
**The Honorable
Albert A. Gore, Jr.**

**“The Strength of
America”**

The 2001 Jerry Wurf
Memorial Lecture



**The Labor and Worklife Program
Harvard Law School**

JERRY WURF MEMORIAL FUND (1982)
Harvard Trade Union Program, Harvard Law School

The Jerry Wurf Memorial Fund was established in memory of Jerry Wurf, the late President of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Its income is used to initiate programs and activities that “reflect Jerry Wurf’s belief in the dignity of work, and his commitment to improving the quality of lives of working people, to free open thought and debate about public policy issues, to informed political action...and to reflect his interests in the quality of management in public service, especially as it assures the ability of workers to do their jobs with maximum effect and efficiency in environments sensitive to their needs and activities.”

SENATOR DAVID PRYOR, DIRECTOR
INSTITUTE OF POLITICS, KENNEDY SCHOOL OF
GOVERNMENT, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Kennedy School of Government and to the Institute of Politics. I'm David Pryor and I have the high privilege of being the Director of this great Institute. The Kennedy family 35 years ago established the Institute of Politics. It is a part of the Kennedy School of Government and during those decades of service and pride, the Institute of Politics and the Kennedy School, working as a team, has set forth literally hundreds and hundreds of young men and women to every state in the union and to almost every country on earth with an increased knowledge of government and a greater and more impassioned desire for public service and the commitment to make a better world. To be sure, there is no other place in the world like the Kennedy School of Government. We welcome all of you here this evening.

I think that the late President Kennedy might look down tonight at this wonderful event to see the young men and women from all over the world tonight to hear our former Vice President and he might say with us, "this is what it's all about." It doesn't get any better. To Vice President Gore, what an opportune time to come back to Harvard, where he graduated in 1969 and to come back here and tell us, in his own words, about the strength of America. What a moment to choose such a title.

I had the privilege of serving alongside with him in the United States Senate and sir, we welcome you back to Harvard. You are no stranger to this forum and I might add that the Vice President in 1969 was a very, very active student leader when he was here and we encourage that in all of you.

To our new president of Harvard, I think we certainly owe a great, great welcome tonight. He is the 27th President. I remember Peter J. Gomes just about a year ago speaking at one of our suppers, Mr. President; he said "and now, I want to talk to you about the race for the presidency." He says "the race that really matters, the presidency of Harvard University." We welcome you, Larry Summers, a most distinguished American, a former Secretary of the Treasury. What a wonderful and great honor to welcome you here this evening.

And this gentleman to my right has helped make it all possible. He is Jerry McEntee, he is the President of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees which is the largest union of working men and women in America. He tonight is making it possible for our former vice president to deliver the Jerry Wurf Lecture and we're honored at this time to introduce to you Jerry McEntee.



David Pryor

PRESIDENT GERALD McENTEE
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY AND
MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES

It is important in the midst of sadness and mourning for the tragedies that occurred on September 11, to continue to move forward with our lives and, indeed, with the life of our nation

Thank you very much. Boy, what a crowd! You look wonderful out there. I want to thank Senator Pryor for the very kind introduction and for pointing out the fact that we are the largest labor union in America. SEIU would be upset about that but I'm very glad to hear it.

I want to begin by saying that it is important in the midst of sadness and mourning for the tragedies that occurred on September 11, to continue to move forward with our lives and, indeed, with the life of our nation. We think that's why it's appropriate that we have all gathered here today to hear the Vice President give the Jerry Wurf Memorial Lecture. To begin with, and I think an important point, we're here to honor the memory of Jerry Wurf. His wife, Mildred, is here with us today. Her son, Nick, her daughter Abigail are with us today still lending support to her husband's ideas, and we thank Mildred Wurf for that.

I had the honor to succeed Jerry as President of AFSCME. He was a man dedicated to intellectual pursuits and to social justice. He was dedicated to fighting for respect and dignity for public service workers. When disaster hit our country last month it was public service workers, if you will think about it, who originally came to the rescue. Whether they were wearing hard hats and drilling in lower Manhattan or they were wearing fire fighter boots and walking in the smoldering wreckage. Whether they were providing grief counseling or processing essential government assistance to families in need, America's workforce has continued to do their jobs. And by doing their jobs, they are keeping America strong and they are keeping America going. They're not wealthy folks. They arrived at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in ambulances, pickup trucks, fire trucks, police cars, not limousines. They are the 70% of our labor force that used to be called the working class. Not supervisors, often not college educated and, until September 11 in many cases, indeed not appreciated.

