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Document A

America

America I've given you all and now I'm nothing.

America two dollars and twentyseven cents January 17, 1956.

I can't stand my own mind.

America when will we end the human war?

5 Go fuck yourself with your atom bomb.

I don't feel good don't bother me.

I won't write my poem till I'm in my right mind.

America when will you be angelic?

When will you take off your clothes?

10 When will you look at yourself through the grave?

When will you be worthy of your million Trotskyites?

America why are your libraries full of tears?

America when will you send your eggs to India?

I'm sick of your insane demands.

15 When can I go into the supermarket and buy what I need with
my good looks?

America after all it is you and I who are perfect not the next world.

Your machinery is too much for me.

You made me want to be a saint.

20 There must be some other way to settle this argument.

Burroughs is in Tangiers I don't think he'll come back it's
sinister.

Are you being sinister or is this some form of practical joke?

I'm trying to come to the point.

25 I refuse to give up my obsession.

America stop pushing I know what I'm doing.

America the plum blossoms are falling.

I haven't read the newspapers for months, everyday somebody goes on trial
for murder.

30 America I feel sentimental about the Wobblies.

America I used to be a communist when I was a kid I'm not sorry.

I smoke marijuana every chance I get.

I sit in my house for days on end and stare at the roses in the closet.

When I go to Chinatown I get drunk and never get laid.

35 My mind is made up there's going to be trouble.

You should have seen me reading Marx.

My psychoanalyst thinks I'm perfectly right.

I won't say the Lord's Prayer.

I have mystical visions and cosmic vibrations.

40 America I still haven't told you what you did to Uncle Max after he came
over from Russia.

I'm addressing you.

Are you going to let your emotional life be run by Time Magazine?
I'm obsessed by Time Magazine.

45 I read it every week.
Its cover stares at me every time I slink past the corner candystore.
I read it in the basement of the Berkeley Public Library.
It's always telling me about responsibility. Businessmen are serious.
Movie producers are serious. Everybody's serious but me.

50 It occurs to me that I am America.
I am talking to myself again.

Asia is rising against me.
I haven't got a chinaman's chance.
I'd better consider my national resources.

55 My national resources consist of two joints of marijuana millions of genitals
an unpublishable private literature that jetplanes 1400 miles an hour
and twentyfive-thousand mental institutions.
I say nothing about my prisons nor the millions of underprivileged who live
in my flowerpots under the light of five hundred suns.

60 I have abolished the whorehouses of France, Tangiers is the next to go.
My ambition is to be President despite the fact that I'm a Catholic.

America how can I write a holy litany in your silly mood?
I will continue like Henry Ford my strophes are as individual as his automob-
biles more so they're all different sexes.

65 America I will sell you strophes \$2500 apiece \$500 down on your old strophe
America free Tom Mooney
America save the Spanish Loyalists
America Sacco & Vanzetti must not die
America I am the Scottsboro boys.

70 America when I was seven momma took me to Communist Cell meetings
they sold us garbanzos a handful per ticket a ticket costs a nickel and the speeches were
free everybody was angelic and sentimental about the workers it was all so sincere you
have no idea what a good thing the party was in 1835 Scott Nearing was a grand old man
a real mensch Mother Bloor the Silk-strikers' Ewig-Weibliche made me cry I once saw
75 the Yiddish orator Israel Amter plain. Everybody must have been a spy.

America you don't really want to go to war.
America its them bad Russians.
Them Russians them Russians and them Chinamen. And them Russians.
The Russia wants to eat us alive. The Russia's power mad. She wants to take
80 our cars from out our garages.

Her wants to grab Chicago. Her needs a Red *Reader's Digest*. Her wants our
auto plants in Siberia. Him big bureaucracy running our fillingstations.
That no good. Ugh. Him make Indians learn read. Him need big black
niggers. Hah. Her make us all work sixteen hours a day. Help.

85 America this is quite serious.
America this is the impression I get from looking in the television set.
America is this correct?
I'd better get right down to the job.
It's true I don't want to join the Army or turn lathes in precision parts
90 factories, I'm nearsighted and psychopathic anyway.
America I'm putting my queer shoulder to the wheel.

Berkeley, January 17, 1956

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Source: Allen Ginsberg, "America" from *Collected Poems, 1947-1980*, New York: Harper&Row, Publishers, p.146-148, 1984.

