BACCALAUREATE 2005

Baccalaureate Address by Dr. Eboo Patel, founder and executive director of the Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago, May 15, 2005

A New City on a Hill

Bismillah Ar-Rahman Ar-Rahim. I first stepped foot on this beautiful campus nine years ago. About a week after my own graduation from the University of Illinois. I was beginning a three-month road trip across the country well armed by $500 in my bank account a head full of radical spangles and two stern warnings from my mother: don't crash the Oldsmobile, and you better get a good job when you return home. She's here; there might be a third stern warning forthcoming after this.

I remember that time as being so open to the world, so alive to possibility. I don't know if there is any time when a young person, or any person, is so open to what could be than in the weeks immediately following graduation. There is a great line in Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*, "It's so wonderful to be at the beginning again when the whole world feels new." It's in that spirit that I talk to you this afternoon.

I want to begin by taking you to my hometown, Chicago, where there is one of the most hopeful walks in America. If you move into the grand entranceway of the Art Institute and continue on the lower level, you find yourself in a dimly lit corridor displaying the various instruments that the human family has used to shed its own blood across the centuries. It is a dark walk through the swords and spears, the ancient slingshots, medieval armor, rifles and pistols. But if you continue forward a different color begins to emerge: the azure possibility of the human future as displayed in Marc Chagall's *America Windows*. Mounted on those panels are symbols of freedom and welcome, work and worship, song and study, of hope of what this world could be.

Every generation either moves us closer to the azure of possibility or it adds more darkness.

A century ago, the great Penn scholar W.E.B. Du Bois said: "The problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line." His words were so prescient. After the blood of postcolonial movements and civil rights struggles, unfortunately the challenge of racial equality is still with us.

But the Class of 2005 is coming of age at the dawn of a new century, which may well be dominated by a different line—the faith line. From Central Africa to the Middle East, from Northern Ireland to South Asia, people from different religious backgrounds are murdering each other in the name of God. Too often the fighting, the killing and the dying are done by young people not much older than this class.

From the early days of this nation, Americans have always had a sense that the eyes of the world were upon us. When John Winthrop sailed across the Atlantic he committed to building a "city on a hill" that would be a model for the world. America has always imagined that city with a steeple in the center, symbolizing the key role that religion has played in the life of this republic since its inception. Inspiring both good and bad, both slave drivers and freedom fighters, both war mongers and peacemakers.

This distinctive religiosity did not escape the many foreign observers who tried to unravel the American story. In fact the British writer G.K. Chesterton several generations ago observed, "America is a nation with the soul of a church."

That observation is only partially true today. The most religiously devout nation in the west is now the most religiously diverse nation in the world. Our city on a hill may still have a steeple in the center, but that steeple is now surrounded by the Hebrew script of Jewish synagogues, by the minarets of Muslim Mosques, by the intricate carvings of Hindu Temples, by the chanting of Buddhist sanghas.

What spirit will characterize this new American city on a hill? Will we succumb to the suspicion, hatred and violence that characterizes inter religious relations in so much of the world? Or will we build an entity that shines like the Chagall Windows, and offer it to the world as a model of inter religious cooperation? If we are to achieve the latter possibility, we shall have to focus far more attention on questions of religious diversity.

There are many places in our society where people from particular religious groups gather to talk about religion. These include synagogues, mosques, temples, sanghas, churches, and their related religious organization. There are increasing numbers of spaces where people from diverse religions gather—universities, schools, neighborhoods, companies, YMCAs. But there are precious few spaces where people from different religions come together to directly engage building bridges across religious differences. And that's dangerous. The cornerstone of a diverse society is as Michael Walzer said, "Is relationships between diverse communities and at the same time maintaining a common life."

I can tell you about the danger of this from my personal experience. When I was a high school student in the western suburbs of Chicago, the kids I ate lunch with in high school included a Hindu, a Jew, a Mormon, a Lutheran and a Catholic. We were all devout to a degree, but we never talked about religion. So somebody might say at the lunch table, "I'm not eating today," or "I'm not eating a certain type of food today," or "I can't eat for the next month." Nobody ever asked any questions about that. Somebody might say, "I can't play basketball this weekend because of some prayer thing." But nobody ever asked any questions. This probably relieved all of us. None of us had a language of religion in which to articulate our particular faith in a pluralist public square. If anybody asked me why I was fasting, my answer would have been, "my mama told me I had to."

