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My fellow Americans, we have come to the final days of this campaign. And I'm impressed with how clear the issues have become -- I'm impressed because I know just how hard it has been to get my message past the many obstacles and filters that ~~have~~ have been put between us.

But obviously, not all the barriers in the world could keep you from seeing what stares you in the face -- and what you know in your hearts.

Take a good look. You can't help seeing how far this nation of ours has drifted away from constitutional government, away from moral order, away from peace, and away from freedom.

Just think about it for a moment. Do you want my opponent to "let us continue"?

We simply can't continue -- unless we want to commit national ~~suicide~~ suicide. We have to chart a new course of peace and freedom, of morality and constitutional order. We must stop the spread of socialism at home and Communism abroad.

And that, my fellow Americans, is why I'm running for the Presidency of the United States.

Stop and think a moment. What kind of a President do you really want?

Do you want a President who will twist arms, manipulate power, and take more and more control over your lives?

Do you want a man who will spend and spend -- and borrow and borrow -- and tax and tax?

Do you want a President who won't bother to find out if his closest advisers are security risks -- even though the survival of our country depends on the secrets they possess?

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Do you want a President who will sit idly by while crime grows five times faster than population?

Who will follow a foreign policy of drift, deception, and defeat -- trusting our Communist enemies and mistreating our free world friends?

Do you want a President who will promise anything and everything, just to buy the job -- promise even to free you from all your responsibilities?

Do you really think the President of the United States should be this kind of person?

Just think about it for a moment. Don't you want a President who, above all, respects the Constitution -- who respects the independence of the other branches of government, and the rights of our sovereign states?

Don't you want a President who opposes the forced bussing of children from their normal neighborhood schools -- who opposes the principle of forced integration as well as forced segregation?

Don't you want a President who will cut your federal government down to size, who will run an honest Administration staffed with men of integrity -- who will make his Administration live within its means?

Don't you want a President who will place national security before everything else, who will keep the peace through a responsible policy of strength and high purpose -- who will give back to our nation the dignity, respect, and prestige that it deserves?

You're being asked by my opponent and his curious crew to vote for everything under the sun -- for everything but the American way.

Let's vote for the American way. How about voting for freedom this time?

Now, I want you to pause with me and think about what that means. What is freedom?

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When words are thrown into the arena of politics, their meanings often become confused. And that is just what has happened to the word "freedom."

The confusion began more than two decades ago when you were told that your government has the power to give you freedom -- to give you such things as freedom from want and freedom from fear. Those who seek national office are now even beginning to promise you freedom from ~~worry~~ worry and responsibility.

Of course, nobody wants to be ~~poor~~ poor or worried or frightened. But do you really believe that government can make you rich and happy and confident? Is that what you think freedom is, something somebody in the White House can give you if he feels like it?

Do you really believe there is somebody so wise and prudent and powerful that he can -- or will -- give you those things if you just put him in the White House? Do you really believe him when he tells you how smart and big-hearted he is?

Of course you don't.

You and I know that all these things are the very opposite of what the founders and builders of this nation meant by freedom. You and I know that the Declaration of Independence was written by men who had their bellies full of oppressive government. And the framers of the Constitution were determined that we should never again have a government distant and arbitrary.

To them the meaning of freedom was clear. It meant freedom from oppressive government.

That's why they gave us our most precious political gift: a government that is limited and dispersed -- a government that is close to the people it serves. That's why they gave us a Bill of Rights, spelling out the powers specifically denied to government.

Let us never forget that those rights are constantly in danger, not only from frontal assault but also from erosion through unintentional neglect and disregard. No person -- whether government official or private citizen -- should violate the rights of some in order to further the rights of others.

But isn't that very thing happening more and more across this land of ours? I fear it is. And the worst thing about it is that we are being asked to destroy the rights of some under the false banner of promoting the "civil rights" of others.

We only cloud the issue by labeling the real problem before us as one of "civil rights." A man's civil rights are those he has in relation to his government, not in relation to his fellow man. Of course, government should not discriminate among citizens on irrelevant grounds such as color, creed, or religion.

And no national political leader believes it should.

All good Americans agree that the rights guaranteed by the Constitution must be realized. And, as I have said so many times and repeat once again, the President must execute his office and exercise his moral leadership to make sure that this is the case.

Congress must also take action to remedy defects in the laws dealing with genuine civil rights, and that is why I voted for and supported the acts of 1957 and 1960. These laws gave needed protection and security to every citizen's right to vote in federal elections, regardless of race or creed. Nothing less would be faithful to our Constitution.

But the fundamental issue of our day -- the new area into which the act of 1964 dangerously treads -- is a different one. It is the issue of unfair discrimination in the private affairs of men. I am unalterably opposed to such discrimination, but I also know that government can provide no lasting solution. No law can make one person like another if he doesn't want to. Government can do little more than offer moral leadership and persuasion. The ultimate solution lies in the hearts of men.

