



[► Back to RenewAmerica](#)

## SPEECH

# Patriot's Day Picnic in DuPage County, Illinois

Alan Keyes

September 11, 2004

Thank you very much. Good afternoon.

I'll have to say, in one way, the wonderful warmth of your welcome and of the greetings and the heartfelt affection that I've experienced this afternoon makes it kind of difficult for me to talk about some of the things that we need to discuss on this day. And that's one of the difficulties, in fact, I think of American politics in general.

So often we conduct our political affairs by coming together like this in warmth and fellowship. It's colorful and it's fun. And that can lead us, I think, to forget what it is that we do here and what it is that this process signifies.

We decide with words and arguments and persuasion and ballots what has been decided down through human history--what is still decided, sadly, in many parts of the world on battlefields, on streets flecked with blood by violence and death. And the issues that are involved, the issues of who shall be the legislators, who shall be the executives, who shall be the judges, who shall wield the power, and what shall be the laws--these are issues that, down through human history, people have had to stake their lives in order to decide them.

But we come together in friendly environments, in places of warmth and affection, and together in an environment that breeds peace and goodwill, we call upon each other and upon our fellow citizens to make these judgments so important to our nation's future. And you see, the atmosphere can sometimes lead us to forget that we, too, are making the decisions that could spell the life or death of our nation, of our society, of our institutions, of our freedom.

Now, as we gather here together today on September 11th, it ought to be hard, though, to forget that fact, because what we are remembering is the terrible day when, out of the blue, all unexpected to any of us--so unexpected that in the first moments and even hours of it, we didn't quite comprehend what had happened--a terrible blow was struck against this country, as violence was aimed by ideologues and fanatics at innocent lives by the thousands that were snuffed out that day, bringing a terrible abyss of grief to families and to friends and to communities and to the heart of the nation as a whole.

It is true, though, that since that day we've seen the resilience of the American spirit. We have seen the resilience of the community that we seem especially to rediscover in moments of adversity. And I think one thing that we need to remember, above all, as we go forward toward November in the great choice the American people have to make, is that in the aftermath of that terrible day, we were, all of us--whatever our backgrounds, whatever walk of life we were in, however ordinary we may seem to ourselves and to those around us--we were all called upon to rise to that occasion.

And there was for us a voice, there was for us a man, there was for us a leader, ordinary as we are, who in his decisions and in his articulation and in his courage and in the

determination he showed to stand against the evil that had struck against this people and the conscience of the world, he showed that we would rise. He spoke for our hearts, he spoke for our courage, he spoke for our resilience, and we have come back!

On November 2nd, we will be offered a choice for President of the United States, and I think that it's all well and good to have folks now standing there carping at this decision and that decision, wearing in the wisdom of hindsight as if it were a badge of honor, acting every day as if the cost that we pay in money and in lives is a cost that we could deliberate about tonight and decide to forego tomorrow.

The problem with John Kerry is he thinks the war on terrorism is optional!

The problem with John Kerry is that he forgets we did not choose this war, but we must be determined to prevail in it!

I thank God Almighty that we have had in the White House somebody who doesn't rely on the wisdom of hindsight to make his decisions. I'll tell you something: the wisdom of hindsight isn't of much use when you're dealing with people who are planning and plotting the devastating kinds of attacks we saw on September 11th. What's needed to meet those enemies is the courage of foresight, the courage to take the tough decisions, not on the information you'll get, but on the information you have, and to do what is necessary to defend the lives, to defend the future of America. G.W. Bush had that courage, he made those decisions, and he stands by with the courage today!

And I would say this to every American, whatever background, race, creed you may be, as we stand now to confront a common danger, so we must stand behind the leader who, at every moment since that terrible attack, has remembered his obligation to defend us all, has never forgotten that once the blow is struck, it will be too late to care about those whose lives are claimed in it. He understands that in a terrible war such as this, there is a very simple, clear rule: you must get to the enemy before the enemy gets to the innocent people in this country and around the world.

If we ever needed a reminder of that, we sure got it in the course of the last week and more, as we witnessed the terrible and almost incomprehensible inhumanity that the terrorists in Russia inflicted on, who? On children! And on the hearts of their parents. Can you imagine a worse pain than the pain of the mother who had to choose between her two-year-old and her six-year-old which would live and which would die?

I cannot understand the hearts hard enough to inflict that upon a parent's heart! I cannot understand the consciences so seared and dead that they could aim the blow of destruction at helpless children!

We stand today not just in defense of our lives, but in defense of the conscience of decent humanity!

We stand today not just in defense of our lives, but in defense of every decent hope for peace, of every decent hope for compassion that mankind has nurtured through all the terrors of the 20th century to bring us here!

This War against Terror is a war for that simple principle that now is recognized to prevail, even in the midst of the temptations and passions of war: that we must respect the claims of innocent human life; that whatever our agenda, whatever our war, whatever our cause, even though we strike a blow in righteous self-defense, yet we must never consciously target the life of the innocent. We can fight as warriors in defense of our land, but we must fight as warriors, as well, in defense of the human conscience and of human dignity, as the great principle of our heritage has established it for us.