Back then I thought little about the dangers lurking within this absence. But that danger was brought to the forefront a couple of years after graduation.

Photograph by Stuart Watson

My best friend from high school, a Jew named Ariel, reminded me of a time that both of us would rather have not happened. There were a group of thugs in our high school who took to scrawling anti-Semitic slurs on classroom desks, shouting obscene comments in the hallways. I did not confront their bigotry. I did not comfort my friend. I averted my eyes, and I avoided Ariel, because I could not stand to face him.

In this conversation, he shared with me in no uncertain terms how scared he was to come to school on those days, and his utter loneliness because his friends had abandoned him. His articulation of his suffering and my complicity is perhaps the single most humiliating experience in my life. My silence was a betrayal. Betrayal of the very meaning of friendship; betrayal of depths of Islam, which calls upon Muslims to be courageously compassionate in the face of injustice; betrayal of the fabric of America, which asks of its citizens to protect the bridges of pluralism when other people try to destroy them.

Because of that personal story, and because of what we read every day in the *New York Times*, and the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer,* I started a nonprofit organization called the Interfaith Youth Core. We bring young people from different faith communities together to do common projects. We teach them a language of articulating their particular faith in a pluralist public square. The first lesson is that it is a religious duty to protect and defend those who are under threat. We quote to our young people the great words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who told Christians in Nazi Germany: "Those who do not speak out for the Jews do not deserve to sing Gregorian chants."

For too long, religion has been left out of the diversity discussion in America. I think we ignore it at our own peril. The repercussions of violence in Belfast and Bombay and Baghdad has not yet had serious repercussions in Boston, but we might not be so lucky for so long.

Still, I have faith that the destiny of this nation lies in a different direction. Harvard Professor Diana Eck uses the metaphor of jazz for the possibility of America's diversity: distinct instruments playing music together, each of them holding their own while being together, creating in a clear structure something anew, all of them taking a turn as the lead, confident that the others will back them. I know exactly what she's saying. I was listening to John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* as I wrote this.

The American possibility is most clearly illustrated in the life of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who took his commitment to nonviolence from an Indian Hindu, who marched arm in arm in Selma with a Hasidic Jew, who nominated a Vietnamese Buddhist for the Nobel Peace Prize. Something in his eyes allowed him to see the beating heart of all religious traditions, and he preached: "The Hindu-Muslim-Christian-Jewish-Buddhist understanding of ultimate reality ... is that love is the unifying principle of life."

I see this vision in our great religious poets. The Muslim poet Ibn Arabi, who said:

My heart has grown capable of taking on all forms
A pasture for gazelles
A convent for the Christian
A table for the Torah
Ka'ba for the pilgrim
A temple for idols
My religion is love.
Whichever way its
Caravan turns is the
Path that I follow.

I see it in the words of the great Jewish poet Yehuda Amichai, who says:

Half the people in the world
Love the other half,
Half the people
Hate the other half.
Am I because of this half and that half …
Camouflage my love with worries

I feel it in the depths of the work of William Blake who writes:

We are put on earth a little space that we may
learn to bear the beams of love.

I hear it in the voice of his holiness the Dali lama, when says that his religion is kindness. I see it in the example of Mahatma Gandhi, who used his time in a South African prison to hand-make sandals for the man who ordered his imprisonment.

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BACCALAUREATE 2005

(continued from page 1)

In America we have the opportunity to give concrete utterance to that possibility. That happens here at the University of Pennsylvania where the new president Amy Gutmann says that relationships across diverse boundaries are an ethical imperative. It happens with the religious student organizations on campus under the guidance of my friend and mentor the Reverend William Gipson, who throughout the academic year organizes interfaith programs. I was blessed to be invited by Anjun Cheerna and other members of the Muslim Students Association to participate in their interfaith project in the fall. On a crisp Sunday afternoon I found myself cleaning a children's playground with about 100 students from the University of Pennsylvania representing the range of America's religious diversity. I spent a lot of my time that afternoon with a young Orthodox Jew from Washington D.C. and I asked him "Why did you come to this program?" He said: "This is what Judaism's about, and this is what America's about."

