



ENGLISH SPEECHES

WITH BIG SUBTITLES



HILLARY CLINTON

BE RESILIENT

<https://youtu.be/46yStqMV4eY>

Being here with you brings back a flood of memories. I remember the first time I arrived on campus as an incoming law student in the fall of 1969 wearing my bell-bottoms, driving a beat up old car with a mattress tied to the roof. I had no idea what to expect. Now to be honest, I had had some trouble making up my mind between Yale and Harvard Law Schools. Then one day while we were still in that period of decision making, I was invited to a cocktail party at Harvard for potentially incoming law students where I met a famous law professor.

A friend of mine, a male law student, introduced me to this famous law professor. I mean truly, big three piece suit, watch chain, and my friend said, "Professor, this is Hillary Rodham. She's trying to decide whether to come here next year or sign up with our closest competitor." Now the great man gave me a cool dismissive look and said, "Well, first of all, we don't have any close competitors. And secondly, we don't need any more women at Harvard."

Now I was leaning toward Yale anyway but that pretty much sealed the deal, and when I came to Yale I was one of 27 women out of 235 law students. It was the first year women were admitted to the college, and as that first class of women prepared to graduate four years later, The New York Times reported on Yale's foray into co-education, noting that the women "worked harder and got somewhat better grades than the 940 men graduating with them. A fact," they went on to say, "that some of the men apparently found threatening." Well, I was shocked.

But over the years Yale has been a home away from home for me, a place I've returned to time and again. I spoke to class day back in 2001 on the 300th anniversary of the university, and I hope that that will be the case for many of you as well. This school has been responsible for some of my most treasured friends and colleagues, people like Jake Sullivan and Harold Koh, and I've watched some of you grow up, like Rebecca Shaw, who's graduating today and you'll hear from shortly. And I've been honoured to serve over the last year or two, working with some of the Yale Law School faculty including the new Dean, Heather Gerkin.

Now Yale grads, many of whom are also here today, have worked for me in the United States Senate, the State Department, on my presidential campaigns, and I have been so well-served. I have a very dedicated campaign intern here graduating, David Shimer, the class of 2018.

But I have to confess, of all the formative experiences I had at Yale, perhaps none was more significant than the day during my second year when I was cutting through what was then the student lounge with some friends, and I saw this tall, handsome guy with a beard who looked like a viking. I said to my friend, "Well, who is that?" And she said, "Well, that's Bill Clinton. He's from Arkansas and that's all he ever talks about." And then as if on cue, I hear him saying, "And not only that, we grow the biggest watermelons in the world."



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And I was like, "Who is this person?" But he kept looking at me and I kept looking back.

So we were in the Law Library one night, I was studying but I couldn't help but see occasionally as I lifted my head up that he was, again, looking at me. So finally I thought, "This is ridiculous," so I got up, went over to him, and I said, "If you're going to keep looking at me and I'm going to keep looking back, we at least ought to be introduced. I'm Hillary Rodham. Who are you?" And that started a conversation that continues to this day.

Now it was also here at Yale that I saw a flyer in the Law School on a bulletin board that changed my life. Now some of your parents and grandparents may remember flyers and bulletin boards. For the rest of you, suffice it to say, that was how we got information. It was like Facebook but the bulletin board didn't steal your personal information. So one day I saw a note about a woman named Marian Wright Edelman, a Yale Law School graduate, civil rights activist who would go on to found The Children's Defence Fund.

Marian was coming back to campus to give a lecture. I went, I was captivated to hear her talk about using her Yale education to create a Head Start programme in rural Mississippi. And I wound up working for her that summer, and the experience opened my eyes to the ways that the law can protect children or come up short. Because like many of you, I learned just as much outside the four walls of the classroom as I did sitting in a lecture hall, and I discovered a passion that has animated my life and my work ever since.

Now a lot has changed since I was here. In 2019 Yale will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the matriculation of women at the college, and the 150th anniversary of the first women graduate students at Yale. And I heard that Yale officially changed the term freshman to first year. I also heard, amazingly, that The Duke's Men and the Whiffenpoofs have started welcoming women. Now as for my long lost Whiffs audition tape, I have buried it so deep not even Wikileaks will be able to find it, because if you thought my emails were scandalous you should hear my singing voice.

I find it very exciting that today's graduates hail from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and 56 other countries. And in your four years on campus, you've survived late nights in the Bass cubicles and early mornings in the Sterling stacks, you've trekked up Science Hill, maybe you've even found love at The Last Chance Dance, and now you're ready to take on your next adventure. But maybe some of you are reluctant to leave. I understand that. It's possible to feel both because the class of 2018 is graduating at one of the most tumultuous times in the history of our country, and I say that as someone who graduated in the sixties.

