

Key Speech Transcripts

Barack Obama: *Words Matter*

Don't tell me words don't matter. I have a dream – just words words. We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal – just words. We have nothing to fear but fear itself – just words, just speeches.

It's true that speeches don't solve all problems, but what is also true is that if we can't inspire our country to believe again, then it doesn't matter how many policies and plans we have, and that is why I'm running for president of the United States of America, and that's why we just won 8 elections straight because the American people want to believe in change again. Don't tell me words don't matter!

Martin Luther King: *I Have a Dream*

...and so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a *dream* today!

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and "nullification" -- one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls

will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a *dream* today!

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; "and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together."

...and so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.

Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.

Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.

Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado.

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.

But not only that:

Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi.

From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when *all* of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

Free at last! Free at last!

Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!

Will Smith: *Live 8*

The reason that millions of you have tuned in, is that every 3 seconds in one of the poorest countries in the world a child dies as a result of extreme poverty; dies of hunger, or malaria or TB. Dies for lack of drugs that we here in Philly, or you in Berlin or in Moscow can buy from a pharmacy.

Every 3 seconds...dead... just like that, someone else is dead, just like that. Every 3 seconds, somebody's son, somebody's daughter, somebody's future is gone.

Now in just a moment I'm going to ask you all to take out your hands and snap your fingers with me every 3 seconds, and in that moment we're going to let you know that today we're calling on the 8 most powerful words leaders to do what they can to end this daily tragedy, with the stroke of a pen, 8 men can make the word of difference in the lives of billions of people.

Now we can forgive debt, but we cannot forget that right now a child in Africa dies every 3 seconds.

Barack Obama: *Yes We Can!*

It was a creed written into the founding documents that declared the destiny of a nation: Yes, we can.

It was whispered by slaves and abolitionists as they blazed a trail towards freedom through the darkest of nights: Yes, we can.

It was sung by immigrants as they struck out from distant shores and pioneers who pushed westward against an unforgiving wilderness: Yes, we can.

It was the call of workers who organised, women who reached for the ballot, a president who chose the moon as our new frontier, and a king who took us to the mountaintop and pointed the way to the promised land: Yes, we can, to justice and equality.

Yes, we can, to opportunity and prosperity. Yes, we can heal this nation. Yes, we can repair this world. Yes, we can.

And so, tomorrow, as we take the campaign south and west, as we learn that the struggles of the textile workers in Spartanburg are not so different than the plight of the dishwasher in Las Vegas, that the hopes of the little girl who goes to the crumbling school in Dillon are the same as the dreams of the boy who learns on the streets of L.A., we will remember that there is something happening in America, that we are not as divided as our politics suggest, that we are one people, we are one nation.

And, together, we will begin the next great chapter in the American story, with three words that will ring from coast to coast, from sea to shining sea: Yes, we can.

Ann Widdicombe: *Fox hunting*

My problem with hunting is not that I contest the right of farmers to practise pesticide. Hunting is a most ineffective pesticide. Its supporters have tried to have it both ways by saying that they do not kill too many foxes but also that they kill so many that it is a good pesticide. In fact, nine tenths of fox control is done by shooting, not hunting.

Hunting is not a pesticide, so we must ask what it is. It is cruelty. I am not against killing foxes or culling deer. I am against the chase, the cruelty involved in the prolonging the terror of a living, sentient being that is running for its life. They laugh at it, apparently. When the deer is running, can feel the hounds closing in and knows that its strength is not going to last, it is uproariously funny. If it is so funny, why do not those who favour hunting take a trip to Kenya and stand unprotected in a lion reserve and see if they enjoy the hunt? I admit that I might enjoy watching it. Prolongation of terror is wrong. Those who practise it when there are alternatives that are already widely practised do wrong. Yes, the scenes of a hunt are splendid, so splendid that they are all over my dining room curtains, but they are colourful scenes of olde England, and in olde England, not in modern Britain, they belong.

William Wilberforce: *1789 Abolition Speech*

This transcript details one of two accounts of William Wilberforce's famous Abolition speech, delivered in the House of Commons on Tuesday 12 May 1789.

