

Speaker 1:

To begin at this time, please silence all electronic devices. Thank you.

John Heubusch:

Good evening everyone. My name is John Heubusch and I have the honor of being the executive director of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute. Thank you so much for joining us this evening. In honor of our men and women around the world who defend our freedom, if you would please stand and join me for the Pledge of Allegiance.

All:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

John Heubusch:

Thank you. Please be seated. Before we get started this evening, there are just a few people in the audience I'd like to recognize and I will start with one of our foundation's trustees, California's governor, Pete Wilson and his wife Gayle. Oh, do we wish he were still governor. Another we wish were still in office, former congressman Elton Gallegly and his wife Janice. Elton represented the library for 26 years. Former ambassador to the European Union, Gordon Sondland. Gordon, where are you? He's out there somewhere. Ventura County supervisor Janice Parvin. Come on, Janice. And from Simi Valley, Mayor Fred Thomas and Councilman Rocky Rhodes.

Finally, it is a real honor to introduce another of our trustees, someone who has lent his remarkable talents gained in the world of sports marketing to the Reagan Foundation. I know it is something that will come in quite handy when another of our trustees, our speaker tonight, becomes commissioner of the NFL. Ben Sutton is one of the originators of our Time for Choosing program and a key force that has made this evening possible. He is one of the most decent and generous men you will ever meet and he will be introducing our special guest tonight. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Ben Sutton.

Ben Sutton:

Stand right there for just one second. I'm going to take one moment of personal privilege before you go away because in mere days our friend John Heubusch will be retired as the president and CEO of the Reagan Foundation. He has done an unbelievable job here and we have become like brothers and just such a great man and a great American, and I would like to ask that everyone in this room acknowledge this incredible American and the great job he's done. That was not in the scripted remarks, but neither was the time that I put Pete Wilson in nomination for the governorship about two years ago during the recall. So he looked at me with startled surprise and Gayle looked at me like she was going to kill me.

I am delighted to be here tonight. Welcome to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation Institute and Library. It's my high honor and my great privilege to welcome you here for the latest installment of our Time for Choosing series. We began this speaker series about two years ago and since then we've heard from Vice President Pence and Secretary Pompeo, Chris Christie, Paul Ryan, Nikki Haley, Liz Cheney, Larry Hogan, many others and since then some of them have made a choice of their own and they've decided to run for president of these United States. Personally, I am quite certain that I speak for a lot of folks in this room who wouldn't mind if our guest speaker tonight made that same choice. It would be so refreshing to have someone in the White House who understood my accent, but if that doesn't work, I'll do what I can to help you get the NFL job because I think that'd be pretty good. I had dinner with Roger

Goodell one night and he was complaining about how people went after him all the time. I said, you make \$44 million a year, tell them I'll do it for 22.

We all know Condoleezza Rice is our 66th secretary of state, but she is so much more. She's a part owner of the Denver Broncos and a diehard football fan. She's an avid golfer, political scientist and professor and virtuoso pianist who's performed with Yo-Yo Ma and my idol and legend, Aretha Franklin, and a recipient of the Reagan Foundation's prestigious Peace Through Strength Award, which I was very proud to present to her myself just a few years ago. It's enough to make the rest of us feel that we haven't done it with our lives, isn't it?

Today she serves as the Taube director at the Hoover Institute of the California coast at Stanford University, and there she's the center of some of the most important policy debates of our time, which brings us back to a Time for Choosing. The theme of our speaker series and the name of that famous Reagan speech from 1964. For the past several years, the Republican Party has been at a crossroads and a big decision looms for us. What will Republicans represent in the years ahead? Will the party look backward or will it embrace a more Reaganesque view, forward looking with an optimistic vision for the future? And now with 2024 looming, not only will the party have to determine where it's headed, but also who will lead it there.

A lot has changed in the two years since we started this series. Russia invaded Ukraine, a midterm election that brought a lot of surprises, a growing threat from China complete with a giant spy balloon that they shot down about two miles from my condo in South Carolina. But the fundamental questions remain the same, and we've asked Dr. Rice many of the same questions we've asked each of our speakers. On which policies can the GOP agree? What does it mean to be a Republican today? What is Republican foreign policy today? What American principles are paramount? We're not looking for slogans or for sound bites, we're looking for substance and solutions and if there's anyone that I've known in the United States of America or the Republican Party that can be counted on to provide substance and solutions, it's Dr. Condoleezza Rice. So ladies and gentlemen, would you please rise and welcome this leader with too many accomplishments to name, the 19th National Security Advisor and our 66 Secretary of State. Thank you. So glad you're here.