The South African writer, Nobel Prize winner J.M. Coatzee once wrote, "All creatures come into the world with the memory of justice." Now in the American tradition, memory is not good enough. We want the reality of justice. We want the kingdom on earth. It was not an abstract notion of love that moved Martin King to martyrdom, it was the concrete hope of the beloved community—Christian and Muslim, Jewish and Hindu, Buddhist and Baha'i working together to make of this old world a new world. Jane Addams did not just dream a "cathedral of humanity." She built it.

The raw materials of the American new city on a hill are love and courage and hope. These are God-given natural resources, and they occur in abundance in the souls of recent college graduates. The more you use them, the deeper you will find the reserves, and the more likely you are to attract a community of like-minded people. Think about what happened when Dorothy Day risked her love and her courage and her hope, she built one of the most powerful movements of the 20th century, the Catholic Worker.

Class of 2005, architects of a new American city on a hill, go forth build us a shining jewel, and remember the line of James Baldwin: "If we (in America) ... do not falter in our duty now, we may be able to ... achieve our country, and change the history of the world."

Baccalaureate Address by President Amy Gutmann, May 15, 2005

Striving in the Spirit of Caring

Parents, families, friends, and colleagues, welcome. And congratulations to members of the great Class of 2005, my first Penn graduating class!

I would like to open with a memorable quote from a towering work of art: *The Simpsons*. Eight-year-old Ralph Wiggum asks: "Me fail English? That's unpossible!"

Fear not, graduates: I think it is safe to say that you all passed!

Commencement weekend is a time to celebrate your accomplishments with your loved ones, swap favorite memories with your classmates, and plan the next leg of your life's journey. In these precious moments, you realize that this probably is the last time you will all be together as a class. So a good night's sleep will have to wait.

Amidst all the frenzy of this joyous weekend, I ask you to reflect not on what you have done, but rather on the young men and women you have become.

Think back to that gorgeous September evening in 2001 when you assembled on College Green for Convocation. You had just finished reading *Candide* for the Penn Reading Project.

Remember all the disasters and calamities that befall young Candide? The devastating Lisbon earthquake? The flogging?

The major issues in your lives back then were far less world-shaking: whether to drop the Econ class; what to wear to the fraternity party on Saturday night; getting accustomed to using a coed bathroom on your college house floor; telling your parents to stop calling so often … while reminding them that it was OK to keep sending money.

You belonged to the smartest entering class in Penn history, and your whole future at Penn lay in front of you. You were on top of the world.

Less than a week later on September 11, the world shook, and we all were shaken to the core. In those first days following the terrorist attacks on our country, any sense of invulnerability vanished and gave way to fear and bewilderment.

Would you resist the temptation to turn inward in denial—or to lash outward in anger? Or would you instead engage classmates of different backgrounds and faiths? Could you bring comfort, healing, and constructive engagement to our terribly—and terrifyingly—divided world?

So many daunting challenges to confront at the dawn of your life at Penn. You probably felt—to paraphrase Bruce Springsteen—that you weren't so young anymore.

Yet, you had a unique opportunity. As the philosopher Maimonides said: "If now, in the days of my youth, I do not acquire good qualities, when shall I acquire them?"

You seized that opportunity. You made the most of your days at Penn. Not only did you acquire good qualities—and virtues and skills—in abundance, you also put them to good use for the good of others. And you regained your youthful exuberance along the way. What a rough road you have traveled, and what amazing individuals you have become as a consequence!

Among you are many young men and women who pushed the envelope in learning and service: You have done path-breaking research on lung disorders and spinal cord injuries. You have brought information technology to communities in Philadelphia, India, Pakistan, Ghana, and Cameroon.

You have created the Voices of Philadelphia project. You have served with the National Guard in rebuilding Bosnia, and explored the moral foundations of national identity to develop a framework for a free and just world.

