

For Fred + Wally ————— *For what it's worth*
Jim

Thank you Judge Woodlock.

It is my great privilege to welcome each of you officially into the community and political system of the United States of America. Today you have taken perhaps the most important step of your lives. By becoming citizens of this great country you have acquired rights and assumed responsibilities which will affect the rest of your lives and the lives of your children -- and the lives of all the rest of us who are citizens of the United States.

In today's world, it is very clear that citizens of the United States have responsibilities to the people of all nations -- including those from which you have come. We all share, as Dr. Martin Luther King said, "a world house" where what happens in one corner of the globe affects often directly and immediately other nations. Because of the strength and example of America -- and how we examine our rights and assume our responsibilities -- we have had a profound impact on peoples everywhere. Our example has inspired the peoples of Eastern Europe and the students of China to demand democracy. With your help, the United States will continue that proud tradition.

The people of the United States need to better understand the realities and needs of the world's people and, as new Americans, you need to teach the rest of us and to become active participants in the affairs of this nation.

Let me share with you now a few specific ideas about the rights you now enjoy as full citizens of this country and the responsibilities that you now have assumed.

First, it is important that you recognize that your rights have been won by the sacrifice and vision of those new Americans who have come before you. You must appreciate the history of the United States in order to appreciate the importance of your new citizenship.

The American revolution began right here, just up the road, in Concord, Massachusetts. The shot heard 'round the world, over 200 years ago, began a revolution that continues to this day both here and, indeed, worldwide. And the revolution is about human rights. The founders of our nation believed that "all men are created equal and that we all are endowed by our Creator with the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." So, you and I and Judge Woodlock and so many others owe a great debt to those who gave their lives in the American Revolution in order to create this nation based on the respect for human rights.

And throughout the world -- in China, in El Salvador, in Ethiopia and in many other countries -- people continue to struggle to secure these rights that sometimes we in the United States take for granted. As new Americans, you must help the rest of us never to take for granted our rights. And this is one of your new responsibilities.

This country also fought a deadly civil war in which slavery and the human rights of Africans forcibly brought here as slaves was the primary issue. The civil war was a moral struggle. Thousands upon thousands sacrificed their lives in order to secure freedom for all. As new Americans, you owe them, too, a great debt.

And more recently, in the 1950's and 1960's, Dr. Martin Luther King, John and Robert Kennedy and others led this nation in an effort to make real the promise of America that "all men and women are created equal" and are all entitled to basic human and civil rights. We all owe a great debt to those who expanded the rights and secured the freedoms for all.

It is your responsibility not only to understand this history -- but to embrace it. For even in America, rights and freedoms must continue to be protected and expanded. This is a responsibility we all must share. Thus, as new citizens, you have new responsibilities to protect the rights of others -- both here and throughout the world.

As new citizens, you have a responsibility not only to meet the needs of your own family but to help meet the needs and secure the freedoms for the human family. The exercise of these responsibilities takes work and dedication. Here in Boston, you must become part of the life of your neighborhood. You must share in the responsibility to make the schools better for your children and all children. You must share in the responsibility to end crime--against your family and all families. You should share the responsibility to provide help and hope to those in need -- to the ill, to the impoverished and to the most vulnerable in our society.

In closing, let me emphasize the importance of your full participation in the political life of this country. As new citizens you have the right to vote. Use it.

If you do not participate in our elections you give up the greatest right you have now secured and you abandon the greatest responsibility you have now assumed. Only through participation can our rights be protected and our responsibilities to ourselves and others be carried out.

America has always been strengthened by the immigrant and refugee who come here in search of freedom and a better life -- and, in turn, contribute to the well being of their new community. You embody the American dream. I welcome you and I thank you -- for you are the people who continue to make America a great nation and a beacon of hope for all people worldwide.

