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Unity Day Dedication of Flagpole, delivered on January 15, 1970

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Thank you, Mr. Ford, for participating in the ceremonies at Grand Valley State College today. I accept this flag and the flagpole on behalf of the college. As an institution in a democratic nation, we attempt to maintain an open forum where ideas and opinions can be expressed, where the views of a few or many can be made manifest in a reasonable, dignified manner. The sponsoring group today affirms their support of President Nixon's Viet Nam policy, a policy that seeks to end the war. Others may not agree with the methods or timing of the President in dealing with this difficult problem. All, however, as Americans want a resolution to it.

For me, today's ceremony can symbolize a healthy approach to patriotism. It can be a reaffirmation in our system of government. I do not mean by that that our system keeps us from mistakes and injustices. Failure and injustice exist where man is. It does mean that a nation comprised of a great heterogeneity of people has governed itself in such a way that much of life has been good and enobling for those people. It is a system that allows for correction of error if enough people want it. It still possesses a responsiveness to the will of people more effectively than most systems. When it fails, it does so because the people's will is not exercised or aroused, or it is exercised and
aroused in a violent, self-defeating, psychologically debilitating manner.

It fails when some people are satisfied with their lot but do not show concern for others in the society who do not share in the good life, perhaps because they feel they will lose by giving.

Even now, with our current set of problems, errors, and injustices, we can see the system responding; we listen to the debates, we propose and listen to proposed solutions. The people's needs are varied, often conflicting. It takes time for the system to sort, to calculate, and to find a workable way of life. But I think it is capable of doing it. No matter what our personal views about many matters, our system provides a better opportunity than most for the greatest number of people to hold and express those views. So today I hope you can join me in a commitment to live and work in support of a spirit and design given to us in a constitutional convention over 180 years ago. Let us commit ourselves to lawful, reasonable, and fair dealings with one another and with people everywhere, and at the same time guard our right to deal with each other in that manner.