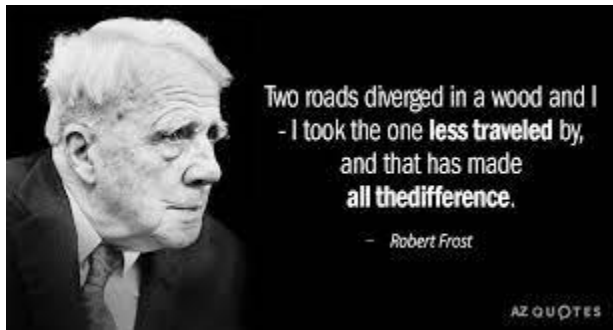


Thoughts on responsibilities of young citizens, remarks made by JFK at Amherst College in 1963.



<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1X8JjB-9grX6R66oypFNEuCgaMx0fX2b81u58zW4NGb4/edit?usp=drivesdk>

by Donald H. Marks, physician and scientist

Let me put on my non-medical hat and speak as a casual student of history and the Arts, as I discuss remarks made by President JFK in 1963 at Amherst College upon receiving an honorary degree. I have long thought about those words from the past, and over several years I have worked to put pen to paper. JFK was, along with FDR, one of my favorite presidents. A man from a wealthy powerful family, a man of means, a politician with good intentions, someone with a global vision, a man connected to the famous, the wealthy, the powerful, the educated, the connected, a man presented at birth with the opportunity to achieve greatness by his birth, a man who put his life on the line for the United States in combat, truly a man for all seasons. To this day, I remember his greatness, the day he died, and I still grieve his loss, especially in the context of current aggressive, highly partisan, take-no-prisoners political life.

In his speech at Amherst, President Kennedy explained the responsibilities and the importance of public service for all citizens, and especially educated citizens. Addressing the class at Amherst, JFK described his view of the role of an artist in society, noting his personal friend Robert Frost's contributions to American arts, culture, and ideology. "When power leads

men towards arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the areas of man's concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses."

Robert Frost and other artists, Kennedy said, make a vital contribution "not to our size but to our spirit, not to our political beliefs but to our insight, not to our self-esteem, but to our self-comprehension."

Those memorable words, as well as Kennedy's call that day for Amherst students to consider how they might serve their country, inspired students at Amherst, and throughout the USA. Five percent of the Amherst senior class of 1964 joined the Peace Corps, the overseas service organization Kennedy had initiated in 1961.

The gridlock and dysfunctional partisanship in Washington, D.C. today poorly compares to the optimism and progressive spirit that seemed to animate the years of the Kennedy administration, at least insofar as I remember it.

The friendship between Kennedy and the poet Robert Frost, dating back to when Kennedy first ran for president, turned cold in the early fall of 1962 after Frost returned from a visit to the Soviet Union and a lengthy talk about cultural exchange with then-Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev.

Frost had a cold and a bad case of jet lag when he returned to the U.S.. Many of us have been there. He gave what appeared to have been a somewhat confused interview, during which he related that Premier Khrushchev had claimed to him that the U.S. "was too liberal to fight." Frost's remarks angered Kennedy, causing him to cut off contact with Frost. Only a month later, the Cuban Missile Crisis developed, with a potential nuclear war. How many of us have similarly cut off a relationship due to a hasty remark, an inopportune comment, thoughts taken out of context or misunderstood, religious or political disagreements? Breaks in friendship can mend, but the pain swirls like a memory underneath, waiting for a fitful rebirth and revenge.

Yet, Kennedy buried the hatchet when he came to Amherst, praising Frost's poetry and his contribution to the American spirit. Frost was an artist who, Kennedy said, "saw poetry as the means of saving power from itself."

The president also told Amherst students that, given the benefits they enjoyed in attending an elite private college in a country that had great disparities in wealth, he hoped they would put their education toward some kind of public service. And back then, many did. Not at all like today.

I hope that my comments won't just be viewed as a snapshot of the past, but as how those issues and ideals that Kennedy spoke about during his visit to Amherst can apply to our lives today ... across the political spectrum. The responsibilities of the wealthy, the educated, the fortunate, the artists, the creative entrepreneur, and those lucky enough to live in Western society and in America in particular are a treasure.

Thank you.

Donald Harvey Marks

References

JFK speech at Amherst College

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/historic-speeches/remarks-at-amherst-college-on-the-arts>


You're probably misreading Robert Frost's most famous poem, "The Road Not Taken."

<https://lithub.com/youre-probably-misreading-robert-frosts-most-famous-poem/>



Additional writings of Donald H. Marks, physician-scientist

- **Reliable news sources:** personal list used by Donald Harvey Marks, <http://bit.ly/3kECPvr>
- **Fake News:** Everything You Need to Know, <http://bit.ly/345cj95>
- **Best Online Free Fact-Checking Tools,**
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vRWVIRgrRAQ9xZ-xCAdZ5mrfOHzniLT7wAJJ519qQwlGKVNJRJql76ZAm-jCd8oUWQ/pub>
- **Fact-Checking: The Ways We Can Fight Fake News,**
<http://bit.ly/3qudEyX>
- **Infodemic:** the epidemic of information, <http://bit.ly/3fV7BgN>
- **The Curious Case of Deepfakes** <http://bit.ly/3GZJdXh>

- My personal **list of Red Flags, Dog Whistles**, Buzzwords, Hot Button words and meaningless caricatures that will drive toxic algorithms to heat and twist elections and trigger hatred on social media. <http://bit.ly/3TcuT4I>
- **Einstein, Relativity and Relative Ethics**, <https://bit.ly/3gWWH9t>
- **What I Haven't Told My Family on the Meaning of Time.**
<https://bit.ly/374cpzJ>
- **Jonas Salk, Polio Vaccine and Vaccinating Against Hate**,
<https://bit.ly/3xjtosh>
- Link to **my Favorite Books**  (and recent read list) <https://bit.ly/3ok9Ux>
- **Elitists Neocons Neolibs**, oh my. What are they, who are they, and why should I care? <http://bit.ly/3LMrs0e>
- **Undermoney**. Techno economic political thriller by Jay Newman. Reviewed by Donald Harvey Marks <https://bit.ly/3Fa4wqb>
- How **Woke** can we be? The meaning of Woke <https://bit.ly/3Fd7fPy>
- **Loneliness and Isolation in the age of COVID-19.** <https://bit.ly/3AMnCz1>

