

BONO
REMARKS ON RECEIVING THE LIBERTY MEDAL
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as prepared for delivery

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President.

I also want to thank Joe Torsella and everyone here at the National Constitution Center... what an inspiring place... will somebody just let me ring that bell?

No? Come on, now, it's already cracked.

I want to thank my wife, Ali. And I want to thank the members of U2 for not firing me when they hear I'm in Philadelphia this evening and they're in the studio expecting me, and I know they won't fire me, because it is Philadelphia and we've played everywhere here, from 70 people to 70,000.

And what amazing music we're hearing tonight. A cappella – that's the closest to God ...the naked voice

I've got five minutes to talk and I could spend ten doing shout-outs. But I just want to thank Ngozi for what she said... More important, for what she's done... She's the kind of leader we all want to work for. Ngozi, we love you.

I must tell you it's a bit humbling for me to be here, where it all got started — where America got started — along with a mayor, a governor, a former President and so many others who have served the cause of freedom.

Whilst I, it must be said, have served the cause of my own ego.

President Bush: you might remember that, when you were in office in 1992, U2 was touring America. And I used to do this bit at every show where I would bring a phone out on stage and ring you up at the White House.

You never took my calls, sir.

You had too much sense, is the truth.

Now your son... did not have your sense.

He not only took my call ... he had me over to lunch.

And then I wouldn't leave.

I think he's been regretting it ever since. Because when I come to the house, I'm not exactly what you call... house-trained or even ... White House-trained.

I am not exactly what you'd call a good guest either. I can be rude, to be honest. I ask for things, like billions of dollars to fight AIDS in Africa. Things like that. I'd like to think I've always left the White House with more than I arrived, and not only budget commitments, but cutlery, silverware... candelabras... one or two Bush family photos... I'll give them back...

OK, and one Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington. It was in the bathroom! No one could see it!

I want to say that the current President Bush was not only gracious, he was passionate — passionate about doing more for the poorest of the poor. And smart enough to know that he wasn't just letting a rock star run amok with his staff. He knew that DATA — the organization being honored tonight — was bursting with energy... filled to the brim with the best and the brightest policy people and campaigners...

Still... People took a risk to work with us. People we wouldn't have expected had us in their offices again and again to hammer out new initiatives like the Millennium Challenge Account, which rewarded poor countries that were tackling corruption with a new kind of start-up money.

We worked with the president on an historic AIDS initiative where now I can tell you there are one and half million Africans who owe their lives to the two little pills a day bought by America.

I might add that this could only happen because in Congress, heroic Democrats and Republicans put down their politics and put in their political capital to make things happen for people that don't have a vote.

And it couldn't have happened without the leadership not just of President No. 43, but No. 42 as well. I just had the pleasure of telling William Jefferson Clinton that thanks to his and the other G8 leaders supporting debt cancellation ... and as a result of inspired African leadership ... there are now 20 million African children going to school that wouldn't be otherwise ... 20 million African children ... wow ...

That is worth shouting about.

This is the America I love

This is why I'm so honored to be here to receive this award.

A punk rocker from the northside of Dublin...

And an organization that until recently carried its DATA in haversacks...

Had its offices in Kinkos 'round the corner.

I want to honor people like our instigator and part-time flame-thrower, Bobby Shriver... and our brilliant director Jamie Drummond, who is here tonight. Jamie...

Jamie and I, if you've noticed, have accents. We come from over there, across the water, but we're over *here* because we're fans of America. In that, we're no different than the more than two and a half million Americans who have joined the ONE Campaign...which began its life in this great city of Philadelphia as recently as 2004... Right in front of Independence Hall.

All of us are fans of America.

I'm also a fan of Benjamin Franklin. Franklin, who wore John Lennon glasses before they were cool... Franklin, who went electric before Bob Dylan did...

Franklin, who said this:

"God grant that not only the love of liberty but a thorough knowledge of the rights of man may pervade all the nations of the earth, so that a philosopher may set his foot anywhere on its surface and say: This is my country."

Well, in case you hadn't heard: I am not a philosopher. I'm a rock star

Though after a few pints this rock star starts thinking he's a philosopher.

No, I'm not a philosopher, but let me set my foot here and say to you tonight:

This is my country.

With humility and pride in my own

I say America is my country... in the sense that anyone who has a stake in liberty has a stake in America.

For all you've been through, good and bad, this is my country too.

For every time I wince or gasp or punch the wall, when I read something that galls, there's another time I am reminded of your great generosity, resilience, innovation, work ethic ... your compassion.

Although today -- today I read in The Economist an article reporting that over 38 percent of Americans support some kind torture in exceptional circumstances.

My country, no... your country – tell me no.

Today as you pin this great honour on me, I ask you ... I implore you ...

As an Irish man who has seen these things up close, I ask you to remember, you do not have to become a monster to defeat a monster.

Your America is better than that.

Your America is the one where Neil Armstrong takes a walk on the moon ... because he can.

Your America is the one where so many Irish people discovered their value.

Your America is one where a brave military fought and died for freedom in places like Omaha Beach and in the Pacific -- give it up for president number 41, a true World War II hero.

Your America gave Europe the Marshall plan
Your America gave the World the Peace Corps...

JFK, RFK, and MLK...

The Special Olympics
Bill and Melinda Gates
Warren Buffet

Of Dylan and Springsteen... the Bard and the Boss...

Steve Jobs
Local hero, Will Smith
The meditations of Mark Rothko
The poetics of Allen Ginsberg
Edward R. Murrow
Miles Davis
Quincy Jones
Mary J Blige
Frank Gehry

Of thee I sing. All of thee!

These are the reasons I'm a fan of America.
And one more: America is not just a country; it's an idea. Isn't it?

A great and powerful idea.

The idea that all men are created equal—that we are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

They're great lyrics, Mr. Jefferson. Great opening riff.

The Declaration of Independence has a great closing line, too: ‘We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.’ The men who made that pledge had a lot to lose by signing that pledge. Like their lives.

What, then, about you and me?

What are we ready to pledge ourselves to? Anything? Anything at all?

What about this idea of liberty?

Not liberty for its own sake but liberty for some larger end... not just freedom from oppression, but freedom *of* expression and worship, freedom from want and from fear.

Because when you’re trapped by poverty, *you are not free.*

When trade laws prevent you from selling the food you grow, *you are not free.*

When you are dying of a mosquito bite, for lack of a bed net, *you are not free.*

When you are hungry in a world of plenty, *you are not free.*

And when you are a monk in Burma this very week, barred from entering a temple because your gospel of peace is an affront to a thug regime...

Well then, ***none of us*** are truly free.

My other country, America, I know will not stand for that.

Look, I’m not going to stand here—a rockstar who just stepped off a private plane — and tell you to put your lives on the line for people you’ve never met. Or your fortunes. I haven’t.

But our sacred honor might just be at stake here. That, and a whole lot else.

So what, then, are you willing to pledge?

How about your science... Your technology... Your creativity... Your compassion... America has so many great answers to offer.

We can’t fix all the world’s problems. *But the ones we can, we must.*

Enough of my voice – listen to the voice of young Africa.

Goodnight.

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