



## **SPEECH**

# **Address to Black America's Political Action Committee (BAMPAC)**

**Alan Keyes**

**September 25, 2001**

**BAMPAC's Fourth Biennial Dinner**

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Opening remarks by BAMPAC Founding Chairman, Dr. Alan Keyes:

Good Evening. Thank You. I have to preface this by sharing with you the antecedents of this evening because we almost weren't here tonight, as some of you might guess. I got a call from Alvin in the aftermath of the awful events that preoccupy all of us these days. He wanted to consult with me on whether or not we should go ahead with this evening. All things considered, you can be sure that it was not necessarily an easy decision--in part because what at least is true for me, and I'm sure for a lot of people this evening, is that it's hard to be in a celebratory mood about anything. I think that feeling is understandable in all of us, especially since the nation we love has been hit as hard as it's ever been hit in history.

It becomes most apparent in times like this, we can get distracted by our squabbles, dissension, disagreements and our different political and ideological point of view, and appear to lack unity as people remind us of our racial, religious and ethnic differences. We as Americans can get to a point where we lose sight of the truth that there is something in each and every one of us, some part of our heart and something in every cell and fiber of our being, that is in touch with and touched by America. We may forget sometimes, but we're not forgetting now. In the wake of that tragedy, we wondered whether it would be a good idea to go forward with the dinner tonight.

We decided to do it. We decided to do it because what we are trying to do in BAMPAC is encourage the participation and leadership of black Americans. We believe that there is a word to be spoken from the heritage of black Americans that has a particular importance and relevance for the American heart. I honestly believe that at times of adversity, at times of difficulty, we are reminded that despite all our wealth, power, status and standing we are still but humble creatures of God, subject to all the frailties of our nature.

In those times, I think the heritage of black Americans is particularly relevant. For, we are Americans who have throughout our history and in the deepest chords of our memory, have a place that is especially touched by adversity and suffering--a place that is also especially mindful of the truth that there is no adversity that can crush the human spirit, that there is no suffering that can snuff out the light of faith.

The terrible blow that was struck against us is, in its nature, one that above all reminds us of the nature of our American faith. We are a diverse people. Sometimes this can lead us to think that we don't have a common ground of faith. We are a people of all backgrounds and creeds and beliefs. Some may be tempted to think that we do not have a common ground of principle to stand on. But as I was reflecting on the nature of the horrific blow that was dealt against us by these terrorists, one thing that has struck my mind most forcefully is the

attitude, the mentality, that was displayed in the planning of this terrorist act towards the people--not just towards the people who were in the buildings that were destroyed, but the people who were passengers on the planes that destroyed those buildings.

The idea of a terrorist attack that assaults innocent human beings in a building, or a mall or a restaurant is bad enough--yet the terrorist mind that looks at a passenger plane and sees the fuel and the intensity of the blast, and sees the rocket engines that will carry it into the heart of destruction like a cruise missile, but who does not see the humanity of one single soul on that airplane is the chilling truth of what we're up against.

This mindset should serve to forcibly remind us of who we are. Whereas that mind stands over there willing to look past humanity for the sake of some agenda, some belief, some ideology that motivates them, some goal they hope to achieve, we as people can remember to stand together on this one principle above all: in spite of every power and every agenda, everything we may want or hope to achieve, in spite of every lust and ambition, there is in every human life a dignity that deserves the respect of every human being, every human power--and there is no excuse for ignoring that dignity.

Held up to us in a sort of awful mirror is the image of that heart which is the opposite of the American heart. I know there are folks who will look at me in the context of the Black American Political Action Committee and wonder how a black person could say that respect for dignity characterizes America.

There are voices being raised now, some of which I find quite shocking--seeing as how we live in a free country, you're liable to hear expressions of every kind of view--who have a mind to act as if we have an obligation to look around, look at all of this and try to figure out what we have done that has brought this on us. I wonder at those people. I have spent a long time in my life, several years, in which I purposely steeped myself in the darkest and most painful aspects of the injustice that was perpetrated against black Americans in the era of slavery. Do you know what I learned from that? I learned that in the context of our human life, the American saga was a uniquely hopeful one. It's not uniquely hopeful because this country was free of injustice, free of suffering, free of misery inflicted by one human being upon another. It's not hopeful because there were hearts who scarified humanity for the sake of greed and ambition, because we know there were. What is hopeful about the American saga, is that in the context of all that human history that militated against it there was raised in this country in every era a banner of conscience that was willing to make the sacrifice, that was willing to take the risks and the chances that were necessary to fight against that injustice in the name of those things that we professed to believe.