These workers are a reminder to all of us of the importance, we believe, of public service. We are at the Kennedy School of Government, an institution dedicated to public service, to hear from a public servant, Al Gore. Al Gore has a strong pro-worker agenda as a senator, as a Vice President and when he ran for president and I know he still is willing, and I know this in my heart, he still is willing to stand side by side with working men

and women in this country and support them and support their right to organize because he believes it in his heart. Like so many Americans over the past few weeks, I know, Al Gore has appreciated the amazing heroism and commitment to our country by everyday American workers, by doing their jobs. Now that several weeks have passed we have all seen some signs of recovery from the shock and the horror of this national nightmare. People are starting to take planes, and I took one to get here today. But, it's not the same as before September 11. Nothing will or should be the same. After all, our country was attacked, America was attacked. All the liberties and freedoms, all the things we hold dear as a nation were attacked. But, as the civil rights anthem says, we shall overcome. The people of New York City shall overcome, the people of Washington, DC shall overcome. The people throughout our country shall overcome, our fire fighters, our EMTs, our office workers, our construction crews and our school personnel shall overcome. That's what it means to be an American. That's what it means to live in America. Our common humanity and goodness has risen to the surface. People help people because that was the only option they could see. Not to make a profit or to be heroes on the six o'clock news, although many of them were, but many of them were in public service. Now is the time to consider or, maybe, reconsider your values and your goals. Now is the time to reach out to others and do good for the sake of doing good, just like American workers have always done. Thank you, and God Bless America.



Gerald McEntee

PRESIDENT LAWRENCE H. SUMMERS HARVARD UNIVERSITY



Albert Gore with
Harvard President
Lawrence H. Summers
Photo by Maritha Stewart

Al Gore is going to speak to us about the strength of America. In a moment, I want to say a few words about the strength of Al Gore but, before I do, I want to say a few words about public service. I want to recognize Jerry Wurf, someone I knew well as his family vacationed near mine in Wellfleet, Massachusetts and someone who I admired for his commitment to doing the right thing by the people he represented and doing the right thing by this country.

Jerry made what I think is a point that none of us at the university can make often enough or strongly enough and that is the importance of public service. There was only one group of people who were going up the stairs in the World Trade Center on September 11 and those were public servants. Public servants. People who are paid by taxes. People who were workers in the government of New York City, workers in the government of New York State and workers in the government of the United States. Anyone who wants to say that government work is wrong or that government is wrong or that government is bad should think about those people going up those stairs at that moment. (applause)

We stand here at a forum of the Institute of Politics of the Kennedy School of Government, an institution dedicated as David so eloquently described to promoting public service. But also an institution that is part of Harvard University, an institution dedicated to teaching students and developing new ideas. The Kennedy School, this forum, represents a judgement, a vision recognized years ago on the importance of marrying together ideas and public service. That is what the career of the man we are going to hear from tonight is all about. Al Gore's had a distinguished career in government: eight years in the House of Representatives, eight years as Vice President of the United States, eight years as a United States Senator. He has had a distinguished career at Harvard as a student, as an overseer of the university. All four of his children have attended Harvard University.

There are many things that one could say about Al Gore, about his accomplishments in the House and Senate, about his Vice Presidency. But I think one of the things for someone here at this university that stands out when I think about Vice President Gore is his commitment to serious thought, to serious research, to thinking through public policy issues and then

