

2001 Award

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The W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award: 2001

REMARKS OF :
KENNETH WOLLACK, PRESIDENT
National Democratic Institute
14th Annual Averell Harriman Award
November 28, 2001

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Good Evening. I'm Ken Wollack, President of the National Democratic Institute. On behalf of our Board of Directors and staff I'm pleased to welcome you here tonight and to thank you for your support.

Over the past 15 years, we've been honored to recognize the special contributions of men and women, here and abroad, who personify the commitment to democracy and human rights that are at the heart of our work. And tonight, we are once again gratified that so many of you have joined us to celebrate the accomplishments of this year's recipients of NDI's W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award -- United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and Linda and Peter Biehl. Through Secretary-General Annan, we also recognize the indispensable role of the United Nations. And through the Biehls, we also remember and honor their daughter, Amy, who lost her life working for a free South Africa.

Before we formally begin tonight's program, we are privileged to hear an invocation from the Very Reverend Nathan D. Baxter, Dean of the Washington National Cathedral.

[Invocation from the Very Reverend Nathan D. Baxter]

It gives me great pleasure to begin the formal program by reading a message from the President of the United States on the occasion of tonight's event.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
November 26, 2001

I am pleased to send warm greetings to the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs as you honor United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan and Linda and Peter Biehl with the 14th Annual W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award.

The recent terrorist attacks against the United States have reminded us that freedom must be defended. Working with a strong coalition of allies, we are defending the right to live in free societies. At the same time, we must seek to expand the frontiers of liberty and to remain vigilant in our support of democracy in countries that have recently found freedom. I commend the Institute for helping to achieve these goals and for working with counterparts around the world to foster respect for human rights.

The Institute's honorees also demonstrate a profound commitment to nurturing freedom and democracy. By promoting peace and human rights, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan has played a significant role in expanding the borders of freedom. America appreciates his achievements as a strong and effective advocate for fighting terrorism and bringing freedom to those who suffer under regimes that foster such evils.

I also applaud Linda and Peter Biehl for their efforts to improve the

lives of thousands of South Africans through their support of the Amy Biehl Foundation. Moving beyond personal tragedy, the Bichls have honored their daughter's memory by working to fulfill her vision for ending racial hatred and injustice. Their courage and accomplishments serve as an inspiration to others.

The efforts of these individuals demonstrate that the Institute's work remains as important today as when the National Endowment for Democracy was founded. We must continue to uphold the importance of its vital mission in extending freedom to those who live without it. Achieving this goal can contribute to a safer and more peaceful world for all.

Best wishes on this special occasion.

George W. Bush

This is the third time that the NDI Board of Directors has chosen as an award recipient someone who, a month later, was selected as the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. Three years ago, it was John Hume and David Trimble of Northern Ireland. I have always known that NDI's governing body was ahead of its time, although the Nobel committee had the good sense, and financial resources, to attach more concrete value to its award.

This reminds me of the story which perhaps Mrs. Annan and Ambassador Eliasson can best appreciate. It is about the great Swedish sociologists, Gunnar and Alva Myrdal. Late one night, Alva Myrdal received a phone call from America, and the voice on the line told her that she and her husband had been chosen to receive a special prize from a large foundation.

"We're being honored by some people in America," Mrs. Myrdal said to her husband, who was sitting nearby.

"M-mm...very nice," he replied. "tell them, thank you."

"You know," said the voice on the line, "the prize carries with it a check for \$100,000."

"Ah, Gunnar," said Mrs. Myrdal, "it's a real honor."

The dinner tonight is like no other we've held. We have met before in times of crisis, but never have we come together to simultaneously celebrate democracy and mark a national tragedy.

The terrorists targeted buildings and civilians and something more: what Secretary-General Annan has called our "shared values." They struck at our diversity, our tolerance. Literally, in the face of the Statue of Liberty, they attacked her promise of opportunity and freedom.

Democracy-building has always drawn support from both sides of the aisle in the House and Senate. And both the Administration and the Congress share a commitment to the things we do. This is exactly as it should be: a bipartisan commitment to our endeavors is a powerful answer to those who misunderstand what America is all about.

