



Another person at the meeting told of walking toward the huge Mall that runs down the center of the District of Columbia and seeing tens of thousands of frightened people rushing across. Men, women, children, all races, all ethnic groups, all categories of people. But not panicked or rude or discourteous. Rather, they were aware and supportive of each other. Cars were grid locked on the streets, but there were no horns blaring. There was a common unspoken sense that we were all in this together. Differences that had divided us the day before, had lost meaning when the planes hit the two towers and the Pentagon.

That day we did not have a race problem in America. I think we all had a similar initial reaction to 9-11. Horror. And unity.

I also think September 11 had special significance for the seniors here today. College is where many of us, probably most of us become adults. Where we try and figure out who we are, what we want to do. For you graduating seniors today, that has all happened in a post September 11 world. You are unique in that sense--the first class of college seniors whose entire college career was post 9-11.

I have talked to some of you about September 11. Although the fall term had begun a week earlier, for all practical purposes, your college years began on September 11. And September 11 has hung like a cloud over much of the time you have spent in college. Sometimes in the foreground, always in the background.

Unfortunately, that remarkable spirit of unity that we all experienced on September 11 did not last. Almost immediately it was replaced by two very disturbing developments. The firments. 1(1)3m bd-6(6)



Today, no nation can be an island.

There is a second irony to this effort to pretend we could shut ourselves off from the world in response to September 11. At that very same time, the issue of diversity was before the United States Supreme Court in the Michigan affirmative action cases. And in those cases virtually all of higher education, including Pomona College, was telling the Supreme Court about the extraordinary value of racial and ethnic diversity. At that very same time our major corporations were telling the Supreme Court about the value and necessity of racial and ethnic diversity in order to be able to operate in the diverse world. Even the military was telling the Supreme Court about the overriding importance of diversity.

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confidence in the whole. And in what m  
ethnic diversity -- drawn from all corners of the globe -- is a potential source of great strength. And that strength from diversity is essential  
in turn, depends on a s enormous racial and s complex world. But to realize that strength depends on our ability to use and appreciate that diversity. To recognize it as an indispensable democratic value. It requires us to know ourselves. To have confidence in ourselves.

We are an imperfect democracy. Not too many years ago our country rejected the very idea of strength from diversity. That failure to appreciate our diversity undermined and scarred our democracy. And resulted in our disgraceful legacy of racial oppression. We have made significant progress, but we still have issues regarding our democracy.

It is now conventional to talk about how September 11 changed everything. This is often said it is time to set aside foolish causes like human rights and turn to serious

11 does not change everything. And that task falls to all of you here today. We all felt the sense of unity that first characterized the response to September 11. That sense, that strength, needs to be captured as the legacy of September 11. Because we need that strength to make sure that the things that define us as a society are not compromised and lost in the response to September 11. To s diversity is viewed as a strength. This will not happen by itself. It will require commitment and courage.

So, let me end by returning to something I said a few minutes ago. That is the observation that the generation represented by the seniors here today seems less interested in social and political issues. That your generation seems less committed. Now, I know that is a generalization and that Pomona students certainly exemplified the unifying reaction to September 11 that I talked about earlier. There were teach-ins and rallies on this campus that were designed to be unifying. That said, I have heard this concern about commitment by your generation from some of you as well.

Why is this the case? I think part of the explanation relates to an impression that the most significant social issues -- civil rights is the example most used in this discussion -- that the most d



