

REMARKS BY GOVERNOR JAMES B. EDWARDS
OPPORTUNITIES INDUSTRIAL CENTER
COLUMBIA, S.C.
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IT IS A DEEP PERSONAL PRIVILEGE FOR ME TODAY TO RECEIVE THIS REPLICA OF THE "PASS TO FREEDOM." THE PROGRAM THAT YOU HAVE BEGUN HERE WILL BE A SIGNIFICANT ADDITION TO OUR BICENTENNIAL YEAR AND BRING THE TRUE MEANING OF FREEDOM CLOSER TO EACH OF US.

THIS "PASS" REPRESENTS A REGRETTABLE TIME IN OUR HISTORY WHEN ALL MEN WERE NOT FREE. NEVERTHELESS, IT HAS NOW COME TO REPRESENT THE HOPES AND DREAMS OF A PEOPLE WHO HAVE STRUGGLED FOR SO LONG FOR EQUALITY, JUSTICE, AND THE BASIC RIGHTS THAT SHOULD BELONG TO EVERY AMERICAN.

I THINK IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT YOU ARE HOLDING THIS PROGRAM ON THE BIRTHDAY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN, THE MAN WHO MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE WORKED SO HARD TO INSURE FREEDOM AND LIBERTY FOR ALL AMERICANS.

ALTHOUGH MORE THAN A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MR. LINCOLN ABOLISHED SLAVERY, THE VESTIGES OF PREJUDICE AND INJUSTICE PREVAILED FOR MANY YEARS. TODAY, WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED MUCH. THERE IS CERTAINLY MORE TO BE DONE.

THAT IS WHY I SEE THIS "PASS TO FREEDOM" AS A SYMBOL OF BOTH THE STRUGGLES OF THE PAST AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE.

TO ME, THE GREATEST CHALLENGE BOTH TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE IS THE PRESERVATION OF OUR PRECIOUS FREEDOM.

WE AMERICANS HAVE TOO OFTEN FORGOTTEN THAT FREEDOM IS REALLY NOT FREE. IT DEMANDS RESPONSIBILITY AND SACRIFICE. IT DEMANDS DEDICATION AND INVOLVEMENT.

ALL TOO OFTEN WE TAKE OUR FREEDOM FOR GRANTED. WE TAKE THE BOUNTY OF THIS FREE NATION FOR GRANTED.

I BELIEVE THAT FULL DEDICATION BY EVERY SINGLE AMERICAN TO THE PRINCIPLES OF FREEDOM AND LIBERTY IS THE KEY TO PROGRESS OF ALL MANKIND. IF WE ARE APATHETIC...IF WE ARE UNINVOLVED...WE RISK THE LOSS OF OUR FREEDOMS.

IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING, THERE IS A "PASS TO FREEDOM" IN AMERICA TODAY...IT IS OUR WILLINGNESS TO MAINTAIN A SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT THAT PRESERVES FREEDOM AS ITS FIRST PRIORITY. WITHOUT DEDICATION TO THIS GOAL, WE COME DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO BEING THE SERVANTS OF GOVERNMENT...AND LOSING OUR OWN PERSONAL FREEDOMS.

THIS IS ONE THING THAT BOTHERS ME MOST TODAY. I AM DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE FREEDOMS OF THE INDIVIDUAL. THE WILLINGNESS OF PEOPLE TO DO FOR THEMSELVES. I AM CONCERNED THAT ONCE WE ALLOW GOVERNMENT OR ANYBODY ELSE TO DO THINGS FOR US...THEY WILL EVENTUALLY END UP DOING THINGS TO US!

THE SLOGAN OF THE OIC "HITS THE NAIL" ON THE HEAD..."WE HELP OURSELVES." THIS IS ONE OF THE GREATEST NEEDS IN AMERICA TODAY. WE NEED PEOPLE WILLING TO HELP THEMSELVES. TOO OFTEN, WE GIVE UP TOO MUCH OF OUR FREEDOM WHEN WE LET OTHERS DO THOSE THINGS FOR US WHICH WE SHOULD RIGHTLY BE DOING FOR OURSELVES.

THE PROGRESS THAT HAS BEEN MADE IN THE PAST TWO DECADES IN THE AREAS OF MINORITIES WOULD NEVER HAVE COME ABOUT IF EVERYONE HAD WAITED FOR SOMEBODY ELSE TO DO THINGS FOR THEM. INSTEAD THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF CONCERNED PEOPLE HAVE WORKED LONG AND HARD TO MAKE THE GOAL OF EQUALITY A REALITY. MORE IS YET TO BE DONE. BUT IT WON'T GET DONE IF WE WAIT FOR SOME ONE ELSE TO DO IT.

AS AMERICANS, WE MUST CONTROL OUR OWN DESTINIES. IN TURN, WE CONTROL THE DESTINY OF THIS NATION. DISREGARD FOR PERSONAL FREEDOM OR APATHY IN THE AFFAIRS OF THIS NATION WILL SURELY RESULT IN THE LOSS OF EVERYBODY'S FREEDOM.

AMERICA HAS HAD A CHALLENGING PAST. HISTORY WILL SHOW THAT WE HAVE HAD OUR GREATEST PROBLEMS WHEN WE DISREGARDED THE PRINCIPLES OF FREEDOM. I BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE THE POTENTIAL FOR AN EVEN GREATER NATION IN THE NEXT CENTURY THAN WE HAVE SEEN IN THE PAST TWO.

BUT WE CAN ONLY HAVE IT THROUGH DEDICATION---PERSONAL DEDICATION...TO THE GREAT PRINCIPLES OF OUR COUNTRY.

AS WE HONOR, TODAY, THE RIGHT OF FREEDOM AS REPRESENTED BY THIS PASS TO FREEDOM...I HOPE WE WILL DEDICATE OURSELVES TO A HERITAGE OF FREEDOM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

THE ORIGINAL OWNER OF THIS "PASS TO FREEDOM," ELIZABETH WELB, SAW FREEDOM AS HER MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION. I HOPE THAT WE TODAY WILL REMEMBER THAT FREEDOM IS ALSO OUR MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION.