

# Centennial Oration

## Robert Green Ingersoll

One hundred years ago, our fathers retired the gods from politics.

THE Declaration of Independence is the grandest, the bravest, and the profoundest political document that was ever signed by the representatives of a people. It is the embodiment of physical and moral courage and of political wisdom.

I say of physical courage, because it was a declaration of war against the most powerful nation then on the globe; a declaration of war by thirteen weak, unorganized colonies; a declaration of war by a few people, without military stores, without wealth, without strength, against the most powerful kingdom on the earth; a declaration of war made when the British navy, at that day the mistress of every sea, was hovering along the coast of America, looking after defenseless towns and villages to ravage and destroy. It was made when thousands of English soldiers were upon our soil, and when the principal cities of America were in the substantial possession of the enemy. And so, I say, all things considered, it was the bravest political document ever signed by man. And if it was physically brave, the moral courage of the document is almost infinitely beyond the physical. They had the courage not only, but they had the almost infinite wisdom, to declare that all men are created equal.

Such things had occasionally been said by some political enthusiast in the olden time, but, for the first time in the history of the world, the representatives of a nation, the representatives of a real, living, breathing, hoping people, declared that all men are created equal. With one blow, with one stroke of the pen, they struck down all the cruel, heartless barriers that aristocracy, that priestcraft, that king-craft had raised between man and man. They struck down with one immortal blow that infamous spirit of caste that makes a God almost a beast, and a beast almost a god. With one word, with one blow, they wiped away and utterly destroyed, all that had been done by centuries of war -- centuries of hypocrisy -- centuries of injustice.

What more did they do? They then declared that each man has a right to live. And what does that mean? It means that he has the right to make his living. It means that he has the right to breathe the air, to work the land, that he stands the equal of every other human being beneath the shining stars; entitled to the product of his labor -- the labor of his hand and of his brain.

What more? That every man has the right to pursue his own happiness in his own way. Grandeur words than these have never been spoken by man.

And what more did these men say? They laid down the doctrine that governments were instituted among men for the purpose of preserving the rights of the people. The old idea was that people existed solely for the benefit of the state -- that is to say, for kings and nobles.

The old idea was that the people were the wards of king and priest -- that their bodies belonged to one and their souls to the other.

And what more? That the people are the source of political power. That was not only a revelation, but it was a revolution. It changed the ideas of people with regard to the source of political power. For the first time it made human beings men. What was the old idea? The old idea was that no political power came from, or in any manner belonged to, the people. The old idea was that the political power came from the clouds; that the political power came in some miraculous way from heaven; that it came down to kings, and queens, and robbers. That was the old idea. The nobles lived upon the labor of the people; the people had no rights; the nobles stole what they had and divided with the kings, and the kings pretended to divide what they stole with God Almighty. The source, then, of political power was from above. The people were responsible to the nobles, the nobles to the king, and the people had no political rights whatever, no more than the wild beasts of the forest. The kings were responsible to God; not to the people. The kings were responsible to the clouds; not to the toiling millions they robbed and plundered.

And our forefathers, in this Declaration of Independence, reversed this thing, and said: No; the people, they are the source of political power, and their rulers, these presidents, these kings are but the agents and servants of the great sublime people. For the first time, really, in the history of the world, the king was made to get off the throne and the people were royally seated thereon. The people became the sovereigns, and the old sovereigns became the servants and the agents of the people. It is hard for you and me now to even imagine the immense results of that change. It is hard for you and for me, at this day, to understand how thoroughly it had been ingrained in the brain of almost every man that the king had some wonderful right over him that in some strange way the king owned him; that in some miraculous manner he belonged, body and soul, to somebody who rode on a horse -- to somebody with epaulets on his shoulders and a tinsel crown upon his brainless head.

Our forefathers had been educated in that idea, and when they first landed on American shores they believed it. They thought they belonged to somebody, and that they must be loyal to some thief who could trace his pedigree back to antiquity's most successful robber.

It took a long time for them to get that idea out of their heads and hearts. They were three thousand miles away from the despotisms of the old world, and every wave of the sea was an assistant to them. The distance helped to disenchant their minds of that infamous belief, and every mile between them and the pomp and glory of monarchy helped to put republican ideas and thoughts into their minds. Besides that, when they came to this country, when the savage was in the forest and three thousand miles of waves on the other side, menaced by barbarians on the one hand and famine on the other, they learned that a man who had courage, a man who had thought, was as good as any other man in the world, and they built up, as it were, in spite of themselves, little republics. And the man that had the most nerve and heart was the best man, whether he had any noble blood in his veins or not.

It has been a favorite idea with me that our fore-fathers were educated by Nature, that they grew grand as the continent upon which they landed; that the great rivers -- the wide plains -- the splendid lakes -- the lonely forests -- the sublime mountains -- that all these things stole into and became a part of their being, and they grew great as the country in which they lived. They began to hate the narrow, contracted views of Europe. They were educated by their surroundings, and every little colony had to be to a certain extent a republic. The kings of the old world endeavored

to parcel out this land to their favorites. But there were too many Indians. There was too much courage required for them to take and keep it, and so men had to come here who were dissatisfied with the old country -- who were dissatisfied with England, dissatisfied with France, with Germany, with Ireland and Holland. The kings' favorites stayed at home. Men came here for liberty, and on account of certain principles they entertained and held dearer than life. And they were willing to work, willing to fell the forests, to fight the savages, willing to go through all the hardships, perils and dangers of a new country, of a new land; and the consequence was that our country was settled by brave and adventurous spirits, by men who had opinions of their own and were willing to live in the wild forests for the sake of expressing those opinions, even if they expressed them only to trees, rocks, and savage men. The best blood of the old world came to the new.

When they first came over they did not have a great deal of political philosophy, nor the best ideas of liberty. We might as well tell the truth. When the Puritans first came, they were narrow. They did not understand what liberty meant -- what religious liberty, what political liberty, was; but they found out in a few years. There was one feeling among them that rises to their eternal honor like a white shaft to the clouds -- they were in favor of universal education. Wherever they went they built schoolhouses, introduced books and ideas of literature. They believed that every man should know how to read and how to write, and should find out all that his capacity allowed him to comprehend. That is the glory of the Puritan fathers.

They forgot in a little while what they had suffered, and they forgot to apply the principle of universal liberty -- of toleration. Some of the colonies did not forget it, and I want to give credit where credit should be given. The Catholics of Maryland were the first people on the new continent to declare universal religious toleration. Let this be remembered to their eternal honor. Let it be remembered to the disgrace of the Protestant government of England, that it caused this grand law to be repealed. And to the honor and credit of the Catholics of Maryland let it be remembered that the moment they got back into power they re-enacted the old law. The Baptists of Rhode Island also, led by Roger Williams, were in favor of universal religious liberty.

No American should fail to honor Roger Williams. He was the first grand advocate of the liberty of the soul. He was in favor of the eternal divorce of church and state. So far as I know, he was the only man at that time in this country who was in favor of real religious liberty. While the Catholics of Maryland declared in favor of religious toleration, they had no idea of religious liberty, They would not allow anyone to call in question the doctrine of the Trinity, or the inspiration of the Scriptures. They stood ready with branding-iron and gallows to burn and choke out of man the idea that, he had a fight to think and to express his thoughts.

So many religions met in our country -- so many theories and dogmas came in contact -- so many follies, mistakes, and stupidities became acquainted with each other, that religion began to fall somewhat into disrepute. Besides this, the question of a new nation began to take precedence of all others.

The people were too much interested in this world to quarrel about the next. The preacher was lost in the patriot. The Bible was read to find passages against kings.

Everybody was discussing the rights of man. Farmers and mechanics suddenly became statesmen, and in every shop and cabin nearly every question was asked and answered.

During these years of political excitement the interest in religion abated to that degree that a common purpose animated men of all sects and creeds.

At last our fathers became tired of being colonists -- tired of writing and reading and signing petitions, and presenting them on their bended knees to an idiot king. They began to have an aspiration to form a new nation, to be citizens of a new republic instead of subjects of an old monarchy. They had the idea -- the Puritans, the Catholics, the Episcopalians, the Baptists, the Quakers, and a few Freethinkers, all had the idea -- that they would like to form a new nation.

Now, do not understand that all of our fathers were in favor of independence. Do not understand that they were all like Jefferson; that they were all like Adams or Lee; that they were all like Thomas Paine or John Hancock. There were thousands and thousands of them who were opposed to American independence. There were thousands and thousands who said: "When you say men are created equal, it is a lie when you say the political power resides in the great body of the people, it is false." Thousands and thousands of them said: "We prefer Great Britain." But the men who were in favor of independence, the men who knew that a new nation must be born, went on full of hope and courage, and nothing could daunt or stop or stay the heroic, fearless few.

They met in Philadelphia; and the resolution was moved by Lee of Virginia, that the colonies ought to be independent states, and ought to dissolve their political connection with Great Britain.

They made up their minds that a new nation must be formed. All nations had been, so to speak, the wards of some church. The religious idea as to the source of power had been at the foundation of all governments, and had been the bane and curse of man.

Happily for us, there was no church strong enough to dictate to the rest. Fortunately for us, the colonists not only, but the colonies differed widely in their religious views. There were the Puritans who hated the Episcopalians, and Episcopalians who hated the Catholics, and the Catholics who hated both, while the Quakers held them all in contempt. There they were, of every sort, and color and kind, and how was it that they came together? They had a common aspiration. They wanted to form a new nation. More than that, most of them cordially hated Great Britain; and they pledged each other to forget these religious prejudices, for a time at least, and agreed that there should be only one religion until they got through, and that was the religion of patriotism. They solemnly agreed that the new nation should not belong to any particular church, but that it should secure the rights of all.

Our fathers founded the first secular government that was ever founded in this world. Recollect that. The first secular government; the first government that said every church has exactly the same rights and no more; every religion has the same rights, and no more. In other words, our fathers were the first men who had the sense, had the genius, to know that no church should be allowed to have a sword; that it should be allowed only to exert its moral influence.

You might as well have a government united by force with Art, or with Poetry, or with Oratory, as with Religion. Religion should have the influence upon mankind that its goodness, that its morality, its justice, its charity, its reason, and its argument give it, and no more. Religion should have the effect upon mankind that it necessarily has, and no more. The religion that has to be supported by law is, without value, not only, but a fraud and curse. The religious argument that has to be supported by a musket, is hardly worth making. A prayer that must have a cannon behind it, better never be uttered. Forgiveness ought not to go in partnership with shot and shell. Love need not carry knives and revolvers.

So our fathers said: "We will form a secular government, and under the flag with which we are going to enrich the air, we will allow every man to worship God as he thinks best." They said: "Religion is an individual thing between each man and his creator, and he can worship as he pleases and as he desires." And why did they do this? The history of the world warned them that the liberty of man was not safe in the clutch and grasp of any church. They had read of and seen the thumb-screws, the racks, and the dungeons of the Inquisition. They knew all about the hypocrisy of the olden time. They knew that the church had stood side by side with the throne; that the high priests were hypocrites, and that the kings were robbers. They also knew that if they gave power to any church, it would corrupt the best church in the world. And so they said that power must not reside in a church, or in a sect, but power must be wherever humanity is -- in the great body of the people. And the officers and servants of the people must be responsible to them. And so I say again, as I said in the commencement, this is the wisest, the profoundest, the bravest political document that ever was written and signed by man.

They turned, as I tell you, everything squarely about. They derived all their authority from the people. They did away forever with the theological idea of government.

And what more did they say? They said that whenever the rulers abused this authority, this power, incapable of destruction, returned to the people. How did they come to say this? I will tell you. They were pushed into it. How? They felt that they were oppressed; and whenever a man feels that he is the subject of injustice, his perception of right and wrong is wonderfully quickened.

Nobody was ever in prison wrongfully who did not believe in the writ of habeas corpus. Nobody ever suffered wrongfully without instantly having ideas of justice.

And they began to inquire what rights the king of Great Britain had. They began to search for the charter of his authority. They began to investigate and dig down to the bed-rock upon which, society must be founded, and when they got down there, forced there, too, by their oppressors, forced against their own prejudices and education, they found at the bottom of things, not lords, not nobles, not pulpits, not thrones, but humanity and the rights of men.

And so they said, We are men; we are men. They found out they were men. And the next thing they said, was, "We will be free men; we are weary of being colonists; we are tired of being subjects; we are men; and these colonies ought to be states; and these states ought to be a nation and that nation ought to drive the last British soldier into the sea." And so they signed that brave Declaration of Independence.

I thank every one of them from the bottom of my heart for signing that sublime declaration. I thank them for their courage -- for their patriotism -- for their wisdom -- for the splendid confidence in themselves and in the human race. I thank them for what they were, and for what we are -- for what they did, and for what we have received -- for what they suffered, and for what we enjoy.

What would we have been if we had remained colonists and subjects? What would we have been to-day? Nobodies -- ready to get down on our knees and crawl in the very dust at the sight of somebody that was supposed to have in him some drop of blood that flowed in the veins of that mailed marauder -- that royal robber, William the Conqueror.

They signed that Declaration of Independence, although they knew that it would produce a long, terrible, and bloody war. They looked forward and saw poverty, deprivation, gloom, and death. But they also saw, on the wrecked clouds of war, the beautiful bow of freedom.

These grand men were enthusiasts; and the world has been raised only by enthusiasts. In every country there have been a few who have given a national aspiration to the people. The enthusiasts of 1776 were the builders and framers of this great and splendid Government; and they were the men who saw, although others did not, the golden fringe of the mantle of glory that will finally cover this world. They knew, they felt, they believed that they would give a new constellation to the political heavens -- that they would make the Americans a grand people -- grand as the continent upon which they lived.

The war commenced. There was little money, and less credit. The new nation had but few friends. To a great extent each soldier of freedom had to clothe and feed himself. He was poor and pure, brave and good, and so he went to the fields of death to fight for the rights of man.

What did the soldier leave when he went?

He left his wife and children,

Did he leave them in a beautiful home, surrounded by civilization, in the repose of law, in the security of a great and powerful republic?

No. He left his wife and children on the edge, on the fringe of the boundless forest, in which crouched and crept the red savage, who was at that time the ally of the still more savage Briton. He left his wife to defend herself, and he left the prattling babes to be defended by their mother and by nature. The mother made the living; she planted the corn and the potatoes, and hoed them in the sun, raised the children, and, in the darkness of night, told them about their brave father and the "sacred cause" She told them that in a little while the war would be over and father would come back covered with honor and glory.

Think of the women, of the sweet children who listened for the footsteps of the dead -- who waited through the sad and desolate years for the dear ones I who never came.

The soldiers of 1776 did not march away with music and banners. They went in silence, looked at and gazed after by eyes filled with tears. They went to meet, not an equal, but a superior -- to fight five times their number -- to make a desperate stand to stop the advance of the enemy, and then, when their ammunition gave out, seek the protection of rocks, of rivers, and of hills.

Let me say here: The greatest test of courage on the earth is to bear defeat without losing heart. That army is the bravest that can be whipped the greatest number of times and fight again.

Over the entire territory, so to speak, then settled by our forefathers, they were driven again and again. Now and then they would meet the English with something like equal numbers, and then the eagle of victory would proudly perch upon the stripes and stars. And so they went on as best they could, hoping and fighting until they came to the dark and somber gloom of Valley Forge.

There were very few hearts then beneath that flag that did not bear to think that the struggle was useless; that all the blood and treasure had been shed and spent in vain. But there were some men gifted with that wonderful prophecy that fulfills itself, and with that wonderful magnetic power that makes heroes of everybody they come in contact with.

And so our fathers went through the gloom of that terrible time, and still fought on. Brave men wrote grand words, cheering the despondent; brave men did brave deeds, the rich man gave his wealth, the poor man gave his life, until at last, by the victory of Yorktown, the old banner won its place in the air, and became glorious forever.

Seven long years of war -- fighting for what? For the principle that all men are created equal -- a truth that nobody ever disputed except a scoundrel; nobody, nobody in the entire history of this world. No man ever denied that truth who was not a rascal, and at heart a thief; never, never, and never will. What else were they fighting for? Simply that in America every man should have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Nobody ever denied that except a villain; never, never. It has been denied by kings -- they were thieves. It has been denied by statesmen -- they were liars. It has been denied by priests, by clergymen, by cardinals, by bishops, and by popes -- they were hypocrites.

What else were they fighting for? For the idea that all political power is vested in the great body of the people. The great body of the people make all the money; do all the work. They plow the land, cut down the forests; they produce everything that is produced. Then who shall say what shall be done with what is produced except the producer?

Is it the non-producing thief, sitting on a throne, surrounded by vermin?

Those were the things they were fighting for; and that is all they were fighting for. They fought to build up a new, a great nation to establish an asylum for the oppressed of the world everywhere. They knew the history of this world. They knew the history of human slavery.

The history of civilization is the history of the slow and painful enfranchisement of the human race. In the olden times the family was a monarchy, the father being the monarch. The mother and children were the veriest slaves. The will of the father was the supreme law. He had the

power of life and death. It took thousands of years to civilize this father, thousands of years to make the condition of wife and mother and child even tolerable. A few families constituted a tribe; the tribe had a chief; the chief was a tyrant; a few tribes formed a nation; the nation was governed by a king, who was also a tyrant. A strong nation robbed, plundered, and took captive the weaker ones. This was the commencement of human slavery.

It is not possible for the human imagination to conceive of the horrors of slavery. It has left no possible crime uncommitted, no possible cruelty un-perpetrated. It has been practiced and defended by all nations in some form. It has been upheld by all religions. It has been defended by nearly every pulpit. From the profits derived from the slave trade churches have been built, cathedrals reared and priests paid. Slavery has been blessed by bishop, by cardinal, and by pope. It has received the sanction of statesmen, of kings, and of queens. It has been defended by the throne, the pulpit and the bench. "Monarchs have shared in the profits. Clergymen have taken their part of the spoils, reciting passages of Scripture in its defence at the same time, and judges have taken their portion in the name of equity and law.

Only a few years ago our ancestors were slaves. Only a few years ago they passed with and belonged to the soil, like the coal under it and rocks on it.

Only a few years ago they were treated like beasts of burden, worse far than we treat our animals at the present day. Only a few years ago it was a crime in England for a man to have a Bible in his house, a crime for which men were hanged, and their bodies afterward burned. Only a few years ago fathers could and did sell their children. Only few years ago our ancestors were not allowed to write their thoughts -- that being a crime. Only a few years ago to be honest, at least in the expression of your ideas, was a felony. To do right was a capital offence; and in those days chains and whips were the incentives to labor, and the preventives of thought. Honesty was a vagrant, justice a fugitive, and liberty in chains. Only a few years ago men were denounced because they doubted the inspiration of the Bible -- because they denied miracles, and laughed at the wonders recounted by the ancient Jews.

Only a few years ago a man had to believe in the total depravity of the human heart in order to be respectable. Only a few years ago, people who thought God too good to punish in eternal flames an unbaptized child were considered infamous.

As soon as our ancestors began to get free they began to enslave others. With an inconsistency that defies explanation, they practiced upon others the same outrages that had been perpetrated upon them. As soon as white slavery began to be abolished, black slavery commenced. In this infamous traffic nearly every nation of Europe embarked. Fortunes were quickly realized; the avarice and cupidity of Europe were excited; all ideas of justice were discarded; pity fled from the human breast a few good, brave men recited the horrors of the trade; avarice was deaf; religion refused to hear; the trade went on; the governments of Europe upheld it in the name of commerce -- in the name of civilization and religion.

Our fathers knew the history of caste. They knew that in the despotisms of the Old World it was disgrace to be useful. They knew that a mechanic was esteemed as hardly the equal of a



hound, and far below a blooded horse. They knew that a nobleman held a son of labor in contempt -- that he had no rights the royal loafers were bound to respect.

The world has changed.

The other day there came shoemakers, potters, workers in wood and iron, from Europe, and they were received in the city of New York as though they had been princes. They had been sent by the great republic of France to examine into the arts and manufactures of the great republic of America. They looked a thousand times better to me than the Edward Alberts and Albert Edwards -- the royal vermin, that live on the body politic. And I would think much more of our Government if it would fete and feast them, instead of wining and dining the imbeciles of a royal line.

Our fathers devoted their lives and fortunes to the grand work of founding a government for the protection of the rights of man. The theological idea as to the source of political power had poisoned the web and woof of every government in the world, and our fathers banished it from this continent forever.

What we want to-day is what our fathers wrote down. They did not attain to their ideal; we approach it nearer, but have not reached it yet. We want, not only the independence of a State, not only the independence of a nation, but something far more glorious -- the absolute independence of the individual. That is what we want. I want it so that I, one of the children of Nature, can stand on an equality with the rest; that I can say this is MY air, MY sunshine, MY earth, and I have a right to live, and hope and aspire, and labor, and enjoy the fruit of that labor, as much as any individual or any nation on the face of the globe.

We want every American to make to-day, on this hundredth anniversary, a declaration of individual independence. Let each man enjoy his liberty to the utmost enjoy all he can; but be sure it is not at the expense of another. The French Convention gave the best definition of liberty I have ever read: "The liberty of one citizen ceases only where the liberty of another citizen commences." I know of no better definition. I ask you to-day to make a declaration of individual independence. And if you are independent be just. Allow everybody else to make his declaration of individual independence Allow your wife, allow your husband, allow your children to make theirs. Let everybody be absolutely free and independent, knowing only the sacred obligations of honesty and affection. Let us be independent of party, independent of everybody and everything except our own consciences and our own brains. Do not belong to any clique. Have clear title-deeds in fee simple to yourselves, without any mortgages on the premises to anybody in the world.

It is a grand thing to be the owner of yourself. It is a grand thing to protect the rights of others. It is a sublime thing to be free and just.

Only a few days ago I stood in Independence Hall -- in that little room where was signed the immortal paper. A little room, like any other; and it did not seem possible that from that room went forth ideas, like cherubim and seraphim, spreading heir wings over a continent, and touching, as with holy fire, the hearts of men.

In a few moments I was in the park, where are gathered the accomplishment of a century. Our fathers never dreamed of the things I saw. There were hundreds of locomotives, with their nerves of steel and breath of flame -- every kind of machine, with whirling wheels and curious cogs and cranks, and the myriad thoughts of men that have been wrought in iron, brass and steel. And going out from one little building were wires in the air, stretching to every civilized nation, and they could send a shining messenger in a moment to any part of the world, and it would go sweeping under the waves of the sea with thoughts and words within its glowing heart. I saw all that had been achieved by this nation, and I wished that the signers of the Declaration -- the soldiers of the Revolution -- could see what a century of freedom has produced. I wished they could see the fields we cultivate -- the rivers we navigate -- the railroads running over the Alleghanies, far into what was then the unknown forest -- on over the broad prairies -- on over the vast plains -- away over the mountains of the West, to the Golden Gate of the Pacific. All this is the result of a hundred years of freedom.

Are you not more than glad that in 1776 was announced the sublime principle that political power resides with the people? That our fathers then made up their minds nevermore to be colonists and subjects, but that they would be free and independent citizens of America?

I will not name any of the grand men who fought for liberty. All should be named, or none. I feel that the unknown soldier who was shot down without even his name being remembered -- who was included only in a report of "a hundred killed," or "a hundred missing," nobody knowing even the number that attached to his august corpse -- is entitled to as deep and heartfelt thanks as the titled leader who fell at the head of the host.

Standing here amid the sacred memories of the first, on the golden threshold of the second, I ask, Will the second century be as grand as the first? I believe it will, because we are growing more and humane. I believe there is more human kindness, more real, sweet human sympathy, a greater desire to help one another, in the United States, than in all the world besides.