It is difficult to imagine a time when El Salvador has not been at war. For over a decade, the world has witnessed some of the worst brutality imaginable -- perpetrated by both the FMLN and the Salvadoran Armed Forces . It has been an ugly war that has not only been costly in terms of human life, but it has also left that tiny country economically crippled. It has been a war whose victims have primarily been civilians.

I have become intimately acquainted with the realities of El Salvador only recently when Speaker Foley appointed me to head a special Congressional Task Force to monitor the Salvadoran Government's investigation into the savage murders of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her young daughter. Up to that point, my expertise on El Salvador was limited to newspaper and magazine articles. I am, as I've said many times, a bread and butter politician from South Boston. My expertise has always been in domestic issues -- not foreign policy matters.

During the last year and one half, my task force has carefully observed the investigation into the Jesuit murders, the prospects for peace in El Salvador and United States policy towards that war-torn country. I would like to briefly expand on those three points.

The murders of the Jesuits on November 16, 1989, focused attention on the situation in El Salvador in a way not seen since the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero -- nearly a decade earlier. The reaction in Congress was one of pure outrage. When it became clear that the Salvadoran Armed Forces were directly responsible for the murders -- the outrage turned to anger.

The central question became whether the murder of the Jesuits resulted from the actions of a few renegade military and political figures operating at the margins of Salvadoran society or whether, in fact, it stemmed from attitudes and actions that goes to the very heart of the armed force and other major institutions in that country.

U.S. officials told me early on to view the Jesuit case as an isolated incident -- the deranged actions of a few -- and not as indictment of the armed forces as an institution. However, anyone who is at all familiar with the facts in the Jesuit case must conclude that the murders reflect problems within the Salvadoran armed forces that go far beyond the actions of a particular unit on a particular night. They reflect problems deeply embedded in the armed forces as an institution.

The murders of the Jesuits grew out of an attitude of suspicion and anger towards activist segments of the church that remains all too widespread within the Salvadoran armed forces and certain other sectors of Salvadoran society. Because of this attitude, too little effort is made to distinguish between those who use non-violent methods to advocate change, and guerrillas who take up arms against the government.

While visiting El Salvador in February of 1990 and during numerous meetings in the United States, I have never once heard any high level Salvadoran military officer ever say the murders of the Jesuits was wrong. They've described the killings as "dumb;" "self-defeating," and "stupid" -- but they never said it was wrong. I often get the feeling that the only reason there is any progress on the case is to get the United States off the back of the Salvadoran military, and not because it is the right thing to do.

This is a very harsh assessment of the Salvadoran military -- but I believe it is deserved. However, I do not wish to leave the impression that every member of the Salvadoran armed forces is bad. There are some honorable and professional men within the ranks of the Salvadoran military who I know are genuinely horrified by the murders of the Jesuits. Sadly, that calibre of person is lacking from the current high command of the Salvadoran Armed Forces -- where decisions and recommendations on how the military should proceed on human rights cases are made.

The Salvadoran high command has failed to provide the necessary leadership and cooperation for this case to move forward. They have, in my opinion, obstructed justice. Salvadoran military officers have withheld evidence, destroyed evidence and repeatedly perjured themselves in testimony before the presiding judge. That could not be done without at least the tacit consent of the high command.

I could list, for pages, examples of military obstructionism in the Jesuit case. But, I remain convinced, if the political will existed within the high command, we could solve the Jesuit case overnight.

At this moment, eight military officers are being held --pending trial -- for the murders. It remains uncertain whether these men will be punished or whether they will walk free. It also remains uncertain whether the investigation into the tragic murders will extend to the issue of "who gave the orders." I believe justice will not be done in this case until the intellectual authors of this crime are held accountable.

I believe the Jesuit case has important implications on whether or not the current round of U.N.-mediated negotiations between the FMLN and the Salvadoran Government can succeed --which is the second point I want to discuss in this essay.

