

GOVERNOR MARTIN O'MALLEY

United States Naval Academy Forrester Lecture

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As Prepared for Delivery

Vice Admiral Fowler, Brigade Commander Barca, distinguished guests,... It is a tremendous honor and privilege to have been invited to speak with all of you this evening.

To the men and women of the Brigade,... on behalf of the people of Maryland I want thank you for stepping forward and choosing to serve our country. Your individual and collective courage in pursuing your vocation of service and leadership is a tremendous source of pride and inspiration to all of us in Maryland who have the good fortune to consider ourselves the neighbors of the United States Naval Academy.



I want to acknowledge as well the presence of those students who are with us today as participants in the 2009 Naval Academy Leadership Conference – a conference of 200 students from 25 civilian and military colleges.

Admiral Fowler has kindly asked me to address with you the timeless question of “how do we recruit, train, and retain the next generation of leaders for the challenges facing our country in the 21st century?”

My training is that of a lawyer. My discipline is that of a generalist. My experience is the experience of a public servant. Like you, my most constant perspective on this question of leadership is that of Citizen of

the United States. I will not address important technical issues like competitive pay or recruitment standards. Instead, given the history of the Forrester Lecture, I will focus in our short time together on the deeper questions that lie beneath our shared understanding of that very human dynamic called, “leadership.”

So how do we recruit, train, and retain the next generation of leaders for the challenges facing our country in the 21st century? Perhaps the answer is contained within the question itself, and a clear answer to the underlying questions of:

1. What are the human qualities and virtues that define true leadership in the individual?
2. What are the great national challenges which cry out for leadership? And,
3. What power gives rise to truthful and effective leadership in any generation?

Let’s begin with the qualities and virtues of individual leadership.

The Virtues of Leadership

Implicit in the notion of recruiting leaders is the idea that some individuals possess innate qualities or virtues of leadership. We sometimes hear it said that he or she has “leadership potential.” Philosophers, poets, and historians alike have pondered the question: “*are great leaders born, or are great leaders made?*” The answer I propose to you tonight is “*yes, they are.*”

They are born with certain qualities and made by discipline and experience.

It has been said by no less than Ralph Waldo Emerson that “*there is properly [speaking] no history, only biography*”¹ -- the study of individual lives and individual leaders. And I agree. For there is in every life a unique alchemy of human qualities, human experiences, human discipline, and human vision that make history; and all of these things tell us a great deal about the qualities, virtues and nature of individual leadership.

When one reads the biographies of individual leaders, one sees two powerful traits possessed by these outlying men and women revered by history: the first is a **willingness to confront adversity**, and the second, closely related, is a strongly felt and clearly articulated **future preference**.

A Willingness to Confront Adversity

The great sociologist, Arnold Toynbee, is known for his “theory on the progress of man.” Man, he said, (and woman he meant as well) progresses in response to adversity. Where the adversity is too great, civilizations move or vanish, where the adversity is too little, civilizations atrophy or fail to progress. And this is true not only of society as a whole, but it also true for the individual: **a willingness to confront adversity**.



¹ Words which echoed Thomas Carlyle who wrote that “Biography is the only true history.”

Noah in building the ark had a willingness to confront adversity.²

Lincoln in teaching himself to read certainly demonstrated in his individual life a willingness to confront the adversity of illiteracy. When, as President, he refused to allow Fort Sumter to be evacuated thereby precipitating the Civil War, he again demonstrated **a willingness to confront adversity.**

When Gandhi and Martin Luther King stood up to overwhelming odds, power, systemic injustice and historic inertia, they too displayed that all important quality of leadership – **a willingness to confront adversity.**

A Strong Future Preference

But related to this first quality of individual leadership -- and perhaps its twin -- is a **strongly felt and clearly articulated “future preference,”** an innate sense that *“man is not the slave of circumstance, or need not be. He makes his own event, not time or chance, their logic his.”*³ **Future preference.**

It is the quality that sees and discerns those fights that are worth the fighting.



It was Professor Carroll Quigley of Georgetown University who would tell each his students that *“the thing that got you [here] today is belief in the future, belief that the future can be better than the present and that people will and should sacrifice in the present to get to that better future,…”*

I have no doubt that the nurturing of this quality is also a critically important part of your training here at the Academy because it is a quality that for more than two hundred years has been at the heart of what it means to be an American Citizen.

“In order to form a more perfect union,…” – **future preference.**

“To secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity,…” – **future preference.**⁴

“Send me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breath free,…” – **future preference.**⁵

“That a government of, by, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” – **future preference.**⁶

² Conversely, when Jonah turned away from adversity, he was swallowed by the whale.

