

# Chronological: Speeches, Statements, Messages, 1968: "The college student of today is the leader and spokesman of tomorrow..."

Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers  
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Speech by Senator Daniel K. Inouye  
1968 National Conference of State Legislative  
Leaders Annual Convention  
Honolulu - December 6, 1968

Y O U T H

POLITICS HAS BEEN DEFINED AS THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE. I HAVE NO  
QUARREL WITH THIS DEFINITION, BUT WE MUST NO LONGER EQUATE THE POSSIBLE  
WITH THE EASILY ATTAINABLE. THE EASIEST PATH IS NOT NECESSARILY THE BEST  
ONE. THE SIMPLEST ANSWER IS TOO FREQUENTLY THE SIMPLE-MINDED ANSWER. WE  
MUST CONCERN OURSELVES TODAY NOT ONLY WITH WHAT IS WITHIN EASY REACH, BUT  
WE MUST STRETCH OUR CAPABILITIES TOWARD ATTAINING WHAT IS BEST IN TERMS OF  
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GAINS. WE MUST DARE TO BE IDEALISTIC, IMAGINATIVE,  
INNOVATIVE, AND PRACTICAL -- ALL AT THE SAME TIME. IN STRIVING FOR THE  
IDEAL, WE CAN TURN TODAY'S DREAMS INTO TOMORROW'S REALITIES.

THIS IS NO EASY TASK. YET IF WE CONFINE OURSELVES TO THE OUTMODED  
RITUALS OF THE PRAGMATIC PAST, WE ARE TYING OURSELVES DOWN WITH CHAINS  
OF OUR MAKING. WE MUST BREAK OUT OF THE TRADITIONAL BOUNDARIES, THE

TRADITIONAL WAYS OF

TRADITIONAL WAYS OF THINKING, TO NEW METHODS AND NEW MEANS -- YET WE MUST UTILIZE THE BEST OF OUR INHERITED RESOURCES AS A FIRM FOUNDATION FOR A FUTURE IN WHICH NOTHING WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE.

WE CAN DO THESE THINGS. WE MUST DO THEM. IF WE DO NOT, WE SHALL LOSE THE SUPPORT OF THE STRONGEST, MOST VOCIFEROUS, MOST VISIBLE, MOST IMPORTANT FORCE IN AMERICAN POLITICS -- THE YOUTH OF AMERICA.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT OF TODAY IS THE LEADER AND THE SPOKESMAN OF TOMORROW. SOMETIMES, OF COURSE, IT SEEMS THAT HE DOESN'T WANT TO WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW. SOMETIMES IT SEEMS THAT HIS DESIRE FOR INSTANT GRATIFICATION OF EMINENTLY WORTHWHILE DESIRES IS IN DANGER OF DESTROYING THE VERY GOALS FOR WHICH HE STRIVES. YET, ON BALANCE, HIS CREDENTIALS ARE EXCELLENT AND HIS MOTIVATIONS ROOTED IN THE MOST MORAL PRECEPTS -- EVEN THOUGH HIS VISION MAY SOMETIMES BE NARROW AND HIS METHODS MISGUIDED.

NO POLITICAL CANDIDATE CAN AFFORD TO IGNORE HIM. IN SHEER WEIGHT  
OF NUMBERS, HIS FORCE

OF NUMBERS, HIS FORCE IS UNDENIABLE. THE COLLEGE STUDENT IS PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE PRESSURE GROUP IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY. MORE THAN SIX-AND-A-HALF MILLION STUDENTS ARE REGISTERED IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ACROSS THE NATION -- ABOUT 47 PERCENT OF ALL THE PEOPLE FROM 18 TO 21 YEARS OLD. BY 1970 -- LESS THAN TWO YEARS FROM NOW -- MORE THAN HALF OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN THAT AGE GROUP WILL BE IN COLLEGE. IN JUST ONE DECADE, THE COLLEGE POPULATION WILL HAVE MORE THAN DOUBLED.

I DON'T WANT TO OVERWHELM YOU WITH STATISTICS, BUT JUST ONE MORE FIGURE MIGHT PROVE ENLIGHTENING. BY 1970, HALF THE POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES WILL BE UNDER 25. MORE THAN 100 MILLION PEOPLE.

