

Patrick Buchanan's "Cultural War" Speech to the 1992 Republican National Convention

There is a religious war going on in this country. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the Cold War itself. For this war is for the soul of America...

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What a terrific crowd this is. What a terrific crowd.

This may even be larger than the crowd I had in Ellijay, Georgia. Don't laugh. We carried Ellijay.

Listen, my friends, we may have taken the long way home, but we finally got here to Houston. And the first thing I want to do tonight is to congratulate President George Bush and to remove any doubt about where we stand. The primaries are over; the heart is strong again; and the Buchanan brigades are enlisted -- all the way to a great Republican comeback victory in November.

My friends -- My friends, like many of you -- like many of you last month, I watched that giant masquerade ball up at Madison Square Garden, where 20,000 liberals and radicals came dressed up as moderates and centrists in the greatest single exhibition of cross-dressing in American political history.

You know, one -- one by one -- one by one the prophets of doom appeared at the podium. The Reagan decade, they moaned, was a terrible time in America, and they said the only way to prevent worse times is to turn our country's fate and our country's future over to the Party that gave us McGovern, Mondale, Carter, and Michael Dukakis. Where do they find these leaders? No way, my friends. The American people are not going to go back to the discredited liberalism of the 1960s and the failed liberalism of the 1970s, no matter how slick the package in 1992.

(Hold it, my friends.)

You know, the malcontents -- the malcontents of Madison Square Garden notwithstanding, the 1980s were not terrible years in America. They were great years. You know it. And I know it. And everyone knows it except for the carping critics who sat on the sidelines of history, jeering at one of the great statesmen of modern time: Ronald Reagan. You know out of -- Remember that time out of Jimmy Carter's days of malaise, Ronald Reagan crafted -- Ronald Reagan crafted the greatest peacetime economic recovery in history: three million new businesses, and 20 million new jobs. Under the Reagan Doctrine, one by one, it was the Communist dominos that began to fall. First, Grenada was liberated by U.S. airborne troops of the U.S. Marine Corps. Then, the mighty Red Army was driven out of Afghanistan with American weapons. And then in Nicaragua, that squalid Marxist regime was forced to hold free elections by Ronald Reagan's Contra army, and the Communists were thrown out of power. Fellow Americans

you ought to remember, it was under our Party that the Berlin Wall came down and Europe was reunited. It was under our Party that the Soviet Empire collapsed, and the captive nations broke free.

You know it is said that every American President will be remembered in history with but a single sentence. George Washington was the father of his country. Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves and saved the Union. And Ronald Reagan won the Cold War. And it is time -- And it is just about time -- It is just about time that my old colleagues, the columnists and commentators, looking down on us tonight from their sky boxes and anchor booths, gave Ronald Reagan the full credit he deserves for leading America to victory in the Cold War. Most of all, my friends -- Most of all, Ronald Reagan made us proud to be Americans again. We never felt better about our country; and we never stood taller in the eyes of the world than when "the Gipper" was at the helm.

But we are here tonight, my friends, not only to celebrate, but to nominate. An American President has many roles. He is our first diplomat, the architect of American foreign policy. And which of these two men is more qualified for that great role? George Bush has been U.N. Ambassador, Director of the CIA, envoy to China. As Vice President, George Bush co-authored and cosigned the policies that won the Cold War. As President, George Bush presided over the liberation of Eastern Europe and the termination of the Warsaw Pact. And what about Mr. Clinton? Well, Bill Clinton -- Bill Clinton couldn't find 150 words to discuss foreign policy in an acceptance speech that lasted almost an hour. You know, as was said -- as was said of another Democratic candidate, Bill Clinton's foreign policy experience is pretty much confined to having had breakfast once at the International House of Pancakes.

You know, let's recall what happened -- let us look at the record and recall what happened. Under President George Bush, more human beings escaped from the prison house of tyranny to freedom than in any other four-year period in history. And for any man -- let me tell you -- for any man to call this a record of failure is the cheap political rhetoric of politicians who only know how to build themselves up by tearing America down -- and we don't want that kind of leadership in the United States.

The presidency, my friends -- The presidency is also an office that Theodore Roosevelt called America's "bully pulpit." Harry Truman said it was "preeminently a place of moral leadership." George Bush is a defender of right-to-life, and a champion of the Judeo-Christian values and beliefs upon which America was founded.