acting on the result of that thinking. Whether the issue is the environment, which has its salience today in no small part because of what Al Gore did in the late 1980s. Whether the issue is telecommunications policy, where we have the policies we have in no small part because of Al Gore's expertise. Whether the issue is something that Al Gore pushed very, very hard when he was in the government without getting the public attention that in retrospect it deserved: the challenge for the United States of how foreign policy deals with failed states that are unable to maintain control of their own borders, that is something that Al Gore was talking about all the time, was challenging all of us to think about in the early 1990s at a time when many in the conventional foreign policy establishment regarded it as a flaky notion or derided concern with failed states as some kind of social work, not a serious pursuit of national security. Al Gore was ahead of the curve then as he has been so often in the past. There are, I would suggest to you, two groups of political leaders: there are political leaders whose views, whose ideas are of interest when they are political leaders because they are political leaders. There is another group, frankly a much smaller group of political leaders whose ideas, of course, have value when they are in office but whose ideas have an independent strength because of their quality, because of their thoughtfulness, quite apart from the position that is held when they are in office. Al Gore, as much as anyone in American public life, represents that second and much narrower tradition of political leadership.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Vice President of the United States, the Honorable Albert Gore.

There was only one group of people who were going up the stairs in the World Trade Center on September 11 and those were public servants.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS THE HONORABLE ALBERT GORE

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Thank you. Thank you very much. President Summers, thank you so much for those kind words and David Pryor, my honored colleague and cherished friend, Jerry McEntee, Barbara, to the Wurf family, Mildred and Abigail and Nicholas, it is truly an honor to give the Jerry Wurf Lecture and to be here, at this institution. You all are very lucky at this institution to have Larry Summers as your new President. We worked together very closely; we were allies and became close friends. We pulled all-nighters together, on policy and battles over whether or not the budget was going to be handled correctly. Anyway, I'm really glad to be here.

I am Al Gore, I used to be the next President of the United States of America. You know, you win some, you lose some and then there's that little known third category (laughter, cheering). This has been a time of transition for me. As I said the other day, it sometimes is difficult. For example, they let other cars on the road with me now when I go out...very, very disconcerting (audience laughter). And, having not driven for eight years it may not be wise. I'm now teaching at Middle Tennessee State and Fisk University. I'm a visiting professor – VP for short (laughter)...hanging on.

You know, I almost didn't make any of those jokes because it's a time when we're all really still reeling emotionally from what happened on September 11 and so I almost didn't; but, you know, you see the courage of those who survived that attack and they're moving on, our country is moving on. It really is very inspiring and I accepted this invitation to come and speak here because I do just most everything that Jerry asks me to do anyway but obviously before the world changed. I read the purposes of this lecture series and of the other activities that are established here in the name of Jerry Wurf. Truly it is an honor to be able to be a part of this program.

As mentioned, I wanted to talk about the strength of America. Well, now more than ever it's abundantly obvious that the strength of America is our people and the unity that we feel, especially when we are attacked. But we have a unity that is different from the unity felt by other nations in any circumstances. I don't think this is a point of chauvinistic, breast-beating pride. I really think that we are the exemplar of a group of people who have come together around a set of ideals.

We're seeing a lot of changes in our world. Some nations are failing. We're seeing what you might call "post-national" entities. Al Qaeda is one: a group that exists in 50 to 60 countries. It's not a nation. The nation of Afghanistan has given refuge to many of its leaders; but the nation of Afghanistan is itself very nearly itself a post-national entity, and when we confront a challenge like this it really calls for new thinking. As President Lincoln said in his second annual message to the Congress, "as our case is new, we must think anew." He went on to say, "we must disenthral ourselves and then we shall save our country."

I said in Iowa last week, that President Bush is my Commander in Chief and that our unity as a nation is stronger than at any time that I can remember in my entire lifetime. I'm grateful for that. It is important to remember why we come together and around what we come together. Franklin Roosevelt, during World War II, repeatedly said that our strength as a nation is found not only in our military might, not only in our soldiers and sailors and airmen, but in our working people, in the production of our factories and farms and the commitment of our people to what the United States of America is all about. In that war, before we became involved in it, some important figures in organized labor like Walter Reuther, for example, were among the most eloquent in our nation in defining the reasons why we needed to be involved.

