often unwilling to practice his speeches out loud before he delivered them. One of his speechwriters, Jennifer Grossman, recalled how Bush read her speech for a park opening for the first time while he was delivering it.<sup>47</sup> Bush also had a bad habit of ad-libbing. This was a problem because he lacked the extemporaneous skills of his successor Clinton. Bush would go back and forth from his own words to the words on the card, resulting in speeches that lacked unity and clear transitions.<sup>48</sup> Bush also had difficulty in handling emotion. He would often cut out portions of his speeches while at the podium for fear that a particularly poignant story would cause him to become overly emotional while speaking and unable to continue.<sup>49</sup>

Most importantly, Bush failed to leverage important moments through public speaking. After the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, many of his advisors suggested that the President use the episode as an opportunity to deliver a major address declaring the end of the Cold War. They felt such a speech would secure Bush a place in history. The President refused. It was not his style. He said to his press secretary Marlin Fitzwater, "I'm not going to dance on the Berlin Wall. The last thing I want to do is brag about winning the Cold War, or bringing the wall down."<sup>50</sup> In the opinion of Mark Davis, Bush had an "innate modesty" that often prevented him from using his public speaking capacity to its fullest.<sup>51</sup>

### **President William Clinton**

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<sup>47</sup> Donaldson-Evans, Catherine. "Different Writer, Same President." Fox News 12 May 2005. 3 May 2008 <<http://www.foxnews.com>>.

<sup>48</sup> Schlesinger, 395.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 385-286.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 374-375.

<sup>51</sup> Davis.

Bill Clinton never used a speechwriter before he ran for the presidency. He would often tell his writers, “I gave three speeches a day when I was governor, never needed a speechwriter.”<sup>52</sup> Clinton’s inexperience with speechwriters did not indicate his lack of respect for the importance of public communication, but rather his great skill at ad-libbing and his strong stylistic voice.

Clinton had some doubts about working with speechwriters. As advisor Don Baer recalled, “I don’t think [Clinton] liked the idea that someone else thought they were going to put words in his mouth...I think he felt like he had a better grasp on his style than others.”<sup>53</sup> Yet not even the most skilled orator can survive the demands of the modern presidency without the help of several speechwriters. Despite his inclination, Clinton and his speechwriters learned to work together effectively to deliver several memorable speeches.

Bill Clinton was a gifted speaker, but he did not consider himself to be an orator. He called his speeches talks. He said he wanted to have a frank discussion with the people.<sup>54</sup> Clinton could be eloquent at times, but he was generally weary of overly grand rhetoric and would edit this language out of his remarks. Speechwriter Michael Waldman recalled standing in the Oval Office while Clinton was marking up his speech draft. Clinton came to a fancy passage, crossed it all out and muttered, “Words, Words, Words.”<sup>55</sup>

Clinton had a remarkable gift for ad-libbing portions of speeches and doing so in a way that made political sense. He would often discard a text and ad-lib entire portions of a speech, developing his ideas in response to audience feedback and applause, deftly departing and returning to the original text. Clinton had an enormous grasp of domestic policy which enabled

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<sup>52</sup> Schlesinger, 405.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 417.

<sup>54</sup> Knuset, David. Telephone interview. 24 Apr. 2008.

<sup>55</sup> “President Clinton’s Speech-making Style.” Morning Edition 1 Jan. 2004. National Public Radio. Lexis Nexis. 3 May 2008. <<http://www.lexisnexis.com>>.

him to speak off the cuff. According to former speechwriter David Knuset, Clinton made very few errors considering how often he improvised during speeches.<sup>56</sup>

Former speechwriter Jordan Tamagni estimated that the ideal balance between a prepared text and Clinton's improvisations was about fifty-fifty. This balance allowed Clinton to be engaged without rambling. It became the speechwriter's job to develop drafts that established a broad theme while still allowing the president to go off of script.<sup>57</sup> Clinton's speechwriters also developed certain tricks to keep the President on track during his speeches. They would often boldface important points in a speech so the president would know to include them.<sup>58</sup> Waldman used a different tactic. He would give the president a 15-minute long speech draft for a 30-minute speech slot with the expectations that his ad-libbing would double the time.<sup>59</sup> For Clinton's talk at the Church of God in Christ in Tennessee, speechwriter Carolyn Curiel gave him an outline of talking points. Clinton filled in the rest while in the pulpit.<sup>60</sup>

Bill Clinton was very involved in editing his speeches. Hillary Clinton later observed, "He's never met a sentence he couldn't fool with."<sup>61</sup> The speechwriters would write dozens of drafts before the President was satisfied. It took 25 drafts for his first inaugural address.<sup>62</sup> Clinton would usually edit by speaking. He would get on a podium and start reading the speech aloud, editing as he went, rephrasing sentences and ad-libbing sections. The speechwriters would listen and incorporate these changes into future drafts.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Knuset.

<sup>57</sup> Schlesinger, 408.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 409.

<sup>59</sup> President Clinton's Speech-making Style.

<sup>60</sup> Schlesinger, 415.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 403.

<sup>62</sup> Knuset.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.



