

**The Liberal Party of the State of New York:
Nomination of Hillary Rodham Clinton
As Candidate for the U.S. Senate,
Delivered by Martin S. Begun,
Inter Continental Hotel,
New York City,
June 3, 2000**

Mr. Chairman, Jonathan Reiter ... Mr. Vice Chairman, Ray Harding ... Members of the Liberal Party of the State of New York ... Your presence here this morning is important ... because our mission here is important. Today, we will nominate the Liberal Party's candidate for the office of United States Senator from the State of New York. This is far more than a mere political nod of the head. It is ... in fact ... a fulfillment of the best traditions of this party's commitment to the task of improving the quality of life for the people of this state ... and for the nation as a whole.

Before we get to the formalities, I'd like to pause a moment ... and ask you to consider with me ... what that commitment means. In recent years, the term "liberal" has been demeaned – demeaned in the press ... demeaned in the rhetoric of the far right ... demeaned in the minds of the public. It has been endowed with connotations and nuances of meaning that its founders never intended and that we ... its members today ... absolutely refute – a refutation amply documented by word, deed and voting record.

And what exactly does "liberal" mean? – this word that the conservatives so malign. It simply means "free" ... undeniably the single most important concept underlying the creation of the United States of America. Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, was, by the standards of his time, a liberal. George Washington, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin ... all of the framers of the Constitution were liberals. These heroes of the early republic were men of means and education ... holders of wealth and privilege ... yet they chose to risk all those advantages to defend a principle – the principle of freedom ... the principle of liberty. In 1775, conservatism was represented by the Tories, who were supporting the crown...George III. If the conservatives had prevailed in that historic struggle, we would be standing here today ... under the Union Jack ... singing "God Save the Queen."

Since the founding of the republic, liberals have been the standard bearers for all that is best in America ... caring ... compassion ... concern for the protection of all ... and especially for those unable to care for themselves. We have been the authors and champions of the finest hours in American history, from the Boston Tea Party ... to the Battle of Yorktown ... to the defense of the entire free world some 60 years ago in Europe and Asia. That is a tradition that the Liberal Party of the State of New York honors today – and will continue to honor ... in its support of candidates and causes that present themselves for consideration by the electorate of the state.

Let's take a brief look at our party's history. It was founded in 1944 by social and political activists – among them the seminal educator John Dewey and the great theologian Reinhold Niebuhr – to support the presidential candidacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Since that time, it has been a significant force for social change in New York ... the party not only of Roosevelt ... but also of Herbert Lehman ... Jacob Javits ... Hugh Carey ... Robert F. Wagner ... and scores of others who have served the state in elected office. Its mission has been to ensure ... through the political process ... that all Americans gain equal access to the freedoms and opportunities promised by our nation's founders and guaranteed ... in perpetuity ... by our Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Historically, the Liberal Party has supported candidates who offer real, practical solutions to the most difficult social problems we face. Unlike the political robots they often oppose, liberals speak to human concerns ... to the poor, the elderly, the young, the marginalized ... working people ... family people. The concerns of the Liberal Party have not been political concepts ... but real issues ... problems that people grapple with every day.

Today especially ... let us remember also that, after President Roosevelt's death in 1945, his widow became the living symbol of this party ... continuing, outside the spotlight of elected office, the work to which she and her husband had dedicated their unique partnership. Presented with the opportunity to seek office on her own, Mrs. Roosevelt declined. But that was over a half-century ago. Times have changed, and it doesn't take a big leap of imagination to feel that ... in those circumstances today ... she would surely have said "yes."

So it is fitting that the Liberal Party should choose a candidate who is the spiritual and political descendant of Eleanor Roosevelt – someone ... like Mrs. Roosevelt ... whose cares and concerns demonstrate a total commitment to education ... universal health care ... and the equal protection of rights for all citizens. Someone who has learned the realities of Washington politics under the spotlight of high – very high – political office. Someone with the cumulative, substantive experience ... indeed the wisdom ... so necessary in an effective and innovative legislator ... qualities rarely found in candidates of any party.

