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ADDRESS

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Prepared for

Delivery at

I AM AN AMERICAN DAY

Ceremonies

Sylvan Theatre

Washington, D. C.

Sunday, May 18, 1947

3:30 P. M.

Today, all over this great land, American citizens are assembled for observance of "I AM AN AMERICAN DAY".

The occasion honors two great groups of new citizens - those who came to us from other lands and who have been recently naturalized, and those youth who have just reached their maturity. Both groups stand ready to shoulder their share of responsibility in the civic and political life of the Nation and of the states and localities in which they reside.

As the Nation honors the first group, it pays tribute to the millions from many lands who, since the beginning of our history, have come here to realize their dream of liberty, and to make their contributions to the building of our great country.

When the Nation honors the second group - the youth of today, it likewise gives recognition to all the youth of all the yesterdays who have contributed to the meaning of American citizenship, in peace, and in war.

In the honoring of these two groups on "I AM AN AMERICAN DAY", the Day has come to be regarded as a time to impress upon all Americans the significance of citizenship - a time for rededication to the ideals and principles of the American way of life, and to the task of building a greater and better America.

This broader significance of the observance was emphasized by President Truman in this year's proclamation, when he called for "exercises designed to help our citizens better to understand their privileges and responsibilities as participants in our representative democracy, to the end that world peace and domestic felicity may be attained and perpetuated."

It is indeed fitting, therefore, as we honor our adopted citizens and our youth who have reached their maturity, that we stress also the worth and

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importance of every individual citizen.

The story of this country is the story of you and me, your neighbors and mine, their parents and ours. It is the narrative of what our forefathers endured, and what they accomplished.

It is also the record of how we, of the present generation, are dealing with the legacy of democracy, of the way we are accepting its rights and privileges, and discharging its duties and responsibilities.

Our forefathers declared to the world that man is born a human being - the most important thing God ever created, and entitled to certain inherent, inalienable rights.

The tenets of democracy - the sacredness of human personality, the inherent, inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness - were established by the early colonists, and have been strengthened by the millions of immigrants who have come here throughout the years of our history.

These tenets, out of which stem the American way of life, will continue to shape the future of our Nation, and be the yardstick by which we measure our freedom and justice, yet they must be recognized, not merely as privileges to be enjoyed, but as a trust to be maintained and defended.

We must ever remember that continuance of the American way was not assured by the Founding Fathers. We must look upon democracy not as an accomplished fact, but as an endeavor.

Our great principles of government can never be taken for granted.

Idealism in government is something that must be kept constantly in mind, perpetually guarded, and continuously lived.

Vigilance is the price of liberty. Nothing that is not cherished will preserve itself.

America must never allow herself to become indifferent. An indifferent America will lose the right to be happy.

The struggle for freedom never ends. It cannot be won once and for all.

Each generation must fight for liberty, must rewin its rights, must win them again and yet again that men may still be free.

Two years ago, the guns ceased firing in Europe. At that time, patriotism touched the hearts of our people with a sense of universal kinship. High interest in active citizenship and patriotic service were the watch-words.

Peace-time interest in good citizenship must carry on from where war-time interest left off. Good citizenship should be a matter of continuous concern - not limited by peace or war, by time or incident.

Our responsibilities have not been lessened by the successful prosecution of the war. They have increased as we strive to lead our Nation and the world to a lasting peace.

Our responsibilities are not vague and distant. They are simple, definite day by day things, right before us, in our home and in our community.

As we make democracy work in the home and in the community, its total of goodness multiplied, will widen into the national and world horizons. Freedom and brotherhood throughout the Nation and the world begin at home.

America will be as great as her people are great. She will grow as her people grow. Multiplied smallness can dwarf our Nation and blind its vision.

The failure of a single citizen, or a group of citizens in a single community, causes the Nation to suffer. We are "One Nation Indivisible."

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The most precious gift this country has to offer is its citizenship. The citizenship that gives so much, expects much.

It expects each individual to do his part to make democracy work for all instead of expecting it to work for him alone, since the whole is more important than any of its parts.

It expects all Americans to be alert guardians of our ideals, and eternally vigilant against those subversive elements that seek to undermine, tear down and destroy our form of government.

It expects us to watch for those undercover groups and individuals who would deny to their fellow citizens the privileges of freedom, justice and equality on which our democracy was founded.

It expects us to keep our country a land where men and women may live free from fear and terror, where our children may grow up unafraid and where justice and brotherhood prevail among all races and creeds.

In reading a story a few days ago about our soldier dead in cemeteries around the world, I noted that American boys with unfamiliar old world names were sleeping by the side of General Patton. Some of those boys came to this country, as did their forefathers, to take their place beside other Americans to live and, if necessary, to die for the American dream of a better world.

No artificial barriers - racial, religious, or economic - separated men on the fighting front.

No religious differences came between Protestant Chaplain Clark V. Poling of New York, Catholic Chaplain John B. Washington of New Jersey, Protestant Chaplain George L. Fox of Massachusetts, and Jewish Chaplain Alexander D. Goode of the District of Columbia, as they went to their deaths on a night in February of 1943, when a loaded troop transport was torpedoed in the North Atlantic.

The actions of the four chaplains - their religion exemplified, and their heroism unsurpassed and rarely equalled - will go down in our traditions as a shining example of what makes our country "One Nation Indivisible".

Colonel Alfred C. Oliver, the "Chaplain of Bataan", who delivered the invocation here today, can tell us all that different religious faiths never divided American soldiers while they were prisoners of war in the Philippines.

Upon this memorable occasion, each of us should examine the concept of citizenship we hold. If it is narrow, it is weak. If it includes hatred and prejudice, or any kind of exclusiveness, then it is unsound, and we cannot truthfully say, "I Am An American".

Made up of many different racial strains, America has a golden opportunity to give to the world a shining example of how a free people can live and work together in harmony and happiness, with mutual respect for one another and good will to all.

In an address delivered in 1915, to 5,000 newly naturalized citizens, that great American, Woodrow Wilson, who visioned a "world safe for democracy", said: "You have taken the oath of Allegiance to a great ideal, to a great body of principles, to a great hope of the human race".

To our adopted citizens, I wish to urge that you choose from your heritage only the best and add it to that ideal.

America was originally created this way by those who came here from other shores.

Our Nation has become good and great because generation after generation of people from all lands have brought to us their best gifts of mind, body, and spirit.

They did not bring those things which they should have left behind.

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It is important then to remember that, once citizenship is accepted, there can be no divided political allegiance - no qualified loyalty to this country.

New citizens should firmly resolve to leave behind them in the land of their nativity all of their political conflicts and strifes.

Ancient hatreds must never be permitted to run rife in this country.

Racial minorities must not carry into our civic life age-old feuds of foreign lands and measure their own welfare, not by the country of their adoption, but by the interests of the country they left.

There can be no true allegiance to our great ideal, to our great body of principles and to the great hope of the human race unless all the old scores are wiped out.

War, a ruthless school master, has given us a picture of nations in the old world that are today prostrate, wrecked because their people harbored in their hearts hate and intolerance.

Whether citizens by birth, or citizens by choice, Americans have a heritage unequalled anywhere in the world.

As sovereign citizens, genuine and faithful in purpose, we must be ever mindful of our trust to hand on to the next generation a better country than we, ourselves, found.

Abundant in resources, with a profound belief in the worth and dignity of every human being, our country is the hope of humanity.

The stars of America must continue to shine, pointing the way toward peace and good will.