

ORIGINAL

#7 | Sarasota

REMARKS

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(GREETINGS TO HOSTS, GUESTS, FRIENDS, ETC.)

IT'S INDEED A PRIVILEGE FOR ME TO BE HERE TODAY TO HONOR A GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS -- AND A COMMUNITY -- WHO DEMONSTRATED THAT THEY HAVE THE TWO THINGS THAT MAKE SOCIETY WORK:

* THEY HAVE COURAGE ... AND THEY HAVE HEART.

THERE WAS A TIME IN THIS COUNTRY -- AND IT WASN'T TOO LONG AGO EITHER -- WHEN WE FIRST LEARNED OF THIS NEW AND DEVASTATING INFECTIOUS DISEASE CALLED AIDS.

SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT YEARS AGO, THE DISEASE WAS TRANSMITTED BY PERSONS WHO DIDN'T KNOW ANY BETTER ... TO PERSONS WHO KNEW NOTHING. IT WAS THE WORSE KIND OF PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS BECAUSE THE RISKS SEEMED VERY HIGH, WHILE OUR LEVEL OF INFORMATION WAS VERY LOW.

WE DID, HOWEVER, KNOW A FEW THINGS FOR SURE. WE WERE POSITIVE THAT THE AIDS VIRUS WAS TRANSMITTED IN CERTAIN SPECIFIC WAYS ... THAT IT JUST WASN'T SOMETHING YOU COULD PICK UP CASUALLY.

IT WAS NOT AIR-BORNE. IT WAS NOT FOOD-BORNE.

BUT IT WAS BLOOD-BORNE.

PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE IT WAS BLOOD-BORNE, THE AIDS VIRUS WAS POPPING UP IN CITIES AND TOWNS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. IN FACT, IT SEEMED TO BE WANDERING AROUND IN A RANDOM FASHION JUST LIKE OTHER VIRUSES. BUT OF COURSE IT WASN'T JUST LIKE THEM AT ALL.

AIDS WAS A VIRUS ... BUT IT WAS NOT THE USUAL FLU-LIKE VIRUS WITH WHICH EVERY AMERICAN IS FAMILIAR.

IT WAS A VIRUS ... BUT WE WEREN'T ABLE TO COME UP WITH A VACCINE AGAINST IT, AS WE'VE DONE WITH OTHER VIRAL DISEASES. AND WE STILL LACK SUCH A VACCINE.

THESE PARTIAL SIMILARITIES AND THESE UNEXPLAINED
DIFFERENCES CONFUSED PEOPLE.

AND MANY AMERICANS, I'M SORRY TO SAY, PREFERRED THE EASY
PATH OF CONFUSION AND FEAR, RATHER THAN THE MORE RESPONSIBLE PATH
OF TRUTH AND COURAGE.

AS A RESULT, MANY PEOPLE WITH THE AIDS VIRUS SUFFERED GREAT
CRUELTY AT THE HANDS OF THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS. MANY OF THOSE
EARLY VICTIMS WERE CHILDREN.

CRUELTY CAN NEVER BE EXCUSED IN OUR SOCIETY. BUT CRUELTY AGAINST CHILDREN AND OTHER UNWITTING AND INNOCENT VICTIMS OF THE AIDS VIRUS IS ESPECIALLY INEXCUSABLE.

FORTUNATELY, THAT KIND OF BEHAVIOR IS NOT THE NORM FOR OUR COUNTRY. I CAN TELL YOU THAT THE MAJORITY OF AMERICANS UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ONE'S NEIGHBOR ... THEY UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS TO BE COMPASSIONATE ... THEY ARE AMERICANS WHO RESPECT THE CALL TO JUSTICE ... WHO HAVE THE COURAGE TO THINK CLEARLY AND DO WHAT'S RIGHT.

YOU WILL FIND THEM IN FLORIDA, HERE IN SARASOTA ... YOU WILL FIND THEM IN ARCADIA, INDIANA ... YOU'LL ALSO FIND THEM IN CALIFORNIA AND NEW YORK ... IN NEW ENGLAND ... IN THE SOUTHWEST AND THE NORTHWEST ... EVERYWHERE IN THIS COUNTRY.

AND THAT'S WHAT WE MUST CELEBRATE TODAY.

WE GATHER HERE TO HONOR A NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS -- GOOD AND DECENT PEOPLE -- WHO IT IS OUR PRIVILEGE TO KNOW AND RECOGNIZE NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE RADICALLY DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER AMERICANS ... BUT RATHER WE RECOGNIZE THEM TODAY BECAUSE -- IN ADDITION TO THEIR PERSONAL STRENGTH AND INTEGRITY AND DECENCY -- THEY ALSO HAPPEN TO REPRESENT WHAT IS BEST ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF OUR COUNTRY.

THIS IS A VERY DIFFICULT TIME FOR US ... AND FOR THE WORLD. WE ARE TRYING TO CONTAIN AND, IF POSSIBLE, ONE DAY ELIMINATE A VERY DANGEROUS INFECTIOUS DISEASE ... THE DISEASE OF AIDS. WE'RE TRYING TO DO THAT, AND I BELIEVE WE WILL SURELY SUCCEED.

AND WHILE WE'RE IN THE PROCESS OF DOING THAT, I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT WE WILL KEEP INTACT OUR BASIC HUMAN VALUES ... OUR RESPECT FOR ONE ANOTHER ... OUR DEVOTION TO CHARITY AND MERCY ... AND OUR CONSTANT, HISTORIC PURSUIT OF JUSTICE.

I CAN ASSURE YOU OF THAT BECAUSE TODAY WE HAVE AMONG US THE KIND OF PEOPLE WHO EXERCISE THOSE VERY SPECIAL VALUES IN THEIR DAILY LIVES ... PEOPLE WHO HAVE SHOWN US HOW IT CAN BE DONE ... PEOPLE WHOSE EXAMPLE WE CAN -- AND SHALL -- FOLLOW THROUGHOUT THIS DIFFICULT TIME ... AND FOR ALL TIME.

AND NOW, IT IS MY PLEASURE TO HONOR EACH OF THEM IN A VERY SPECIAL WAY ...

(SUE: ADD PAGES HERE)