

ROOSEVELT'S DEDICATION SPEECH ★ JUNE 3, 1903

“**C**ongressman Hitt and you my fellow Americans and particularly you the men who in every gathering, the first of citizens of this republic, are for evermore entitled to right of line. I consider myself fortunate in being able to come today to this city to dedicate this beautiful Memorial hall, a hall in the erection of which, the citizens of this city and town honor themselves in honoring you.

I greet you, the men who fought on land and glad I am that here we should have the flag of the monitor [ship] Winnebago to remind us, if we need such reminder, and I hardly think we do, to [text illegible] a matter of personal concern to every citizen of the union. No more fitting memorial, no more fitting monument could be erected than a hall such as this, a hall beautiful in itself and beautiful, because of the uses to which it is consecrated, and the hall, the monument is not only for you just as you are not only for yourselves, your lives, your deeds, have now become part of the every fiber of the nation. You warred for four years for your children, that they could have within their borders peace forever. You warred to establish the fact that this government was not one of license but one of liberty and by and through the law that this government was in very fact unified and free. You and those like you saw what Abraham Lincoln saw, that anarchy was the handmaiden of



tyranny. You saw that injustice by one man to that man's fellow inevitably must be revenged by the mere logic of fact. And that the only way to secure safety for the republic in the future was to do away with such injustice. You fought to establish a principle that this government should be for all time a government of self-respecting freemen; no man being permitted to wrong his neighbor and each man being in return shielded from wrong himself. The problems that we now have to face at the onset of the new century are different from the problems that you had to face.

New methods for their solution must be devised but the spirit in which we must face them must be the same spirit that you showed when Abraham Lincoln called and you answered. This is a government of law, of liberty, of order; it is not, and it never shall be a government by a

plutocracy; it is not and it never shall be a government by a mob.

No baser creature exists than he who looks with arrogant disregard upon his fellow because that fellow is less off. There can be no baser man, but there can be a man as base, and that is the man who regards with envy, rancor and hatred his fellow because that fellow is better off.

The two spirits, the two attitudes are equally base and equally unworthy of every man bred up in the principles of American Citizenship or to the traditions of the men who in Washington founded this republic, who in Lincoln's time preserved it.

I am warned that my time here has come to an end. I thank you. I thank you in the name of my own comrades of the Spanish American war and of the men of the National Guard, ever ready to come forward and do their part as you did yours. Our job was a little one, but we did it. And we hope that you feel that in the hour of lesser trial, we showed ourselves not wholly unworthy of the men whose spirit had rung true in the hour of great trial. I thank you for listening to me. I do not know that I have been able to do you any good, but you have been able to do me a great deal.”

PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT

*Excerpt from the
Rockford Morning Star,
June 4, 1903*