

# REMARKS ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

HILLARY CLINTON

JUNE 4, 2009

...President Obama's [Nobel Peace Prize] speech also reminded us that our basic values, the ones enshrined in our Declaration of Independence—the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—are... the birthright of every woman, man, and child on earth. That is also the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the prerequisite for building a world in which every person has the opportunity to live up to his or her God-given potential....

The potential within every person to learn, discover, and embrace the world around them, the potential to join freely with others to shape their communities and their societies so that every person can find fulfillment and self-sufficiency, the potential to share life's beauties and tragedies, laughter and tears with the people we love—that potential is sacred.... [E]xpanding the circle of rights and opportunities to all people—advancing their freedoms and possibilities—is why we do what we do.....

Of course, people must be free from the oppression of tyranny, from torture, from discrimination, from the fear of leaders who will imprison or “disappear” them. But they also must be free from the oppression of want—want of food, want of health, want of education, and want of equality in law and in fact.

To fulfill their potential, people must be free to choose laws and leaders; to share and access information, to speak, criticize, and debate. They must be free to worship, associate, and to love in the way that they choose. And they must be free to pursue the dignity that comes with self-improvement and self-reliance, to build their minds and their skills, to bring their goods to the marketplace, and participate in the process of innovation. Human rights have both negative and positive requirements. People should be free from tyranny in whatever form, and they should also be free to seize the opportunities of a full life. That is why supporting democracy and fostering development are cornerstones of our 21st century human rights agenda....

This Administration, like others before us, will promote, support, and defend democracy....

At the same time, human development must also be part of our human rights agenda. Because basic levels of well-being—food, shelter, health, and education—and of public common goods

like environmental sustainability, protection against pandemic disease, provisions for refugees—are necessary for people to exercise their rights, and because human development and democracy are mutually reinforcing....

So human rights, democracy, and development are not three separate goals with three separate agendas. That view doesn't reflect the reality we face. To make a real and long-term difference in people's lives, we have to tackle all three simultaneously....



HILLSDALE COLLEGE

PURSUING TRUTH · DEFENDING LIBERTY SINCE 1844