

## John Kerry's remarks at the Democratic convention (*excerpts*)

(29 July 2004/Boston)

[...] I ask you to judge me by my record: As a young prosecutor, I fought for victims' rights and made prosecuting violence against women a priority. When I came to the Senate, I broke with many in my own party to vote for a balanced budget, because I thought it was the right thing to do. I fought to put a 100,000 cops on the street.

5 And then I reached across the aisle to work with John McCain, to work to find the truth about our POWs and missing in action, and to finally make peace in Vietnam.

I will be a commander in chief who will never mislead us into war. I will have a vice president who will not conduct secret meetings with polluters to rewrite our environmental laws. I will have a secretary of Defense who will listen to the advice of our military leaders. And I will appoint an Attorney General who actually upholds the Constitution of the United States.

10 My fellow Americans, this is the most important election of our lifetime. The stakes are high. We are a nation at war, a global war on terror against an enemy unlike any we've never known before. And here at home, wages are falling, health care costs are rising, and our great middle class is shrinking. People are working weekends, two jobs, three jobs, and they're still not getting ahead.

15 We're told that outsourcing jobs is good for America. We're told that new jobs that pay \$9,000 less than the jobs that have been lost is the best we can do. They say this is the best economy that we've ever had. And they say that anyone who thinks otherwise is a pessimist. Well, here is our answer: There is nothing more pessimistic than saying America can't do better.

20 We can do better and we will. We're the optimists. For us, this is a country of the future. We're the can-do people. And let's not forget what we did in the 1990s. We balanced the budget. We paid down the debt. We created 23 million new jobs. We lifted millions out of poverty and we lifted the standard of living for the middle class. We just need to believe in ourselves and we can do it again.

25 So tonight, in the city where America's freedom began, only a few blocks from where the sons and daughters of liberty gave birth to our nation, here tonight, on behalf of a new birth of freedom, on behalf of the middle class who deserve a champion, and those struggling to join it who deserve a fair shot, for the brave men and women in uniform who risk their lives and the families who pray for their return, for all those who believe that our best days are ahead of us, with great faith in the American people, I accept your nomination for president of the United States.

30 I am proud that at my side will be a running mate whose life is the story of the American dream and who's worked every day to make that dream real for all Americans: Senator John Edwards of North Carolina, and his wonderful wife Elizabeth and their family. This son of a mill worker is ready to lead and next January, Americans will be proud to have a fighter for the middle class to succeed Dick Cheney as Vice President of the United States.

And what can I say about Teresa? She has the strongest moral compass of anyone I know. She's down to earth, nurturing, courageous, wise and smart. She speaks her mind and she speaks the truth, and I love her for that, too. And that's why America will embrace her as the next First Lady of the United States.

35 [...] As President, I will fight a smarter, more effective war on terror. We will deploy every tool in our arsenal: our economic as well as our military might; our principles as well as our firepower.

In these dangerous days there is a right way and a wrong way to be strong. Strength is more than tough words. After decades of experience in national security, I know the reach of our power and I know the power of our ideals.

40 We need to make America once again a beacon in the world. We need to be looked up to and not just feared.

We need to lead a global effort against nuclear proliferation to keep the most dangerous weapons in the world out of the most dangerous hands in the world.

45 [...] And tonight, we have an important message for those who question the patriotism of Americans who offer a better direction for our country. Before wrapping themselves in the flag and shutting their eyes to the truth and their ears, they should remember what America is really all about. They should remember the great idea of freedom for which so many have given their lives. Our purpose now is to reclaim democracy itself. We are here to affirm that when Americans stand up and speak their minds and say America can do better, that is not a challenge to patriotism; it is the heart and soul of patriotism.

50 You see that flag up there. We call her Old Glory. The stars and stripes forever. I fought under that flag, as did so many of those people here tonight and all across our country. That flag flew from the gun turret right behind my head. It was shot through and through and tattered, but it never ceased to wave in the wind. It draped the caskets of men I served with and friends I grew up with. For us, that flag is the most powerful symbol of who we are and what we believe in. Our strength. Our diversity. Our love of country. All that makes America both great and good.