Condoleezza Rice:

Thank you. Thank you. Well, thank you very much for that stirring introduction and I do understand your accent very, very well. No, no problem there. I just want to join in thanking John for everything that you have done. I've been fortunate to be on the board of the Reagan Foundation Library. I've been fortunate to see all that John has brought, but it is his commitment, not just in his head but in his heart to this enterprise and I know that we all know you're going to be a part of us for a long, long time to come, but thank you for everything you've done. And thanks to all of you for being here, especially my good friends Pete and Gayle Wilson. It's always great to have you here.

I have to admit that when I was asked to do this speech, I did look at the list and I thought, "There's a common theme here." You remember those which of these is not like the other? Well, I'm one of those that's kind of not like the other if you look at the prospects ahead for most of the speakers in A Time for Choosing, but I'm honored to have a chance to address this really important question coming from the language of President Reagan's iconic speech A Time for Choosing. He delivered that speech almost 60 years ago and it resonates very strongly today.

One is struck by the persistence and the relevance of the themes, the creep of government, a government that cannot pay for what it has already done and insists on doing more, advancing deeper and deeper into the lives and the affairs of its people, the echoes of those who thought America lacking in moral virtue and therefore with nothing special to say to its citizens or to the world, the clamor by

some, not all, to mind our own business in world affairs, even those who fight for freedom and ask for our help.

The Reagan Presidential Foundation Institute and Library is right to remind us with this series that we face another time of choosing, but perhaps unlike the Reagan speech, I do not want to speak in terms of a single day of choice, election day, but the ongoing challenge of choosing daily as we seek to strengthen American democracy. I want to make one other amendment if I may. As I approach tonight's assignment, I want us to think also that a time of choosing is also a time of reckoning, a time for reflection. And so let me suggest three vectors in which we now face hard choices because frankly, we as a country have failed to attend to certain basic realities, the problem of opportunity for all of our citizens, the state of our institutions and our role in the world and running through it all, the forward march of technology.

First, there is the matter of opportunity. Capitalism has been the only economic system that has delivered growth and prosperity and freedom to its people, but markets frankly reward some skills and not others. Now, I'm not disturbed that Yo-Yo Ma can make a living playing the cello while I, a failed piano major, was not able to do that. That's a matter of talent. I met Alison Felix, the great sprinter the other day. She has multiple Olympic gold medals. I don't. That is a matter of unequal talent. But today we face a different problem. There is undeniably inequality of opportunity for too many of our citizens. You will notice that I did not say equity, a word that summons the notion of guaranteed and equal outcomes. No, I mean equality of opportunity. The chance through hard work and personal responsibility to enjoy and lead a good and fulfilling life. For Americans who are not united by ethnicity, religion, nationality, but by an idea you can come from humble circumstances and you can do great things, the reality of inequality of opportunity is thus a tragedy.

People have come from all over the world, some to make \$5, not 50 cents, some from the most advanced countries to be a part of that ideal, but the other part of that bargain was that you were not trapped also in your class. The circumstances of your birth were not to be the story of your life and the way up and the way out was always a high quality education and a good job. Now, in my family, this is an article of faith. We all had some ancestor along the way that made choices that made us American in the sense of being able to seize opportunity. My grandfather, paternal grandfather, John Wesley Rice Sr, was that person for our family.

My grandfather was a sharecropper son in Eutaw. That would be E U T A W. I'm not kidding, Alabama. And when he was a young man, he decided he was going to get book learning in a college. And so he asked passers-by where a colored man could be educated and they told him about Little Stillman College. It was a Presbyterian school about 30 miles from where he lived. So he saved up his cotton. He went off to Stillman College. He finished his first year. They said to him, "Okay, so how are you going to pay for your second year?" And he said, "Well, I'm out of money." They said, "Then you're out of luck." But thinking quickly, Granddaddy Rice asked, "So how are those boys going to college?" And they said, "Well, you see, they have what's called a scholarship and if you wanted to be a Presbyterian minister you could have a scholarship too." My granddaddy said, "That is exactly what I had in mind." And my family. My family has been college-educated and Presbyterian ever since.