Last week in Iowa I drove around part of the state in a car and I heard about a labor dispute where the machinists had gone out on strike in a place called Middle Amana. It's an interesting story, a utopian community in the last century, or two centuries now...so, they were on strike. So, I just got up early one morning and drove down there. They're out in the middle of a very rural, sparsely populated area. I went to a HandiMart nearby and bought a bunch of donuts and went to the gates and handed out the donuts. We were talking there and one of these men who were out on strike carrying a sign looked at me. And kind of just out of the blue, of course, we had talked about September 11, but we had gone on and we were talking about what they were concerned about: health insurance, wages, working conditions and then out of the blue he looked at me and said, "hey, you tell President Bush that there are a whole lot of us that are ready to go if we need to. I'll



Albert Gore



Albert Gore and HUCTW Treasurer
Donene Williams

go,” and he was talking about the challenge that our country faces now and his response was so basic and so in keeping with what our country’s all about. It really was quite moving to me.

This battle against terrorism is a battle for the value of human life and freedom against those who, for reasons of hatred or artificial constructs, do not attach the same meaningful value to life. In one of the interfaith ceremonies, one of the faith leaders in one of the ecumenical services that have been held around our country said about 10 days ago that there were two kinds of people at the World Trade Center site and the other sites September 11. One group was made up of those who were willing to sacrifice their lives in order to kill the innocent and inspire terror. Then there was a second group, willing to sacrifice their lives in order to save the innocent and to rescue those who were in danger. As President Summers mentioned, that second group was made up predominantly of public employees, the group that Jerry Wurf devoted his life and career to fighting for. If you look at the list of those who were involved in those sacrifices, you think of the firefighters, the police, union members both groups, EMTs with AFSCME, AFGE, about 235 members of AFGE were in that complex. AFT, several members of AFT were killed in the plane crashes, airline pilots, Communications Workers of America, 400 CWA members were in the World Trade Center towers, dozens more at the Pentagon. Electrical workers, 16 members of the IBEW. The Flight Attendants, 25 of them. Hotel Employees, Restaurant Employees, 270 members working at the top of tower number one. The Machinists, like the fellow in Iowa, there were members on the planes and others lost. Office and Professional Employees, Operating Engineers, Painters and Allied Trades, Plumbers and Pipefitters, all of these unions lost members. SEIU’s public employees federation. 15 carpenters, 15 members of the Carpenters.

I want to tell you about one public employee in particular who was the first official victim that was taken by the firefighters. Death certificate number one. You may have read about Father Mychal Judge, 68 years old, probably among all of the victims killed September 11, remembered by more individuals because he was the chaplain of the New York Fire Department, one of them, an AFSCME member as a matter of fact, 68 years old. He was a friar and one of his colleagues saw a plane flying low and heard the collision and said to Father

Judge, “I think you’re going to be needed.” Without a second thought, he quickly took off his friar’s outfit and put on his chaplain uniform and rushed to the Trade Center attack, and he knew the firemen would be there. One of the firemen was killed by a collision with someone who had fallen from one of the upper floors. Father Judge knelt beside him to give him the last rites and out of respect he took off his helmet to give the last rites, and the debris from the tower began to fall in larger quantities and he was killed.

The firefighters, who have a tradition of taking out their own from sites where tragedy has taken place, came and got Father Judge, wrapped him in a white sheet, took him to a nearby church, put his rosary beads in his hand, put his helmet and his badge on his chest and laid him on the altar of the church. They wouldn’t let him be taken to the coroner’s office until they took him to the fire hall just a short distance away, and thousands of firefighters who knew him – he was a member of District Council 37 – came to pay their respects. He was willing to go directly in harm’s way out of what has been described in scripture as “no greater love.” He exemplified both the sacrifice and the values of our country in this time of great peril. We should remember him and all of the others, those who were working that day, those who were visiting, and we should honor their memories by fighting for the values that bind us together as a country.

I really think that we should also remember them in asking for a change in the attitude that some have had in past years and decades toward public employees. We need to recognize that the public employees of state and local and county and the federal government are working for us and breathing life into our representative democracy. So let’s be done with this business of attacking them and criticizing them and instead recognize faults when they exist but honor them for the way they serve us and the courage that they show on a daily basis (applause), making our democracy work.

In the aftermath of the incident, right now there are a thousand ironworkers who have been cutting through millions of tons of debris. There are members of Local 78 of the Laborers, who are dealing with the sensitive task of handling the asbestos on the site. They’ve been trained for it. These people deserve our respect and when a jury talked about the importance of organizing, I’d just like to say a brief word about how that is

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related to the strength of America. There are men and women in our country who have trouble making enough to pay the rent and provide the basics for their families. Some of them, incidentally, work on this campus and I honor the students who were involved last spring (applause) and I know that this university that I love so much is going to find a way to come to an equitable solution and the process that's underway has been making some progress.

