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Introduction of F. W. de Klerk, delivered at the Economic Club of Grand Rapids' Annual Dinner on June 6, 2000

Arend D. Lubbers
Grand Valley State University

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Thomas Carlyle, the 19th Century Scottish historian and essayist, wrote "History is the biography of great people." There are individuals born at a special time, in an unusual place, for a specific purpose. F. W. de Klerk, our guest this evening, changed the society of South Africa. His life is an example that makes Carlyle's point. The road that led him to the transformation of his nation goes back to the Transvaal, to an education at Potchefstroom University for Higher Christian Education, and to an immersion in law which he practiced for more than a decade before taking a place in Parliament in 1972. This was a solid professional background for the unknown task that he later would feel compelled to undertake.

But where were the personal qualities formed, those that provide wisdom and intuition, that combine strength with courage and fix the moral compass? His roots are in the Afrikaner culture. He is a descendant of Dutch, German and Huguenot settlers, peoples with character and determination, familiar to those who know American history because they were important at the beginning of our nation as well.

His family grew from these roots to positions of leadership in South Africa. He naturally inherited those qualities that brought him cabinet posts, national party leadership, legislative leadership and finally in 1989 the Presidency of his country. When elected he acted almost immediately. America's Great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln once said, "When a white man
governs himself, that is self government. But when he governs himself and also governs some other men, that is despotism. What I do mean to say is that no man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent.” President de Klerk acted upon the same belief expressed by Lincoln more than a century earlier. He freed Nelson Mandela, and took the initiatives that led directly to South Africa's first universal franchise election. He led the peaceful revolution rather than wait to react to what might have been a less peaceful one. His actions guaranteed his loss of the Presidency in the ensuing election, actions which are unfamiliar to us in our observations of incumbent Presidents. His great time in history was recognized by the world when he shared with Nelson Mandela the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

Now through the F. W. de Klerk Foundation he devotes resources and time to assure the success and stability of the full democracy that his courage and intelligence brought into being. Aristotle wrote “Dignity does not consist in possessing honors, but in deserving them.” I present to you Mr. F. W. de Klerk, not only a *Time* magazine Man of the Year, but one of the world’s most deserving citizens.
FAX to
President Lubben
from
Susan Lovell
June 2, 2000
3:30 p.m.
QUOTES FOR PRESIDENT LUBBERS’ INTRODUCTION OF
FORMER SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT DE KLKERK

In his December 11, 1993, acceptance speech for the shared Nobel Peace Prize with African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela, F. W. de Klerk said,

“Five years ago, people would have seriously questioned the sanity of anyone who predicted that Mr. Mandela and I would be joint recipients of the 1993 Nobel Peace Price. And yet both of us are here before you today. We are political opponents. We disagree strongly on key issues and we will soon fight a strenuous election campaign against one another. But we will do so, I believe, in the frame of mind and within the framework of peace that has already been established... (which) will and must be measured by the happiness and welfare of the children, at once the most vulnerable citizens in any society and the greatest of our treasures. The children must at last play in the open veld, no longer tortured by the pangs of hunger or ravaged by disease or threatened with the scourge of ignorance, molestation and abuse, and no longer required to engage in deeds whose gravity exceeds the demands of their tender years.”

Nelson Mandela said their shared peace prize was a call “that we devote what remains of our lives to the use of our country’s unique and painful experience to demonstrate that human existence should be based on democracy, prosperity and solidarity.”
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. Matthew

Truth is justice’s handmaid, freedom is its child, peace is its companion, safety walks in its steps, victory follows in its train; it is the brightest emanation from the gospel; it is the attribute of God. Sydney Smith

Justice is the sum of all moral duty. William Godwin 1793

Democracy... it is a condition where people believe that other people are as good as they are. Stuart Chase

Unless justice be done to others it will not be done to us. Woodrow Wilson

World-historical men—the Heroes of an epoch—must, therefore, be recognized as its clear-sighted ones; THEIR deeds, THEIR words are the best of that time. Friedrich Hegel’s Philosophy of History

Only a peace between equals can last; only a peace, the very principle of which is equality, and a common participation in a common benefit. Woodrow Wilson’s address to the Senate in 1917.

Justice is the end of government. It is the end of civil society. It ever has been and ever will be pursued until it is obtained, or until liberty be lost in the pursuit.

James Madison, The Federalist

History is the biography of great men. Thomas Carlyle
National injustice is the surest road to national downfall.
William Gladstone

The moral law is written on the tablets of eternity. For every false word or unrighteous deed, for cruelty and oppression, for lust or vanity, the price has to be paid at last. J.A. Froude

I think the first duty of society is justice. Alexander Hamilton

It is a blessed thing that in every age some one has had the individuality enough and courage enough to stand by his own convictions. Robert Ingersoll, 19th Century

Fairness is what justice really is. Justice Potter Stewart

The human mind can invent peace with justice.
Norman Cousins’ Who Speaks for Man? 1953

When a white man governs himself, that is self government. But when he governs himself and also governs some other men, that is worse than self government—that is despotism. What I do mean to say is that no man is good enough to govern another man without that other’s consent. Abraham Lincoln: America’s Great Emancipator

Justice is truth in action. Benjamin Disraeli 1851

I know of no rights of race superior to the rights of humanity. Frederick Douglass 19th Century

The whole of government consists in the art of being honest. Thomas Jefferson to John Adams
The tendency of all strong Governments has always been to suppress liberty, partly in order to ease the processes of rule, partly from sheer disbelief in innovation.

J.A. Hobson, 1926

Dignity does not consist in possessing honors, but in deserving them.

Aristotle

There are no necessary evils in government. Its evils exist only in its abuses. If it would confine itself to equal protection, and, as Heaven does its rain, shower its favors alike on the high and on the low, the rich and the poor, it would be an unqualified blessing.

Andrew Jackson 1832

Justice without power is inefficient; power without justice is tyranny. Justice without power is opposed, because there are always wicked men. Power without justice is soon questioned. Justice and power must therefore be brought together, so that whatever is just may be powerful, and whatever is powerful may be just. Blaise Pascal

There never was yet a truly great man that was not at the same time truly virtuous. Benjamin Franklin