Mr. Clinton -- Mr. Clinton however, has a different agenda. At its top is unrestricted -- unrestricted abortion on demand. When the Irish-Catholic Governor of Pennsylvania, Robert Casey, asked to say a few words on behalf of the 25 million unborn children destroyed since Roe v Wade, Bob Casey was told there was no room for him at the podium at Bill Clinton's convention, and no room at the inn. Yet -- Yet a militant leader of the homosexual rights movement could rise at that same convention and say: "Bill Clinton and Al Gore represent the most pro-lesbian and pro-gay ticket in history." And so they do. Bill Clinton says he supports "school choice" -- but only for state-run schools. Parents

who send their children to Christian schools, or private schools, or Jewish schools, or Catholic schools, need not apply.

Elect me, and you get "two for the price of one," Mr. Clinton says of his lawyer-spouse. And what -- And what does Hillary believe? Well, Hillary believes that 12-year-olds should have the right to sue their parents. And Hillary has compared marriage and the family, as institutions, to slavery and life on an Indian reservation. Well, speak for yourself, Hillary.

Friends -- Friends, this -- This, my friends -- This is radical feminism. The agenda that Clinton & Clinton would impose on America: abortion on demand, a litmus test for the Supreme Court, homosexual rights, discrimination against religious schools, women in combat units. That's change, all right. But that's not the kind of change America needs. It's not the kind of change America wants. And it's not the kind of change we can abide in a nation we still call "God's country."

The President -- The President of the United States is also -- The President of the United States is also America's Commander-in-Chief. He's the man we authorize to send fathers and sons and brothers and friends into battle. George Bush was 17 years old when they bombed Pearl Harbor. He left his high school graduation; he walked down to the recruiting office; and he signed up to become the youngest fighter pilot in the Pacific war.

And Mr. Clinton? And Bill Clinton? I'll tell you where he was. I'll tell you where he was. I'll tell you where he was. Let me tell you where he was. I'll tell you -- I'll tell you where he was. When Bill Clinton's time came in Vietnam, he sat up in a dormitory room in Oxford, England, and figured out how to dodge the draft.

Let me ask the question to this convention: Which of these two men has won the moral authority to send young Americans into battle? I suggest respectfully -- I suggest respectfully, it is the American patriot and war hero, Navy Lieutenant J. G. George Herbert Walker Bush! My fellow Americans -- My fellow Americans, this campaign is about philosophy, and it is about character; and George Bush wins hands down on both counts. And it is time all of us came home and stood beside him.

As his running mate, Mr. Clinton chose Albert Gore. But just how moderate is Prince Albert? Well according to the National Taxpayers Union, Al Gore beat out Teddy Kennedy, two straight years, for the title of "biggest spender in the U.S. Senate" and Teddy Kennedy isn't moderate about anything. I'm not kidding. I'm not kidding about Teddy. How many 60-year-olds do you know who still go to Florida for spring break?

You know up at that great -- at that great big costume party they held up in New York, Mr. Gore made a startling declaration. Henceforth, Albert Gore said, the "central organizing principle" of governments everywhere must be: the environment. Wrong, Albert. The central organizing principle of this republic is: freedom. And from the ancient -- And from the ancient forests -- from the ancient forests of Oregon and Washington, to the Inland Empire of California, America's great middle class has got to start standing up

to these environmental extremists who put birds and rats and insects ahead of families, workers, and jobs.

One year ago -- You know, one year ago, my friends -- One year ago I could not have dreamt I would be here tonight. I was just one of many panelists on what President Bush calls "those crazy Sunday talk shows." But I disagreed with the President and so we challenged the President in the Republican primaries, and we fought as best we could. From February to June, President Bush won 33 of those primaries. I can't recall exactly how many we won. I'll get you the figure tomorrow.

But tonight I do want to speak from the heart to the 3 million people who voted for Pat Buchanan for President. I will never -- I will never -- I will never forget you, or the great honor you have done me. But I do believe -- I do believe deep in my heart that the right place for us to be now, in this presidential campaign, is right beside George Bush. This Party -- This Party is my home. This Party is our home and we've got to come home to it. And don't let anyone tell you any different.