While sectarian strife raged in many parts of the world, you cultivated a deeper understanding of one another's faith traditions.

True, you did not solve the most complex and controversial issues of our time. Your Penn education was meant above all to prepare you for the reality making progress while being unsettled, and to learn how to make the most—and contribute the most—to a complex world that is not prone to easy solutions.

Knowing how much you do not know, as Socrates teaches us, is the truest sign of wisdom. Once you enter the wisdom zone, you want to learn more, to understand more, and to keep asking questions.

This Baccalaureate service at Penn dates back to 1865, not long after the American Civil War had ended.

Three months earlier, President Lincoln had called for national healing in his second inaugural address. Worried that his plea for "malice toward none and charity toward all" had fallen on deaf ears, Lincoln asked the great Abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass for his impression of the speech.

"Mr. Lincoln," Douglass said, "that was a sacred effort."

Women and men of the great Class of 2005, you, too, have made sacred efforts to enrich our community of scholars and to serve others. I pray that long after you graduate you keep striving in this same spirit of caring.

Never stop caring. Never stop learning. And never lose your infectious joy for living. You have grown into remarkable human beings whose greatest accomplishments are yet to come. With your ongoing Penn education to guide you, nothing—as little Ralph Wiggum would say—nothing is unpossible!

COMMENCEMENT 2005

Commencement Address by President Amy Gutmann, May 16, 2005

Pursuing the Answers to the World's Problems and Mysteries

Chairman Riepe, Trustees, honorary degree recipients, honored guests, parents, families, friends, and all survivors of Senior Week: It is my great privilege to welcome you to the 249th Commencement of the University of Pennsylvania!

I am very pleased to welcome our ever loyal alumni back to Penn. In truth, just as your Penn experience rejuvenates you throughout your lives, a big part of you enriches our University forever.

Members of the great class of 2005: Way to go!

You are my first graduating class as Penn's president. Our time together, I regret, was much too brief … but apparently long enough for me to make it onto the Senior Matchmaking Crush list!

Graduates, I have learned a lot quickly—and with great delight—about you. I have rejoiced in the flowering of your genius, talents, and idealism in our classrooms, laboratories, hubs, galleries, and theaters.

I have screamed myself hoarse while you ruled the Ivy League in sports!

I have observed your passionate commitment to justice and the enduring values of democracy.

I therefore pronounce you ready to pursue the answers to the world's problems and mysteries that your elders have generously left to you to solve.

Today, you are about to enter a world that your fellow alumni from the Class of 1955 or Class of 1980 could not have foreseen. New ideas, technological breakthroughs, and cultural trends travel at the speed of light without passing through customs.

When Irish playwright Hugh Leonard was asked 25 years ago why he liked

America so much, he replied:

"It is the only part of the world that hasn't become Americanized."

Today, America is just beginning to come to terms with how globalized and interconnected the whole world has become.

Photograph by Marguerite F. Miller

The past several years have proved beyond a reasonable doubt that we cannot seal ourselves off from the world's blessings or curses. We benefit from exposure to a global contagion of cultures and trends for good. And we also are vulnerable. Economic collapse in the Pacific Rim, political instability in the Middle East, and the soaring demand in India and China for fossil fuels send shockwaves through the American economy and forever alter the fabric of American lives.

Past generations of Americans confronted new, complex realities and threats to civilization with courage and wisdom. So too must we boldly rethink our approach to the defining the issues of *our* time.

We need to acknowledge and act upon two fundamental truths.

First, constructive global engagement always—always occurs locally among individuals who know how to make a positive difference in people's lives.

Yes, governments, multinational corporations, international and nongovernmental organizations are largely responsible for flattening the world socially and economically.

But it is not true that only governments, NGOs, and the United Nations can manage globalization by themselves. Quite the contrary, local communities feel the effects of globalization—in jobs gained or lost, in lives saved or lost—individuals in local communities can work together to regain control over their own destinies.

The second truth: Constructive global engagement is a two-way street. Our approach must be the opposite of *noblesse oblige,* where governments and major institutions bestow their largesse and enlightenment on communities and countries. Rather, individuals and communities must be engaged in a spirit of true partnership.