Clinton's tendency to continue to edit and edit meant that that his speeches were often finished at the eleventh hour. Winging-it at the last minute was Clinton's style, said Knuset.<sup>64</sup> Speechwriters learned to expect 2 AM calls from the president telling them he had decided to rewrite the draft for a speech he was delivering that very same morning.<sup>65</sup> In one amusing anecdote, Clinton was scheduled to deliver a speech at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. Clinton tried to hold his coffee cup, while simultaneously rewriting portions of his speech in the back of the car. When the vehicle hit a bump, Clinton's coffee spilled all over his shirt. With no time to turn back, Clinton ended up borrowing a white shirt from a similarly built Secret Service agent.<sup>66</sup>

The Clinton administration experienced its share of ideological divisions within its internal ranks, but these divisions did not prove damaging as they had in previous administrations. Clinton advisors were divided between the liberal Old Democrats and the centrist New Democrats.<sup>67</sup> Clinton avoided the fiasco of Ford's office by keeping his policy development engaged in the speechwriting process. In the Clinton administration, there was a great deal of crossover between speechwriters and policy aids with many of his speechwriters having policy backgrounds.<sup>68</sup> In Knuset's opinion, Clinton reveled in the conflicting positions he received from his staff. While the President would ultimately make decisions, he would often attempt to synthesize views and produce policy and rhetoric that melded the different opinions.<sup>69</sup>

Clinton also avoided one major problem of the Reagan administration by restructuring his speechwriting office. Most of Clinton's foreign policy addresses was handled by speechwriters

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> President Clinton's Speech-making Style.

<sup>66</sup> Schlesinger, 411.

<sup>67</sup> Knuset.

<sup>68</sup> Schlesinger, 437.

<sup>69</sup> Knuset.

within the National Security Council. These individuals were well-versed in foreign policy issues and unlikely to draft rhetoric that would prove to be a diplomatic misstep.<sup>70</sup>

The Clinton administration adapted its public communication efforts to advancements in public opinion research and new technology. While previous administrations had used public opinion polling in a minimal capacity, Clinton made great use of this strategy. His administration would use polling to see how Americans felt about policy issues, and then craft arguments based on the most salient opinion.<sup>71</sup> Pollsters Mark Penn and Dick Morris also used polling to test sound bites. After determining which sound bites worked best, Morris would check with the executive departments to see if they had any policy proposals that fell under the theme of a sound bite. Then Morris would instruct the writers to draft a presidential address that incorporated and highlighted the sound bite.<sup>72</sup>

Clinton was the first president to be seriously affected by the 24-hour news cycle. Each time Clinton spoke, his words could be carried over cable television stations and on internet websites. As a result, Clinton spoke more times in a year than any president previous or since.<sup>73</sup> In the opinion of many of his speechwriters, Clinton spoke too much, distracting the media from his most important points.<sup>74</sup> The 24-hour news cycle helped Clinton get his message to the public, but it also multiplied the destructive impact of his sexual scandals. For a good part of his second administration, the media remained focused on his impending impeachment trial.

Clinton had an extraordinary ability to explain complex policy in simple terms that resonated with the American public. He was great in the pulpit, reacting and ad-libbing based on the reactions of his audience. He was also a skilled politician and was able to use language to

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<sup>70</sup> Schlesinger, 437.

<sup>71</sup> "Interview with former Clinton speechwriter Micheal Waldman." *Fox the Edge with Paula Zahn* 27 Sep. 2000. Fox News Network. *Lexis Nexis*. 3 May 2008. <<http://www.lexisnexis.com>>.

<sup>72</sup> Schlesinger, 438.

<sup>73</sup> President Clinton's Speech-making Style.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* and Knuset.

“stab an opponent in the back while making it look like he was patting him on the back.”<sup>75</sup> David Knuset described President Clinton as “a preacher, professor and politician all rolled into one.”<sup>76</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Behind the scenes of every presidency is a group of speechwriters who draft a president’s remarks to the nation. The demands of the modern presidency require that our leaders relinquish control of their rhetoric to speechwriters. Yet all presidents remain pretty relatively active in the drafting and editing process.

The nature of this collaborative relationship between a president and his speechwriters varies depending on the administration. It is clear from this examination of four modern presidencies that the success of a president depends in part on his understanding of the importance of public communication and on his management of these staff relationships. Those presidents who successfully managed their staff and their communications found electoral and historical success, those who had problems in this area, did not.

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<sup>75</sup> Knuset.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

### **Acceptance Speech for the Democratic Party Nomination**

*This is a speech written for Barack Obama to deliver at the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado.*

Nearly two years ago, I started my campaign on the steps of the Illinois State Capitol. I was a freshman Senator, with zero major donors, zero endorsements and a very funny sounding name. I knew then that I was embarking on an improbable and unlikely journey to the presidency.

But I also knew it was the kind of improbable and unlikely journey only possible in America.

My father was a foreign student, born in a Kenyan village. He came to America because this country gave him an academic scholarship and a chance.

In college, my father met my mother - a shy, Midwestern girl, the daughter of a World War II vet who moved his family west to Hawaii in search of opportunity and adventure.

There were an improbable pair, my mother and my father.  
Born an ocean apart, of different backgrounds, of different colors.

But they both shared a belief that their only son would achieve great things.

Because they both shared an unwavering faith in the promise of America.

They believed that in America every child could go to college if they only studied hard enough.  
That in America every family could experience prosperity if they only worked hard enough.  
That in America class and color was of no consequence.

