Chronological: UH Commencement, Honolulu, 1992-12-20

A COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS BY
SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUYE
"BUILDING BRIDGES TO THE FUTURE:
THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII MEETS
THE CHALLENGES OF THE TWENTY-FIRST
CENTURY"
HONOLULU, HAWAII

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1992

Ladies and gentlemen, graduates, parents and friends, it is truly a pleasure to return once again to the campus of the University of Hawaii, and to share with you another joyous commencement. There are few events on my calendar which so vividly symbolize the hopes and dreams of young America as does the awarding of the baccalaureate -- few events which speak so eloquently to the promise which our great nation offers to each of its citizens.

In your transition from student and scholar to graduate, our nation is once again blessed with renewed creativity and the power of youthful idealism. For just as surely as each one of you represents the pinnacle of hope, and achievement for your families, so too do you represent yet one more jewel in the crown of our great democracy.

This is your moment, your hour, to be recognized for all that you have accomplished during your years of study. It is the first of what I hope will be many golden days in the sun for each one of you. I salute your achievements, take pride in the honor which you bring to all Hawaii, and bid you the best of luck as you move off to new horizons.

-- MORE --

THE WORLD AFTER THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL

Before you go, however, I would like to leave you with a few thoughts, about the changing face of the world in which you are now entering -- a world of challenge, a world of opportunity, and yes, a world of increasing uncertainty. The events now unfolding in Asia, Africa and Europe, suggest that we are embarking upon a period of tumultuous change -- a time of political reorientation as dramatic and as profound as any which our fathers and grandfathers witnessed this century.

I wish I could reassure you that the unrest which now encircles the globe will be short-lived and that peace and prosperity will be the inevitable consequence of humanity's eternal struggle for justice and equality. This is certainly my prayer, but unfortunately is beyond the capacity of any of us to predict.

As one who has seen the ravages of war and poverty numerous times over the course of my life, I would be deceiving you if my optimism for the future were not tempered by what I know to be reality. History, my friends, provides no guarantees on the shape of things to come. The possibilities for good and for evil remain essentially today, as they have always been, as numerous as the stars.

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This is the spirit that built our nation and made possible the freedoms we now cherish.

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This is not so today. While the demise of Soviet communism has led to a frenzied rush of democratic nation-building, the prospects for the future remain anything but certain. In places as remote as Bosnia, the Georgian republic, Tajikistan and Nagorno-Karabakh, liberation from Moscow has brought about none of the stability or prosperity which the citizens of these areas had dreamed of for decades. Instead of peace -- civil war, territorial disputes, hyper-inflation and ethnic strife have become the cruel legacy of self-determination.

What has been left in the wake of the once monolithic Soviet empire is a collection of economically and politically depressed mini-states, each struggling to survive as democratic nations with little capacity to succeed and no experience upon which to undertake such a bold experiment.

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The reason for this fire sale of the century is simple. Faced with mounting debts, collapsing economies, unemployment, political instability and the prospect of large-scale starvation, the new republics of Asia have come to rely on the sale of weaponry as virtually the only source of hard currency.

It is a sad fact that, just when humanity appeared to be moving away from armed confrontation, this new influx of weapons into the world's trouble spots has brought about a renewed fear of war, insurgency and repression. Even the scientists of the former Soviet Union are rushing to sell their services abroad -- services which include the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction.

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In its place, however, we are creating a lighter, more mobile force able to respond to conflict and instability in new and creative ways. The skill and professionalism exhibited by our forces during Operation Desert Storm builds on the experience of the past, and is characteristic of the changes now taking place in our armed forces.

Even as we speak, the American military is engaged in vital humanitarian relief work in Somalia, Iraqi Kurdistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina -- essential tasks for which our people are most ably suited. This work, I believe, is just as important to our national security as was manning the watchtowers along the inter-German frontier for nearly forty years, perhaps even more so.

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The diversity of numbers, and the focus of your curriculum, has given you an advantage in the new world of Asian-Pacific culture, commerce, and cooperation that few can match.

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Make no mistake, your success in shaping this new Age of the Pacific will determine both the quality and the nature of our way of life far into the next century.

