

ADDRESS TO THE BARTRAM SCHOOL 6/7/68

I know it is customary, and perhaps expected, for commencement speakers to apologize for their part in ~~the~~ graduation exercises, but I am not troubled by the impulse to do so. There is a sameness to these occasions -- to the casual observer this may be a repeat performance -- but it is the sameness of the sunrise, which occurs with total regularity, but is always fresh and different, and beautiful.

Perhaps in the long sweep of time history does repeat itself, but in the short span of your lives it hasn't occurred, and it won't. I've never known two sunrises alike, nor two graduations, nor two lives.

Last Sunday I heard a marvelous commencement speech, full of wit and wisdom, and was tempted to steal it for you today. ~~But~~ this is not last Sunday, and the world has changed:

A young man who aspired to leadership has died. His death is every American's loss. <sup>Aside from the loss of his personality, the trauma of this event</sup> Campaigning for President will never again be the same. One man, by his act of violence, has erected a barrier between the American public and those who seek their political support, and that barrier is not compatible with Democracy.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., the historian, places the guilt for this deed on every American. He conceives that we, as a nation,

live under some primal curse that springs from our dark past.

Spokesmen for the Arab world place the blame on the American nation as accessory to the murder of their Palestinian homeland.

James Reston senses "something in the air...a kind of moral delinquency."

A television commentator pointed out that there were 5,000-plus deaths from firearms in America last year, only 30 or 40 in England and France.

The Jacksonville Journal commented that Robert Kennedy's death was a harvest of hate, that our souls are overdue for a thorough cleansing.

It does not seem a very promising time in which to graduate. Colleges are full of discontent. Professors are counselling rebellion. Police are using force on campuses where reason should prevail.

I would suggest to you, though, that the wrong goat is being driven into the wilderness. I do not believe this is a basically evil nation, nor a cursed one. I do not believe we are stamped by society with a "birthright of violence." The murder of John Kennedy by a warped American schooled in Russia and Cuba, and Robert Kennedy by an Arab permitted by a generous America to live here though not a citizen, and Martin Luther King by an unknown assailant influenced by we know not what forces, does

not support ~~our~~<sup>the</sup> argument for damning a nation. This is a wonderful, exciting time to graduate.

The turmoil in the nation results from our attempt to expand both the concept of freedom and the ideal of justice.

Freedom cannot be expanded to a point where it becomes license without destroying itself.

When the concept of freedom is expanded to include the right to violate the social compact which is the fabric of freedom, it destroys that fabric -- and freedom.

When the exercise of freedom ignores both self-restraint and social restraint it is not freedom, but anarchy.

And when society, in its pursuit of freedom condones its violation, it cannot long remain free.

But thank God you live in a land where the problem is not too little freedom, but too much. *your problem: to live in a world where normal restraints removed.*

Justice, too, has its ~~restrictions~~<sup>limitations</sup>. Freedom and justice are not entirely compatible, because to be free is to have the right to be wrong; to be just, there can be no wrong.

To some extent the rebellion in our cities is a demand in the name of justice for economic equality to match our political equality. But the two cannot co-exist. *To be free is to be unequal.*

We Americans have a vast responsibility for the first time in history we stand in liberty within sight of plenty. Our sin, if it be that, is that we have let our reach exceed