When I consider the magnitude of the subject which I am to bring before the House, a subject, in which the interests, not of this country, nor of Europe alone, but of the whole world, and of posterity, are involved: and when I think, at the same time, on the weakness of the advocate who has undertaken this great cause, when these reflections press upon my mind, it is impossible for me not to feel both terrified and concerned at my own inadequacy to such a task.

But when I reflect, however, on the encouragement which I have had, through the whole course of a long and laborious examination of this question, and how much candour I have experienced, and how conviction has increased within my own mind, in proportion as I have advanced in my labours; when I reflect, especially, that however averse any gentleman may now be, yet we shall all be of one opinion in the end; when I turn myself to these thoughts, I take courage I determine to forget all my other fears, and I march forward with a firmer step in the full assurance that my cause will bear me out, and that I shall be able to justify upon the clearest principles, every resolution in my hand, the avowed end of which is, the total abolition of the slave trade.

I wish exceedingly, in the outset, to guard both myself and the House from entering into the subject with any sort of passion. It is not their passions I shall

appeal to I ask only for their cool and impartial reason; and I wish not to take them by surprise, but to deliberate, point by point, upon every part of this question. I mean not to accuse any one, but to take the shame upon myself, in

common, indeed, with the whole parliament of Great Britain, for having suffered this horrid trade to be carried on under their authority. We are all guilty we ought all to plead guilty, and not to exculpate ourselves by throwing the blame on others; and I therefore deprecate every kind of reflection against the various descriptions of people who are more immediately involved in this wretched business.

Having now disposed of the first part of this subject, I must speak of the transit of the slaves in the West Indies. This I confess, in my own opinion, is the most wretched part of the whole subject. So much misery condensed in so little room, is more than the human imagination had ever before conceived. I will not accuse the Liverpool merchants: I will allow them, nay, I will believe them to be men of humanity; and I will therefore believe, if it were not for the enormous magnitude and extent of the evil which distracts their attention from individual cases, and makes them think generally, and therefore less feelingly on the subject, they would never have persisted in the trade.

I verily believe therefore, if the wretchedness of any one of the many hundred Negroes stowed in each ship could be brought before their view, and remain within the sight of the African Merchant, that there is no one among them whose heart would bear it. Let any one imagine to himself 6 or 700 of these wretches chained two and two, surrounded with every object that is nauseous and disgusting, diseased, and struggling under every kind of wretchedness! How can we bear to think of such a scene as this?

One would think it had been determined to heap upon them all the varieties of bodily pain, for the purpose of blunting the feelings of the mind; and yet, in this very point (to show the power of human prejudice) the situation of the slaves has been described by Mr. Norris, one of the Liverpool delegates, in a manner which, I am sure will convince the House how interest can draw a film across the eyes, so thick, that total blindness could do no more; and how it is our duty therefore to trust not to the reasonings of interested men, or to their way of colouring a transaction. Their apartments, says Mr. Norris, are fitted up as much for their advantage as circumstances will admit.

The right ankle of one, indeed is connected with the left ankle of another by a small iron fetter, and if they are turbulent, by another on their wrists. They have several meals a day; some of their own country provisions, with the best sauces of African cookery; and by way of variety, another meal of pulse, according to European taste. After breakfast they have water to wash themselves, while their apartments are perfumed with frankincense and lime-juice. Before dinner, they are amused after the manner of their country. The song and dance are promoted, and, as if the whole was really a scene of pleasure and dissipation it is added, that games of chance are furnished. The men play and sing, while the women and girls make fanciful ornaments with beads, which they are plentifully supplied with.

Such is the sort of strain in which the Liverpool delegates, and particularly Mr. Norris, gave evidence before the privy council. What will the House think when, by the concurring testimony of other witnesses, the true history is laid open. The slaves who are sometimes described as rejoicing at their captivity, are so wrung with misery at leaving their country, that it is the constant practice to set sail at night, lest they should be sensible of their departure. The pulse which Mr. Norris talks of are horse beans; and the scantiness, both of water and provision, was suggested by the very legislature of Jamaica in the report of their committee, to be a subject that called for the interference of parliament.