That in America the son of a Kenyan goat-herder and a small town gal from Kansas could one day stand on this stage and say to you:

I accept your nomination for the Presidency.

[Applause]

I want to thank those people who helped me return to this convention stage.

To my beautiful wife Michelle and my daughters Malia and Sasha, you inspire me daily.

To the voters and volunteers who braved tornados in Tennessee and ice storms in Maryland to let their voice be heard, I thank you with all my sincerity. You are the foot soldiers in our revolution.

Today we have an opportunity to change the course of American history. We are called up to answer to the “fierce urgency of now”.

For 8 years we’ve watched President Bush and the Republican Party lead this country in the wrong direction. Bush promised us compassion and he gave us corruption. He promised us prosperity and gave us peril. And he promised us wisdom and he gave us war.

He spoke of the importance of family values while sitting idly by as families lost their homes and health insurance.

He called for an era of personal responsibility while shirking his own responsibility for an unwise war.

He shrouded his actions in the American flag while eroding the very values that flag represents.

That flag, it doesn’t belong to President Bush. It doesn’t belong to the Republican party. It belongs to America. It doesn’t stand for torture, wiretaps, and war. It stands for freedom, equality and compassion.

It’s time for us to reclaim our American values. To reclaim our democracy.

Americans are demanding a fundamental change in the way our government functions. Change in the direction this country is headed.

As I’ve traveled around the United States through cities and suburbs and prairies and plains, I’ve felt the enormous energy of an inspired electorate. In state after state, I’ve witnessed long lines of people snaking around poll booths. People waiting for hours, braving snow and rain just to cast their vote. To cast a vote for unity over division. To cast a vote for hope over fear. Democrats, Republicans and Independents all casting a vote for change.

Change for the father I met in this Mile High City who lost his job and pension after the plant he worked at for 20 years closed down.

Change for the single mother I met in Iowa who works two jobs but still couldn't afford health insurance for her sick child.

Change for the young man in Iraq who prays for the day when he may return home safely.

Change for the millions of Americans whose names we'll never know, but whose needs demand our action.

Now I know there are people out there who question my promise of change. They say it's empty rhetoric. They say that I lack the grit or the experience to get the job done. But let me tell them - change is not a convenient catchphrase I picked up on the campaign trail, it's a principle I've fought for my entire life, from south side Chicago to a seat in the Senate.

As a college graduate, I gave up a job on Wall Street to help the homeless get off the streets. With my beat-up blue civic and a map, I set out across Chicago neighborhoods, working with community organizations to establish employment training programs, after school programs and affordable housing.

As a lawyer, I passed on a lucrative career, choosing instead to fight for justice and equality as a civil rights attorney in Chicago. I worked to ensure that no person was denied the right to vote and no person was silenced in their fight against corporate fraud.

As a U.S. Senator, I championed tough lobbying legislation, rooting out Abramoff-style corruption in Congress. And I worked to ensure that thousands of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan would be given the care they rightly deserved.

And as your President, I will champion the values and policies for which this Democratic Party stands.

When I think about the promise of America, I think about very first campaign for the Illinois Senate.

Back then, no one knew the name Barack Obama. My early campaign stops were in a friend's living room or in a church basement. Back then, there were no cheering crowds. I was lucky if five people came to see me.

The experience was a blessing because it gave me the opportunity to talk with people one-on-one, and to listen to what people had to say about their lives and their government.

During these conversations, I was struck by the commonality of beliefs that people shared across races, across religions, across classes. A set of true American values emerged.

They thought that anybody willing to work should receive a living wage.

That every child should have access to quality education regardless of their neighborhood  
That no person should have to file for bankruptcy because they got sick.  
That a person who worked hard their whole life should be able to enjoy a dignified retirement.  
That every child deserves a clean environment and a safe world.  
That a government by the people *should* serve the people.

For two long we've watched as our government has been hijacked by beltway lobbyists and private interests. While they gain, the average American is losing.

People are working harder than ever, but falling farther behind.  
CEOs continue to get richer, while the average worker's wage continues to fall  
The cost of healthcare, housing and education are soaring.

People are sick and tired of a president who dances around these problems, while doing little to stop them.

As your president, I'll bring real change to Washington. And I'll work to fulfill the promise of America.

When I'm president we'll finally pass a plan for universal health care for all Americans. Health care isn't a privilege - it's a right. What does it say about the priorities of a nation in which our leaders accept health insurance paid for by taxpayer dollars while millions of taxpayers go without.

It's time we have a leader that stops talking about the 47 million uninsured Americans and start doing something about it. As president, I will act for your health by passing comprehensive healthcare reform by the end of my first term.

When I'm president, we'll end Bush's tax cuts for the wealthy. This isn't economic stimulus, it's good old-fashion Republican nepotism. I will put tax dollars back where they belong - In the hand of hard-working American families.

When I'm president, we'll end tax cuts for companies that send our manufacturing jobs overseas and support job creation right here in the United States. I'll double federal funding to create high-paying jobs within our national borders. I'll make investments in education and training to leverage American's greatest strengths - our people, our ingenuity and our entrepreneurial spirit.

When I'm president, we'll give each child a fair chance on the American dream by investing in education, from infancy to Ph.D. We'll expand funding for early childhood education, reinvest in our failing schools, and work to make college affordable for every American.