But, there are a lot of people in America who are having a hard time. We as a people are now working far more than any other people in any developed, advanced economy on earth. And that time has been taken partly from families, partly from communities. There are many families that now split shifts in order to take care of their families and also take care of their obligations at work. A lot of communities are kind of frayed at the edges because there's not the kind of investment in community life and in civic groups. I see Robert Putnam over there nodding forcefully...my daughter interviewed him for the *Crimson* and took him bowling to do the interview. Of course the author of *Bowling Alone* has made this point that civic groups have not been receiving the same kind of investment. One of the reasons is that the intensity and the amount of time that is being put into work is partly being taken from communities, being taken partly from families. The strength of America can be found not only in our military, not only in our workplace but also in the vibrancy of our communities and the resilience and love and sharing of our families. Families and communities are both now under siege in a sense. Both need more investments of time and energy. We have a time famine for many workers, in the phrase of Arlie Hochschild.

One of the ways that people in the workforce address this kind of difficulty is by speaking up and asking employers to recognize the difficulty and do something about it. But, for a long time the lesson has been absorbed that that doesn't always work very well. And one way to remedy the imbalance in the conversation is for employees to be able to band together and speak with one voice. That's what organizing is all about.

Of course, everything's a question of balance and there have been times in our history when the pendulum has swung too far one way or too far the other way. But right now organizing is a very important priority. Let me tell you one story that illustrates it for me:

I met a man about 30 or 34 years old who was an immigrant to America from a communist country. He had actually left with his parents from a communist country when he was one year old but did not make it to the United States until he was 16 years old. He described his feelings when he came, on a boat – classic scene – he sees the Statue of Liberty, near the site that is the object of so much grieving now, and he was so inspired by the Statue of Liberty, it was the essence of what immigrants who flee persecution feel when they come here. He came, began to make his way through the school system, got married, got a job. He had a hard time. He was in California and he went to several different work places, joined unions, didn't get what he felt was a just reward, was stretched thin, was not really enjoying life.

His brother called him and suggested that he come to Las Vegas, where there was a vibrant, growing economy with higher wages and more opportunities. And so he went, and he went to a work site to sign up for work and the employer there had a favorable and healthy cooperative relationship with the workforce and with the union that represented them. After he signed his application, the representative of the employer said, "well, now you'll probably want to join the union so the sign up table is right over there." And he said, he really couldn't believe it because of the hostile relationships that he had personally experienced between his previous employers and the organizations that had represented him before. He said that as he walked toward the union table he looked around to see if he was being photographed or if somebody was writing down his name and he took another step and finally he sat down to sign up and he realized that it was real and that it was okay. And here's what he said: he said that at the age of 33 that was the first time since he was 16 years old, looking at the Statue of Liberty that he had felt in his heart the same feeling of freedom that he felt when he came into New York harbor.

There are a lot of Americans who feel the need to have more freedom to spend time with their families, to become involved in their communities, to choose their own values in life and get off the treadmill a little more often in order to really enjoy what this country is truly all about. Jerry Wurf fought for those values, fought for those people. This series is intended to keep that vision and those values alive and it is an honor for me to continue in that tradition. Thank you very much.



Albert Gore and Mrs.
Mildred Wurf
Photo by Martha Stewart

AFTERWORD

AUDIENCE QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

I was wondering what you thought about the role of civil liberties after this attack?

Senator David H. Pryor: I just went to the president of Harvard University and I said, “Mr. President, come on back up to the stage, you look so uncomfortable out there in that little chair, so he’s going to rejoin us.”

Here’s the deal: all right, y’all ready? We’re going to start right over here and we’re going to have a few questions for the Vice President. We want our questions very succinct, short, no speeches and we’re going to start here and then we’re going to that microphone. We’ll make that circle a couple of times so, question 1:

Audience Question: I’m a Master’s student in the Center for Middle Eastern Studies. My question is about civil liberties. Right now at the Kennedy School students who are international students have had their financial files given to the FBI without their permission. I was wondering what you thought about the role of civil liberties after this attack?