I recently went back and looked up those famous lines from Charles Dickens in *A Tale of two Cities* because I usually end after saying, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." But it goes on, "It was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

Now Dickens was writing about the years leading up to the French Revolution, but he could have been describing the ricocheting highs and lows of this moment in America. We're living through a time when fundamental rights, civic virtue, freedom of the press, even facts and reason are under assault like never



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before. But we are also witnessing an era of new moral conviction, civic engagement, and a sense of devotion to our democracy and country. So here's the good news. If any group were ever prepared to rise to the occasion, it is you, the class of 2018. You've already demonstrated the character and courage that will help you navigate this tumultuous moment, and most of all, you've demonstrated resilience.

Now that's a word that's been on my mind a lot recently. One of my personal heroes, Eleanor Roosevelt said, "You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself I have lived through this horror, I can take the next thing that comes along." Well, that's resilience and it's so important because everyone, everyone gets knocked down. What matters is whether you get back up and keep going. This may be hard for a group of Yale soon-to-be graduates to accept, but yes, you will make mistakes in life. You will even fail. It happens to all of us, no matter how qualified or capable we are. Take it from me.

I remember those first months after that 2016 election were not easy. We all had our own methods of coping. I went for long walks in the woods, Yale students went for long walks in East Rock Park. I spent hours going down a Twitter rabbit hole, you spend hours in the Yale Memes Group. I had my fair share of Chardonnay, you had penny drinks at Woads. I practised yoga and alternate nostril breathing, you took Psych and the Good Life.

And let me just get this out of the way, no, I'm not over it. I still think about the 2016 election. I still regret the mistakes I made. I still think though, that understanding what happened in such a weird and wild election in American history will help us defend our democracy in the future. Whether you're right, left, centre, Republican, Democrat, independent, vegetarian, whatever, we all have stake in that. So today as a person, I'm okay. But as an American, I'm concerned.

Personal resilience is important but it's not the only form of resilience we need right now. We also need community resilience. That's something that this class has embodied during your time on campus. Literally, at times, like in the March of Resilience your sophomore year. It was the biggest demonstration in the history of the school. That's 300+ years. Led by women of colour, supported by students and faculty determined to make Yale a more just, equitable, and safe place for everyone. Many of you have said that march was a defining moment in your college experience, and that says something about this class and your values. Because the truth is, our country is more polarised than ever.

We have sorted ourselves into opposing camps and that divides how we see the world. The data backs this up. There are more Liberals and Conservatives than there used to be and fewer Centrists. Our political parties are more ideologically and geographically consistent, which means there are fewer northern Republicans and fewer southern Democrats. And the divides on race and religion are starker than ever before. And as the middle shrank, partisan animosity grew. Now I'm not going to get political here, but this isn't simply a both sides problem. The radicalization of American politics hasn't been symmetrical. There are leaders in our country who blatantly incite people with hateful rhetoric, who fear change, who see the world in zero sum terms, so that if others are gaining, well, they must be losing. That's a recipe for polarisation and conflict.



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Our social fabric is fraying and the bonds of community that hold us together are fractured. This isn't just a problem because it leads to unpleasant conversations over the Thanksgiving dinner table, it's a problem because it undermines the civic spirit that makes democracy possible. The habits of the heart that de Tocqueville found so unique in the American character. I believe healing our country is going to take what I call radical empathy. As hard as it is, this is a moment to reach across divide of race, class, and politics, to try to see the world through the eyes of people very different from ourselves and to return to rational debate. To find a way to disagree without being disagreeable, to try to recapture a sense of community and common humanity.

When we think about politics and judge our leaders, we can't just ask, "Am I better off than I was two years or four years ago?" We have to ask, "Are we all better off? Are we as a country better, stronger, and fairer?" That's something you've done here at Yale. You've learned that you don't need to be an immigrant to be outraged when a classmate's father, a human being who contributes to his family and his country is unjustly deported. You don't need to be a person of colour to understand that when black students feel singled out and targeted, we still have work to do. And you don't need to experience gun violence to know that when a teenager in Texas who just survived a mass shooting says she's not surprised by what happened at her school because, and I quote, "I've always felt like eventually it was going to happen here too." We are failing our children. So enough is enough, we need to come together and we certainly need common sense gun safety legislation as soon as we can get it.

Now empathy should not only be at the centre of our individual lives, our families, and our communities, it should be at the centre of our public life, our policies, and our politics. I know we don't always think of politics and empathy as going hand in hand, but they can, and more than that, they must. As former secretary Madeleine Albright writes in her terrific new book, *Fascism: A Warning*, she says, "This generosity of spirit, this caring about others and about the proposition that we are created equal is the single most effective antidote to the self-centred moral numbness that allows fascism to thrive." And of course, Madeleine had personal experience fleeing the Nazis in Czechoslovakia as a baby, returning after the war, feeling the communists as a young girl.