Michelle and I remember how tough it was to pay off those college loans while starting our new family. We want to make sure our next generation of professionals isn't saddled by college debt. As president, I'll create a tax credit students can receive in exchange for serving their community and the nation.

When I'm president, we'll find ways to address climate change and end our dependence on foreign oil. For eight years, we've lived under a president who believes the best way to address environmental problems is to pretend they don't exist. Not any more. Under my presidency, the United States will be a leader in the battle against global climate change.

When I'm president, we'll finally end the war in Iraq. No more Americans will die fighting President Bush's unjust and unwise war. Under his leadership, John McCain says our troops could remain in Iraq for another 100 years. Not under my watch. As president, I'll bring the troops home within 16 months. I will close Guantanamo. I will outlaw torture. I will restore habeas corpus. And I'll show the world that America is a nation that stands for freedom and compassion. Not war and deceit.

For too long now, we've lived under a president who has used 9/11 as a prop in his campaign of fear, a man that has used our national tragedy for his own political ends. When I think about that September morning, I'm not reminded of our fear. I'm reminded of our compassion. I'm reminded of how strong and powerful America can be when its people are united. When we work together. When we stretch our hands across the aisles of Congress. When we refuse to see a nation in terms of red and blue and choose to see it as red, white and blue.

True unity is the only way we can overcome the serious deficits our nation faces and address the great challenges of our time: disease that decimate populations around the globe, climate change that places our planet in peril, genocide that debases the value of human life, terrorism that threatens our security and poverty that weakens the strength of our social fabric.

This election is about the past vs. the future. It's about whether we'll settle for the same old divisions and Washington politics or whether we'll reach for a politics of common goals, shared sacrifice and shared prosperity.

When people say it cannot be done, I think of my time as a community organizer in South Side Chicago twenty-five years ago. In the shadow of abandoned manufacturing plants, we brought black people, white people and Latino people together to fight for jobs. In the classrooms of our failing schools, we brought people together to demand afterschool programs for their children. In the street where are children were being shot, we brought people together to find solutions to gang violence.

Together we restored hope and opportunity to neighborhoods plagued by despair and fear. Together we brought change to Chicago, and together we can bring change to America.

Years from now I want us to look back at this election and say this was the moment.

This was the moment when we chose hope over fear.

This is the moment when we chose unity over division.

This was the moment when America united to make change possible.

We can heal this nation. We can transcend our divisions. We can seize the future.



We can change this nation. Yes, we can – We can fulfill the promise of America. Step by step, block by block, hand in hand together.

Thank you and God bless.

### **Presentation Speech for the Academy of Motion Picture's Lifetime Achievement Award**

*This is an award presentation speech to honor the Academy of Motion Picture's 2008 Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Robert F. Boyle.*

The artist Pablo Picasso said, "Art is not truth. Art is a way of approaching the truth."

I can find no truer words to describe the endeavor of the man we honor here tonight.

He is an artist that has spent his life approaching emotional truth - by way of architectural truth. Using art to create worlds only experienced through the magic of movies.

His career has spanned seven decades, his name has graced the credits of over 100 films, and his vision has produced some of the most iconic images of American cinema.

Tonight we honor the legendary production designer and art director Robert Boyle.

Art direction is a seldom celebrated, yet essential craft of our industry. The art director provides a visual interpretation to a written script. He creates the space in which a film is realized.

Robert Boyle's work represents the benchmark of his craft, the magnum opus which others seek to replicate.

Aspiring composers have their Beethoven. Aspiring playwrights have their Shakespeare. And aspiring art directors have their Robert Boyle.

Boyle's work is marked by heightened reality and gorgeous artificiality. He has a unique ability to construct a reality more emotionally authentic than that which engendered its creation. It is as if he captures the essence of a location, bottles it up, concentrates it, and then releases it through the mediums of projection screens, mattes, wood and paint.

Boyle's production sets not only enhance a story, but also cement it in time and place. He has built diverse sets including turn-of-the-century Russian shtetls and baroque mansions.

Boyle's extraordinary career began 73 years ago when, as an eager but unemployed young architect, he found work as a draftsman in the art department of Paramount Studios.

He soon began an industrious collaboration with the master of suspense, Alfred Hitchcock. Their partnership pushed the limits of special effects and propelled Boyle towards a greater perfection of his craft.

Under the guidance of Hitchcock, Boyle went to extreme lengths *and* extreme heights to create his artificial realities.

When locations scouts for *North by Northwest* could not find a flat cornfield where Cary Grant could run but not hide, Boyle solved the dilemma. He built his own cornfield. He transferred an entire cornfield from the rolling hills of California to the flat earth of the San Joaquin Valley just to achieve the right effect.

When Hitch visited Mount Rushmore, he liked the way the nearby pine trees cast long, thin shadows onto the ground. Unfortunately, the production staff could not reproduce this lighting effect in the studio. For that iconic scene where Cary Grant bids farewell to Eva Marie Saint, Boyle actually hand painted shadows onto the studio grass.

When the Department of the Interior refused to let Hitchcock film Cary Grant scaling down the faces of Mount Rushmore, Hitchcock turned, once again, to Robert Boyle.

Boyle devised a solution: He would rebuild the monument on the MGM lot.

It was no easy task.

