**[EZ Speech Writers No. 15321]**

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Remarks by Bob Pate’s son, Raj, on the occasion the celebration of Indian Independence Day, August, 2016.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN . . . HONORED GUESTS . . . FELLOW CELEBRANTS OF INDIA’S INDEPENDENCE DAY. . .

I’M VERY GRATEFUL TO MY FATHER FOR GIVING ME THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE WITH YOU THE FEELINGS OF A 15-YEAR-OLD BOY CONCERNING THE STATE OF THE WORLD HE FINDS HIMSELF IN AND THE FUTURE I SEE BEFORE ME. AND I’D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THREE THINGS IN PARTICULAR [TODAY/TONIGHT]: INDEPENDENCE . . . CADAVERS . . . AND UNITY.

SIXTY-NINE YEARS AGO, AFTER YEARS AND YEARS OF GREAT STRUGGLE AND STRIFE, INDIA WON ITS INDPENDENCE FROM THE BRITISH EMPIRE. THAT THIS EMPIRE WAS EVIL AND UNJUST GOES WITHOUT SAYING, FOR IT MADE OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES LIVING IN ITS COLONIES AROUND THE WORLD LITTLE MORE THAN SLAVES. AND WHILE IT WOULD BE NICE TO SAY THAT THE END OF BRITISH RULE OVER INDIA ALSO ENDED THE STRIFE AND STRUGGLE THAT BROUGHT THAT INDEPENDENCE ABOUT, THIS UNFORTUNATELY WASN’T SO.

INDIA HAS ALWAYS BEEN A LAND OF MANY PEOPLES, MANY CULTURES, AND MANY DIFFERENT RELIGIONS; AND THE PARTITION OF THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT INTO TWO NATIONS — INDIA AND PAKISTAN, AT THE TIME — DID VERY LITTLE TO MITIGATE THE STRIFE THAT HAD EXISTED AMONG THESE VARIOUS GROUPS FOR MANY YEARS, INDEED, FOR MANY *CENTURIES*.

INDIA, EVEN DURING THE BRITISH *RAJ*, WAS HARDLY A “MELTING POT,” AS THE AMERICANS LIKE TO SAY. IT WAS, IF ANYTHING, A BOILING COULDRON OF INTERRACIAL ANIMOSITY, CROSS-CULTURAL CONFLICT, AND RELIGIOUS ANTAGONISM, MUCH OF WHICH HAS CONTINUED UP UNTIL THIS VERY DAY. TO ME, THIS IS JUST PLAIN CRAZY. WHY SHOULD INDIA’S DEEP AND RICH HISTORY OF DIVERSITY CONTINUE TO FOSTER, NOT HARMONY AND GOODWILL, BUT CONTINUING CONFLICT, ANTAGONISM AND STRIFE. AND FOR WHAT?

BECAUSE HINDUS AND MUSLIMS AND SIKHS AND BUDDHISTS AND CHRISTIANS, AND SO ON, HAVE DIFFERENT NAMES FOR “GOD?” BECAUSE THESE DIFFERENT SECTS HAVE DIFFERENT WAYS OF CELBRATING LIFE AND HONORING THE DEAD? BECAUSE THE LEADERS OF SOME OF THESE GROUPS EQUATE THE SUPERIORITY OF THEIR VALUE SYSTEMS WITH HOW MUCH GROGRAPHY THEY CONTROL?

LIKE I SAID, THIS IS JUST PLAIN CRAZY TO ME, FOR SURELY, IN THE WORDS OF THE GREAT AMERICAN POET, MAYA ANGELOU*: “I NOTE THE OBVIOUS DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EACH SORT AND TYPE; BUT WE ARE MORE ALIKE, MY FRIENDS, THAN WE ARE UNLIKE.”*

AND THIS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IS WHAT BRINGS ME TO CADAVERS.

CADAVERS ARE THE PERFECT METAPHOR FOR MRS. ANGELOU’S OBSERVATION. FOR IF YOU STRIP AWAY THE SKIN FROM A THOUSAND CADAVERS IN A MORGUE, YOU’LL SEE THAT, UNDER THAT SKIN, WE ARE EXACTLY THE SAME. INDEED, WE ARE VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL. WHEN EXANGUINATED, WE ALL BLEED RED. WE ALL POSSESS THE SAME

MUSCLES AND SINEWS AND BONES. WE ALL HAVE THE SAME COMPLEX NERVOUS SYSTEM AND THE SAME INCREDIBLE BRAIN STRUCTURE. EXCEPT, PERHAPS, FOR A FEW MINOR AND SUPERFICIAL DIFFERENCES IN THE SHAPE OF OUR SKULLS, WE ARE ALL *EXACTLY* ALIKE. WHICH IS TO SAY: WE ARE ALL FUNDAMENTALLY *HUMAN*.

THERE IS, IN THE END, MORE THAT UNITES US THAN DIVIDES US. OUR STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE IN AN INCREASINGLY COMPLEX AND ENDANGERED PLANET ARE COMMON TO ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD, WHETHER IN A PRIMITIVE VILLAGE IN AFRICA OR AN ADVANCED COUNTRY LIKE CANADA.

WE ARE ALL THE VICTIMS, IF NOT THE PERPETRATORS, OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS POTENTIALLY DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES.

WE ALL LOVE OUR CHILDREN AND WANT THEM TO THRIVE, DESPITE THE COMMON CHALLENGES WE ALL FACE AS HUMANS.

AND WE ALL LOVE FREEDOM AS A BIRTHRIGHT — WHETHER IT’S BEING DENIED TO US AT THE MOMENT BY DESPOTS, OR WHETHER WE’RE LUCKY ENOUGH TO ENJOY IT AS A MATTER OF LAW.

WE ARE, AS MAYA ANGELOU SAID, MORE ALIKE THAN WE ARE UNLIKE. AND I BELIEVE THAT THE SINGLE GREATEST CHALLENGE THAT WE ALL FACE IN THE WORLD OF TODAY — AND THE WORLD THAT I SHALL INHERIT AS I ENTER ADULTHOOD — IS THE CHALLENGE OF FINALLY, ONCE AND FOR ALL, FOR PERHAPS THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY, CREATING A TRUE UNITY OF ALL HUMANKIND.

NOW I KNOW THAT ONE 15 YEAR-OLD KID DOESN’T HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN ALL BY HIMSELF. BUT ALL OF US HERE IN THIS ROOM CAN AT LEAST *BEGIN* TO MAKE IT HAPPEN. THAT’S WHY MY FATHER IS NOW GOING TO CALL UPON A NUMBER OF RELIGIOUS AND CIVIC LEADERS HERE [TODAY/TONIGHT] TO COME UP TO THE STAGE AND LIGHT A *DIYA* LAMP, WHICH IN INDIA IS A SYMBOL OF BOTH LIGHT AND UNITY. I AM ESPECIALLY HAPPY TO BE A PART OF THIS SYBOLIC RITUAL, BECAUSE IF THE WORLD THAT I’M SOON TO INHERIT NEEDS ANYTHING, IT CERTAINLY NEEDS BOTH LIGHT *AND* UNITY — THE LIGHT TO SEE CLEARLY THE ESSENTIAL HUMANITY WITHIN ALL OF US, AND THE UNITY TO OVERCOME THE SMALL AND PETTY AND TOTALLY INSIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES THAT DIVIDE US.

[GESTURING TO YOUR FATHER] AND SO IT IS NOW MY DEEPEST HONOR AND RIVILEDGE, DEAR FATHER, TO TURN THE STAGE OVER TO YOU. THANK YOU.

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