Now that brings me to one more form of resilience that's been on my mind over the last year, democratic resilience. In 1787, after the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin, who by the way received an honorary degree from Yale, was asked by a woman in the street outside Independence Hall, "Well doctor, what have we got? A republic or a monarchy? And Franklin answered, "A republic, if you can keep it." Right now we're living through a full-fledged crisis in our democracy. Now there are not tanks in the streets, but what's happening right now goes to the heart of who we are as a nation.

And I say this not as a democrat who lost an election, but as an American afraid of losing a country. There are certain things that are so essential, they should transcend politics. Waging a war on the rule of law and a free press, delegitimizing elections, perpetrating shameless corruption, and rejecting the idea that our leaders should be public servants undermines our national unity. And attacking truth and reason, evidence and facts should alarm us all.

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Timothy Snyder writes in his book, *On Tyranny*, "To abandon facts is to abandon freedom. If nothing is true, then no one can criticise power because there is no basis upon which to do so. If nothing is true, then all is spectacle." I think Professor Snyder, both in that book and in his new one, *The Road to Unfreedom*, is sounding the alarm as loudly as he can. Because attempting to erase the line between fact and fiction, truth and reality is a core feature of authoritarianism. The goal is to make us question logic and reason and to sow mistrust toward exactly the people we need to rely on, our leaders, the press, experts who seek to guide public policy based on evidence, even ourselves.

Just this week, former Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson said, "If our leaders seek to conceal the truth, or we as people become accepting of alternative realities that are no longer grounded in facts, then we as American citizens are on a pathway to relinquishing our freedom. Perhaps a tad late, but he's absolutely right. So how do we build democratic resilience? I think it starts with standing up for truth, facts, and reason, not just in the classroom and on campus but every day in our lives. It means speaking out about the vital role of higher education in our society, to create opportunity and equality. It means calling out actual fake news when we see it and supporting brave journalists and their reporting, maybe even by subscribing to a newspaper. Now most of all, as obvious as it seems, it means voting. In every election, not just the presidential ones. So yes, these are challenging times for America but we've come through challenging times before.

I think back to the night Barack Obama was elected president. Many of us, so many of us were jubilant. Even I, who had once hoped to beat him, was ecstatic. It was such a hopeful moment, and yet in some ways this moment feels even more hopeful, because this is a battle-hardened hope, tempered by loss, and clear-eyed about the stakes. We are standing up to policies that hurt people. We are standing up for all people being treated with dignity. We are doing the work to translate those feelings into action. And the fact that some days it is really hard to keep at it just makes it that much more remarkable that so many of us are, in fact, keeping at it.

It's not easy to wade back into the fight every day, but we're doing it. And that's why I am optimistic, because of how unbelievably tough Americans are proving to be. I've encountered lots of people in recent months who give me hope. The Parkland students who endured unthinkable tragedy and have responded with courage and resolve. The leaders and groups I've gotten to know through Onward Together, an organisation I started after the election to encourage the outpouring of grassroots engagement that we're seeing. Everyone who is marching, registering voters, and diving into the issues facing us like never before, some for the very first time in their lives. And I find hope in the wave of women running for office, and winning. And hope in the women and men who are dismantling the notion that women should have to endure harassment and violence as a part of our lives.

So we have a long way to go. There are many fights to fight and more seem to arise every day. It will take work to keep up the pressure, to stay vigilant, to neither close our eyes, nor numb our hearts, or throw up our hands and say, "Someone else take over from here." Because at this moment in our history our country depends on every citizen believing in the power of their actions, even when that power is invisible and their efforts feel like an uphill battle. Of every citizen voting in every election, even when your side loses. It is a matter of infinite faith, this faith we have in the ability to govern ourselves, to come together to make



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honourable, practical compromise in the pursuit of ends that will lift us all up and move us forward.

So yes, we need to pace ourselves but also lean on each other. Look for the good wherever we can. Celebrate heroes, encourage children, find ways to disagree respectfully. We need to be ready to lose some fights, because we will. As John McCain recently reminded us, "No just cause is futile, even if it's lost." What matters is to keep going no matter what, keep going.

The Yale you're graduating from is very different from the Yale I graduated from. It's different even from the Yale that welcomed you four years ago. Four years ago, not one of Yale's colleges was named after a woman. Today students are carrying on the legacy of a trailblazing LGBT civil rights activist at Pauli Murray College and celebrating one of Yale's own hidden figures at Grace Hopper College, named after the naval officer who happened to be one of the first computer programmers in America.

Those changes didn't happen on their own, you made them possible. You kept fighting, you kept the faith. And because of that, in the end, you changed Yale as much as Yale changed you. And now it's time for you to make your mark on the world. I know the best. The best for you, for Yale, and for America is yet to come, and you each will have a role to play and a contribution to make. Thank you and congratulations to the class of 2018.