Boyle fearlessly climbed into the rusty boatswain chair left by the monument's carver, and he spiraled up and down the cliff for days, photographing the monument from top to bottom, earning him the nickname "the man on Lincoln's nose."

Back at the MGM soundstage, Boyle used these photographs to reconstruct the heads of four presidents with rear projection screens.

Boyle's recreation of Mount Rushmore was no small feat. After all, it took 400 men and 14 years to create the first version.

Boyle has worked on other renowned films including *The Birds*, *In Cold Blood*, *Cape Fear*, and *Saboteur*.

In his illustrious career in Hollywood, Robert Boyle has tempered the great changes of cinematic history and remained a leader and innovator in his craft. At 98-years-old, Robert remains active consulting, lecturing and teaching other about his craft. His teaching and his legacy will guide the next generation of visual storytellers.

Throughout his career, Boyle's ingenuity and attention to detail has earned him the accolades of his contemporaries and the acclaim of the Academy. Boyle has previously received four Academy Award nominations for Best Art Direction for *North by Northwest*; *Gaily, Gaily*; *Fiddler on the Roof* and *The Shootist*.

Tonight, it is my honor to *finally* award Robert Boyle with the golden statue he deserves.

Congratulations for you achievement Robert.

### **2008 School of Public Affairs Commencement Address**

Thanks for the introduction. I have to say, this \$40,000 a year education was definitely worth it. I just got my picture backstage with [insert graduation speaker's name]. Priceless.

When I first heard I would be speaking to you this morning, I had a difficult time deciding what to say. A commencement speaker must inspire a diverse audience while simultaneously avoiding any reference that could offend an individual's political sensibilities.

This typically would not be difficult except for the fact that I'm giving a commencement address *to* the School of Public Affairs *on* the most politically active campus in America *in* our nation's capital *during* election season.

You see my dilemma.

At first I was going to tell you that when it comes to changing the world...yes, *we can*. But, Barack Obama already took that line.

Then, I was going to tell you to cherish your experiences at AU. But the lawyers called. Apparently, Hillary Clinton now has a trademark on the word experience.

So then, I was going to instruct my fellow students to live a life of integrity, to be a real straight talker. But that bus already left the station with John McCain on it.

So finally out of frustration I was just going to tell you all to F\* the man, F\* the system, start a revolution...[pause and sigh] but Ron Paul got there first.

So in the name of political neutrality, I'm going to begin this morning by talking about the one thing that unites us – our values.

Don't worry - I'm not talking about some politician's family values. I'm talking about our American University values.

Respect for diverse people and ideas.  
A commitment to creating positive change in the world.  
Dedication to serving the public good.

These are the values that brought us to American University. Values strengthened and deepened by our four years at this great institution.

I want to share with you how these values brought *me* to American University. How I decided AU was the right school for me. I'm taking you way back in the day, before that old tree on campus became a carved eagle. Before we had free range eggs in TDR. Before AU had a championship basketball team.

I was visiting AU as a prospective student, and I noticed right away that the campus was in a frenzy. On one side of the quad, a field of orange flags was erected near Kay. On the other side of the quad, students were handing out fliers. Unbeknownst to me, I had stumbled upon campus during the annual pro-life vs. pro-choice protests. I had no idea what was happening until I was walking past MGC, and someone handed me a hanger and told me I might need to use it someday.

I have to be honest, I was really offended, *but* at the same time oddly inspired.

Regardless of what side I agreed with, I was excited to see this kind of activism on campus.

I was glad to see that AU students were like me.  
That they cared about issues of public importance.  
That they sought change in the political system.  
That they used their voice to make a difference.

I was really moved by the passion and energy I felt that day. The same passion and energy that inspires me each time I speak with one of my classmates and hear about those great things he or she is doing for this world.

I knew right away that this was the school for me. It all started with that hanger.

And as I got to know many of the students in this audience, I discovered that we all came to American University for the same basic reasons. That we all share the same basic story.

We left our towns and cities across the United States and across the world because we had big ideas and big dreams. Dreams too big for a small town like mine -- New Cumberland, Pennsylvania – population 7,000.

So we left our homes. Our friends. Our family

And we flocked to DC – to this hub of political power.

And we flocked to American University – a school established by an act of Congress, built on the principle of service to the public.

We came with our big dreams. And we came with those shared values.

And four years later we're *finally* leaving - armed with a degree and the tools and knowledge to pursue those dreams.

And you know what makes us unique as American University graduates - we don't recoil when faced with the great challenges of our time. We don't curtail our dreams or abandon our values just because the obstacle seems too great.

As AU graduates, we will not allow the world to shape our values; rather we will shape the world to fit our values. Our American University values.

I know we are all excited to get started. But I also know we share some anxiety about what comes next. Future is a scary word.

And it doesn't help that for the last semester, every person we know has been asking us the same dreaded questions. What are you going to do with your degree? What do you want to be after you graduate?

Hey, don't look at me. I don't have the answer. I'm a CLEG major – I just got a degree in everything and nothing at the same time.

But seriously, those are really tough questions for us.

Because for SPA students, our degrees don't always correspond with clear careers. We are not future teachers, accountants or engineers.

And our dreams don't always correspond to clear positions. In fact, what we want to do may not even have a title.

Changer of the World

Terminator of American dependence on oil.

Instigator of the next great social revolution.