Democracy, in its infinite variations, is the best defense against the closed philosophies of hate and oppression. In this week after Thanksgiving, you are one more reason for thanks. Our task now is to widen the circle.

We recognize that we are privileged to play a part in supporting courageous democrats, both leaders and grassroots activists, who struggle against tremendous odds to promote democratic reform or consolidate the institutions of representative democracy. And we could not have done so without the help of so many of you, and so many other people around the world who are part of the ever-growing international network that is NDI today.

I want to single out for special recognition and thank our dinner chairs, Molly Raiser, and Peter and Judy Kovler. Their involvement and support means a great deal to all of us at this Institute.

We are honored once again by the presence of members and staff of the United States Congress. Over the years NDI has benefited greatly from the advice, participation and support of Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill who recognize that advancing democracy not only reflects our nation's values, but also

it serves our interests. And the U.S. Congress, as an institution, continues to inspire democratic activists in other countries.

I would also like to recognize the National Endowment for Democracy and NDI's sister institutions that are part of the Endowment family - the American labor movement's Solidarity Center, the International Republican Institute and the Center for International Private Enterprise.

I want to single out for appreciation those who made all of this possible. The corporations, trade unions, foundations and individuals who have been so generous in their support.

At its heart, NDI is a public / private partnership. It represents a community of interests between the private sector and our public institutions, between business and labor: that everyone benefits when people have the freedom to control their destinies.

I want to especially welcome John Sweeney, the President of the AFL-CIO. As we all know, so much of the work of democracy and human rights has been advanced by the trade union movement that champions the dignity of working men and women.

I want to welcome the diplomatic corps and political leaders visiting from abroad. The presence of representatives here from new, emerging and traditional democracies, and yes, from yet-to-be democracies, personifies the nature of our work. NDI seeks to bring people together with diverse experiences and expertise to share what they know and what they have learned. NDI's multinational approach to democratic development is in the internationalist tradition of the Democratic Party of the United States. We are pleased to have with us tonight the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Terry McAuliffe, along with former chairman, Ambassador Charles Manatt, who served as the first chairman of NDI.

NDI has enjoyed the support of four administrations and we are proud to associate ourselves with the Bush administration's commitment to the promotion of democracy abroad. With us this evening are current and former officials from the White House, the Departments of State, Commerce and Agriculture, as well as from the Agency for International Development, which has been such a vital partner in our democratic development mission. I want, in particular, to recognize the US Ambassador to the United Nations, John Negroponte.

There is perhaps no institution that better represents the universal aspirations for democracy, human rights and peace than the United Nations; and in recent years, the agencies of the UN have given concrete expression to these aspirations by dedicating increasing resources to programs that provide people a real stake in their society. We welcome tonight representatives of these agencies, and in particular, the United Nations Development Program and the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division with which NDI enjoys a close partnership in so many regions of the world.

Also with us here tonight are 11 afghan women in exile who are taking part in a program sponsored by Vital Voices. In the most brutal way, the Taliban regime sought to destroy the dignity of women. These activists and thousands like them are raising their voices so that women are assured a role in rebuilding their country. Their efforts will lay the groundwork for peace and tolerance, and we are honored by your presence. NDI hopes to work with you and your colleagues inside Afghanistan in the not too distant future.

I want to recognize NDI's Board of Directors and staff. This is a board that supports and guides our work year in and year out and NDI's staff, both in Washington and in field offices in every region of the world, are the most talented and dedicated group of people I have ever known. Over worked and underpaid, they are the heart and soul of this organization. I want to say a special word of thanks to NDI Vice President Jean Dunn, who along with Development Director, Deborah Ullmer, organized this dinner. This event, like so many other endeavors at NDI, would not have happened without Jean's day-to-day leadership of the organization.

Finally, I would like to express our gratitude to those practitioners in this room and thousands of others around the globe who volunteer their time to assist NDI's programs, that help build political parties and civic organizations, safeguard elections and promote citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. Their experience and expertise are central to NDI's efforts.

We know that as the community of democracies has grown, democratic practice has become inseparable from democratic cooperation.

Thank you again for joining us this evening. And now we take a short dinner break before we resume the program. Bon appetit.

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