THIS IS A TRULY SIGNIFICANT PHENOMENON. TO SOME, PERHAPS, IT IS A FRIGHTENING ONE.

BUT JUST AS WE CANNOT AFFORD TO IGNORE THE IMPACT OF THESE YOUNG

PEOPLE, WE ALSO CANNOT

PEOPLE, WE ALSO CANNOT AFFORD TO UNDERESTIMATE THEM. THEIR INFLUENCE  
MUST BE WEIGHED IN TERMS OF MORE THAN JUST NUMBERS.

WHO ARE THESE YOUNG PEOPLE? WHAT DO THEY WANT? WHAT DO THEY BELIEVE  
IN -- IF ANYTHING?

THE YOUTH OF OUR COUNTRY ARE BETTER-EDUCATED, MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE,  
MORE CONCERNED THAN ANY PRECEDING GENERATION. BY AND LARGE, ALTHOUGH THEY  
REBEL AGAINST THEIR PARENTS' AUTHORITY, THEY SHARE WITH THEIR PARENTS A  
BELIEF IN LAW AND ORDER -- WITH JUSTICE; A BELIEF THAT CONSTRUCTIVE CHANGE  
CAN COME FROM THE ESTABLISHED POLITICAL PARTIES IN THIS COUNTRY; AND, IN  
MOST CASES, THEY SHARE THEIR PARENTS' RELIGION AND BELIEF IN GOD.

YET THEY ARE PERCEPTIBLY DIFFERENT. WHAT SETS THEM APART?

THEY ARE DIFFERENT FROM THEIR PARENTS -- AND THERE ARE REASONS.

THEY HAVE GROWN UP DURING A TIME OF DRASTIC AND SOMETIMES VIOLENT SOCIAL,

ECONOMIC, AND TECHNICAL

ECONOMIC, AND TECHNICAL CHANGES. CHANGE IS NO LONGER MERELY AN ABSTRACT CONCEPT. IT IS A FACT OF EVERYDAY LIFE. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS THE STATUS QUO, FOR TODAY'S STANDARDS MAY BE OUTMODED BY TOMORROW.

TRAVEL BY JET AIRPLANE ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND ACROSS THE WORLD, A PHENOMENON STILL DRAMATIC AND EXCITING TO MOST OF US OVER 30, IS COMMONPLACE TO THE COLLEGE STUDENT OF TODAY. THE OLD BARRIERS OF TIME AND GEOGRAPHY ARE FALLING FAST.

WE LIVE IN AN ERA OF INSTANTANEOUS COMMUNICATION. MARSHALL McLUHAN HAS POINTED OUT THAT THE CHANGE FROM RELIANCE ON THE PRINTED WORD TO THE INSTANT COMMUNICATION AFFORDED BY TELEVISION MEANS NEW AND MORE RAPID PERCEPTIONS UNDREAMED-OF ONLY A GENERATION AGO. AS McLUHAN HAS SAID, "IT INVOLVES ALL OF US AT ONCE."

WHEN HAWAII ACHIEVED STATEHOOD IN 1959, MAINLAND TELEVISION PROGRAMS

APPEARED IN HAWAII

APPEARED IN HAWAII A MINIMUM OF TWO WEEKS AFTER THEY WERE SEEN IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. NOW TELEVISION AUDIENCES IN HONOLULU CAN SEE SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AS THEY HAPPEN -- AND DAY-TO-DAY CHANGES IN EVERYTHING FROM FASHIONS TO RIOTING ARE THE COMMON CURRENCY OF PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF TODAY, THEN, WILL NOT BE CONTENT WITH YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS TO THE PROBLEMS OF TODAY AND TOMORROW. THEY KNOW THAT CHANGE IS NOT ONLY NECESSARY BUT INEVITABLE, AND THEY ARE DETERMINED THAT THEY WILL HAVE AN ACTIVE PART IN SHAPING THE FORCES OF CHANGE.

THESE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE NOT ONLY BETTER-INFORMED AND BETTER-EDUCATED THAN PREVIOUS COLLEGE GENERATIONS -- THEY ARE ALSO MORE SECURE AND INFINITELY MORE AFFLUENT. WHEN I ATTENDED COLLEGE, MUCH OF THE PRESSURE TO CONFORM AND TO WALK IN THE PATHS OF TRADITION AROSE FROM THE NECESSITY TO EARN A LIVING

TO EARN A LIVING AND TO GAIN BOTH SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS. TIMES HAVE INDEED CHANGED.