But when today I can look at your zip code and I can tell whether you're going to get a quality education, can I really say it doesn't matter where you came from, it matters where you're going? The COVID crisis gave parents a look at what their kids were learning and how they were learning, and many of them did not like what they saw. This has led parents to insist properly on a stronger voice in the education of their children. That is positive. But the crisis did something else. It deepened educational inequality. Poor kids, many of them minority kids, have experienced learning loss at a truly alarming rate and this on top of the inequalities that already existed.

The truth is that too many of our children, poor children, are trapped in failing neighborhood schools and it is appalling that those who would clothe themselves in banners to demand equity are some of the loudest opponents of school and parental choice. We have a system of choice for some. If you are of means, you will move to a district where the schools are good and the houses are expensive or you will send your kids to private schools. Some will have the audacity to then write an editorial against school choice in the Washington Post having sent their kids to Sidwell Friends. Public education is indeed important, but poor parents need the same choices that richer Americans enjoy and from Florida to Utah to Indiana and Arizona, governors and legislatures are embracing choice.

K-12 education is not of course our only problem. We need to come to terms with the fact that globalization, for all of its benefits, did leave some people behind. I teach in the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University and inevitably I will have a student with the following profile. Born in Brazil, went to college at Oxford, first job was in Shanghai, now in graduate school at Stanford, next job will be in Dubai, moves easily around the world. But that is not the path and will not be the path that is open to so many. For some, globalization laid bare the fact of limited and outdated skills and thus equally limited prospects. We must address this and do it now. There can be no more college graduates with massive debt and no skills when a two-year degree and an apprenticeship would deliver a good job. There can be no more 35 year olds who cannot be retrained despite 47 federal job training programs and almost 19 billion a year spent in that area. We need a human potential initiative that can unite us all.

Second, it is a time of reckoning about America's values and our institutions. We were bequeathed remarkable institutions by the founders who built barriers to tyranny and pathways to the pursuit of happiness. The idea that human beings could self-govern was a novel one at the end of the 18th century. That the framer's institutional design continues to protect the rights of citizens to say what we think and worship as we please and to be free from the arbitrary power of the state more than two centuries later is truly breathtaking. That their institutional design has also protected the peaceful transfer of power under recent challenges to it and thus to our democracy is remarkable. It is a testament to the brilliance of our founders and it is a testament to their commitment to liberty.

Yet, that is not the whole story. We know that America was created with a birth defect. It was called slavery. For two centuries it consigned some of my ancestors to bondage, though I must admit others were actually slave holders. When those chains were lifted, there would be another hundred years of second class citizenship, Jim Crow and redlining and exclusion from America's most important institutions. We must teach that history bluntly and truthfully. We cannot return to the days that I experienced as a fourth grader in my home state of Alabama. Our textbook was called Know Alabama. Apparently slavery didn't exist in Alabama according to Know Alabama. So we don't want to return to those days, but the reckoning has to also recognize an undeniable reality. We have made so much progress and to say that we have not, as some do, is to dishonor the legacy of those who fought and died and struggled toward a more perfect union.

To be sure, I do not see the United States of America through rose-colored glasses. I am a child of the segregated South. We couldn't go to a movie theater, we couldn't go to a restaurant, but my parents, somehow, with their mantra that you have to be twice as good. So we tried to be twice as good. "There are no victims. When you say you are a victim, you have given control of your life to someone else," they said. And so despite the circumstances of Birmingham, despite the violence of Birmingham, violence that in 1963 took the life of Denise McNair, my kindergarten classmate in that 16th Street Church bombing, despite all of that, my parents and their friends had us convinced that we could be president of the United States even if we couldn't have a hamburger at the Woolworths [inaudible 00:26:37]. So I do not see the United States through rose-colored glasses, but I will tell you something. As secretary of

state, I travel the world and no country, no country deals better with difference and tries harder than the United States of America.