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Document B

Farewell Address to the Nation by Ronald Reagan – January 11, 1989

[...] Ours was the first revolution in the history of mankind that truly reversed the course of government, and with three little words: “We the people.” “We the people” tell the government what to do, it doesn’t tell us. “We the people” are the driver, the government is the car. And we decide where it should go, and by what route, and how fast. Almost all the world’s constitutions are documents in which governments tell the people what their privileges are. Our Constitution is a document in which “We the people” tell the government what it is allowed to do. “We the people” are free. This belief has been the underlying basis for everything I’ve tried to do these past eight years.

But back in the 1960s, when I began, it seemed to me that we’d begun reversing the order of things – that through more and more rules and regulations and confiscatory taxes, the government was taking more of our money, more of our options, and more of our freedom. I went into politics in part to put up my hand and say, “Stop.” I was a citizen politician, and it seemed the right thing for a citizen to do.

I think we have stopped a lot of what needed stopping. And I hope we have once again reminded people that man is not free unless government is limited. There’s a clear cause and effect here that is as neat and predictable as a law of physics: As government expands, liberty contracts.

Nothing is less free than pure communism, and yet we have, the past few years, forged a satisfying new closeness with the Soviet Union. I’ve been asked if this isn’t a gamble, and my answer is no because we’re basing our actions not on words but deeds. The détente of the 1970s was based not on actions but promises. They’d promise to treat their own people and the people of the world better. But the gulag was still the gulag, and the state was still expansionist, and they still waged proxy wars in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Well, this time, so far, it’s different. President Gorbachev has brought about some internal democratic reforms and begun the withdrawal from Afghanistan. He has also freed prisoners whose names I’ve given him every time we’ve met.

But life has a way of reminding you of big things through small incidents. Once, during the heady days of the Moscow summit, Nancy and I decided to break off from the entourage one afternoon to visit the shops on Arbat Street – that’s a little street just off Moscow’s main shopping area. Even though our visit was a surprise, every Russian there immediately recognized us and called out our names and reached for our hands. We were just about swept away by the warmth. You could almost feel the possibilities in all that joy. But within seconds, a KGB detail pushed their way toward us and began pushing and shoving the people in the crowd. It was an interesting moments. It reminded me that while the man of the street in the Soviet Union yearns for peace, the government is Communist. And those who run it are Communists, and that means we and they view such issues as freedom and human rights very differently.

We must keep up our guard, but we must also continue to work together to lessen and eliminate tension and mistrust. My view is that President Gorbachev is different from previous Soviet leaders. I think he knows some of the things wrong with his society and is trying to fix them. We wish him well. And we’ll continue to work to make sure that the Soviet Union that eventually emerges from this process is a less threatening one. What it all boils down to is this. I want the new closeness to continue. And it will, as long as we make it clear that we will continue to act in a certain way as long as they continue to act in a helpful manner. If and when they don’t, at first pull your punches. If they persist, pull the plug. It’s

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still trust but verify. It's still play, but cut the cards. It's still watch closely. And don't be afraid to see what you see.

50 I've been asked if I have any regrets. Well, I do. The deficit is one. I've been talking a great deal about that lately, but tonight isn't for arguments. And I'm going to hold my tongue. But an observation: I've had my share of victories in the Congress, but what few people noticed is that I never won anything you didn't win for me. They never saw my troops, they never saw Reagan's regiments, the American people. You won every battle with every call you made and letter you wrote demanding action. Well, action is still needed. If we're to finish the job, Reagan's regiments will have to become the Bush brigades. Soon he'll be the chief, and he'll
55 need you every bit as much as I did.

Finally, there is a great tradition of warnings in presidential farewells, and I've got one that's been on my mind for some time. But oddly enough it starts with one of the things I'm proudest of in the past eight years: the resurgence of national pride that I called the new patriotism. This national feeling is good, but it won't count for much, and it won't last unless
60 it's grounded in thoughtfulness and knowledge.