THESE STUDENTS TAKE FOR GRANTED THE FACT THAT THEY WILL LIVE COMFORTABLY NO MATTER WHAT FIELD THEY CHOOSE TO ENTER. WHY NOT, WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME IN THE U. S. IS EXPECTED TO INCREASE 50 PERCENT IN THE PERIOD 1965-1980 -- IN TERMS OF PURCHASING POWER, NOT DOLLARS? TODAY'S COLLEGE STUDENT CAN JUSTIFIABLY EXPECT TO LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE EDUCATED PEOPLE WITH TALENT AND AMBITION CAN REASONABLY EXPECT TO LIVE COMFORTABLY AND SECURELY.

YET, ALTHOUGH THEY FEEL SECURE, THEY ARE NOT COMPLACENT. THEY ARE DEEPLY DISTURBED OVER WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE THE COMPLACENCY -- OR WORSE -- OF THEIR ELDERS.

THEY HAVE STRONG RECENT MEMORIES OF THE VIOLENT DEATHS OF THREE

OF THE LEADERS

OF THE LEADERS THEY MOST ADMIRER, JOHN F. KENNEDY, MARTIN LUTHER KING, AND ROBERT F. KENNEDY. THEY HAVE STRONG MEMORIES, TOO, OF THE FACT THAT THE NATION'S BRIEF REMORSE WAS NOT FOLLOWED BY A PERIOD OF CONSTRUCTIVE REACTION TO THIS VIOLENCE.

IS IT ANY WONDER, THEN, THAT THESE STUDENTS HAVE LESS FAITH THAN WE WOULD LIKE IN THE TRADITIONAL FIGURES OF AUTHORITY -- PARENTS, PROFESSORS, PREACHERS, POLICEMEN, AND, PERHAPS HEADING THE LIST, POLITICIANS?

THESE, THEN, ARE THE YOUTH OF TODAY. THEY ARE WELL-EDUCATED, WELL-INFORMED, KNOWLEDGEABLE, AFFLUENT, AND DEEPLY CONCERNED. WHAT DO THEY WANT FROM THE WORLD OF TOMORROW?

BASICALLY, THEY SEEM TO HAVE THREE GOALS, GOALS WITH WHICH NO FAIR-MINDED PERSON CAN ARGUE -- AN END TO RACIAL INJUSTICE, AN END TO THE WAR IN VIETNAM, AND A SIGNIFICANT VOICE IN THE AFFAIRS OF THE COUNTRY IN WHICH THEY PLAY AN

WHICH THEY PLAY AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE.

THERE ARE THOSE AMONG THEM WHO BELIEVE THAT THESE GOALS CANNOT BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT DESTROYING THE WORLD INTO WHICH THEY WERE BORN. MUCH PUBLICITY HAS BEEN GIVEN TO SMALL MINORITY STUDENT GROUPS WHICH FREQUENTLY SEEM TO MAKE UP IN NOISE AND PUBLICITY FOR WHAT THEY LACK IN NUMBERS AND LOGIC. THEY CONSTITUTE ONLY A TINY FRACTION OF U. S. STUDENTS, YET THEIR SPOKESMEN REPRESENT A VERY REAL DANGER -- THE DANGER OF A TYRANNY OF THE MINORITY -- A TYRANNY AS INVIDIOUS AS THAT OF THE MAJORITY.

BUT EVEN CLEAR-THINKING STUDENTS REBEL AGAINST AUTHORITY. YOU FREQUENTLY HEAR THEM SAY THEY MUST FIGHT IN ANY WAY POSSIBLE FOR THE RIGHT TO GOVERN THEMSELVES, TO CONTROL THEIR OWN DESTINIES. ONE STUDENT IN FIVE IN THE U. S. HAS TAKEN PART IN SOME KIND OF DEMONSTRATION ~~AND I DON'T MEAN A PANTY RAID. PANTY RAIDS HAVE GONE THE WAY OF GOLDFISH SWALLOWING~~

~~AND CROWDING INTO~~

AND ~~CROWDING INTO TELEPHONE BOOTHS~~. THE STUDENTS ARE DEMONSTRATING NOW  
BECAUSE THEY WANT TO BE HEARD. THEY ARE SAYING WHAT ARTHUR MILLER SAID  
SIMPLY AND CLEARLY IN DEATH OF A SALESMAN, "ATTENTION MUST BE PAID."