Honorable Albert Gore: I don’t know the particulars of the inquiries you refer to. I just can’t really comment on the equity or justice involved, I don’t know what the basis of it is. But I will answer your question in general terms: again, Franklin Roosevelt said that the great cause in which we are engaged cannot be won by ignoring the great values for which we’re fighting. And I think there’s broad agreement in our country that we have to protect civil liberties, we have to protect what America is all about. In times of conflict and danger there are always difficult questions of balance that have to be addressed but the business of profiling or stereotyping those who happen to be of the same ethnicity or religion of the perpetrators of this attack, that’s unacceptable. I say religion, incidentally. Their religion was not Islam as Muslims recognize the faith of Islam. But my point is that we need to be very, very careful to protect the civil liberties of all Americans regardless of their heritage.

Audience Question: I’m from Washington, DC. I’m very glad that you’re here, Mr. Vice President. I’ve been an admirer of yours for a long time and you’ve said that you’re a friend of the working people. I’m glad to have you here in this forum today. I just came from a different forum, up in the Science Center. It was a worker’s forum and it was for the committee that’s studying wages and employment conditions here. You spoke a little about the struggle for a living wage here last spring and I

was just wondering what your response is in light of your remarks about organizing and workers and community and community responsibility and the fact that there are over a thousand workers on this campus making poverty wages.

Honorable Albert Gore: Well, I expressed my support for them. Last spring I called President Summers' predecessor on behalf of that cause...you know, these things are often more complex than they appear on the surface but I'm with the working men and women involved. And, as I said earlier, I have a feeling of confidence that the committee that's working on this, having made progress, is going to end up doing the right thing.

Audience Question: I'm a student at Harvard Divinity School here. You talked a lot, Mr. Gore, tonight about the second level of what Dean Nye here at the Kennedy School has talked about, a sort of three-dimensional chess board. You talked a lot about the economic reality. I'm wondering if you might be willing, in light of September 11, to speak to either the first or the third levels, the more political military level or reality in terms of foreign policy or the third level of transnational, non-state actors, specifically keeping in mind who these terrorists are.

Honorable Albert Gore: Okay, I'm not as familiar with the three level matrix that you're working from here (laughter, applause) but I'm glad I covered at least one dimension. Let me deal with the trans-national organization part of it – I'm going to have to read Joe's material! He's a smart guy; I'll have to look into that. I knew I was missing something!

I think we are seeing the emergence of post-national entities. I think that our country is a little different, a lot different, from most because, as I said earlier, we are bound together by a set of what we believe to be transcendent values and universal truths. That's what we assert. That was our revolutionary contribution to the world and that is why we have been a destination reality for peoples from all parts of the earth. But in much of the world we're seeing a spiritual disinvestment in the nation-state. The nation-state in its current form is said to have emerged in the wake of the print revolution, when civic knowledge was distributed over national groupings to the point where people saw themselves and identified themselves as part of nations, instead of empires or city-states or what have you. Now, with the electronic broadcast media, the satellite, the

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Albert Gore and
Harvard President
Lawrence Summers

internet – y’all know about me and the internet (laughter)...it’s a long story – these new media are now disseminating a zillion times as much information. Al Quaeda communicates with its members over the internet, they believe, in encrypted messages. It exists in 50-60 countries. I mentioned that there’s a disinvestment in the nation-state in a lot of other countries and I think that there’s a re-investment in two directions: first, toward supra-national entities like the European Union, for example, and some of the global organizations and downward to sub-national entities, like regions and tribes. You have Quebec, Lombardy, Catalonia, Chechnya, in Belgium the Flemings and the Walloons are moving much more rapidly apart. And the bundle of investment that was the nation-state for many of these people has been pulled a little bit apart. A lot of people in Europe don’t look to their nations now for the enforcement of health and safety regulations or for protection. They look increasingly to the European Union or to other supra-national entities and, therefore, the identity that they have invested in their nation-states is now re-directed in part toward entities closer to home. Their cultural traditions, etcetera. In the midst of this reorganizing process, there are these transnational/post-national entities. Look at the drug trade, for example. “Plan Columbia” is in some ways similar to the war on terrorism. There is a nation that serves as the locus of many of the principles and much of the activity, but the nation itself is not the originator of the threat. The same thing can be said with Al Quaeda and Afghanistan. So, it’s very difficult. We’re going through a process of reorganization that is going to continue to present us with new challenges, especially since national boundaries are more porous – to people, to communications, to weapons. Our response has to be not only military but also economic, political, cultural and there’s a good and fruitful debate in our nation now, on a bi-partisan basis, about how we can best pursue that kind of response.