We also do not want to ignore the essential role that American institutions have played in righting these wrongs. Thomas Jefferson himself thought it unlikely that freed slaves and white people could live together in peace. Abraham Lincoln, the great emancipator, had his doubts too. Now I ask you, wouldn't they be floored by what they would see today? We have much more work to do toward a just America. It is a source of national shame that Black Americans make up 13% of the population, but 38% of those who are incarcerated. It is a tragedy that African Americans die of manageable diseases, diabetes and heart disease and high blood pressure at higher rates than their white counterparts. It is sad that too often a Black American knows in her heart of hearts that she is indeed still judged by the color of her skin. We should insist with all of our being that this is unacceptable and it should be a call to action.

Race still matters. We are not colorblind and we are not likely to be. Yet, we can reckon with this and reflect on our past, the role of race in our society without being determined to make everything about race. Let's remember it was once all about race. We have spent two centuries trying to change that. So do we really want to define everything in the terms of the ethnic tribe to which we belong? Do we want to insist that our children at an early age confront race, a really complicated idea when they're just trying to figure out what it means to be human at seven years old? Let them play. Let them get to know each other. Let them be curious about their different skin colors, but realize that they're likely to be willing to ignore it and to become friends anyway.

Knowing all that we know, could we also just once celebrate the institutions, the constitution, elections, legislation that remarkably moved us to where we are now despite our past? And could we do it recognizing the complexity of our history, not to whitewash it, but also not to wipe out the memory of it soviet style, canceling historical figures, their photographs, their names on buildings, because their imperfections and their fealty of values to another time somehow make us uncomfortable in our self-righteousness.

Instead of these pointless exercises in what I'll call virtue signaling, I would propose the following: For anyone who leads an organization, a university or a corporation, the next time you are asked to sign a letter protesting the policies of a loss of another state, likely a law that you actually have not read, turn and look in the mirror instead. If you are a lender, do you have disparate outcomes? If so, do something about it. If you're in healthcare, do you see results that are troubling in terms of race? Then do something about it. If every American takes just one step toward justice in our own lane and thus within our own reach, the impact could be extraordinary and it could be real. This is so critical for our future. No country, no democracy can long prosper if its people do not believe in it and do not believe that it is worth protecting. This is a conversation that must be had in every school, in every university, and more importantly, at every kitchen table, parent to child.

I am so grateful that my parents and my grandparents and their friends believed in America even when perhaps America didn't fully believe in them. But they instilled a belief in this country, a love of this country in me, and I think I can say that they were rewarded and so was I. One of the most extraordinary moments in my life, of course, was my swearing in as secretary of state. There in the Ben Franklin room of the State Department on the eighth floor, I stood with the president at my side taking an oath of office to a constitution that actually once counted my ancestors as three fifths of a man to protect and defend the United States of America from all enemies, foreign and domestic.

And I just glanced up at the portrait of Ben Franklin looking down on us and I thought, "What would old Ben have thought of this?" Here is a Black woman being sworn in as secretary of state by a Jewish Supreme Court justice, a female, my neighbor, Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Old Ben wouldn't have even guessed that possible. He would never have imagined it. But really, neither did I as a little girl in

Birmingham, Alabama, and I doubt that Ruth did either when she was just trying to be heard in law school. That's the American story. That's the America that we celebrate. With all of its flaws, with all of its difficulties, with all of its past, we celebrate the progress that demonstrates.

Now, I think we know too, that our strength at home is essential to how we think about our role abroad. So this is a time of reckoning about America's role in the world. It took a confident America to do the things that we did after World War II. It took a confident America to take a pledge to Europe, an attack upon one is an attack upon all. When the Soviet Union had exploded a nuclear weapon five years ahead of schedule in 1949. It took a confident America to say we won't protect our nearly 50 to 60% of the world's GDP. We will build an international system in which all can prosper. It took a confident America to believe in rebuilding Germany, not weaker, stronger, but this time democratic, and the same in Japan. That confident America has left the world much, much better. And I know that Americans wonder, when can we finally unload these burdens of leadership? We have asked the men and women in uniform who volunteered to defend us at the front lines to carry a heavy load and sometimes to pay the last full measure to keep the peace. We have had to lead for a very long time with great, great consequence to us as a country. I remember standing in the Oval Office in August of 2008 and the president and I were chatting and Karl Rove came in and he had some polls and it turns out the Bush administration wasn't that popular in August of 2008. And the president being George W. Bush said, "I don't believe these polls. I don't think we're this unpopular."