It is often said that only the freedom of a member of a minority is violated when some barrier keeps him from associating with others in his society. But this is wrong. Freedom of association is a double freedom or it is nothing at all. It applies to both parties who want to associate with each other. And so the barriers infringe the freedom of everybody in the society, ~~not~~ not just the minorities.

Now, the removal of such barriers enhances freedom. That is clear. But it is equally clear that freedom is diminished when barriers are raised against the freedom not to associate. We must never forget that the freedom to associate means the same thing as the freedom not to associate. It is wrong to erect legal barriers against either side of this freedom.

We are forced to only one conclusion. As far as the government is concerned, it must ensure freedom of association, but it cannot and should not ensure association itself. That is a matter that must be mutually and freely decided by the individuals involved. It is a matter of the heart and conscience.

And so I endorse the position of the Republican Platform of 1964 on the bussing of school children. I say with the Platform that it is wrong to take school children out of their normal neighborhood schools for the sake of achieving "racial balance," or some other hypothetical goal of perfect equality imagined by the theorists of the so-called "Great Society." It is wrong -- morally wrong -- because it re-introduces through the back door the very principle of allocation by race that makes compulsory segregation morally wrong and offensive to freedom.

The bussing of school children is only one example of doctrinaire and misguided equalitarianism. If we extend the principle to its logical end, we are compelled to use racial quotas as a substitute for the principle of equal opportunity in every aspect of social life. Why not move families from one neighborhood to another so that quotas set by some bureaucrat somewhere will be everywhere met?

Or workers from one job to another? Or business men, or government officials, or any group of any description? Is this what we have in mind when we speak of freedom and equal opportunity?

Of course not. Our aim, as I understand it, is ~~not~~ neither to establish a segregated society nor to establish an integrated society. Our aim is to preserve a free society.

Let us never forget that our people came here as immigrants from all over the world. Each minority group -- including my own -- faced some degree of discrimination as it arrived and took root in our society. And each overcame the obstacles of discrimination because -- when all is said -- America is the land of opportunity.

While attending to our liberties at home, let us reclaim our proud heritage as the land of promise for the oppressed and enslaved throughout the world. Let our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, and our living example inspire the downtrodden everywhere!

And more than that, let us display through deeds -- and not through empty slogans -- our compassion for the victims of tyranny. Let us resolve never again to give aid to the godless Communist enslavers of captive peoples anywhere -- in Poland, in Yugoslavia, or in the Soviet Union itself. Let us resolve never again to slam the door on that last hope of the oppressed -- the freedom to leave the country of oppression.

Let us resolve never to permit the shame of another ~~But~~ Berlin Wall.

And let us welcome to our shores those victims of Soviet enslavement fortunate enough to escape from the Captive Nations. Let us once again be the warm haven of those seeking freedom and equal opportunity.

Let us make it crystal clear to Communist tyrants that we shall never be satisfied with anything short of restoration of freedom and independence to Captive Nations. What Communist tyrants have stolen from peoples around the globe -- in violation of solemn agreements -- they must restore to those peoples.

This we must declare, for all to hear, if we are to keep faith with our heritage of freedom and honor.

Yes, ours is the heritage of a free society. To remain free, we must have a government of leadership, ~~restraint~~ restraint, and compassion. It must always stand ready to aid the needy and support the helpless.

I will also make sure that the federal government follows a responsible fiscal policy and preserves the value of the dollar. My Administration will put an end to the inflationary policy of perpetual deficit spending.

I will never do anything to endanger the benefits of those who rely on social security payments. That is, and always has been, my solemn pledge.

These are the guideposts that mark the way to progress through freedom. You may choose this way, or you may choose the other one open to you.

The other is the way of the man who would be the Great Leader of his own "Great Society." He opens up his arms and says, "Bring your troubles to me. I will ~~we~~ take ~~we~~ care of them for you."

"You want peace? I'll aid, appease, and accommodate the Communists for you.

"You want more ~~we~~ money for the potatoes you didn't grow? I'll give it to you.

"You want no responsibilities? I'll do everything for you.

"You want no worries? I'll worry for you."

Relax and don't worry. The Great Leader and his curious crew will do for you all those things you find unpleasant to do for yourselves. And all he asks is that you give him more and more power over your lives -- more and more without end.

Never mind the wise statesman who once warned us: "Power corrupts -- absolute power corrupts absolutely." That's old-fashioned. That was meant for another age. This is the modern world, a world that you -- and you -- and you -- are too weak or too dumb to cope with.

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It's a Great Leader you need -- a leader who is more clever than you are, and stronger by far. Put all the power in his hands, and he will give you "true" freedom -- which we used to call slavery. And then you won't need to be concerned about your oppressed brethren ~~anywhere~~ elsewhere in the world.

Is this all a ~~fantasy~~ fantastic nightmare? Think about it a minute.

You have a choice to make. Which way will you choose?

Will you choose the way that continues the spread of socialism at home and Communism abroad?

Or will you join with me and stop the spread of socialism at home and Communism abroad?

I have faith in you. I know which way you will choose. And with your help and with God's blessing, I will bring the country back to the proven path of progress through freedom.