THAT IS THE KEY. IF WE, THE MEMBERS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT, THE  
SYSTEM, DO NOT GIVE THEM A LEGITIMATE MEANS FOR MAKING THEMSELVES HEARD,  
THEY WILL RESORT TO ILLEGITIMATE METHODS. THE PLAIN TRUTH IS THAT, IN TOO  
MANY CASES, EXTREMIST ACTION HAS RESULTED IN REFORMS LONG OVERDUE AND LONG  
OVERLOOKED.

AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, FOR EXAMPLE, THE VIOLENCE HAS DIMINISHED,  
BUT THE EFFECT OF THE VIOLENCE IS A NEW ADMINISTRATION APPARENTLY MUCH MORE  
WILLING THAN THE PREVIOUS ONE TO LISTEN TO RESPONSIBLE STUDENTS' VOICES  
AND TO RESPOND TO THEM.

MAYBE YOU KNOW THE STORY ABOUT THE FARMER WHO WAS SEEN HITTING HIS

MULE OVER THE HEAD

MULE OVER THE HEAD WITH A WOODEN MALLET. WHEN HE WAS ASKED WHY HE RESORTED TO SUCH VIOLENCE, HE SAID, "FIRST, WE'VE GOT TO GET HIS ATTENTION."

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO GET THE ATTENTION OF THOSE IN A POSITION TO FULFILL LEGITIMATE REQUESTS. WE MUST BE SURE THAT THE YOUTH OF AMERICA DO NOT HAVE TO RESORT TO THE WOODEN MALLET OF VIOLENCE OR ILLEGALITY BEFORE THEIR VOICES CAN BE HEARD.

IT IS OUR DUTY TO PROVIDE A LEGITIMATE OUTLET FOR LEGITIMATE PROTEST AND CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM. IT IS EQUALLY OUR DUTY, HOWEVER, TO POINT OUT THAT THIS ESTABLISHMENT HAS PAVED THE WAY FOR EXACTLY THE KIND OF CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION THAT CLEAR-THINKING YOUTH SO LOUDLY DEMAND.

WE CANNOT DENY THAT THERE IS STILL TOO MUCH RACIAL INJUSTICE IN THIS COUNTRY, YET WE MUST REMEMBER THAT IN THE PAST ELEVEN YEARS FIVE CIVIL RIGHTS BILLS WERE PASSED AND THE NEGRO HAS FINALLY COME TO THE PLACE IN

WHICH, AFTER 100 YEARS,

WHICH, AFTER 100 YEARS, THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION IS CLOSE TO BECOMING  
A REALITY.

WE CANNOT DENY THAT THE WAR IN VIETNAM, LIKE ALL WARS, IS IMMORAL.  
WE MUST RESPOND TO THE DEMANDS OF YOUTH THAT THIS WAR MUST BE ENDED. WE  
MUST REMEMBER, HOWEVER, THAT WE CANNOT BE IRRESPONSIBLE IN OUR CALLS FOR  
INSTANT PEACE ANY MORE THAN WE CAN BE IRRESPONSIBLE IN CALLING FOR TOTAL  
MILITARY VICTORY. THE WAR IN VIETNAM MUST BE ENDED BY PATIENT POLITICAL  
NEGOTIATION. IT MUST BE ENDED RESPONSIBLY AND PERMANENTLY.

WE MUST REMEMBER, TOO, THAT WE HAVE TAKEN SIGNIFICANT STEPS TO  
ASSURE THAT FUTURE GENERATIONS WILL NOT SUFFER FROM THE RAVAGES OF ATOMIC  
WAR. WE MUST REMEMBER THE NUCLEAR TEST BAN TREATY OF 1963, THE BANNING  
OF ATOMIC WEAPONS IN SPACE IN 1967, AND THE NUCLEAR <sup>NOW</sup> PROLIFERATION TREATY  
OF 1968.

YET WE CANNOT REST

YET WE CANNOT REST ON THESE ACHIEVEMENTS. THEY ARE  
MERELY THE FOUNDATIONS ON WHICH WE MUST BUILD A BETTER FUTURE.

WE MUST RID OURSELVES OF THE OUTMODED CONCEPT THAT  
MATURITY BEGINS AT THE AGE OF 21. I HAVE KNOWN MATURE 17-YEAR  
OLDS , AND IMMATURE 50 -YEAR OLDS. IN OUR COLLEGES AND  
UNIVERSITIES , IN OUR POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS , IN OUR GOVERNME NT  
AS A WHOLE , WE MUST ALLOW THE YOUTH OF AMERICA A MORE  
PROMINENT PART AND A STRONGER VOICE.

WE CAN BEGIN BY LOWERING THE VOTING AGE TO 18 . PRESIDENT  
JOHNSON HAS SAID THAT THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF AMERICA MERIT OUR  
CONFIDENCE , AND , IN HIS WORDS , WE MUST PROVE TO THEM " THAT  
THEY ARE RESPECTED , THAT THEY ARE TRUSTED . "

I REGRET THAT HAWAII WAS NOT SUCCESSFUL IN LOWERING THE  
VOTING AGE OF HER CITIZENS TO 18.

THE YOUTH OF AMERICA

THE YOUTH OF AMERICA HAVE PROVED THEIR WORTH. THEY ARE NOT ONLY BETTER -EDUCATED , BETTER -INFORMED , MORE SECURE THAN THEIR PARENTS. THEY ARE ALSO LESS PATIENT. THEY ARE THE CONCERNED GENERATION , WHICH HAS GROWN UP IN THE SHADOW OF THE ATOMIC BOMB. THEY MUST BE RECKONED WITH AND LISTENED TO.

THEY ARE NOT UNBELIEVERS , ALTHOUGH THEY ARE FREQUENTLY SKEPTICS. THEY BELIEVE IN THE PERFECTIBILITY OF MAN AND THE POSSIBILITY OF CONSTRUCTIVE CHANGE. THEY ARE THE HOPE AND THE PROMISE OF TOMORROW.

I MUST ADD A NOTE OF CAUTION. WE CANNOT CONFUSE THE REQUIREMENT FOR CONSTRUCTIVE CHANGE WITH THE WANTON DESTRUCTION OF WHAT IS ALREADY GOOD IN OUR SOCIETY. WE CANNOT TEAR DOWN LAWS , INSTITUTIONS , AND TRADITIONS SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY ARE THERE.

ALL OF US WERE BORN

ALL OF US WERE BORN INTO A WORLD WE NEVER MADE. ALL  
OF US ARE THE PRODUCTS AND INHERITORS OF A CIVILIZATION CARVED  
BY THE VERY FIG<sup>6</sup>URES OF AUTHORITY SO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE ARE  
REJECTING. ALL THE VALUES WHICH CAME BEFORE US CANNOT BE  
REJECTED AUTOMATICALLY , NOR CAN POVERTY AND PREJUDICE ,  
VIOLENCE AND DISORDER , BE RADICATED OVERNIGHT SIMPLY BECAUSE  
WE WISH THEM GONE. ~~AS I SAID IN THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THIS~~  
~~YEAR'S DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION~~ , WE MUST REJECT VIOLENCE AS A  
MEANS OF PROTEST. WE MUST REJECT THOSE WHO PREACH VIOLENCE.  
AND WE MUST ALSO REJECT THOSE WHO WOULD HIDE RACISM BEHIND  
THE MASK OF LAW AND ORDER.

I HAVE INFINITE FAITH IN THE CAPACITY OF THE YOUTH OF  
AMERICA TO REJECT DESTRUCTION FOR ITS OWN SAKE , TO BRING ABOUT  
CONSTRUCTIVE CHANGE IN AN ORDERLY WORKABLE MANNER , AND TO  
BUILD A BRIGHT NEW FUTURE ON THE FIRM FOUNDATION OF THE GLOWING  
ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PAST.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PAST. THE YOUTH OF AMERICA HAVE GREATER  
RESOURCES AND THEREFORE BEAR GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES THAN  
ANY PREVIOUS GENERATION. I AM SURE THEY WILL NOT TAKE THESE  
RESPONSIBILITIES LIGHTLY.