

TODAY I HAVE THE HIGH HONOR AND PERSONAL PRIVILEGE OF BEING THE FIRST TO WELCOME YOU AS NEWLY ADMITTED CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES. THIS IS A MOMENTOUS EVENT NOT ONLY FOR YOU BUT FOR GENERATIONS OF YOUR FAMILY TO COME. SO, CHERISH THIS MOMENT; SAVOR THIS MOMENT; BUT PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, GO HOME TODAY AND WRITE ABOUT THIS MOMENT SO THAT FUTURE GENERATIONS CAN LEARN THE STORY OF THEIR AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE, TAKE A MOMENT AND LOOK AT EACH OTHER: YOU, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS A GROUP, ARE NOW AMERICA. WELCOME TO YOUR NEW CITIZENSHIP.

TODAY'S CEREMONY IS AN EXPRESSION OF OUR COUNTRY'S MOST FUNDAMENTAL PROMISE -- TO SECURE A MORE PERFECT UNION. THIS LOFTY ASPIRATION IS MADE MORE REAL BY YOUR PRESENCE HERE TODAY. YOU REMIND US OF THE

VALUE OF OUR OWN CITIZENSHIP. THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES IS A HISTORY OF IMMIGRATION.

THE UNITED STATES IS ALSO THE LAND OF FRESH STARTS. OUR COUNTRY WAS NOT FOUNDED UPON RACIAL, ETHNIC, OR POLITICAL IDENTITIES. IT WAS NOT FOUNDED ON HEREDITARY PRIVILEGE OR AFFILIATION WITH FAVORED FAMILY NAMES. OUR FIRST PRINCIPLE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY WAS AN IDEA EXPRESSED BY THOMAS JEFFERSON ON JULY 4, 1776 WHEN HE STATED:

WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT, THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL, THAT THEY ARE ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN UNALIENABLE RIGHTS, THAT AMONG THESE ARE LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

THIS IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO KEEP IN MIND. THE CONSTITUTION IS OUR CIVIC COMPASS. IT CREATES THE CONDITIONS OF LIBERTY, AND LIBERTY IS A

CONDITION OF HAPPINESS. BUT AS BENJAMIN FRANKLIN PUT IT: “THE CONSTITUTION DOESN’T GUARANTEE HAPPINESS, IT ONLY GUARANTEES THE PURSUIT OF IT. YOU HAVE TO CATCH UP WITH HAPPINESS YOURSELF.”

THE PHILOSOPHER, ARISTOTLE, SAYS THAT VIRTUE ONLY MANIFESTS ITSELF IN ACTION. MAYBE WE COULD BORROW FROM ARISTOTLE WHEN UNDERSTANDING OUR DUTIES AS AMERICAN CITIZENS. OUR FOUNDING IDEAS ARE NOBLE AND TRUE. BUT IT IS ONLY BY OUR ACTION THAT THEY HAVE ANY MEANING; ANY VIRTUE. CITIZENSHIP IS AN ACTION WORD.

WHEN YOU TAKE ACTION, REMEMBER THAT AMERICA’S ADVANTAGE IS THE *UNITY* OF A DIVERSE PEOPLE. SO, PLEASE --- SHARE YOUR ART, YOUR MUSIC, YOUR LANGUAGE, AND ESPECIALLY, FOR ME AT ANY RATE, YOUR RECIPES WITH YOUR FELLOW AMERICANS.

ON A HOT SUMMER DAY IN PHILADELPHIA ALMOST
250 YEARS AGO BENJAMIN FRANKLIN WAS LEAVING
THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION AT
INDEPENDENCE HALL WHEN HE WAS APPROACHED
BY A GROUP OF CITIZENS. A WOMAN IN THE GROUP
DEMANDED “WHAT KIND OF GOVERNEMENT DID YOU
GIVE US – A REPUBLIC OR A MONARCHY?!”
FRANKLIN REPLIED, “A REPUBLIC, MADAM, IF YOU
CAN KEEP IT.”

FRANKLIN KNEW, AND YOU SHOULD KNOW, THAT AMERICA'S SUCCESS WAS NOT INEVITABLE. AND NOTHING ABOUT ITS CONTINUED SUCCESS IS INEVITABLE AS WE SIT HERE TODAY MANY YEARS LATER. FREEDOM, AS HISTORY TEACHES US, IS NOT THE NATURAL STATE BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS AND THE PEOPLE.

A GREAT MANY OF YOUR FELLOW CITIZENS HAVE SUFFERED, FOUGHT AND DIED IN THE STRUGGLE TO BRING LIFE TO THE PROMISES OF OUR FOUNDING COVENANT. IF WE ARE TO CONTINUE TO ENJOY "THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY" WE MUST TAKE OUR CITIZENSHIP SERIOUSLY.