Try putting that on a business card.

Nonetheless, I encourage you all to follow your values and let the title work itself out.

Before I finish, I want to leave you with one last story.

My freshman year of college, I was a volunteer for DC Reads, a tutoring program for low-income students in DC. I was assigned to tutor a shy fifth-grader named Jayden. Unfortunately, Jayden was so shy that he wouldn't even talk to me. He answered all my questions with yes, no or a shake of his head. I tried to talk to him about school, video games and sports, but still he said nothing.

Then one Monday evening, I was teaching Jayden to use Microsoft Word when we were interrupted by the chatter of the two girls seated next to us. They were talking about what they wanted to be when they grew up. Unexpectedly, Jayden interjected himself in the conversation. He announced loud and clear that he was going to become the first astronaut to land on Mars. I was completely shocked by his outburst. I was so impressed that he mustered the courage to speak up like that.

I wish I could tell you that Jayden opened up to me after that day. But he didn't. The next Monday evening, Jayden was just as shy as ever.

But I fondly recall that moment. Such is the power of a dream. It can spur even the most timid among us to action.

So I urge you to take your dreams and find the courage within you to realize them. Because in so doing, you will help others realize theirs.

And don't worry if you don't start out where you hope to end up. Even if you're bound for great things – which I'm confident you are -- *someone* needs to get Ted Kennedy's assistant's assistant his coffee each morning.

Whatever happens, don't forget those American University values. And don't lose site of that big dream.

After all, this planet could use a few more world changers.

And don't believe it can not be done. As American author John Andrew Holmes said, "God may have been waiting centuries for someone ignorant enough of the impossible to do that very thing."

### **Nothing But Nets Speech**

*This is a speech I wrote to be delivered at an event hosted for Nothing But Nets, a non-profit organization that works to prevent malaria deaths around the world.*

Mariam Karega's eyes brimmed with tears as she cradled her 15-month-old son Hussein. Just a few weeks earlier, young Hussein had taken his first steps. Now he had little energy left. His diseased body lay listlessly in his mother's outstretched arms.

Mariam's tears reflected the sadness of a mother holding her dying child. In the sweltering afternoon heat of rural Tanzania, dozens of other villagers solemnly gathered around Mariam and her son. These mothers and fathers looked on with knowing sympathy. They too had lost children to the same dreadful disease.

In the villages of rural Africa, the loss of a child is an all too common occurrence.

Thousands of children are dying each year from a small and seemingly innocuous creature – the mosquito.

These children are dying from malaria. Death by mosquito bite.

Every year 500 million people become infected with malaria and one million die from the disease.

Children are the most vulnerable.

According to the United Nations, a child dies from malaria every 30 seconds. And in the last decade, malaria has killed 10 times the number of children as all wars combined during the same period.

Most alarmingly, malaria deaths are on the rise. The disease is becoming resistant to medications and expanding into new regions of the world, killing more people than it did just a decade ago.

In its battle against the science of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the mosquito continues to triumph.

That's why the World Health Organization has declared the mosquito "public health enemy No.1."

Fortunately, malaria is a treatable disease. Children like Hussein can often be saved if they receive quick treatment from a qualified doctor.

But in areas of the world where malaria is most prevalent, doctors are scarce. And so are financial resources. Few families can afford the high cost of medical care.

Mariam wanted to take Hussein to the hospital to see a doctor, but the cost of round-trip transportation, tests, and doctor's fee was a sum she simply could not afford.

And what was that sum?

Miriam calculated that saving Hussein's life would cost her family 10,000 rupees – or sixteen dollars and sixty five cents. A trivial sum for most people in this audience, but a sum far beyond Mariam's meager means.

Health activists hope that like epidemics of the past, malaria will one day be eradicated with a vaccine. Unfortunately, money for malaria vaccine research remains inadequate. Few pharmaceutical companies are willing to invest money into vaccine research for a disease affecting the poorest of the world. It could be years before an effective vaccine is discovered. While we may be without a vaccine, we are not without the tools to prevent malaria.

The problem may be complex, but the solution is quite simple.

The best way to prevent malaria is by preventing mosquito bites.

And the simplest and cheapest way to prevent mosquito bites is insecticide-treated bed nets. A \$10 bed net can save a life.

In fact, it can save more than more than one life. Whole families can sleep under the protection of a single net.



Bed nets work because mosquitoes that carry malaria are nocturnal. The nets create a barrier that kills or drives off mosquitoes from an area. This leads to a reduction in malaria deaths even among villagers without nets.

The World Health Organization found that mosquito nets can reduce malaria transmissions by 50 to 90 percent in areas with high coverage.

Veronica Njeri has personally seen just how effective these nets can be. Veronica lives amidst the swampy paddies of her rice farming village in Maendeleo, Kenya. Veronica lost two of her six children to malaria. Since free mosquito nets were distributed to her village five years ago, Veronica says malaria deaths have become rare.

And she's right. The World Health Organization found that malaria deaths among children fell by 44 percent in Veronica's village.

In most areas, few families can afford to purchase their own mosquito nets. As a result, according to the World Health Organization, less than three percent of African children under the age of five sleep under mosquito nets.

That's why the United Nations Foundation launched *Nothing But Nets*. It's a global, grassroots campaign to save lives by delivering insecticide-treated nets to needy communities around the globe.