Audience Question: The attack on America was seen by many as an attack on American values, values that we’ve sworn, fought, died to protect on behalf of people all over the world. How important do you think it is to extend the rights embodied in those values, rights like a fair trial and the best defense

possible to people like Osama bin Laden and the members of Al Qaeda and if by some accident or some aberration a trial by jury...

Honorable Albert Gore: ...In 1969, I went into the army. I ended up going to Vietnam. It was very complicated. This isn't complicated, to me. It's not complicated like Vietnam was. Second point: it is extremely difficult for President Bush to find the right path here. Whoever was in the White House would face tremendous difficulty. I had the privilege of serving in the White House for eight years and being close at hand when similar decisions were put before us, some of them involving Osama bin Laden. And there are extremely difficult judgment calls which have to be made and there is no doubt in my mind that in the weeks and months ahead President Bush will be called upon to make some judgment calls that inevitably will fall in a way that some here and in our country will disagree with. Debate it, fine. But, within boundaries because he is the leader of our country, he is our president, he is the commander in chief of our military and all of us, I think, should support the effort to respond in an appropriate and forceful way. I hope, therefore, that when time passes and when debates start about the stimulus package and there's debate about this bill or that measure and so forth, that even as we disagree about other things in America that we find a way to remain as unified as we possibly can because winning this war, and people debate about whether this war is appropriate, winning this struggle against terrorism is extremely important for future generations of Americans. And so I hope we can keep that unity myself (applause).

Audience Question: I'm a Master's and political policy student here. My question relates to the question asked before, but I think it's important to talk about it and to stress it. Since September 11 there have been other attacks on Americans here in the US. In Arizona, an individual of Indian descent was shot, mosques have been attacked, people of Arabic descent have been kicked off of airplanes after they've boarded. Even here in Cambridge at a T station an Arab graduate student was harassed. These types of attacks threaten our national unity. I know it's important to stress that, as you did in your last response, that it's important to protect civil liberties, but what do you think local governments and communities should do,

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what do you think the president should do – since you should have been there yourself – in order to respond to these types of attacks, (make sure they) don't occur again and don't really challenge the strength of America.

Honorable Albert Gore: Well, I think President Bush did a good thing by going to the mosque in Washington, DC and making a formal statement there. I thought that was very effective and I thought that was a good start. And there have been other statements: when the service was held at the National Cathedral, a Muslim cleric was prominent in the program. It's part of what we're all about in America. When I was driving across Iowa last week I went to Cedar Rapids, the second largest city in the state, and I was reminded by some friends there when we were having coffee that the oldest Islamic center in North America is there, that's what they say, anyway. I talked with them, my friends there, and one of them said, "Well, why don't you go over there?" So I did. And I stayed there for over two hours just informally talking with them and the word went out on the telephone and many, many members of the congregation came and we had a very wide ranging discussion. One of the older men and much of the congregation's been born and raised in Cedar Rapids, and it's just a long-time institution there. One of the older men said that the worst problem is faced by the women in the congregation because the head scarves are distinguishing markers that serve as a trigger for discrimination. One of the women spoke up and told a story that was very moving to me. It didn't happen to her personally, but it happened to a friend that she knew in another community. She said that her friend had suffered discrimination and hatefulness because of her head scarf and that a woman in a Christian congregation in the town sympathized with her, knew her, befriended her and, in response, began wearing a head scarf herself and that in her church other women took up the same practice and it spread to some other congregations. Pretty soon, the haters couldn't tell the Christians from the Muslims and Jews and whatever and so it stopped. Now that kind of, now that's really what the essence of America is all about. I believe in my heart that this nation has a two-fold mission in world history. We tend to concentrate on our mission of proving that freedom is our God-given birthright and that it's, that freedom unlocks the higher fraction of the human potential than any other way of organizing society. But I think we also have a second mission that is not as