There is a real vindication of conscience in the story of this nation. This conscience has borne great fruit for the world. We have stood in a position to terrorize the earth and instead we have offered the earth its liberty. No other nation has ever stood in that position. No other nation that has come close has withstood the temptation to terrorize and we did. At times like this it would be wise to remember this. For, whatever the challenges we face, and whatever challenges we have yet to overcome in terms of justice and human dignity, we are a people who have time and again proven, though we are of the same mixed nature as all other human beings, given the chance we will eventually do what's right.

Today as we look at the blow that has been struck against us by these conscienceless fanatics, I think we shouldn't strive for an explanation. Instead we should just remember what we are and what we must continue to strive for--not just for ourselves but also for all the people that we represent. It's times like this that we will see the proof that what we stand for makes a difference.

A lot of countries around the world are trembling. I have to tell you that I take a certain satisfaction in that trembling. I take satisfaction in it because there are a certain number of those trembling countries which have systematically built up the network and infrastructure of terrorism over the past several decades. I hope that the individuals, policy-makers and governments who are responsible for this complicity are deeply worried that we are going to come and get them.

What gives me even more satisfaction is to know that they are trembling and that their fear is aggravated when they imagine what they would do in our place. I'm serious. But what I know and what you know, and what we have time and time again proven to our credit as a people, is that we will not do what they would do in our place. We will not do it because we are a people that have amongst us people of every race color, nationality and creed. There is no part of the world we can touch without touching the heart and conscience of some American. Yet there is also no part of the American conscience that we can touch that will be willing to lose touch with our humanity.

The inhumanness of the attack will be met with firmness, toughness and strength, directed against those who perpetrated it, but it will be conducted with the same humanity we have always shown because that's who we are.

I believe we will show that discipline of character because there are components of our people who have suffered on the wrong side of injustice, who have suffered grief, whose hearts have been torn by that suffering. That helps us to resist the temptation even in the midst of wholesale destruction upon others. All of this even in the midst of our sorrowing over the lives we have lost ought to help us remember and to stand strong and with a somber pride in the character of our people.

I think we will come out on the other side of this stronger and better for it, as we always do when calamity strikes at the heart of our nation. We will come out better and stronger partly because of the strength that we display, partly because of the restraint that will discipline that strength. Altogether we will come out better, because by contrast with the terrorists we fight, we will have remembered that we do in fact stand together.

We are one people, one race, on the common ground of that principle which sees in every human face, in every human life, the reflection of the Will and Goodness of the Creator, God.

I have noticed that in the days since the terrible tragedy Americans have been brought back to their faith. I mean this in the literal sense. It has been a time of prayer for us. In this prayer let us remember who we are, and that our very existence is a prayer of acknowledgment to the Creator's Will. For, He has formed and fashioned us with a dignity that we will defend, with the rights that we will preserve, and with the hope for human destiny that we will not surrender.

*Over 400 guests attended the BAMPAC dinner, including several Congressmen: Hon. Todd Akin - (R-MO); Hon. Chris Cannon - (R-UT); Hon. Mike Ferguson - (R-NJ); Hon. Sam Graves - (R-MO); Hon. Mark Green - (R-WI); Hon. Felix Grucci - (R-NY); Hon. Mike Rogers - (R-MI); Hon. Paul Ryan (R-WI); Hon. Bill Shuster (R-PA); Hon. Robert Simmons - (R-CT); Hon. John Shimkus - (R-IL); Hon. John Sweeney - (R-NY); Hon. Don Sherwood - (R-PA); Fmr. Reps. Dick Shulze (R-PA) and Roger Zion (R-IN). In addition, other Members of Congress were represented by their key legislative aides.*

*Other elected officials and leaders in attendance included: Virginia Delegate Dick Black, Delaware Attorney General Jane Brady, Atlanta Mayor Bill Campbell, Jim Martin (60 Plus), Grover Norquist (Americans for Tax Reform), Jack Oliver (Republican National Committee), Angela Sailor (White House Office of Public Affairs), Colorado Lt. Gov. Joe Rogers, Robert Woodson (National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise), and BAMPAC Board Members Jackie Cissell and Star Parker.*



**WE NEED ALAN KEYES**  
for President