

CAUTION -- FOR RELEASE AFTER 2:00 P. M.
MONDAY, APRIL 20, 1964

Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON
YWCA NATIONAL CONVENTION
CLEVELAND, OHIO - APRIL 20, 1964

Mrs. Marvel, Members and Friends of the YWCA:

I am delighted to be here as your conference opens and to reaffirm my admiration for your organization. I bring you personal greetings from one of your most avid admirers--my husband.

The YWCA which touches so many lives each day has touched our own on many occasions.

When we have traveled on assignments abroad--to Greece, Turkey, The Philippines, the letters Y-W-C-A are a common tongue and they seem to say -- "this is an outpost of democracy".

In Washington, just four blocks from the White House are the busy facilities of the YWCA residence. I have cut the ribbon for their International Food Fair and like their stream of visitors carried away honey from Mt. Olympus and Scandanavian chocolates. Often, I have thought how much that red-brick building means in the daily life of the city and many young women who come to Washington to seek their fortune. I think of the young girl--let's call her Grace--fresh out of a small town high school. For very little money, she found a place to live comfortably while she filled out the inevitable Form 57s dozens of times and looked for a job in the vast and sometimes--alas--impersonal employer -- the United States Government.

Convenient in the heart of the city for her, peace of mind for her parents who are back home waiting for a letter or a phone call, and the widening horizons of meeting young women from all over our country. These are just a few benefits which the "Y" gave her.

In the next building, the expanded facilities are literally revolving doors of learning for everything from classes on finance and language to charm and bridge. Eight thousand people utilize its services each year. In the swimming pool, youngsters are learning life saving, including my Luci.

I think too of a service at the National Cathedral where I stood in solemn attendance at your World Fellowship Service as young women in colorful costumes from 70 countries marched by proudly carrying their flag. Everyone sensed the inspiration that comes from a unity of purpose.

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Charles Malik, when President of the United Nations, referred to the YWCA as a veritable "U.N. of women". Certainly you have been united in purpose, but with a tolerance of those many points of view which impart character to our world society.

You meet here today in the very city where 44 years ago you met and resolved to help correct the economic injustices of the society of that day. That day has become this. They-- your predecessors--have become you.

So, on the outset of this convention, we find solace in what has been accomplished and challenge in what has not.

A great deal of soul-searching went into my decision to accept your flattering invitation. For it seemed terribly presumptuous for me--the amateur--to find any words of wisdom for you--the expert.

I cannot rally you to the war on poverty or the war on prejudice for you have been waging it on the front lines so well and so long.

I cannot call on you to learn more about the world because you daily practice that preachment. In understanding the neighborhood and its needs, you have come to understand--in the most concrete fashion--the world and its urgencies. You already know that the intangibles of place, the mood and tone of a neighborhood can become agents of good will or demons of divisiveness.

But together we can look to the future and take heart that there is comfort in the war we now wage--the war FOR humanity.

The very fact that we are engaged in an attack on the slums, instead of our fellow man; that our hands are free to pick up the plowshare, is evidence that we live in an envied hour in history.

Our battlecry of hope is that while 30 years ago a President could stand up and say one-third of us are ill-clothed, ill-fed, and ill-housed -- now, today, the statistic we fight has shrunk to one-fifth.

As pioneers in the field of making life better, let us consider for a moment what we can do to enlarge our efforts. First, we must ask ourselves: What kind of a world do women want?

Above all, we want a world at peace, a security based on mutual trust. We want our children to live in a country--in a community which bases its actions among its citizens on fair play, fair play for all, not because it is political or expedient, but because it is morally right. It cannot be otherwise.

We want stable conditions for a homelife, free of unemployment. The biggest crippler of family life is the inability to get a job. People don't want handouts. They don't want doles. They want to learn the skills they can exchange for a paycheck.

We want a good home environment for our children. And, if we mean this and strive for it effectively--it encompasses a really massive attack on the part of city-dwellers to demand long-range, imaginative efforts to make our cities clean, functional and beautiful.

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We must face the fact that we are rapidly becoming an urban society.

The growth of major cities in this country is eight percent greater than the growth of the total population.

We know by these statistics that the cities are where our children are going to grow up, now and even more in the future. If the city is a jungle, the child may turn out to be a wolf cub.

In a prosperous society, we have every right to expect and demand a decent urban life for our families. This is where our children will get their chance. And, we must do everything in our power to see that this is better than just a fighting chance.

Women can do much in their civic life. They can alert citizens to be interested in the affairs of their city. They can push and prod legislators. They can raise sights and set standards. Today, the resources available in our society are so vast. We have tools and instruments for growth. We need bolder imagination about the way we want to live--better homes for our families, better schools for our children, better cities for all of us. Women can be dedicated doers for all these things.

It is not an easy assignment. It is a necessary one and it is a joyful one.

I remember G. K. Chesterton once remarked something like this: "It has been said that Christianity has been tried and failed. The truth is that Christianity has been tried, found difficult, and put aside."

But we are not a people to give up. To gain the kind of world we want, we must face up to the unfinished adventures of America. Our forebears were not afraid of the wilderness; we need never fear the wilderness of our problems.

When you chose as your theme, "Match Us To This Hour", it was not idle choosing.

It is a great hour for the human race. How fortunate we are to be alive at a time when everyone of us is needed.

A century ago, Emerson wrote: "We think our civilization is near its meridian, but we are yet only at the cockcrow and morning star."

His words are as meaningful today as they were then. You can help make the morning beautiful.

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