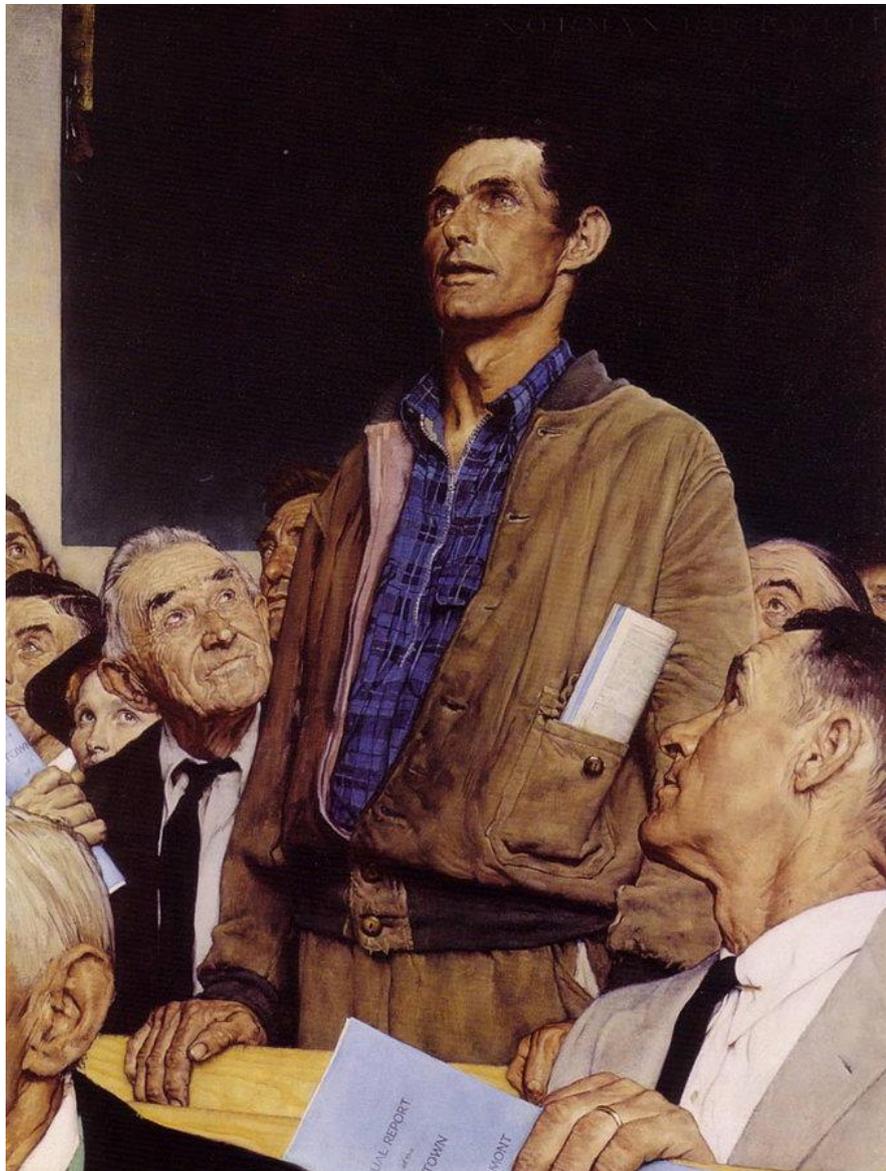
An informed patriotism is what we want. And are we doing a good enough job teaching our children what America is and what she represents in the long history of the world? Those of us who are over thirty-five or so years of age grew up in a different America. We were taught, very directly, what it means to be an American. And we absorbed, almost in the air, a love of
65 country and an appreciation of its institutions. If you didn't get these things from your family, you got them from the neighborhood, from the father down the street who fought in Korea of the family who lost someone at Anzio. Or you could get a sense of patriotism from school. And if all else failed, you could get a sense of patriotism from the popular culture. The movies celebrated democratic values and implicitly reinforced the idea that America was special. TV was like that, too, through the midsixties.
70

But now, we're about to enter the nineties, and some things have changed. Younger parents aren't sure that an unambivalent appreciation of America is the right thing to teach modern children. And as for those who create the popular culture, well-grounded patriotism is no longer the style. Our spirit is back, but we haven't reinstitutionalized it. We've got to do a
75 better job of getting across that America is freedom – freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of enterprise. And freedom is special and rare. [...]

Source: Joint Committee on Printing Congress (U.S.), *Memorial Services in the Congress of the United States and Tributes in Eulogy of Ronald Reagan Late a President of the United States*, United States Government Printing Office, 2005, p. 226-227.

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Document C



Norman Rockwell, *Freedom of Speech* (1943)
Oil on canvas
116.2 cm × 90 cm (45.75 in × 35.5 in)
Norman Rockwell Museum,
Stockbridge, Massachusetts
United States