We must progress. We are just at the commencement of invention. The steam engine -- the telegraph -- these are but the toys with which science has been amused. Wait; there will be grander things, there will be wider and higher culture -- a grander standard of character, of literature and art. We have now half as many millions of people as we have years, and many of us will live until a hundred millions stand beneath the flag. We are getting more real solid sense. The schoolhouse is the finest building in the village. We are writing and reading more books; we are painting and buying more pictures; we are struggling more and more to get at the philosophy of life, of things -- trying more and more to answer the questions of the eternal Sphinx. We are looking in every direction -- investigating; in short, we are thinking and working. Besides all this, I believe the people are nearer honest than ever before. A few years ago we were willing to live upon the labor of four million slaves. Was that honest? At last, we have a national conscience. At last, we have carried out the Declaration of Independence. Our fathers wrote it -- we have accomplished it. The black man was a slave -- we made him a citizen. We found four million human beings in manacles, and now the hands of a race are held up in the free air without a chain.

I have had the supreme pleasure of seeing a man -- once a slave -- sitting in the seat of his former master in the Congress of the United States. I have had that pleasure, and when I saw it my eyes were filled with tears. I felt that we had carried out the Declaration of Independence -- that we had given reality to it, and breathed the breath of life into its every word. I felt that our flag would float over and protect the colored man and his little children, standing straight in the sun, just the same as though he were white and worth a million. I would protect him more, because the rich white man could protect himself.

All who stand beneath our banner are free. Ours is the only flag that has in reality written upon it: Liberty, Fraternity, Equality -- the three grandest words in all the languages of men.

Liberty: Give to every man the fruit of his own labor -- the labor of his hands and of his brain.

Fraternity: Every man in the right is my brother.

Equality: The rights of all are equal: justice, poised and balanced in eternal calm, will shake from the golden scales in which are weighed the acts of men, the very dust of prejudice and caste: No race, no color, no previous condition, can change the rights of men.

The Declaration of Independence has at last been carried out in letter and in spirit.

The second century will be grander than the first.

Fifty millions of people are celebrating this day. To-day, the black man looks upon his child and says: The avenues to distinction are open to you -- upon your brow may fall the civic wreath -- this day belongs to you.

We are celebrating the courage and wisdom of our fathers, and the glad shout of a free people the anthem of a grand nation, commencing at the Atlantic, is following the sun to the Pacific, across a continent of happy homes.

We are a great people. Three millions have increased to fifty -- thirteen States to thirty-eight. We have better homes, better clothes, better food and more of it, and more of the conveniences of life, than any other people upon the globe.

The farmers of our country live better than did the kings and princes two hundred years ago -- and they have twice as much sense and heart. Liberty and labor have given us all. I want every person here to believe in the dignity of labor -- to know that the respectable man is the useful man -- the man who produces or helps others to produce something of value, whether thought of the brain or work of the hand.

I want you to go away with an eternal hatred in your breast of injustice, of aristocracy, of caste, of the idea that one man has more rights than another because he has better clothes, more land, more money, because he owns a railroad, or is famous and in high position. Remember that all men have equal rights. Remember that the man who acts best his part -- who loves his friends the best -- is most willing to help others -- truest to the discharge of obligation -- who has the best

heart -- the most feeling -- the deepest sympathies -- and who freely gives to others the rights that he claims for himself is the best man. I am willing to swear to this.

What has made this country? I say again, liberty and labor. What would we be without labor? I want every farmer when plowing the rustling corn of June -- while mowing in the perfumed fields -- to feel that he is adding to the wealth and glory of the United States. I want every mechanic -- every man of toil, to know and feel that he is keeping the cars running, the telegraph wires in the air; that he is making the statues and painting the pictures; that he is writing and printing the books; that he is helping to fill the world with honor, with happiness, with love and law.

Our country is founded upon the dignity of labor -- upon the equality of man. Ours is the first real Republic in the history of the world. Beneath our flag the people are free. We have retired the gods from politics. We have found that man is the only source of political power, and that the governed should govern. We have disfranchised the aristocrats of the air and have given one country to mankind.

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## Bank of Wisdom

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