Who better to lead the world into a new era of global engagement than the University of Pennsylvania? We respectfully engage people from other societies and cultures as full partners. We learn together. We grow together. We share the fruits of our successes, which in turn produce more success.

Penn's local engagement demonstrates the power of partnerships to solve the problems of cities and public education.

We have collaborated with our partners in West Philadelphia to revitalize our neighborhood, to launch a wonderful neighborhood public school, and to strengthen other local schools. And now, we and the School Reform Commission are exploring the possibility of building a model public high school with a focus on international studies and languages.

At the same time, knowledge and understanding flow back and forth between Penn students, faculty, and staff and the communities we engage respectfully as equal partners.

Penn provides proof perfect that individuals can make a profound difference. Graduating senior Harveen Bal, for example, worked in Ghana, where she was inspired by what she learned from sickle cell patients to devote her undergraduate research and her future as a Marshall Scholar to improving the lives of the poor in the developing world while also learning from them.

Alastair Green, another of our great graduating seniors, spent two summers in Ecuador establishing a cooperative that makes "fair trade" clothing that is now sold on Penn's campus.

I am particularly proud that Penn faculty and students, led by our Graduate School of Education, are on the ground with local relief agencies in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia and India to help rebuild the schools that were destroyed by the tsunami.

From collaborating with neighbors in Taipei and Caracas on new urban designs to working with Kurds to form a Parliament in Kurdistan. From developing new child-centered models of social policy to increasing the power of Information Technology in Asia and Africa.

These endeavors are but a few of the countless ways that Penn serves our core mission by reaching out to the rest of the world. Wherever there are dramatic advancements in knowledge and in the quality of life, great universities like Penn often are engaging local communities on two-way streets across six continents.

Yet, we at Penn still have far to go and much to learn as we take the lead in becoming *the* global university for the 21st century.

We need to create ever more robust models of global engagement across all 12 of our schools.

We need more of our alumni worldwide to be engaged with their alma mater as we pledge to be ever more engaged with them.

We need to infuse the diverse perspectives and brainpower that our international students bring to our campus. Without our exceptional young men and women from overseas, America's colleges and universities lose out in the global competition for talent—and so, too, will our country and the world.

I pledge that this University will remain not only open, but eager to welcome the best and brightest students from the world over into our community of scholars.

We are more than a community. We are a fellowship. A Penn fellowship bound by our quest for knowledge that deepens our understanding of the world. A Penn fellowship united in our desire to engage all the world's people in common pursuit of justice and peace and the learning upon which justice and peace must be built.

Graduates, a few moments ago, we greeted each other on the cosmopolitan thoroughfare called Locust Walk, where students from all over the world meet and I have chatted with many of you during this wonderful year together.

I thank all of you for leaving an enduring mark on this campus and on the communities you have already engaged at home and abroad.

This is no good-bye to all that! The cosmopolitan road to global engagement goes on forever.

Next year, I will be visiting Penn alumni in India and Asia. Just as we met on Locust Walk, I hope to run into some of you on Marine Drive in Mumbei, on Orchard Road in Singapore, on the Ginza in Tokyo, and on Tiananmen Square in Beijing. So be there!

Graduates, I wish you health and happiness on your life's journey of engagement with people and places worldwide to whom you have much yet to offer and from whom you have much yet to learn.

This may not be the world you anticipated or the future you bargained for when you arrived at Penn. But you are prepared—not just to hold your own, but to lead.

I am extremely optimistic about the future. Why? I will give you just 6,000 reasons—the great Class of 2005! Godspeed!

Commencement Remarks by Dr. Neville Strumpf, Chair of the Faculty Senate, May 16, 2005

A Positive Force for Greatness

As incoming Chair of the University of Pennsylvania Faculty Senate, I bring greetings from the entire Faculty and our wishes for a lifetime of personal satisfaction and professional achievement. How exactly shall we consider satisfaction and achievement?

I would suggest spotting three points on the moral compass to guide us: first, integrating the meaning of community; second, distinguishing privilege from entitlement; and third, imagining greatness.