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BEFORE THE FACULTY AND STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

DECEMBER, 1992 12/20/92

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But friends, please don't be discouraged by my words. After all, we Hawaiians know well the meaning of uncertainty. We live with it every day. Whether it is a typhoon or storm surge striking hard from across the Pacific or the explosion of molten rock streaming forth from the depths of the earth, this for us is the price of living in Paradise. We have come to accept that violence and chaos is a natural and inevitable part of existence. It is neither a cause for fear or disillusionment. It must be accepted, confronted and overcome. This is the Hawaiian spirit.

It is for this reason that our nation is obliged to remain strong and resolute in the face of the changes now taking place. In our rush to demobilize our armed forces and melt down the weapons of war, we mush stop to consider just what might be required should the winds of misfortune turn in our direction. Is it prudent, I ask you, to close down the community fire station and sell off its equipment simply because an area has been temporarily spared the ravages of an inferno? Of course not.

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For though the challenge is enormous, you have been molded by a University of exceptional character and caliber. Its perspective has been influenced, in no small measure, by the scholarship embedded in The East-West Center, an institution noted for its academic stature and ability both on the mainland and abroad. For over a quarter of a century, the Center has brought our nation closer to understanding the unique, and often perplexing, cultures and customs of the Pacific region. All Americans owe it a debt of gratitude.

Whether one is pursuing work in the fields of national security, telecommunications, business, education, travel, tourism or agriculture, the University of Hawaii and its affiliated programs have fostered an interdisciplinary environment that is aptly suited to our new age. The diploma which you receive today represents decades of educational alchemy that has produced one of the richest and most varied experiences available to students today. Do not forsake its promise. Trust in the ideas which it has nurtured in you. Be proud of the values it represents.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let me say that this university will forever be a source of pride and deep affection for me -- a place of personal as well as scholarly enrichment.

For as I have watched its students come and go over the years, grow and mature, so too have I watched the development of this university from a small and struggling campus to an institution of international renown.

It should be a source of honor for all ~~Hawaiians~~ the people of Hawaii that, ~~out of our native soil,~~ we have built a university with outstanding departments, assembled a world class faculty and brought together a diverse student body representing the best of America's youth.

Mr. President, scholars -- and especially ~~all of those graduating seniors here today~~ the graduates, I salute you. The greatest of your accomplishments are still before you. Go forth and seek them, give flight to your dreams, take hold the reins of destiny, and live life to the fullest.

Thank you and ~~God's speed.~~ Aloha

DANIEL K. INOUYE
HAWAII

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COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION
Chairman, Subcommittee on Communications

Chairman, SELECT COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

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If I did not know how well you have been prepared for this task I think I would leave this hall with feelings of some trepidation. But I have none.

For though the challenge is enormous, you have been molded by a University of exceptional character and caliber. Its perspective has been influenced, in no small measure, by the scholarship embedded in the East-West Center, an institution noted for its academic stature and ability, both on the mainland and abroad. For over a quarter of a century, the Center has brought our nation closer to understanding the unique, and often perplexing, cultures and customs of the Pacific region. All Americans owe it a debt of gratitude.

Whether one is pursuing work in the fields of national security, telecommunications, business, education, travel, tourism or agriculture, the University of Hawaii, and its affiliated programs, have fostered an interdisciplinary environment that is aptly suited to our new age. The diploma which you receive today represents decades of educational alchemy that has produced one of the richest, and most varied experiences available to students today. Do not forsake its promise. Trust in the ideas which it has nurtured in you. Be proud of the values it represents.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let me say that this university will forever be a source of pride and deep affection for me -- a place of personal as well as scholarly enrichment.

For as I have watched its students come and go over the years, grow and mature, so too have I watched the development of this university from a small and struggling campus to an institution of international renown.

It should be a source of honor for all the people of Hawaii that we have built a university with outstanding departments, assembled a world class faculty, and brought together a diverse student body representing the best of America's youth.

Mr. President, scholars, and especially the graduates, I salute you. The greatest of your accomplishments are still before you. Go forth and seek them, give flight to your dreams, take hold the reins of destiny, and live life to the fullest.

Thank you and Aloha.