SO, LET ME OFFER YOU THREE WORDS TO REMIND YOU HOW BEST TO DO THAT: GRIT, GRATITUDE, GRACE.

GRIT. BY GRIT I MEAN PERSONAL FORTITUDE, COURAGE, RESOLVE. DISAGREEMENT IS ESSENTIAL TO THE FUNCTION OF A REPUBLIC BUT BEING DISAGREEABLE IS NOT. NEVERTHELESS, YOU MAY ENCOUNTER THOSE WHO WISH TO EXCLUDE YOU BASED ON YOUR APPEARANCE OR YOUR SINCERELY HELD BELIEFS OR FOR NO REASON AT ALL. PERSEVERE AND PRESS FORWARD TRUTHFULLY AND JOYFULLY. DOING SO MAKES YOU BETTER, YOUR FAMILY BETTER AND THE WORLD BETTER. I PROMISE YOU THAT THERE IS NOTHING AS SATISFYING AS LIVING A LIFE OF PURPOSE IN SPITE OF THOSE WHO MEAN TO DISCOURAGE YOU. PRESIDENT TEDDY ROOSEVELT CAPTURED THIS IDEA IN HIS “MAN IN THE ARENA”

PASSAGE. HIS WORDS HANG IN MY CHAMBERS. I RECOMMEND IT TO YOU AS A CALL TO ACTION. IT IS PRESIDENTIAL PERMISSION FOR YOU TO FAIL IN YOUR ENDEAVORS BUT A MANDATE FOR YOU TO DO SO WHILE DARING AND TRYING. ROOSEVELT TELLS US:

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

GRATITUDE. REFLECT EVERY NOW AND THEN, LIKE WE DO TODAY, ABOUT OUR UNIMAGINABLE GOOD FORTUNE. THE CONSTITUTION IS THE MOST AMBITIOUS AND ENDURING DOCUMENT DEvised IN HUMAN HISTORY TO MAXIMIZE THE POWER OF FREE PEOPLE *TO LIVE IN SERVICE OF NOBLE IDEALS*. BE GRATEFUL FOR THAT GIFT. BE WORTHY OF THAT BLESSING IN ALL THAT YOU DO.

GRACE. SADLY, TOO MUCH OF OUR DISCOURSE WITH EACH OTHER IS UNKIND AND INTEMPERATE. RESIST THE POPULAR TEMPTATION OF BEING SNARKY. IT HAS BECOME THE PRINCIPAL VOCATION AND PASTTIME OF FAR TOO MANY. TO BE GOOD PEOPLE AND THEREFORE GOOD CITIZENS, WE NEED TO PULL BACK FROM THIS NARCISISTIC ABYSS. JUDGE LEARNED HAND WISELY OBSERVED THAT “THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY IS THE SPIRIT WHICH IS NOT TOO SURE IT IS RIGHT.” SO, I ENCOURAGE YOU TO

ENGAGE YOUR NEIGHBORS AND LEADERS WITH HUMILITY. A GREAT THEOLOGIAN WAS ONCE ASKED, “OF ALL THE VIRTUES, WHICH ARE THE THREE GREATEST?” HIS RESPONSE: “HUMILITY, HUMILITY, HUMILITY.” HUMILITY IS NOT THINKING LESS OF YOURSELF; IT IS THINKING OF YOURSELF LESS. SO REMEMBER – WHILE YOU MAY DISAGREE WITH SOME OF YOUR FELLOW CITIZENS, THEY ARE NOT YOUR ENEMIES. ABIDE THE TRUTH THAT WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER IF WE ARE TO BE IN IT AT ALL. BY THE SAME TOKEN, DARE TO BE UNFASHIONABLE AND THINK FOR YOURSELF. BUT DO SO WITH GRACE. AS A CANDIDATE FOR THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY SAID MANY YEARS AGO, “PATRIOTISM IS NOT SHORT, FRENZIED OUTBURSTS OF EMOTION, BUT THE TRANQUIL AND STEADY DEDICATION OF A LIFETIME.”

SO...THE DUTY OF A LIFETIME FALLS TO YOU NOW,
OUR NEWEST CITIZENS. START A BUSINESS,
CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION, PRACTICE YOUR
RELIGION, LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR. IT MAKES NO
DIFFERENCE WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE. IN THE
UNITED STATES IT DOES NOT MATTER WHO YOU
WERE; IT MATTERS WHO YOU ARE. SO TAKE YOUR
PLACE IN AMERICAN HISTORY AS GRATEFUL
STEWARDS OF THE AMERICAN PROMISE.

ON BEHALF OF THIS COUNTRY, I WELCOME YOU, I
CONGRATULATE YOU, AND I WISH FOR EACH OF YOU
THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY.

CONGRATULATIONS!