In the new book, *Building America's First University,* George Thomas and David Brownlee describe Benjamin Franklin's "transcendent notion" of a college, "setting its course toward the world of the present and the future, a place reflecting the values of the community." In the transformation of our University over time, we have contributed to the evolution of deeply held values, including openness, honesty, courage, tolerance, diversity, and dialogue. Among all societal institutions, the university is perhaps that rarest of places where these values flourish, and where a communal and intellectual spirit is nourished. Maintain that spirit of community always.

An education from Penn is indeed a privilege, meaning "a special advantage granted to or enjoyed by you." In contrast to entitlement, that is, "having a right or claim to something, or a guarantee of special lifetime benefits," a degree from Penn is not a ticket to special prerogatives, lesser responsibilities, easier access, or even more money. Keep the attitude of entitlement at bay, in favor of the far more useful recognition that comes with the responsibility brought by privilege. At the time of her inaugural, President Amy Gutmann said, "A dream I didn't know I had, has come true." That's a merger of privilege and responsibility in the very best sense of the words. May it also be yours.

As for greatness, you are inheriting a troubled world. Civic and global engagement will be especially crucial in the coming decades as we face what it means to be a citizen in a country where many social needs go increasingly unmet, and where we have also thrust ourselves onto a very volatile world stage. You must take your precious intellectual skills, and be a positive force for greatness in debates about what type of society we will choose to live in, and what type of society we will leave to those who come after us.

In the spirit of Benjamin Franklin's "transcendent notions" of practical education, carry forever within your red and blue compass of life, these anchor points: Community, privilege, greatness.

Best wishes and Godspeed.

Commencement Address by Kofi Annan, U.N. Secretary General, May 16, 2005

A Future "In Larger Freedom"

Madam President, thank you for those kind words, and Provost, and thank you on behalf of all my fellow honorees for the degrees you have bestowed on us today.

Fellow Graduates, my wife Nane and I are deeply honored to join you and your proud families on this happy day. We offer each one of you our warmest congratulations.

But I must admit that I am a bit apprehensive, because I know you are all looking at me and thinking: "There's no way he's going to be as good as Bono!" And you're right: my good friend the lead singer of U2 is a hard act to follow.

Fellow Graduates,

You have had a precious opportunity at this great university. You have explored the realm of ideas—ideas about what is true and false, what is right and wrong, what works and what does not.

As you graduate, a new phase of your life begins. The time has come to put ideas into practice. Indeed, the story of your lives will be the story of your struggle to be true to the ideas you believe in.

It is the same for individual nations, and for our world.

As Bono said last year, the United States of America is not just a country— it is an idea. It is the idea described in the Declaration of Independence, which Benjamin Franklin and others signed here in Philadelphia—that all human beings are created equal, and have inalienable rights.

The United Nations is an idea, too. It is not just a building in Manhattan, or a piece of international machinery. It embodies a conviction on the part of people everywhere that we live on a small planet, and that our safety, our prosperity, our rights—indeed, our freedoms—are indivisible.

Your grandparents' generation learned this hard lesson. I hope some of them are here with you today to share in this proud moment. In the 1920s and 1930s, many in this country thought that Europe's problems were for Europeans to solve, and that dangers in Asia did not matter to the United States. Pearl Harbor proved that idea wrong in practice, while the horrors of the Holocaust proved it utterly wrong as a matter of ethical responsibility.

You, the class of 2005, have learned this lesson anew in your own time. You have seen how a poor and misgoverned country—Afghanistan—became an incubator of terrorism, with devastating consequences here in the United States. And you have seen on your television screens some of the terrible indignities suffered by your men and women from war, terrorism, tyranny, injustice, hunger, poverty, ignorance and disease.

When they were about your age, your grandparents, along with their allies in many other nations, made great sacrifices to defend freedom and restore world peace. They called their alliance "the United Nations". Their victory in 1945 led to the establishment of the United Nations as a standing organization for global security.

The United Nations Charter is one of the milestone documents in the history of human freedom. It speaks of the equal rights of men and women, and of nations large and small; and of a world of social progress and better standards of life "in larger freedom."