³ From John Boyle O'Reilly, an early voice for civil rights and a staunch critic of the way that Native Americans were being treated in the 1870's. He had been sentenced to death for his part in an unsuccessful Irish uprising in the mid-1800's. After his sentence was commuted, he escaped from a penal colony in Australia and came to Boston where he eventually became editor of the most influential paper in the city.

⁴ U.S. Constitution

⁵ Inscribed at the base of the Statue of Liberty, from Emma Lazarus's poem “The New Colossus”

⁶ From Abraham Lincoln in the Gettysburg Address

For strength and clarity of future preference, remember the beautiful, timeless and American Revolutionary simplicity of Franklin Roosevelt's four freedoms: "In the future days which we seek to make more secure," he said, "we look forward to a world founded upon four essential **human** freedoms. The first is freedom of speech and expression,... **everywhere in world**. The second is the freedom of every person to worship God in his [or her] own way,...**everywhere in the world**. The third is freedom from want,...**everywhere in the world**,... And the fourth is freedom from fear,... **anywhere in the world.**"

Yes, great leaders possess a willingness to confront adversity, and alongside this willingness, they also possess a deeply felt and strongly articulated future preference.

But beyond these essential and probably, to some degree, innate qualities, I have come to believe there is a method to effective leadership that is learned and trained; there is an acquired discipline and a honed courage to effective leadership.

The Discipline of Leadership

What is this discipline of leadership?

First, effective leaders develop **the vision to set important goals**.

Secondly, effective leaders learn **the discipline to measure progress** towards their goals.

And finally, effective leaders develop **the courage to change** tactics and strategies, when necessary, in pursuit of goals.

That's it.

In most human enterprises, courage alone does not an effective leader make. Courage must also be accompanied by a discipline and method for applying "*rational human effort to human problems*"⁷ by setting goals, by measuring performance and by changing tactics and strategies when necessary to achieve the goals.

The Vision to Set Important Goals

In the field or waters of combat, you know yourselves that your short term success will be short lived if you do not have a long-term vision for where you are going. Leaders must therefore be able to answer the questions of "*where are we going?*" and "*how will we know that we're getting there?*" And they must also be able to answer these questions with sufficient clarity such that all of those who are involved in making the success of the human endeavor **stay on board**.

Where are we going? How will we know if we're getting there? Are we getting closer?..." These are questions as old as the human condition itself; questions that were no doubt asked of Moses by his followers over the course of a forty-year wander through the desert; questions asked of Columbus and Magellan. Questions asked of Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony.

Goals are indispensable, but they are meaningless without the discipline to measure performance.

⁷ In Robert Kennedy's Day of Affirmation speech, he said: "*there is no basic inconsistency between ideals and realistic possibilities -- no separation between the deepest desires of heart and of mind and the rational application of human effort to human problems.*"

The Discipline to Measure Progress

Neil Armstrong's small step for man was made possible not only because President Kennedy had the vision to declare that America would put a man on the moon; but because he also had **the discipline to measure performance** towards that goal by saying publicly that we would land a man on the moon within a decade. And implicit in his declaration of goal and his measurement of performance was the courage to change our level of effort, our magnitude of investment, as well as any other tactics and strategies **necessary to achieve the goal.**

You see, it is not a matter of goals **OR** measures. It is a discipline of goals **AND** measures. Not a choice of compass or controls, but a discipline of compass and controls to steer any ship of human endeavor.

Those of us in the public sector tend to be very good at measuring "inputs" but not "outputs." For example, we ask "how much does this year's budget invest in environmental protection?" Less often do we ask, "how much nitrogen are we keeping from flowing into the Chesapeake Bay this month compared to how much flowed into the Chesapeake Bay last month?" We often ask how much we are spending on public education, less often do we ask how many more students are we graduating in science, technology, engineering and math this year compared to last year? And if the answer is none, then what are we doing to change the outcome.

The Courage to Change

Setting goals and measuring performance only advance the mission, however, if one has -- as a leader or citizen -- **the courage to change course** when the things we are doing are not working.

This, of course, is not always easy. We humans tend to fall in love with the "way we've always done it." We tend over time to confuse an unquestioning rote familiarity with expertise and excellence. This is a difficult challenge for American automakers as they slowly adjust to the green revolution. This is something others in industry like Apple Computer have been able to embrace -- once on the brink of collapse; Apple, time and again has embraced new strategies just as the old ones stopped working.



Information – timely, accurate, shared by all -- and the successful interpretation of that information is key to the success of any shared human endeavor. Today's military is fortunate to have at its disposal some of the most advanced technology ever dreamed up by humankind. But all these advanced technologies – radar systems, sonar, UAV's, signal intelligence, and so forth – are useless unless you set up the criteria by which to apply the data you receive to the goals you seek to achieve.