I said, "You know, Mr. President, they're tired of us. It's been war, it's been vigilance, it's been terrorism." I said, "They're tired of us." I did say, "Mr. President, I'm tired of them too." But the fact is that sadly, we cannot afford to be tired because others who do not share our values and would challenge our interests are not at all tired. America has not been perfect. What collection of humans can claim to be? But we have done a lot of good in the world. Just last week we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the largest global health program in human history. 25 million lives saved across Africa and across the world. We are not just a powerful country, we are a compassionate country and we have been willing to bring that compassion when necessary, but to exercise our might when needed.

We face a generational test right now, today, in what we are being asked to do in Ukraine. Not to fight for them but to give them the means to fight for themselves. There is a moral case to be made that we cannot allow might to make right, that a big power cannot be allowed to extinguish its smaller neighbor. We have seen that movie before. The scenes are like the negative of an old photograph from 1939, but this time in color. The moral cause is clear. Yet, this is not only a matter of justice, it is a matter of protecting our interests. Great power rivalry has reemerged with a vengeance and the biggest challenge comes from communist China.

China is an adversary like no other. This is not the Cold War where the Soviet Union was a military giant, but a technological and economic midget. China could, in time, be our equal in each of these three domains. We must meet the challenge through innovation and robust defense spending and nurturing our lives in the region. But if we thought for one moment, for one moment, that what is happening in Ukraine and the China challenge were divisible, Xi Jinping has told us otherwise. His relationship without limits with Vladimir Putin is based on one thing and one thing only, a desire to check American power and influence and ultimately to replace the United States as the dominant military and technological power in the world. That is why the Chinese are apparently considering lethal military assistance to Russia. If Russia loses, it sets back this scheme to undermine American power. Keep that in mind. Xi Jinping and Putin may believe that we are not up to the challenge. The unconscionable withdrawal from Afghanistan may well have convinced them of that. But we are so far meeting the moment, even if sometimes too hesitantly and haltingly for my taste. Let me assure you, having known Putin, that he still

believes he can win because we will tire and leave the Ukrainians alone and sometime in the future, Russia will win.

Now, I will make a comment about the time of choosing in the terms that Reagan meant it. Anyone who wants to be and one day will be president of the United States should think twice about abandoning our obligations to defend the principles of the international system on which our security and interests rely. I would not want to be the president who tells the American people that Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping have won in Ukraine and are ready for their next adventure. And I would not want to have to admit that I could have led the United States to do something about it and didn't. Ronald Reagan understood responsibility and America's essential role in a speech 40 years ago today. In talking about the challenge of Soviet communism, Reagan shocked the world by calling that empire evil. It was not a declaration of war, it was just a statement of the truth. And it showed that he understood that peace through strength was not just the absence of war, but the presence of a just world resting on American power values and will. Those who would ask us to choose them to lead us would do well to follow his example.

Reagan's example is there for us in so many ways. He addressed America's challenges with a message of hope and optimism. This time, in meeting this moment, we should not empower and amplify the voices of those who would feed grievance and despair and anger, whether they are on the right or on the left. They see a dark America, not a shining city on the hill. They see Americans pitted against one another from the comfort of websites and newsfeeds and blogs that divide and silence. This cannot be our fate and it cannot be our choice for the future of this great country.

Speaking of choices, I'm often asked, well, very often asked about a choice that I have made. The question goes something like this, "Why on earth are you a Republican?" Or, "Are you still a Republican?" Well, let me answer that for you. First, there's the matter of birthright. In 1952, my father and my mother, who were not yet married but were engaged, went to try to register to vote in Alabama. My mother was beautiful and the poll tester said to her, "What do you teach?" She said, "I teach American history." She taught English. And so he said, "You probably know who the first president of the United States was." And she said, "Yes, George Washington." He said, "You pass. You're registered." And then he looked at my father, 6'2" and a football player, and he said to my father, "How many beans are in this jar?"