To understand what those words "in larger freedom" mean, we should recall the vision of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who did more than any other person to bring the United Nations into being. He spoke of a world in which all human beings would enjoy political and religious freedom, as well as what he called "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear".

In other words, democracy, peace and a decent standard of living should be the birthright of every person. And thus, human rights, security and development, taken together, make up the idea of "larger freedom."

After all, a young man your age who has HIV AIDS, who cannot read or write, and who lives on the brink of starvation is not truly free–even if he can vote to choose his rulers. Equally, a young woman your age who lives in the daily shadow of civil war, or who has no say in the way her country is run, is not truly free—even if she has enough money to feed herself and her family.

The United Nations exists to help relieve this kind of suffering, and to help address its root causes.

That is why, every day, courageous and committed men and women are serving under the blue flag of the United Nations—in war zones, in humanitarian emergencies, and in poor communities all over the world.

They are diplomats, negotiating access to civilians or cease fires among warring factions. They are soldiers and police, shielding ordinary men, women and children from violence, and helping to implement peace agreements. They are aid workers arranging food deliveries and protecting refugees; human rights experts helping to strengthen the rule of law; economists and agronomists advising communities how to produce more food and distribute it better.

They are in the front line of larger freedom. I hope that some of you will join them, and that all of you will recognize the value of their work.

They are working today to offer hope to the people of Haiti, Kosovo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and a host of other countries.

They are assisting the political transition in Iraq, where the United Nations helped draft the legal framework for last January's elections and to train thousands of workers for polling day.

They are in Afghanistan, in the occupied Palestinian territory, and in Lebanon, helping to conduct elections, and to promote stable and inclusive political institutions and long-term peace.

They are saving lives from famine and disease in Darfur, while working with the African Union to protect people from the appalling crimes that have been committed there, and to find a lasting political solution to the conflict.

On the other side of the Indian Ocean, they are assisting devastated regions in ten nations recover and rebuild after the tsunami last December.

Photograph by Marguerite F. Miller

These men and women who serve the United Nations are carrying out mandates given to them by the sovereign States that make up the Organization's membership, whether in the Security Council or the General Assembly. They are doing work that no single country either can, or wants to, do on its own.

They could do very little of this work without the enormous diplomatic and financial contribution of the United States. Nor could they do it without the contributions of many other countries, particularly those who provide the troops—nearly 70,000 of them—who are deployed in some 18 United Nations peacekeeping operations on four continents.

But I am far from complacent about the United Nations today.

Just as America has had to struggle, throughout its history, to move ever closer to the ideals declared by its founders, so too the United Nations is a work in progress. If we are to keep alive the idea that gave birth to the Organization, and pass it on healthy and strong to your generation, we must make sure that the United Nations moves with the times.

That is why I have put before the Member States, for their decision, a blueprint called "In larger freedom" for a truly overhauled United Nations, set up to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The United Nations must live up to the highest standards of integrity and accountability—and I am committed to ensuring that it does.

But the major reform decisions rest with the Member States. The reform agenda includes a clear stand against terrorism, a tighter regime to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, more support for democracies, and better peacekeeping and humanitarian capacities. It also calls for an urgent boost in resources from rich nations to cut world poverty in half within the next ten years, and a new human rights body at the United Nations to focus on the implementation of all human rights in all countries.

These changes would not solve all the world's problems. Nor would they make the United Nations perfect. But they would make the UN much more effective in advancing the cause of larger freedom around the world.

World leaders are going to meet in New York in four months time to take up these proposals. If they can work together to make far-reaching reforms, they will help bequeath to your generation a United Nations that can carry forward the ideals for which your grandparents sacrificed so much six decades ago.

And I trust that, when it is your turn to lead, you will improve on what my generation has done. Do not think you can look away from the injustice, the suffering, or the lack of true freedom that is the lot of so many people in our world today. Your future depends on their future. The cause of larger freedom should be your cause. As I look at you today, with all your talent, your diversity, your commitment, and your optimism, I have no doubt that you will do your part to help make it come about.

Congratulations, and good luck to you all.