

Address by
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Washington Square
Salt Lake City, Utah
August 30, 2006



A patriot is a person who loves his or her country.

Who among you loves your country so much that you have come here today to raise your voice out of deep concern for our nation – and for our world?

And who among you loves your country so much that you insist that our nation’s leaders tell us the truth?

Let’s hear it: “Give us the truth! Give us the truth! Give us the truth!”

Let no one deny we are patriots. We support our nation’s troops. We are grateful to our veterans who have sacrificed so much for our freedoms. We love our country, we hold dear the values upon which our nation was founded, and we are distressed at what our President, his administration, and our Congress are doing to, and in the name of, our great nation.

Blind faith in bad leaders is not patriotism.

A patriot does not tell people who are intensely concerned about their country to just sit down and be quiet; to refrain from speaking out in the name of politeness or for the sake of being a good host; to show slavish, blind obedience and deference to a dishonest, war-mongering, human-rights-violating president.

That is not a patriot. Rather, that person is a sycophant. That person is a member of a frightening culture of obedience – a culture where falling in line with authority is more important than choosing what is right, even if it is not easy, safe, or popular. And, I suspect, that person is afraid – afraid we are right, afraid of the truth (even to the point of denying it), afraid he or she has put in with an oppressive, inhumane, regime that does not respect the laws and traditions of our

country, and that history will rank as the worst presidency our nation has ever had to endure.

In response to those who believe we should blindly support this disastrous president, his administration, and the complacent, complicit Congress, listen to the words of Theodore Roosevelt, a great president and a Republican, who said:

The President is merely the most important among a large number of public servants. He should be supported or opposed exactly to the degree which is warranted by his good conduct or bad conduct, his efficiency or inefficiency in rendering loyal, able, and disinterested service to the Nation as a whole. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that there should be full liberty to tell the truth about his acts, and this means that it is exactly necessary to blame him when he does wrong as to praise him when he does right. Any other attitude in an American citizen is both base and servile. To announce that there must be no criticism of the President, or that we are to stand by the President, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American public. Nothing but the truth should be spoken about him or any one else. But it is even more important to tell the truth, pleasant or unpleasant, about him than about any one else.

We are here today as truth-tellers.

And we are here to demand: “Give us the truth! Give us the truth! Give us the truth!”

We are here today to insist that those who were elected to be our leaders must tell us the truth.

We are here today to insist that our news media live up to its sacred responsibility to ascertain and report the truth – rather than acting like nothing more than a bulletin board for the lies and propaganda of a manipulative, dishonest federal government.

We have been getting just about everything but the truth on matters of life and death . . . on matters upon which our nation’s reputation hinges . . . on matters that directly relate to our nation’s fundamental values . . . and on matters relating to the survival of our planet.

In the process, our nation has engaged in an unnecessary war, based upon false justifications. More than a hundred thousand people have been killed – and many more have been seriously maimed, brain damaged, or rendered mentally ill. Our nation’s reputation throughout much of the world has been destroyed. We have many more enemies bent on our destruction than before our invasion of Iraq. And the hatred toward us has grown to the point that it will take many years, perhaps generations, to overcome the loathing created by our invasion and occupation of a Muslim country.

What incredible ineptitude and callousness for our President to talk about a Crusade while lying to us to make a case for the invasion and occupation of a Muslim country!

Our children and later generations will pay the price of the lies, the violence, the cruelty, the incompetence, and the inhumanity of the Bush administration and the lackey Congress that has so cowardly abrogated its responsibility and authority under our checks-and-balances system of government.

We are here to say, “We will not stand for it any more. No more lies. No more pre-emptive, illegal war, based on false information. No more God-is-on-our-side religious nonsense to justify this immoral, illegal war. No more inhumanity.”

Let’s raise our voices, and demand, “Give us the truth! Give us the truth! Give us the truth!”

Let’s consider some of the most monstrous lies – lies that have led us, like a nation of sheep, to this tragic war.

Following September 11, 2001, the world knew that Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda were responsible for the horrific attacks on our country. Our long-time allies were sympathetic and supportive. But our president transformed that support into international disdain for the United States, choosing to illegally invade and occupy Iraq, rather than focus on and capture the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks.

Why invade and occupy Iraq? Vice President Dick Cheney and Condoleezza Rice represented to us, without qualification, that there were strong ties between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda.

In September, 2002, President Bush made the incredible claim that “You can’t distinguish between al Qaeda and Saddam.”

President Bush represented to Congress, without any factual basis whatsoever, that Iraq planned, authorized, committed, or aided the 9/11 attacks.

Our President and Vice-President, along with an unquestioning news media, repeatedly led our nation to believe that there was a working relationship between al Qaeda and the Iraqi government, a relationship that threatened the US.

Even last week, when I met with Thomas Bock, National Commander of the American Legion, I asked him why we are engaged in the war in Iraq. He said, “Why, of course, because of the 9/11 attacks on our country.” I asked, “What did Iraq have to do with those attacks?” He looked puzzled, then said, “Well, the connection between al Qaeda and Iraq.”