For, we are all of us created equal, and endowed--not by presidents, not by the Congress, not by the Constitution, not by the laws, not by the judges, but by the decree of the Creator, God --with our unalienable rights!

But here we have a problem, you see?

I think we have stood together quite well as a nation in our efforts to meet this external threat. We are accepting, every day, inconveniences and sacrifices, and our brave young men and women are standing now not on the front lines but *behind* the lines of the enemy that seeks to destroy us, risking and giving their lives, putting their hearts and their consciences on the line so that not only we but all those who are our brethren in decency in the world can some day stand free of the shadow of terror.

But as that shadow is motivated in its heart by a disregard of the principle of innocent human life, so does it remind us of what Abraham Lincoln, the great statesman from our own state, said in a speech to the Young Men's Lyceum--I think it was in 1835 or 1836--he pointed out that if America ever lost its liberty, it wouldn't be because we were defeated by an external foe, it would be because we had lost the moral character and understanding needed to sustain our freedom.

Now, people sometimes wonder--a lot of people have been wondering over the course of the last several weeks--why does Alan Keyes spend so much time talking about moral issues. Why? Well, I'll tell you why. I spend so much time talking about moral issues because what I have said for the last five years and ten years and twelve years and fifteen years remains as true and more true today as it was when I first started speaking the words long ago. The crisis that faces us, the crisis that in the end will bring down the institutions and hope of our liberty is not a crisis that will be brought on by terror from abroad. It is rather a crisis that will be brought on by moral disillusion right here at home.

And that means that the issues through which we confront the challenge of conscience are issues vital to the survival of our freedom and to our identity as a free people. And that is why, there's not a day goes by--though some people wish there was--there's not a day goes by, and there won't be a day goes by in this campaign when I don't find some reason to raise the banner of truth. If we are all of us created equal and entitled by that right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, then the authority of that Creator applies as much to the innocent child in the womb as it does to you and I who stand free in the world.

I know some people would like me to stop talking about that. They think that there are more important issues, but see, I bear both the burden and the insight of my heritage as a black American. And the insight is this: when my heart was first broken as a young man by learning about all the terrible horrors of slavery, and I determined that I had to understand how it could happen, the answer that I finally reached after many years of reading and study is that, contrary to what some people say, slavery wasn't about racism. Slavery was about greed. Slavery was about the greed that ignores the requirements of human conscience in order to pursue the goal of material wealth and success.

And at the end of the day, the success of that kind of greed, do you know what made it ultimately possible? It wasn't just the folks who were out there pursuing lucre, buying and selling human dignity on the auction block, it was those who were going into the churches, getting down on their knees to pray to God--the God who, Himself, had declared the truth of human dignity and the compassion that we owe and respect we owe to every human being--they were the ones who stood silently by and let the injustice occur. It was their silence that, above all, made possible the centuries of oppression. And I have sworn to my heart before Almighty God that never will I stand silently by and let the innocent suffer, when my voice could be raised in their defense!

And it is not just a challenge for me. People wonder, and I, too--the press keeps pressing at me sometimes with a question that suggests, "What are you doing here? You're not from Illinois. Why did you come from Maryland and get involved in this race?"

You want to know why? Because in the history, as I read it, do you know where the voice was raised that with persistence and courage and prudence and statesmanship finally led Americans to confront the truth of slavery's injustice, and finally even accept the war that would bring it to an end? Do you know where the hearts were conceived? Do you know where the spirit was raised? Do you know where the fire began that finally cleansed this nation's

conscience of all those decades of idleness? It was *here*, in this great state of Illinois that that heart and conscience were formed!

It was here, among a people who understood that the worth of a human being shouldn't be measured by where they come from, but by what their character is. It was here where people understood that the Union had to be preserved, but could only be preserved on the basis of respect for those great moral principles that have made our nation great and strong and free.

It may be true that in some geographic sense, I come new to Illinois, but in the sense of heart, and values, and truth, I have lived in the Land of Lincoln all my life.

And it is why I come here now to rally the heart of this land to the defense of America's moral destiny. Illinois is needed again, its citizens are needed again, its faith is needed again, for again those principles are threatened with destruction. And I say, in all candor, that that confrontation over the moral destiny of this country, it is especially at stake in the election for United States Senator in this state.

The one thing that caught my eye most, when folks asked me to come and they finally got me to take a look at Barack Obama's record--I've got to say, there are all kinds of things in that record that I would profoundly disagree with. I'm approached very often by people who say that the big problem in Illinois, which we all recognize and understand, is the problem that Illinois is lagging behind its neighbors and the rest of the country in terms of the recovery. We have not seen the job creation. We have been suffering the prolonged effects of the destruction of the manufacturing base. The fact that we have had unfair free trade agreements that are exporting the jobs so important to Illinois overseas. And so, folks go around, like my opponent, they repeat the mantra of jobs. Jobs, jobs, jobs, jobs, jobs. They think if they say the word "jobs" often enough that they'll get the "job" done on the voter, and they'll get their vote.