frequently held up. It is because we have attracted people from every part of the earth, because we have been in this land between the two great oceans where generations came from older societies to start over again and because we are such a diverse nation, we are looked to by peoples all over the world as a testing ground for the proposition that men and women of different ethnicity, race, cultures, religions can not only just get along together but can enrich and strengthen one another in diversity. Now, you hear those words and maybe it just sounds like a boilerplate kind of thing. I hope not, because I really think it's a challenge that each of us has to undertake personally. I'd like to tell you what I think is the way to go about it. William Julius Wilson is here. We've talked about some of these challenges and with John Hope Franklin, who's the senior scholar of race in America, and he said the sum total of his scholarship is – and this applies to ethnicity and religion as well as race, I think – is that race is always present and if you pretend it's not then you're missing something. Religious difference, if it is known or obvious with a head scarf or some other marker, it's always present and you shouldn't pretend otherwise. But, if you approach it in the right way the differences can be transcended with surprising ease. How do you do it? What is the right way? I think it's a two step process. Number one: the establishment of mutual respect for difference, including recognition of any unique suffering that has come about because of that difference, such as the discrimination that Arab-Americans have felt. This requires an appreciation for the unique contributions that have come because of the different perspective and experience. Then, after the establishment of that mutual respect, the second step is transcendence of difference. Now, why is it important to do those steps? Because it's all too easy for someone in a majority to say to someone in a minority, "Hey, let's just get along. Let's just get along." Because that can be heard by someone in the minority as being dangerously naive and devoid of any genuine recognition of what the difference in experience has been. I think that we, as human beings, are vulnerable to investing these kinds of differences with all kinds of emotional energy and spiritual energy and the slightest difference can be the trigger for incredible outbursts of violence. Hutus and Tutsis are, to many of their neighbors, indistinguishable, one from the other. But the difference, slight as it appears to be, serves as an excuse for



Wurf Family Members
Abigail, Mildred and
Nick with Albert Gore

This is a new time. We are going to fulfill the mission of America

the unleashing of this violence that really is not rooted in the difference. But the difference is invested with all this other stuff. Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland are largely the same people, with the same basic religion, but different faith traditions. Again, we are horrified by the violence that is frequently made manifest there. We in the United States have women in congregations willing to put on the markers of another faith, just to protect our respect for tolerance and diversity. All of us have the opportunity to fight that battle here in the United States. When you hear hateful speech, when you hear jokes that maybe you would let pass, speak up, say, "hey look, you know, that's not what we're about." This is a new time. We are going to fulfill the mission of America. If that sounds too idealistic to you, hey, to me it is just basic to what the United States of America is all about (applause). It's part of the battle that we have to fight right now against terrorism.

Thank you all very much. Thank you (applause).

CONCLUSION

SENATOR DAVID H. PRYOR

Back in the Senate, we used to have a thing we would say, “Mr. President, I would like to rise on a point of personal privilege” and so, if I may, Mr. Vice President, I would like to rise on a point of personal privilege and tell you a little bit of a story that happened here the morning and the day of September 11.

At 9:00 this TV screen, the big screen, was turned on and people gathered right here in this great forum room. First there were 20, then there were about 50, then there were 100 and then there were 200 and then there were 500, I don’t know how many hundreds. During the course of the day they stayed. The president of Harvard sent word, no classes, you can go home. Mr. President, no one left. In fact, more people came. I think that more people came, because this great room that you so inspired was a place where people of good will and people of a common cause come together and try to find answers to complex problems. I think they came here because they knew that people of good will would be here, would remain here. People here who really loved to exchange debate, share ideas, engage in controversy – that’s what this place, right here, is all about. And that’s what makes us different. The gentleman from China came up to me that morning and said, “Senator Pryor, I’m a student from China, but today, I’m an American.” Somehow or another, I think that’s what this is all about.

Jerry, we thank you and we thank the Wurf family who has made this all possible tonight. Mr. President, we thank you and Mr. Vice President, you have made this evening so wonderful for us at this time and also you have made us once again believe that for this country, for all of us, and for this generation right here, truly the best is yet to come. Thank you, sir.

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