I was shocked. Here is a man who has criticized us for opposing the war in Iraq – and he is completely wrong about the underlying facts used to justify this war.

Not only has there never been any evidence of any involvement by Saddam Hussein or Iraq with the attacks on 9/11, but there has never been any evidence of any operational connection whatsoever between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda.

Colin Powell finally conceded there is no “concrete evidence about the connection.” “The chairman of the monitoring group appointed by the United Nations Security Council to track al Qaeda” disclosed that “his team had found no evidence linking al Qaeda to Saddam Hussein.” And the top investigator for our European allies has said, ‘If there were such links, we would have found them. But we have found no serious connections whatsoever.’”

President Bush himself finally admitted nine days ago during a press conference that there was no connection between the attacks on 9/11 and Iraq. It’s terrific that the President has now admitted what others have known for so long – but where is the accountability for the tragic war we were led into on the basis of his earlier misrepresentations?

Besides the fictions of Saddam Hussein somehow being linked to the 9/11 attacks and his supposed connection with al Qaeda, what was the principal justification for forgoing additional weapons inspections, failing to work with our

allies toward a solution, refraining from seeking additional resolutions from the United Nations, and hurrying to war – a so-called “pre-emptive” war – in which we would attack and occupy a Muslim nation that posed no security risk to the United States, and cause the deaths of many thousands of innocent men, women, and children – and the deaths and lifetime injuries to many thousands of our own servicemen and servicewomen?

The principal claim was that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction – biological and chemical weapons – and was seeking to build up a nuclear weapons capability. As we now know, there was nothing – no evidence whatsoever – to support those claims.

President Bush represented to us – and to people around the world – that one of the reasons we needed to make war in Iraq – and to do it right away – was because Saddam Hussein was seeking to build nuclear weapons. His assertions about Saddam Hussein trying to purchase nuclear materials from an African nation and about Iraq seeking to obtain aluminum tubes for the enrichment of uranium were challenged at the time by our own intelligence agency and scientists, yet he didn’t tell us that!

Ten days before the invasion of Iraq, it was proven that the documents upon which President Bush’s claim about Saddam Hussein trying to obtain uranium was based were forgeries. However, President Bush did not disclose that to the American people. By that failure, he betrayed each of us, he betrayed our country, and he betrayed the cause of world peace.

Neither did the vast majority of the news media disclose the forgeries – until it was far too late. It took our local newspapers here in Salt Lake City four months – until after President Bush declared that major combat in Iraq was over – to report the discovery that the documents were forgeries – and, therefore, that there was no basis for the false claims about Saddam Hussein trying to build up a nuclear capability. By its failure to promptly disclose the forgeries, the news media betrayed us as well.

Had the American people known we were being lied to – had President Bush informed us that the documents were forged and that he had no other basis for his claim – had our nation’s media done its job, rather than slavishly repeating to us the lies being fed to it by the Bush administration – our nation may well not have allowed the commencement of this outrageous, illegal, unjustified war.

To President Bush, to his administration, to our go-along Congress, and to our news media, we are here today, demanding, “Give us the truth! Give us the truth! Give us the truth!”

Then-National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice said that high-strength aluminum tubes acquired by Iraq were “only really suited for nuclear weapons programs,” warning “we don’t want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud.”

Undisclosed by President Bush or Condoleezza Rice was the fact that top nuclear scientists had informed the Administration that the tubes were “too narrow, too heavy, too long” to be useful in developing nuclear weapons and could be used for other purposes. Dr. Mohamed El Baradei, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, agreed.

So much for the phony claims of Saddam Hussein building nuclear weapons – the primary claims justifying the rush to war.

What were we told about chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction? These claims were as baseless and fraudulent as the claims about nuclear weapons.

President Bush told us in his January 2003 State of the Union address that Hussein had the materials to produce as much as 500 tons of sarin, mustard and VX nerve agent. Then, in May of 2003, he made the outlandish statement that, “We found the weapons of mass destruction. We found biological laboratories.”

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told us, “We know where the [WMDs] are.” Vice President Cheney and then-Secretary of State Powell also joined in the chorus of lies and misinformation about weapons of mass destruction.

Of course, no stockpiles of biological or chemical weapons were found. Bush Administration Weapons Inspector David Kay noted that Iraq did not have an ongoing chemical weapons program after 1991—a conclusion remarkably similar to statements made by Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice *before* the 9/11 attacks – and *before* they sacrificed the truth in the service of promoting the Bush administration’s case for war against Iraq.

On February 24, 2001, less than 7 months before 9/11, Colin Powell said that Saddam Hussein “has not developed any significant capability with respect to

weapons of mass destruction. He is unable to project conventional power against his neighbors,” said Colin Powell.

And in July 2001, two months before 9/11, Condoleezza Rice said: “We are able to keep his arms from him. His military forces have not been rebuilt.”

It is astounding how they changed their claims after the President decided to make a case for the invasion and occupation of Iraq!

To think that we could be lied to by so many members of the Bush administration with such impunity is frightening – chilling. Yet these imperious, arrogant, dishonest people think we should just fall in line with them and continue to take them at their word.