There's only one problem. Every time Barack Obama says "jobs," somebody ought to confront him with his record in the state senate, where he has supported every one, practically, of the things Governor Blagojevich has done to kill the businesses that provide the jobs that are in fact the opportunity for people in this state!

How long is it going to take for our leaders in the Democrat Party to understand this simple truth: you can't have jobs if you kill all the businesses.

I have to confess that I don't believe it requires long years of study and a Ph.D. to see that. I would think that--and this gives me a little hope--with just a little bit of education, I think that our Democrat colleagues could possibly get that one. But while they were learning, the people of this state would still be without jobs and be without hope and be without opportunities. I've got a better way. Instead of waiting for the Democrats to learn the obvious, why don't we just elect Republicans up and down the ticket in this state, and let them forge ahead on common sense to get the job done! That's what we need to do.

And I have looked at other things [in Barack Obama's record]. He goes about--the other day, I was at a meeting of registered nurses, and he addressed them on healthcare, and he put forward a proposal as to how we deal with the skyrocketing rates of malpractice insurance, and on the strength of his promises in that regard, he said, "Vote for me!" And I couldn't help but think, when I heard about this, that here is Barack Obama coming before the people of Illinois, he says that I'm the one who just arrived, but he speaks as if *he's* the guy who just got here! And we don't look at his record of the last eight years in the state senate where he sat on the back bench and did nothing while this problem drove doctors out of our state, while it left southern Illinois without neurosurgeons, while it left parts of our state without gynecologists and obstetricians? Fine time to discover the problem!

See, when it was just a problem for the people of Illinois, he didn't bother to do anything with it. Now that it's something he can exploit to get votes, he figures it's time to address it.

But I gotta tell you. I think this is one of the major challenges we face in this state. We face in the State of Illinois, this simple truth that everybody knows and understands: we are now

under the subjection of a machine, political mentality that appeals to people on the basis of their selfishness so that politicians can rein over us on the basis of their selfishness. I think it's time we brought it to an end.

Politics does not exist so that the people can serve the politicians. It exists so that the politicians can serve the best interest of the people!

But when will we make it happen? It is that politics of selfishness that I think is one of the emblems of the terrible effect that moral weakness and corruption has on our society. See, when you have moral character, you know that you're free, but you use that freedom for the sake of your children, your family, your community, your state and your nation. You can actually understand the words that were spoken by an American president in his first inaugural address when he said, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country."

Do you remember those words? I remember those words. Do you know who doesn't seem to remember? The president who spoke those words was John F. Kennedy. I haven't heard anything remotely like that from any Democrat in this state in decades!

When will they remember the true heritage of America?

I, sadly, believe that the reason we're gathered here today, I think we need a new kind of emancipation movement. I really do. I think we need a new movement to free some folks. There are people in our state who are right now prisoners of conscience. Their conscience tells them that innocent life should be respected in the womb. Their conscience and their faith tell them that we should respect traditional marriage between a man and a woman and commit ourselves never to abandon the essential meaning of marriage in the dedication to procreation. Their conscience tells them that respect for human dignity requires respect for human enterprise and human liberty and human responsibility, not to place people under the domination of an all-powerful government that denies their responsibility and their human worth.

Their conscience tells them this, but they have been for long years imprisoned in a prison of conscience formed by the selfish ambition of a Democrat machine that exploits their loyalty in order to betray their conscience.

I think that it is time that we reach out across all the lines of race and color and creed and religion, across all the lines of party to say to those prisoners of conscience, "The doors are open, you can be free! Stand with us, not in a coalition of selfishness, but in a community of principle dedicated to those things of conscience that we all hold dear as Americans."

This shall be, for me, the meaning of the Keyes campaign in Illinois. It is a campaign of moral purpose. It is a campaign that means not just to speak about but to demonstrate the hard business of integrity. It is a campaign that rejects the politics of selfishness to offer the politics of principle, the politics of true and common aspiration to our people.

And I think this is so because I am an American. It is so because I am a Republican. It is so because I am one who believes that we must stand first and foremost for that truth which was there in our Declaration when it told us that our rights come from God. For, if our rights come from the Creator, God, then they must be exercised with respect for the authority from which they come. Abandon that authority, and we have abandoned the very foundation of our way of life.

You know, there are a lot of people who share that creed--and I appeal to you now as those who stand with me open that common ground of faith, who stand with me in that home of the heart and spirit which truly is Illinois. I ask you to join with me. For, in the next year or two years, we are going to make the fundamental decisions that will determine the fate of the marriage-based family, we're going to fight the battles that will recall or not the conscience of America to true principle in the respect for innocent life, that will recall or not the courage of America in true perseverance in the war upon the terrorists who destroy innocent life. These

things will be decided now.

[tape ends]