My father was devastated and he went back and this old man, this elder in his church said, "Oh, Reverend, I'll tell you how to get registered." He said, "You know, there's a woman down there as a clerk and she's a Republican." And of course there weren't very many Republicans in Alabama in 1952. He said, "So if you just go down there and you tell her that you are a Republican, she'll register you." And so my father did, and he was registered to vote and he never forgot it. And he was Republican till the end of his life. And then there was my own choice, dating to December 25th, 1979 when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. President Carter was unable to mobilize American power to resist that awful event. And Ronald Reagan seemed to have answers as to how to confront a Soviet Union that after years of study, I personally knew to be both evil and dangerous.

That is the story of how I became a Republican. But I have remained a Republican not because of complete alignment with the party, no one can ask that of any party, but because I do believe that the values of the Republican Party that I know are America's values and the foundation of hope for our future. They are values that are worth defending today as they were worth defending in the past. Affirming the power of markets and private enterprise, the source of creativity and growth, knowing that governments should not try to do for its citizens, that which its citizens themselves can and should do, recognizing that we are a country of immigrants and also of laws that must be respected, knowing, too, that newcomers seeking opportunity here refreshes and keep us young, believing that America is

special and that we are a force of for good in the world and channeling the inspiration and extraordinary stories of leaders like the one that we honor here today, Ronald Reagan.

You see, president Reagan's success in leading this country rested more than anything on faith in the American people. He believed in their essential goodness and their ability to overcome all obstacles before them. That faith has led America throughout the centuries to actively pursue their rights as individuals to pursue happiness. But it has driven them, too, to be the most communitarian people on the face of the earth through faith-based institutions in civil society, voluntary associations as de Tocqueville called them, Boys and Girls Clubs and Rotaries and American Red Cross and so many others. In these associations, we see the real strength of American democracy. Individual citizens, not just the government who are insisting that they will not leave their fellow citizens behind.

Ronald Reagan had this unshakable belief in America's future, and I share that and it is reinforced every day. I know that this is the most creative and innovative country in human history. We will leverage the technology that comes from that genius to do great things in education and healthcare and beyond. Technology is not good or bad. It is how you use it that determines what it does for society and to society. We must be wise, but I will bet any day on free peoples in the race to harness technology and that free peoples, unlike captive ones, will use it to the good of humankind.

And I have faith because I teach a younger generation that is better than advertised. Yes, they are impatient. They do think that if they have Googled it, they have researched it. They are in a hurry to change the world, even if they don't quite have their facts straight. But they are the most public-minded generation that I have seen in 40 years of teaching. And the question for America's future is will we give them pathways so that the choices that they make are ones that make our country stronger? Will we teach them the history of our country honestly, but without recrimination for our past? Will we insist that they listen civilly to voices and views with which they do not agree? Will we remind them that we have more in common than differences of skin color and circumstances of life? Will we encourage them to take up some form of national service so that they can leave the comfort of their own environment to serve people that they would otherwise never see, and in the bargain, learn to be grateful for all that they have? Will we inspire them to, like Americans before them, choose to make what seems impossible today seem inevitable tomorrow?

This time of choosing before us may seem like the most critical in the history of our country, but there have been many others. Declaring independence against the greatest military power of the time, believing that people could self-govern and somehow winning, fighting a civil war, brother against brother, but building a more perfect union, winning for the descendants of slaves the basic rights of citizenship, yes, in the streets of Selma and Birmingham, but also in the courts and in the Congress, defeating the communist behemoth and freeing an entire continent, meeting the terrorist threat of 9/11 with defiance and with unity.

Well, it must have all seemed impossible, but each time that we chose freedom over tyranny, individual liberty over the dictates of government, personal responsibility over entitlement and grievance, we made the impossible seem inevitable in retrospect, and we kept moving forward choice by choice, day by day to an America whose best days were always in front of it. That is the spirit that you evoke today when you ask that we look again to this time of choosing. Thank you very much.

Speaker 1:

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much for coming. Please remain seated as our VIP guests leave the building. Tonight. Dinner will be held at our Air Force One Pavilion. You may exit from our side door entrances. The entrance to the Air Force One Pavilion will be at the roundabout by the President Reagan on the horse statue.

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