The truth has been established. Iraq had nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks on the United States. There is no evidence of any operational ties between Iraq and al Qaeda. And there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

What a tragedy, leading to greater tragedy. We are fed lie after lie, our media reinforces those lies, and we are a nation led to a tragic, illegal, unprovoked war.

We are here because of our values. We love our country. We cherish the freedoms and liberties of our country. We don't call those who speak out against our nation's leaders unpatriotic or un-American or appeasers of fascists. We have good, wholesome family values. In our families, we teach honesty, we teach kindness and compassion toward others, we teach that violence, if ever justified, must be an absolutely last resort. In our families, we teach that our nation's constitutional values are to be upheld, and that they are worth standing up and fighting for. Our family values promote respect and equal rights toward everyone, regardless of race, ethnic origin, and sexual orientation. In our families, we teach the value of hard work and competence – and we are left to wonder about a President who, after receiving an intelligence memo about the threat posed by al Qaeda, decides to continue his month-long vacation – just before the 9/11 attacks on our country.

As we demand the truth from others, let us also face the truth. Our government all too often has not cared about the human rights of people in other nations – and it doesn't really care about democracy, unless it leads to the election of those who will do our bidding.

Consider the irony regarding the claims that Saddam had chemical weapons and, because of that, we needed to rush to war in Iraq. When Saddam Hussein was using chemical weapons – first against Iranians, then against his own people, the Kurds – our country provided him with biological and chemical agents and equipment to make the weapons. Presidents Reagan and George H.W. Bush refused even to support economic sanctions against Hussein for his use of weapons of mass destruction. What did our nation do in response to Hussein's use of chemical weapons, killing tens of thousand of people, when he actually had them? We befriended, coddled, and rewarded him – with government-guaranteed loans totaling \$5 billion since 1983, freeing up currency for Hussein to modernize his military assets.

Perhaps those in the US government who aided and abetted Saddam Hussein to further US business interests, while he was gassing the Kurds, should be sharing his courtroom dock as he is being tried now for crimes against humanity.

No more lies, no more hiding of the truth, no more wars that more than triple the value of stock in Dick Cheney's prior employer, Halliburton – and which, as of last September, has increased the value of the Halliburton CEO's stock by \$78 million.

We are patriots. We're deeply concerned. And we demand change, now.

No more lies from Condoleezza Rice about whether she and President Bush were advised before 9/11 of the possibility of planes being flown into buildings by terrorists.

No more gross incompetence in the office of the Secretary of Defense.

No more torture of human beings.

No more disregard of the basic human rights enshrined in the Geneva Convention.

No more kidnapping of people and sending them off to secret prisons in nations where we can expect they will be tortured.

No more unconstitutional wiretapping of Americans.

No more proposed amendments to the United States Constitution that would, for the first time, limit fundamental rights and liberties for entire classes of people simply on the basis of sexual orientation.

No more federal land giveaways to developers.

No more increases in mercury emissions from old, dirty, dangerous coal-burning power plants.

No more backroom deals that deprive protection for millions of acres of wild lands.

No more attacks on immigrants who work so hard to build better lives.

No more inaction by Congress on fixing our hypocritical and inconsistent immigration laws and policies.

No more reliance on fiction rather than the science of global warming.

No more manipulation of our media with false propaganda.

No more disastrous cuts in funding for those most in need.

No more federal cuts in community policing and local law enforcement grant programs for our cities.

No more inaction on stopping the genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan.

No more of the Patriot Act.

No more killing.

No more pre-emptive wars.

No more contempt for our long-time allies around the world.

No more dependence on foreign oil.

No more failure to impose increased fuel efficiency standards for automobiles.

No more energy policies developed in secret meetings between Dick Cheney and his energy company cronies.

No more excuses for failing to aggressively cut global warming pollutant emissions.

No more tragically incompetent federal responses to natural disasters.

No more tax cuts for the wealthiest, while the middle class and those who are economically-disadvantaged continue to struggle more and more each year.

No more reckless spending and massive tax cuts, resulting in historic deficits and historic accumulated national debt.

No more purchasing of elections by the wealthiest corporations and individuals in the country.

No more phony, ineffective, inhumane so-called war on drugs.

No more failure to pass an increase in the minimum wage.

No more silence by the American people.

This is a new day. We will not be silent. We will continue to raise our voices. We will bring others with us. We will grow and grow, regardless of political party – unified in our insistence upon the truth, upon peace-making, upon more humane treatment of our brothers and sisters around the world.

We will be ever cognizant of our moral responsibility to speak up in the face of wrongdoing, and to work as we can for a better, safer, more just community, nation, and world.

So we won't let down. We won't be quiet. We will continue to resist the lies, the deception, the outrages of the Bush administration. We will insist that peace be pursued, and that, as a nation, we help those in need. We must break the cycle of hatred, of intolerance, of exploitation. We must pursue peace as vigorously as the Bush administration has pursued war. It's up to all of us to do our part.

Thank you everyone for lending your voices to this call for compassion, for peace, for greater humanity. Let us keep in mind the injunction of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”