The government obviously wants the FMLN insurgents to put down their weapons and become politicians. We all want that. But this will never happen if the FMLN knows that its members can still be murdered with impunity by the military or death squads allied with the military.

And if the government cannot convict those who murdered the Jesuits - - a case which has received tremendous attention -- then who is going to punish the murderer of a trade unionist or a civilian politician or a guy who stands up on a street corner and says the armed forces are corrupt and have to change?

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It's this simple. If military impunity does not end, the war will not end.

The FMLN also must take steps to make peace in El Salvador a reality. Quite frankly, the FMLN's negotiating stands have been hard-line and, in many cases, unreasonable. The FMLN's position on the key issue of military reform has been particularly extreme in that the FMLN is advocating a total elimination of the Salvadoran military. While some may view a society without an army, especially one that has committed so many atrocities, as desirable -- it is simply unrealistic and unworkable. The FMLN must show more flexibility on this issue, if the talks are to succeed.

Further, the FMLN must make a greater effort to refrain from the kind of violent offensives like the ones they launched in November of 1989 and 1990. In both cases, there were large numbers of civilian casualties and enormous destruction to the physical infrastructure of the country. I, for one, do not believe that these acts of violence contribute in any positive way to the peace process. In fact, they make peace more difficult. El Salvador is a country where one act of violence prompts another act of violence. It is a vicious and mindless circle. The fact is that the Salvadoran people are sick of war and sick of people who talk about nothing but war.

What is the proper role for the United States in all of this? It is my belief that the United States must become the leading international supporter of peace in El Salvador. To do that we have got to become more even-handed. For too long, too many in the Executive Branch have felt that by criticizing the Salvadoran military they would be giving aid and comfort to the FMLN.

Let me be clear, I am no fan of the guerrillas. But it is important to remember, if not for the corruption and the human rights violations of the military, there would be no FMLN.

During the last session of the Congress, legislation was passed in both the House and Senate to reduce military aid to El Salvador. Under the bill, 50% of our military aid would be withheld unless the FMLN refused to negotiate or take certain other actions that escalate violence or human rights abuses. On the other hand, if the Salvadoran government refuses to negotiate, fails to investigate the Jesuits case, or abuses human rights, 100% of our military aid would be withheld.

The purpose of the bill was to create a strong incentive for both sides to negotiate seriously and to reduce the level of fighting while those negotiations were underway.

Sadly, the Administration

Statement by Congressman Joe Moakley
September 5, 1990

Last month, another round in the negotiations between the government of El Salvador and the opposition FMLN was held in San Jose, Costa Rica. The goal of the negotiations is a peaceful settlement to a long and brutal war that has already claimed 70,000 lives.

Unfortunately, the negotiations last month did not go well. Almost no progress was made on the key issue of military reform. The FMLN's proposal on this subject was particularly extreme and unrealistic, and provided no opportunity for the United Nations mediator to bring the two sides closer together.

Another round of negotiations is scheduled to begin next week. I hope that the FMLN position will be more flexible at that time, and that the mediators will be encouraged by both sides to develop proposals aimed at establishing a middle ground.

I also condemn -- in the strongest possible terms -- FMLN threats of another military offensive. The Salvadoran people are sick of war and sick of people who talk of nothing but war.

In this connection, I think it ironic that last May this House voted to provide strong incentives for the FMLN to refrain from a new offensive, to refrain from purchasing arms, to refrain from attacks against civilians, and to negotiate in good faith.

The Administration opposed that plan and, as a result, those incentives are not now in law. I only hope that the Administration's opposition to the proposal, which was offered by Rep. John Murtha and myself, does not lead inadvertently to further violence in El Salvador.

And I hope that we will, in the weeks ahead, pass legislation that will provide strong incentives for both sides in El Salvador to respect human rights and to end this senseless war.

I would also add that I am encouraged by the Administration's willingness to attempt to reach an accomodation on this issue with the Congress. And I am confident, in the weeks ahead, we will do just that.