

Craig delivered this commentary to a packed audience of 350 people at the James A. Little Theatre in Santa Fe, following a showing of “Uncovered: The Whole Truth About the Iraq War.” Craig’s talk set the tone for an exceptionally high quality open microphone period.

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Tomorrow There Is Work To Be Done

Here in the long dry winter it must seem as if the truth has been forfeit, as if the Constitution were written for some other more fortunate nation, as if the rule of law were a legend of some other and distant past. Here in the limbo space between presidential pronouncements despair settles into the valleys of peace like a dark fog and the armies of conscience are tempted to drift away, to melt into the night, pilgrims of peace headed home as if to give up the fight. What can we do, in this long winter, to maintain our spirit? What can we do, when the president controls the agenda, to regain the initiative? What can we do that is not only protest and anger but sings of those very principles of democracy and justice we ask others to honor?

Never in the long history of the republic has a president seemed so to embody and to such a degree, the opposite poles of moral ambivalence and moral certainty. Never in the history of the presidency has a politician seemed so confident to speak of foreign empire and his chosen destiny for some other land, as if he were schooled and knew what other people need. Never in the history of American politics has a commander in chief known so little about war and been so reckless with its consequences.

Someone wrote to me the other day and said “You must support the president at all costs because he is your president.” Therefore, this person seemed to say, because he is president he is also right. This person, while in my mind wildly misguided, nevertheless spoke for a nation that desperately wants our leaders to be right and all across this land Mr. Bush is supported by people who urgently hope that he knows what he is talking about. What can we do, we who fear that he does not know, to give heart and hope to the weak spirited, the fragile and the discouraged?

Let there be no doubt about the fundamentals. Those who seek the truth must speak truth. Jessica Lynch said, after all the hype and propaganda about her furious shooting and firing at the enemy that no, she had not done that, she had not fired at all, and I say to you that Jessica Lynch’s candor is the bedrock of America.

We remember the young gay man Matthew Shepard who was crucified by bigots on a fence in Wyoming in 1998 and his parents refused to cry out for blood vengeance and said no we will not have anything to do with the death penalty

and I say to you that those parents who stood tall for compassion are the bedrock of America.

Those who seek decency must conduct themselves with decency. Not long ago a man came running after me in the airport because I had left my passport in one of those plastic boxes and I say to you that in every crowd in every airport there is a man or a woman who would chase you, too, to the end of the longest concourse to bring you what is yours, because there is decency in the core of America.

Before you cry out and say, Oh, no, it is not like that, we are not like that at all, I ask you to note that there are men and women in this crowd tonight who study civil rights without compensation and who study sustainable energy without tax benefits and who plan water conservation only because it is right and who give money to churches and time to soup kitchens and pledge to Truthout and to Move On and to the Center for Defense Information and to Common Cause and to Peace Action and I say to you there will never be a Hitler in this country because of men and women like these who are in this room tonight who are the bedrock in America.

There is Bill Moyers in America and Michael Moore in America and Amy Goodman in America and Richard Rodriguez and Molly Ivins and Lewis Lapham and Howard Zinn and the Sun Magazine and the Eldorado Sun. I vouchsafe to you that if they go off the air or out of print they will talk to you by email and if they go off email they will talk to you from the circulars printed on their home computers and if they can no longer print from a computer they will sing and dance on the sidewalks and touch the hearts of America through music and mime and theater. And if they, the famous names, do that, so will we the anonymous and beautiful unknowns, because anonymity is power too and we are together here, we are brothers and sisters here, in this long winter of our discontent.

If we cannot come to this theater we will gather in our living rooms and when they come to take us from our living rooms we will perform in whatever Guantanamo they put us into until the world learns that we are all, all, now under this regime, detainees. Every man and every woman in America is a detainee now, made a prisoner by un-truth, and every man and every woman will be made free, not by them but by the truth which has its own way and its own power and its own future, inexorable, like a river, inevitable like the spring.

I remember Pete Seeger coming to my college town and singing in 1965 that Lyndon Johnson was wading into the Big Muddy, and that the water was rising, and he sang of the horrors of the House Un-American Activities Committee and he sang for all the mute and the halt and lame of America and I say to you that as long as there are guitars and banjos and a crowd of neighbors there will also be honesty and courage and truth in America. There was a 1965 in America when we were deep in the Big Muddy and there was also a 1975 when we

got out, and no one in power today can forget that we got out of Vietnam quicker than we have yet gotten out of the Philippines or Germany or Korea or Japan, because you and I were not on the streets to get us out of those places, but we are on the streets this time, and we will get us out of this place.

Conscience is not the government's business, it is the people's business; it has always been the people's business, since Tom Paine, since Susan B. Anthony, since Caesar Chavez, since Martin King, since Erin Brockovich, since Love Canal, since Ralph Nader. Of course it is the people's business and you are the people and you, here tonight, are bedrock in America.

We shall overcome. We have always overcome. No winter lasts forever. Let faith in your own self be the source of your courage. Let the faith in the commitment of the person sitting beside you tonight be your hope when you are down. Sing Yankee Doodle Dandy and remember that our modern story began with a revolution, sing John Brown's Body and remember that even in our times justice has flowed down from the hills like a river, read Archibald MacLeish and Mary Oliver and Richard Lenhert and blow forever on the coals of your own heart. The people have always overcome. We always will. We have more tools. Something there is that doesn't love a king. Go home and get a good night's sleep. Take care of yourself. Tomorrow there is work to be done in America. ----- January 17,
2004 James A. Little Theater Craig S. Barnes