And speaking of the traditions of the Liberal Party, I'd like to make a few observations about the traditions of New York State. New York is more than a state of the union ... it is the Empire State ... a state of mind ... a place in the heart. It's where people come ... from all over the nation ... from all over the world ... to fulfill their dreams ... to make their marks ... to leave behind a place that is better for their having been there. For artists, scholars, educators, performers, writers, scientists, reformers, financial titans ... for all who hear the call to achieve and excel ... New York is the promised land. Even today ... 214 years after its dedication ... the Statue of Liberty ... our Statue of Liberty ... raises her arm in welcome to all who would come here to make this world a better place.

Just look at some of those who have crafted New York's history and heritage. Carl Schurz, a man we all consider a New Yorker ... the man for whom we named a park on the Upper East Side of this city ... was born in Germany, represented the State of Missouri in the U.S. Senate,

and only settled in New York after serving as secretary of the interior. Reinhold Neibuhr himself, a founder of this party, was born in Missouri and first came to New York in 1928 to join the faculty at Union Theological Seminary. Senator and state supreme court justice Robert F. Wagner, father of this city's late Mayor Robert Wagner, Jr., was born in Germany. George Washington, a resident of Virginia, took the oath of office as President of the United States in this very city. The list goes on and on.

And this tradition of welcome continues to this day – to all who seek to live and work in and for New York. Bob Kerrey, recently selected as President of the New School here in this city, is now a senator from Nebraska. John Brademas, president emeritus of New York University, is from Indiana and represented that state in the U.S. Congress. Harry Pritchard, Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and Manhattan Borough President Virginia Fields – both from Alabama. (Virginia only came to New York in 1970.) Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the man whose senate seat we are gathered here to fill, was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

So what is – as the song says – “a native New Yorker”? Technically, I suppose, we'd have to say someone born in the state. But where would New York be ... and how would its history read ... without Alexander Hamilton (born in the West Indies), Aaron Burr (New Jersey) and Nelson Rockefeller (Maine)? And what would its artistic and cultural heritage be without such iconic New Yorkers as Leonard Bernstein (Massachusetts), George Balanchine (Russia), Thomas Cole (England) and Asher B. Durand (New Jersey)? Or O. Henry (North Carolina), Jackie Robinson (Georgia), Babe Ruth (Maryland), Dawn Powell (Ohio) and Nora Zeale Thurston (Florida)? My point is simple: Being a New Yorker is a matter of spirit ... not a matter of origin.

New York has always embraced newcomers ... indeed prides itself on the fact that the fabric of our state is enriched by the fiber of those not born here. We are the financial and cultural center of the nation – indeed, of the world – and our resources have never been defined by birth certificates and prior mailing address. To enforce such a definition would be to compromise our history ... our integrity ... our commitment of service to the nation ... and to the world.

To honor that heritage and that mandate, I am proud to be here this morning ... to nominate for the Liberal Party ... our candidate for U.S. Senator from the State of New York, a true New Yorker in the larger and deeper sense of that term. Born in Chicago, educated in Massachusetts and Connecticut, a longtime civic and political leader of the state of Arkansas, until recently a resident of Washington, DC and now of Chappaqua in Westchester County, she is the quintessential New Yorker. She strengthens the fabric of New York ... she speaks to our concerns ... she shares our standards of excellence.

She has been to all 62 counties in New York. In her role as First Lady of the land, she has seen America in all its parts ... and knows the hopes and aspirations of our people in a way that cannot be matched. Her travels abroad – to the world's most sophisticated countries ... and to the less-traveled nations of the Third World – have given her unique insights and knowledge. She is a mature and seasoned observer of the human condition ... as it exists in all segments of

society. Farmers, laborers, working families, professionals, teachers, parents and children – one and all are a familiar constituency.

There is no need for pretense or illusion when describing the credentials of our nominee ... no magical transformations designed to turn a novice into a person of stature. This candidate comes well prepared ... both in the scope of her knowledge and in her skills of communication. She is not a nine-day wonder; her qualifications for the office of United States senator have been finely honed by experience, observation and intellectual curiosity.

It is my great, great honor to place in nomination the Liberal Party's candidate for U.S. Senator from the State of New York ... the name of Hillary Rodham Clinton. And I want to say to Mrs. Clinton, when she joins us here on the dais ... you honor us, and ... like the lady in our harbor ... we lift our lamp beside the golden door.

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