A \$10 donation to *Nothing But Nets* covers the cost of purchasing a net, distributing it, and educating the recipient about its use.

For \$10 you can buy a week of Starbucks coffee, purchase a movie ticket, or you can save a life. It's that simple.

To date, *Nothing But Nets* has raised over \$16 million dollars, distributed over 700,000 nets, and saved countless lives around the world.

Now *Nothing But Nets* is calling on you to join the global fight against malaria. Visit [NothingButNets.com](http://NothingButNets.com) and make a donation.

Because where a person lives should not determine whether they live.

And the value of their savings should not determine the value of their life.

Together we can prevent malaria. And you can do your part.

Support *Nothing But Nets*.

Send a net. Save a life.

### **Virginia Tech Commemoration Speech**

*This was a speech written for Virginia Tech president Charles Steager to deliver on the first anniversary of the Virginia Tech massacre.*

I want to thank you all for joining us on this solemn day.

I want to welcome back Governor Kaine and members of the class of 2007. And I want to offer a special welcome to those who lost a child, friend or spouse in this tragedy. Our prayers are with you on this day of mourning.

One of the most moving stories I heard following the tragedy was about Professor Cloyd, a man who lost his only daughter Austin in Norris Hall.

Later the same day, Professor Cloyd sent out an e-mail to his classes not knowing whether they would meet again.

In this e-mail, he gave his students one final assignment – an assignment he called the most important of their lives.

“Go to your mother, father, brothers, and sisters,” he wrote, “and tell them with all your heart how much you love them. And tell them that you know how much they love you too.”

In the weeks, days and months since the tragedy, Professor Cloyd’s wishes were realized.

Students offered love and support to one another.

And the world offered love and support to Virginia Tech.

The gospel of Matthew says, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

As God had promised, words of comfort poured forth from around this nation and around the world.

From everywhere and everyone came the same message. We share in your suffering. We share in your grief.

We are all hokies.

Today we join together, once again, to remember the thirty two students and faculty members who lost their lives just one year ago.

On April 16, 2007 this campus experienced an act of violence so great and so unimaginable that we still struggle to come to terms with its impact.

The tragedy of April 16 irrevocably changed this university and this nation.

On that day, the sanctuary of the classroom was violated. A space of learning and acceptance was stained by hate and violence.

On that day, thirty-two people were killed. Thirty-two lives cut short. Thirty-two promises unfulfilled.

It was the worst act of violence on a college campus in history. And for most of us here - the worst day of our lives.

Some of us lost family.  
Many of us lost friends.  
And all of us lost part of our innocence.

On that April morning, we witnessed the worst of humanity. But we also witnessed the best.

As we struggled to make sense of the senseless, we found courage and strength in the actions of others.

The bravery of Professor Librescu, a man who sacrificed his own life so that his students could escape to safety.

The courage of Henry Lee, a student who was shot trying to barricade his classroom door.

The devotion of local medics and police officers who saved countless lives.

And the dedication of counselors and community members who helped us begin to heal.

On this day of commemoration, I want celebrate the strength of this Virginia Tech community.

With the eyes of the world poised on this campus, you demonstrated what makes Virginia Tech great. Our spirit and our solidarity.

You proved that the only antidote to hate – is the love of which Professor Cloyd spoke.

In the days, weeks and months since the tragedy, we have searched for answers, we have searched for meaning and, ultimately, we have searched for peace.

And through this journey, we have begun to heal.

A new year of classes is coming to an end.

Norris Hall has reopened.

Our lives are beginning to return to normal.

Yet I am still reminded of the hand painted sign that hung from Norris Hall a day after the tragedy. It bore the words, “Never Forgotten.”

Though we may heal, we will never forget the tragedy that befell us one year ago.

Every April 16<sup>th</sup>, wherever we are, whatever we are doing, we will take a moment to remember the 32 amazing individuals whose lives were taken from us far too soon.

The events of April 16 have changed us, but they will not set us back. They will only make us stronger.

So as we reflect on the past, we must also embrace the future.

A better future.

A future where hate is stopped at the school house gate.

A future where troubled souls never slip through cracks.

A future where those who suffer seek help rather than a gun.

That future will be our gift to them. Our lives will be their legacy.

I want to leave you with one last story this morning.

The day after the shooting, I was wandering through the makeshift memorials on the Drillfield, searching for strength and comfort. On the bottom of a red poster, scrawled in black marker, I found the words I was looking for. A student had written a definition. It read, “hokie – a noun – a person regardless of race, gender, color or religion that stays united in the face of adversity and emerges victorious.”

That is who we are.

We are hokies.

We are Virginia Tech.

### **Keynote Speech for 2008 Global Philanthropy Forum**

*This was a speech written for Archbishop Desmond Tutu to deliver at the 2008 Global Philanthropy Forum. The subject of the forum was human rights, human security and the responsibility to protect.*

Good afternoon my friends.

It's an honor to be speaking before an audience of such remarkable individuals.

I want to join Jane Wales in welcoming you to this conference where we'll talk of human rights, shared responsibility *and* our common humanity.

Last month, I traveled to Sudan and Eastern Chad with other members of The Elders.

And I had the opportunity to walk through the refugee camps and to meet with people who have fled Darfur. Displaced persons with uncertain futures and no home to call their own.

My friends – It was a truly appalling scene. You have heard the reports, and you have seen the pictures. But it is far worse than you could imagine.

The people, they live in patch-work huts of sticks and rubbish, in a shanty-town cracking at its seams with the sheer volume of people.

And people continue to come from Sudan, day after day, they come.

There are lines of people waiting for food, waiting for water, waiting for medical care, waiting for resources of which there is far too little.

And the women – the mothers and daughters and sisters – those who have suffered much indignity already, they still are without refuge and without safety.

They face the threat of rape each day as they search for firewood beyond the camp borders.

I met women – mere children - as young as nine who were brutalized, their innocence taken.

We do not know who their attackers are. Whether they are Janjaweed or solidarity bandits. But it matters not. The indignity and fear they produce is the same. They are born of the same evil.

The same evil we see in the actions of other tyrants and murderers around the world.

We see it in the killing and imprisonment of pro-democracy activists in Burma.  
In the recent attacks of Mugabe opposition supporters in Zimbabwe.  
In the targeted killings and massive arrests of civilians in Somalia.

My friends, we can not let these tragedies continue.

We must rethink our obligation to man. We must rethink our response to crimes against humanity.

I am happy that the international community is recognizing our responsibility to protect.

The idea that we have *an obligation* to intervene if a sovereign state *can not* or *will not* protect its people.

It's an extraordinary principle. An idea that flips the notion of "a right to intervene" upside down.

But if we strip it of its jargon – of reference to doctrines, state sovereignty and international contracts – we see how simple the concept truly is.

So simple. So intuitive. At the heart of the doctrine is the notion that I am my brother's keeper.

The notion that we all brothers and sisters. That are all connected in the family of man. That what happens to one of us affects us all.

Just as I will not sit idly by as my brother is threatened, I will not sit idly by as a monk in Burma or a young woman in Darfur is brutalized.

I believe that all of us in this audience, all of us in this world have a responsibility to prevent conflict and protect the security of our brothers and sisters.

And I believe philanthropists can play a crucial role in preventing atrocities against man.

We've already seen incredible examples of the interaction between entrepreneurship, philanthropy and human rights.

In Burma, one million people have been driven from their homes by the military government. But now, thanks to one philanthropist, the world knows of their struggle.

Peter Gabriel's organization Witness put video cameras in the hands of Burmese villagers to document these abuses. The footage has been shown on news programs and in parliaments around the globe. Thanks to Peter, the whole world is watching Burma.

Columbia's government has failed to put a stop to FARC attacks and kidnapping. But now, people all over the world are standing up these terrorists, with the internet as their ally.

In February, a young Colombian engineer named Oscar Morales used the website Facebook to mobilize over one million people to march against FARC in the streets of Colombia. They were joined by protests in New York, Paris, Sydney, Washington, and Caracas. Their joined voices have reverberated around the globe.

For four years, women living in Darfur refugee camps have faced the threat of sexual violence each time they collect firewood beyond the camp borders. But now, their situation is changing, thanks to the ingenuity of a small group of American women.

Two years ago, the women of Jewish World Watch started a campaign to distribute solar cookers to two Darfur refugee camps. These cookers have reduced the need for collecting firewood, saving many women from appalling acts of violence.

These problems of the world are great, my friends, but they are not insurmountable. With ingenuity and compassion, you can save lives.

As we seek to address immediate human rights concerns, we must also remember to tackle the root causes of conflict.

Land disputes, access to water, conservation of natural resources.

These are all interconnected to human security, far more than we may realize.

Limited resources and land disputes breed conflict.

In Sudan, shrinking water resources have pitted one tribe against another.

In Burma, Chinese officials exchange arms money for natural gas.

In Gaza, Israeli and Palestinians continue to kill each other over a strip of land 25 miles long.

To achieve human security, we must first achieve resource security.

But most importantly, my friends, we must resolve the ethnic and religious tensions fanning the flames of conflict.

We often speak of black and white, brown and yellow, Christian and Muslim, but we forget that we are all of the same tribe, that of man. We share 99.9 percent of the same genes. Ninety-nine-point-nine percent! Proof that our differences are small; our commonalities great.

I pray that in time we'll recognize each other not as enemies, but as brothers and sisters.

Without true reconciliation, hatred will bubble to the surface again, in far more destructive ways.

As Mahatma Ghandi said, we must "walk the path not of retribution or revenge but the path of reconciliation and forgiveness."

As you all know, reconciliation is a concept near to my heart.

As head of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, my job was to listen to the testimony of those people applying for amnesty for their crimes.

I listened through horrendous stories of murder, torture, mutilation and degradation. I was often appalled by the depth of depravity of which man is capable.

But the most memorable testimony was that that of a young girl. She was the daughter of an ANC activist who was brutally murdered and mutilated by the police.

At the end her tearful testimony, I asked her "Do you think you have it in you to forgive the people who have done this?"

With quiet dignity, she responded. "Yes, I would like to forgive. I just want to know who to forgive."

You see, the human heart is full of forgiveness and goodness.

In our line of work, we often forget that goodness is the norm; evil the aberration. We live in God's world, and in God's world goodness, compassion and justice ultimately prevail.

My friends, God may stand with us, but he can do little without us.

God has blessed you, so you can be the means for blessing others.