Mr. Norris talks of frankincense and lime juice; when surgeons tell you the slaves are stowed so close, that there is not room to tread among them; and when you have it in evidence from sir George Yonge, that even in a ship which wanted 200 of her complement, the stench was intolerable. The song and the dance, says Mr. Norris, are promoted. It had been more fair, perhaps, if he had explained that word promoted. The truth is, that for the sake of exercise, these miserable wretches, loaded with chains, oppressed with disease and wretchedness, are forced to dance by the terror of the lash, and sometimes by the actual use of it. I, says one of the other evidences, was employed to dance the men, while another person danced the women. Such, then is the meaning of the word promoted; and it may be observed too, with respect to food, that an instrument is sometimes carried out, in order to force them to eat which is the same sort of proof how much they enjoy themselves in that instance also.

As to their singing, what shall we say when we are told that their songs are songs of lamentation upon their departure which, while they sing, are always in tears, insomuch that one captain (more humane as I should conceive him, therefore, than the rest) threatened one of the women with a flogging, because the mournfulness of her song was too painful for his feelings. In order, however, not to trust too much to any sort of description, I will call the attention of the House to one species of evidence which is absolutely infallible.

Death, at least, is a sure ground of evidence, and the proportion of deaths will not only confirm, but if possible will even aggravate our suspicion of their misery in the transit. It will be found, upon an average of all the ships of which evidence has been given at the privy council, that exclusive of those who perish before they sail, not less than $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. perish in the passage. Besides these, the Jamaica report tells you, that not less than $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. die on shore before the day of sale, which is only a week or two from the time of landing.

One third more die in the seasoning, and this in a country exactly like their own, where they are healthy and happy as some of the evidences would pretend. The diseases, however, which they contract on shipboard, the astringent washes which are to hide their wounds, and the mischievous tricks used to make them up for sale, are, as the Jamaica report says, (a most

precious and valuable report, which I shall often have to advert to) one principle cause of this mortality.

Upon the whole, however, here is a mortality of about 50 per cent. and this among negroes who are not bought unless (as the phrase is with cattle) they are sound in wind and limb. How then can the House refuse its belief to the multiplied testimonies before the privy council, of the savage treatment of the negroes in the middle passage? Nay, indeed, what need is there of any evidence? The number of deaths speaks for itself, and makes all such enquiry superfluous.

As soon as ever I had arrived thus far in my investigation of the slave trade, confess to you sir, so enormous so dreadful, so irremediable did its wickedness appear that my own mind was completely made up for the abolition. A trade founded in iniquity, and carried on as this was, must be abolished, let the policy be what it might, let the consequences be what they would, I from this time determined that I would never rest till I had effected its abolition.

Christabel Pankhurst: *Women's Right to Vote*

The militant suffragettes who form the Women's Social and Political Union are engaged in the attempt to win the parliamentary vote for the women of this country. Their claim is that those women who pay rates and taxes and fulfil the same qualifications as men voters shall be placed upon the parliamentary register.

The reasons why women should have the vote are obvious to every fair-minded person. The British constitution provides that taxation and representation shall go together. Therefore, women taxpayers are entitled to vote. Parliament deals with questions of vital interest to women, such as the education, housing and employment questions, and upon such matters women wish to express their opinions at the ballot box. The honour and safety of the country are in the hands of Parliament. Therefore, every patriotic and public-spirited woman wishes to take part in controlling the actions of our legislature.

For forty years this reasonable claim has been laid before Parliament in a quiet and patient manner. Meetings have been held and petitions signed in favour of votes for women, but failure has been the result. The reason of this failure is that women have not been able to bring pressure to bear upon the government and government moves only in response to pressure. Men got the vote not by persuading, but by alarming the legislature. Similar vigorous measures must be adopted by women. The excesses of men must be avoided, yet great determination must be shown.

The militant methods of the women of today are clearly thought out and

vigorously pursued. They consist in protesting at public meetings and in marching to the House of Commons in procession. Repressive legislation makes protests at public meetings an offence, but imprisonment will not deter women from asking to vote. Deputations to Parliament involve arrest and imprisonment, yet more deputations will go to the House of Commons.

The present Liberal government profess to believe in democratic government, yet they refuse to carry out their principles in the case of women. They must be compelled by a united and determined women's movement to do justice in this matter. Next session we demand the enactment of a women's enfranchisement measure. We have waited too long for political justice. We refuse to wait any longer. The present government is approaching the end of its career. Therefore, time presses if women are to vote before the next general election. We are resolved that 1909 must, and shall, see the political enfranchisement of British women.