

Excerpt from Nobel Prize Lecture by Kailash Satyarthi (2014)

Friends, the Nobel Committee has generously invited me to present a “lecture.” Respectfully, I am unable to do that. Because, I am representing here – the sound of silence. The cry of innocence. And, the face of invisibility. I represent millions of those children who are left behind and that’s why I have kept an empty chair here as a reminder. I have come here only to share the voices and dreams of our children – because they are all our children – [gesture to everyone in the audience].

I have looked into their frightened and exhausted eyes. I have held their injured bodies and felt their broken spirits.

Twenty years ago, in the foothills of the Himalayas, I met a small, skinny child labourer. He asked me: “Is the world so poor that it cannot give me a toy and a book, instead of forcing me to take a gun or a tool?”

I met with a Sudanese child-soldier he was kidnapped by an extremist militia. As his first training lesson, he was forced to kill his friends and family. He asked me: “What is my fault?”

Twelve years ago, a child-mother from the streets of Colombia – trafficked, raped, enslaved – asked me this: “I have never had a dream. Can my child have one?”

Friends, all the great religions, teach us to care for our children. Jesus said: “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to them.” The Holy Quran says: “Kill not your children because of poverty.”

Friends! There is no greater violence than to deny the dreams of our children.

Therefore ... I refuse to accept that all the temples and mosques and churches and prayer houses have no place for the dreams of our children.

I refuse to accept that the world is so poor, when just one week of global military expenditure can bring all the children to classrooms.

I refuse to accept that all the laws and constitutions, police and judges are unable to protect our children.

I refuse to accept that the shackles of slavery can ever be stronger than the quest for freedom.

I REFUSE TO ACCEPT.

My only aim in life is that every child is free to be a child,

- free to grow and develop,
- free to eat, sleep, and see daylight,
- free to laugh and cry,
- free to play and learn,
- free to go to school, and above all,
- free to dream.

Excerpt from Barack Obama's 2004 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address

On behalf of the great state of Illinois, crossroads of a nation, Land of Lincoln, let me express my deepest gratitude for the privilege of addressing this convention.

Tonight is a particular honor for me because, let's face it, my presence on this stage is pretty unlikely. My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack. His father -- my grandfather -- was a cook, a domestic servant to the British.

But my grandfather had larger dreams for his son. Through hard work and perseverance my father got a scholarship to study in a magical place, America, that shone as a beacon of freedom and opportunity to so many who had come before.

While studying here, my father met my mother. She was born in a town on the other side of the world, in Kansas. Her father worked on oil rigs and farms through most of the Depression. The day after Pearl Harbor my grandfather signed up for duty; joined Patton's army, marched across Europe. Back home, my grandmother raised a baby and went to work on a bomber assembly line. After the war, they studied on the G.I. Bill, bought a house through F.H.A., and later moved west all the way to Hawaii in search of opportunity.

And they, too, had big dreams for their daughter. A common dream, born of two continents.

My parents shared not only an improbable love, they shared an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation. They would give me an African name, Barack, or "blessed," believing that in a tolerant America your name is no barrier to success. They imagined -- They imagined me going to the best schools in the land, even though they weren't rich, because in a generous America you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential.

They're both passed away now. And yet, I know that on this night they look down on me with great pride.

They stand here, and I stand here today, grateful for the diversity of my heritage, aware that my parents' dreams live on in my two precious daughters. I stand here knowing that my story is part of the larger American story, that I owe a debt to all of those who came before me, and that, in no other country on earth, is my story even possible.

Tonight, we gather to affirm the greatness of our Nation -- not because of the height of our skyscrapers, or the power of our military, or the size of our economy. Our pride is based on a very simple premise, summed up in a declaration made over two hundred years ago:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

That is the true genius of America, a faith -- a faith in simple dreams, an insistence on small miracles; that we can tuck in our children at night and know that they are fed and clothed and safe from harm; that we can say what we think, write what we think, without hearing a sudden knock on the door; that we can have an idea and start our own business without paying a bribe; that we can participate in the political process without fear of retribution, and that our votes will be counted -- at least most of the time.

This year, in this election we are called to reaffirm our values and our commitments, to hold them against a hard reality and see how we're measuring up to the legacy of our forbearers and the promise of future generations.

And fellow Americans, Democrats, Republicans, Independents, I say to you tonight: We have more work to do -- more work to do for the workers I met in Galesburg, Illinois, who are losing their union jobs at the Maytag plant that's moving to Mexico, and now are having to compete with their own children for jobs that pay seven bucks an hour; more to do for the father that I met who was losing his job and choking back the tears, wondering how he would pay 4500 dollars a month for the drugs his son needs without the health benefits that he counted on; more to do for the young woman in East St. Louis, and thousands more like her, who has the grades, has the drive, has the will, but doesn't have the money to go to college.

Now, don't get me wrong. The people I meet -- in small towns and big cities, in diners and office parks -- they don't expect government to solve all their problems. They know they have to work hard to get ahead, and they want to. Go into the collar counties around Chicago, and people will tell you they don't want their tax money wasted, by a welfare agency or by the Pentagon. Go in -- Go into any inner city neighborhood, and folks will tell you that government alone can't teach our kids to learn; they know that parents have to teach, that children can't achieve unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television sets and eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white. They know those things.

People don't expect -- People don't expect government to solve all their problems. But they sense, deep in their bones, that with just a slight change in priorities, we can make sure that every child in America has a decent shot at life, and that the doors of opportunity remain open to all.

They know we can do better. And they want that choice.