Outputs give us the compass and controls – they tell us where the opportunities lie. And sometimes those of us who happen to be in charge don't always find this information convenient, because it tells us the mission is failing to achieve the goal.

But effective leadership requires the honing of **the courage to make changes**, to make course corrections, the courage to admit mistakes and the courage to correct prior assumptions based on new facts, evidence, and experience.

So why is effective leadership, across so many critical fields, so important for our country today?

The Challenges Facing America in the Twenty First Century

You and I, my friends, have been born at a point in our human existence when our own creativity and imagination have expanded the outer bounds of human achievement and potential as never before, and by exponents never imagined. In a relative instant of human development, we have through our science and technology taken the vastness of this planet and made it intimately finite for the first time in human consciousness. We have gone from manned flight to men walking on the moon, from vaccine to human genome, from plastics to nano-technology, from telegraph to internet all in a relative flash of time.

And yet we live also in times when our own human frailty and the compounding of human propensities for self-destruction and hyper-consumption of the planet's resources threaten our American and global way of life as never before. We face a range of challenges from global warming to the potential global collapse of marine life and bio-diversity; from global poverty and its many resource pressures including south to north migration, to global terror and the threat that this new type of asymmetrical warfare poses to our balance between liberty and security, and America's moral leadership of the free world,...

These challenges are the terrain upon which your generation's battle will be fought. But take some measure of comfort though from the truth that the essence of this battle is as old as recorded time; for the most fortunate and the least fortunate, for the privileged and the poor, the battle is always the same: will your world change you, or will you change your world?

Leadership, national leadership, ... American leadership will be required to confront these challenges. As our new Secretary of State said in her recent confirmation hearing, *"America cannot solve the most pressing problems on our own, and the world cannot solve them without America."*⁸

Security, Sustainability, and Skills: "Three S's of Twenty-first Century Challenges"

Nowhere is there a greater need for American leadership, than in its application to these major issues of our times; issues which one might call the "Three S's of Twenty-first Century Challenges" – **American leadership on security, American leadership in sustainability, and American leadership in skills and innovation.** They are all inter-related as threats; but they are also inter-related as opportunities for America's renewed moral leadership of this world of ours -- a world which is growing increasingly flat, crowded, and hot.⁹

The first "S" is the cause for which you've chosen to sacrifice and strive, and that of course is **American leadership in security.** As we face new adversaries who are increasingly non-state, non-arrayed, non-traditional actors, it is becoming ever more necessary to reconsider the last century's tactics and strategies. Given these realities, our greatest security advantage is not our sheer numbers nor our advanced technology, but our ability to innovate and adapt.

⁸ From Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's confirmation hearing.

⁹ From the phrase coined by Thomas Friedman

As former U.S. Senator Gary Hart writes it: *“Faith in technology should not blind us to the necessity of innovation in the age of the transformation of war.”*¹⁰ There is a critical necessity of leadership in security innovation. There is also a critical necessity of leadership in intelligence gathering and dissemination that protects us and our neighbors from terror threats without sacrificing the very freedoms we profess as Americans to defend “everywhere in the world.”

Just as our security priorities call for innovation, so too does the second “S”, which is ***American leadership in sustainability – the way we use this planet’s limited resources of land, air, and water.*** Our ability to heal our planet, to fuel its industry, and feed the most fragile and vulnerable of its inhabitants, is not merely a moral and environmental issue which impacts our quality of life and that of future generations; but it is also an issue of urgent relevance to our immediate military and economic security. Unpredictable energy markets threaten our economic stability; and every barrel of oil we purchase from a petro-jihadist impacts our military security.

Sustainability – stabilizing and reversing Global Climate Change -- before it is too late, may very well prove the defining issue of our times. The keys to the survival of our species, and the keys to our American economic potential will likely rest in our ability to unlock, harness, and advance green technologies; it will lie in our ability to discover new renewable forms of energy and bring them quickly to scale for ourselves and the world.¹¹

The third “S” is the primary ingredient in innovation, ***American leadership in skills.*** A recent report by a committee of major American CEOs and university presidents found that the United States is falling seriously behind our global competitors. The Augustine Report reads: *“the scientific and technological building blocks critical to our economic leadership are eroding at a time when many other nations are gathering strength.”*¹² Science, technology, discovery, and healing – these are the foundations of our future prosperity and our future global leadership.

Our great challenge in this regard, therefore, is to find new ways to awaken in our students -- at the earliest age -- a renewed commitment and curiosity in the “STEM” disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and math. We must also awaken in the public at large a commitment to investments that will secure the output of better skills, and a greater capacity for innovation among our people.

The Power of Our Values

And so, understanding the enormity of the challenges at hand and understanding the nature of individual leadership, together, we ask this final question in conclusion:

“What power gives rise to truthful and effective leadership in any generation?”