55 That flag doesn't belong to any president. It doesn't belong to any ideology and it doesn't belong to any party. It belongs to all the American people.

My fellow citizens, elections are about choices. And choices are about values. In the end, it's not just policies and programs that matter; the president who sits at that desk must be guided by principle.

For four years, we've heard a lot of talk about values. But values spoken without actions taken are just slogans. Values are not just words. Values are what we live by. They're about the causes we champion and the people we fight for. And it is time for those who talk about family values to start valuing families.

You don't value families by kicking kids out of after-school programs and taking cops off our streets, so that Enron can get another tax break.

We believe in the family value of caring for our children and protecting the neighborhoods where they walk and play. And that is the choice in this election.

65 You don't value families by denying real prescription drug coverage to seniors, so big drug companies can get another windfall profit.

We believe in the family value expressed in one of the oldest Commandments: "Honor thy father and thy mother." As President, I will not privatize Social Security. I will not cut benefits. And together, we will make sure that senior citizens never have to cut their pills in half because they can't afford lifesaving medicine.

70 And that is the choice in this election.

You don't value families if you force them to take up a collection to buy body armor for a son or daughter in the service, if you deny veterans health care, or if you tell middle class families to wait for a tax cut, so that the wealthiest among us can get even more.

We believe in the value of doing what's right for everyone in the American family.

75 And that is the choice in this election.

We believe that what matters most is not narrow appeals masquerading as values, but the shared values that show the true face of America. Not narrow values that divide us, but shared values that unite us. Family and faith. Hard work, opportunity and responsibility for all so that every child, every parent, every worker has an equal shot at living up to their God-given potential. That is the American dream and the American value.

80 What does it mean in America today when Dave McCune, a steel worker I met in Canton, Ohio, saw his job sent overseas and the equipment in his factory literally unbolted, crated up, and shipped thousands of miles away along with that job? What does it mean when workers I've met had to train their foreign replacements?

America can do better. And tonight we say: help is on the way.

[...] And let me say it plainly: in that cause, and in this campaign, we welcome people of faith. America is not us and them. I think of what Ron Reagan said of his father a few weeks ago, and I want to say this to you tonight: I don't wear my own faith on my sleeve. But faith has given me values and hope to live by, from Vietnam to this day, from Sunday to Sunday. I don't want to claim that God is on our side. As Abraham Lincoln told us, I want to pray humbly that we are on God's side. And whatever our faith, one belief should bind us all: The measure of our character is our willingness to give of ourselves for others and for our country.

90 These aren't Democratic values. These aren't Republican values. They're American values. We believe in them. They're who we are. And if we honor them, if we believe in ourselves, we can build an America that's stronger at home and respected in the world.

[...] I learned a lot about these values on that gunboat patrolling the Mekong Delta with Americans – you saw them — who came from places as different as Iowa, Oregon, Arkansas, Florida, California. No one cared where we went to school. No one cared about our race or our backgrounds. We were literally all in the same boat. We looked out, one for the other and we still do.

That is the kind of America I will lead as President: an America where we are all in the same boat.

Never has there been a more urgent moment for Americans to step up and define ourselves. I will work my heart out. But, my fellow citizens, the outcome is in your hands more than mine.

100 It is time to reach for the next dream. It is time to look to the next horizon. For America, the hope is there. The sun is rising. Our best days are still to come.

Thank you, Goodnight, God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

---

For full text see:

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/politicselections/nation/president/2004-07-29-kerry-speech-text\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/politicselections/nation/president/2004-07-29-kerry-speech-text_x.htm) (7 Aug 2004)

## Comprehension

1. What does John Kerry mean by "can-do people" (l.18)? What synonym for it does he use?
2. Why is Kerry's running mate such a good example of what Kerry wants to convey to his audience?

## Analysis

3. Explain Kerry's metaphor of the U.S.A. as a "beacon" (l. 40).
4. Between lines 56 and 76, Kerry makes use of a very striking stylistic device. What is it, and what is its function here?
5. At the end of his speech, Kerry mentions "the next dream" – this sounds rather vague. But still, his audience seemed to have understood what he meant. What approximately is the meaning of this expression?

More tasks: Refer to *Viewfinder Special*, p. 183.