Yes, we disagreed with President Bush, but we stand with him for the freedom to choose religious schools, and we stand with him against the amoral idea that gay and lesbian couples should have the same standing in law as married men and women. We stand with President Bush -- We stand with President Bush for right-to-life and for voluntary prayer in the public schools. And we stand against putting our wives and daughters and sisters into combat units of the United States Army. And we stand, my -- my friends -- We also stand with President Bush in favor of the right of small towns and communities to control the raw sewage of pornography that so terribly pollutes our popular culture. We stand with President Bush in favor of federal judges who interpret the law as written, and against would-be Supreme Court justices like Mario Cuomo who think they have a mandate to rewrite the Constitution.

Friends, this election is about more than who gets what. It is about who we are. It is about what we believe and what we stand for as Americans. There is a religious war going on in this country. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the Cold War itself. For this war is for the soul of America. And in that struggle for the soul of America, Clinton & Clinton are on the other side, and George Bush is on our side. And so to the Buchanan Brigades out there, we have to come home and stand beside George Bush.

In these six months of campaigning from Concord, New Hampshire to California, I came to know our country better than I have known it ever before in my life, and I gathered up memories that are going to be with me the rest of my days.

There was that day-long ride through the great state of Georgia in a bus Vice President Bush himself had used in 1988 called Asphalt One. The ride ended in a 9:00 PM speech in a tiny town in southern Georgia called Fitzgerald.

There were those workers at the James River Paper Mill, in Northern New Hampshire in a town called Groveton -- tough, hearty men. None of them would say a word to me as I came down the line, shaking their hands one by one. They were under a threat of losing their jobs at Christmas. And as I moved down the line, one tough fellow about my age just looked up and said to me, "Save our jobs."

Then there was the legal secretary that I met at the Manchester airport on Christmas Day who came running up to me and said, "Mr. Buchanan, I'm going to vote for you." And then she broke down weeping, and she said, "I've lost my job; I don't have any money, and they're going to take away my little girl. What am I going to do?"

My friends, these people are our people. They don't read Adam Smith or Edmund Burke, but they come from the same schoolyards and the same playgrounds and towns as we came from. They share our beliefs and our convictions, our hopes and our dreams. These are the conservatives of the heart. They are our people. And we need to reconnect with them. We need to let them know we know how bad they're hurting. They don't expect miracles of us, but they need to know we care.

There were the people -- There were the people that, my friends -- There were the people of Hayfork, a tiny town up in California's Trinity Alps, a town that is now under a sentence of death because a federal judge has set aside nine million acres for the habitat of the spotted owl -- forgetting about the habitat of the men and women who live and work in Hayfork.

And there were the brave people -- And there were the brave people of Koreatown who took the worst of those L.A. riots, but still live the family values we treasure, and who still deeply believe in the American dream.

Friends, in these wonderful -- In these wonderful 25 weeks of our campaign, the saddest days were the days of that riot in L.A., the worst riot in American history. But out of that awful tragedy can come a message of hope. Hours after that riot ended, I went down to the Army compound in South Los Angeles, where I met the troopers of the 18th Cavalry who had come to save the city of Los Angeles. An officer of the 18th Cav said, "Mr. Buchanan, I want you to talk to a couple of our troopers. And I went over and I met these young fellows. They couldn't have been 20 years old. They could not have been 20 years old. And they recounted their story.

They had come into Los Angeles late in the evening of the second day, and the rioting was still going on. And two of them walked up a dark street, where the mob had burned and looted every single building on the block but one, a convalescent home for the aged. And the mob was headed in, to ransack and loot the apartments of the terrified old men and women inside. The troopers came up the street, M-16s at the ready. And the mob threatened and cursed, but the mob retreated because it had met the one thing that could stop it: force, rooted in justice, and backed by moral courage.

Now, Greater -- Greater love than this -- "Greater love than this hath no man than that he lay down his life for his friend."¹ Here were 19-year-old boys ready to lay down their lives to stop a mob from molesting old people they did not even know. And as those boys took back the streets of Los Angeles, block by block, my friends, we must take back our cities, and take back our culture, and take back our country.

God bless you, and God bless America.