I believe you know the answer to this question or you would not be wearing the uniform.

In Senator Hart’s writings he calls it, “America’s Fourth Power” – that asset of the United States’ world

¹⁰ From Senator Hart’s 2004 book, *The Fourth Power*

¹¹ Tom Friedman writes in *Hot, Flat and Crowded*: *“In a world that is getting hot, flat, and crowded, the task of creating the tools, systems, energy sources, and ethics that will allow the planet to grow in cleaner, more sustainable ways is going to be the biggest challenge of our lifetime,... if we take it on, it will revive America at home, reconnect America abroad, and retool America for tomorrow.”*

¹² From the Committee on Prospering in the Global Economy of the 21st Century, chaired by former Lockheed Martin CEO Norm Augustine.

power that is even greater than our unrivaled military, economic and diplomatic powers.

It is a precious thing; a thing found only in the context of community; indeed, there is no such thing as leadership outside of the spiritual context of community. It is a power *“found not simply in freedom from constraint, but in freedom for full participation in the shared life of a people”*;¹³ the people of our nation, and the people of our world. It is why any *“seeker of a higher truth or of God, must eventually and inevitably come back to the idea of community.”*¹⁴

As you progress through your careers, your circumstances will change, but I believe that you will continue to feel the calling in your hearts to serve something greater than yourselves. Your communities will change, but your own sense of responsibility to community will always remain. Your relationship to others when you first graduate will be your shipmates, your Platoon Members, Aviation squadron personnel. You will build your relationships here at first and grow as leaders, developing your own leadership style. At some point, your immediate "community" may change as you venture forth into the Civilian world.

Leadership transcends all social barriers and is executable no matter what community you may be a part of or what forms the basis for your relationship with those that you lead.

But before all of those notions of community, and after your professional careers are over, you are and will remain a Citizen of the United States.



And our greatness as a people -- our power to recruit and summon forth great leadership in every generation -- is not found primarily in our economic, diplomatic or military power, it is found in our fourth power: the power of our principles, the power of our values. It is a treasure found in self-evident truths. It is a treasure held in the spiritual tabernacle of a compassionate and noble community renown around the world as the United States of America.

It's been said that *“Our greatest strength has long been not merely our military might but our moral authority. Our surest protection against assault from abroad has been not all our guards, gates and guns or even our two oceans, but our essential goodness as a people. Our richest asset has been not our material wealth but our values.”*¹⁵

As Americans we have always found our motivation for greatness and sacrifice in higher things: freedom, justice, the rights of man, liberation from the many faces of slavery and oppression. We find our motivation in the truth that *“responsibility is the greatest of freedom’s privileges.”*¹⁶

In the 21st century community of nations, we will progress through adversity as Americans on the strength of our values, and on the exercise of our other formidable

¹³ From Father David Hollenbach of Boston College.

¹⁴ From Thomas Aquinas

¹⁵ Quoted from Ted Sorenson

¹⁶ Robert Kennedy: *“Today, as never before in the free world, responsibility is the greatest right of citizenship and service is the greatest of freedom's privileges.”*

powers in ways that are consistent, aligned with, flowing from and with those values.

Values that thundered across the mall in Washington last week -- just as they have thundered around the world for over two hundred years: *“that all men are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their own full measure of happiness.”*¹⁷

You see, at its essence, the power of our values is all about relationship: our relationship to one another, our relationship to future generations, our relationship to a higher truth, and to God -- a truth that builds trust and community; a truth that proclaims the dignity of every individual; a truth that affirms our own responsibility to advance the common good; a truth that affirms that sense in our soul that there is a unity to spirit and matter, and that what we do in our own lifetimes does matter.

Conclusion

As you embark on your own journey, as American leaders in a world marked increasingly “by peril and possibility,”¹⁸ I give you tonight the words of this blessing:¹⁹

May the gift of leadership awaken in you as a vocation,

And keep you mindful of the Providence that calls you to serve.

As high over the mountains the eagle spreads its wings,

May your perspective be larger than the view from the foothills.

When the way is flat and dull in times of grey endurance,

May your imagination continue to evoke horizons.

*May you have the wisdom to read time clearly
And know when the seed of change will flourish,...*

*May your work be infused with passion and creativity
And have the wisdom to balance compassion and challenge,...*

*May your power never become a shell
Wherein your heart would silently atrophy.*

*[And,] may integrity of soul be your first ideal,
The source that will guide and bless your work.*

Thank you, and may God bless the courageous young men and women of the United States Naval Academy.

¹⁷ From President Obama’s inaugural address.

¹⁸ From George Washington.

¹⁹ From “A Blessing for One Who Holds Power” by John O’Donohue

