

Good Afternoon.

And thank you for your invitation to speak at such a great University.

For a guy who grew up along the Mississippi River in South Minneapolis, and graduated from Roosevelt High School, this is quite an honor.

When I was growing up in Minneapolis I had a group of friends that I call the “Southside boys.” Today we are still very close and they continue to be my very trusted friends.

But the nice thing is, no matter what I do, or say they are still my friends. While it is a great honor for me to be invited to places like Georgetown University, Harvard and Yale, to them it doesn't matter.

To the South side boys I am who I am. They accept me.

I think that there is a lesson in that for everyone that has ever been or ever wants to be in politics.

In your letter of invitation you described me as a person who has challenged traditional beliefs...and a person who is vocal and confident in my beliefs.

Well, you may be right, but the important thing is that I am the same person today as Governor, as I was as a kid growing up on the south side, a Navy Seal in Southeast Asia, or as *Jesse the Body* in front of 20,000 screaming fans.

And I am not going to change who I am. Because if I do, I believe that I will not be effective as a leader and as good a friend to the south side boys.

I am vocal and provocative because that is who I am.

And even though I believe that our political system is in trouble, I think it can be saved.

I can help save it by being honest and true to my convictions. I can help save it by being vocal, being confident and challenging traditional beliefs.

But no one person can save it alone.

That task belongs to the people.

Our political system is in trouble because the Republican and the Democrats have a stranglehold on the electoral system and we the people are letting them get away with it.

The message I bring to you today is that as young people you have the power to break out of this tired old system of partisan, power-building gridlock.

You have the power to say “no” to the special interest money that controls our political system today.

You have the power to demand that our elected officials put the people before their parties. You have the power to support candidates that put candor above pander.

You have the power—but you don’t use it.

You don’t vote. Did you know that in 1972 in Minnesota, the state that most often leads the nation in voter turnout, 50% of people aged 18 to 24 voted? But in 1996, only 32% of the people in the 18 to 24 age group voted.

That is pathetic.

Believe me, when you vote you make a difference. As I stand here today I am living proof.

What will motivate you to vote?

More choices.

When we elect a president or governor in the United States we basically get one more choice than the people in the old Soviet Union got.

I believe that if our political system would encourage more choices our government would be more representative and our citizens would be more engaged.

Is it a coincidence that the two states that consistently lead the nation in voter involvement, Minnesota and Maine, have independent Governors that were elected in three way races?

I don’t think so.

Do you think that if John McCain would have had the courage to run for President in a third party that he wouldn’t be in the thick of the race right now?

Of course he would.

But the trouble is Democrats and Republicans like the system we have. They like the fact that you don’t vote.

Because as long as they know just who is going to vote they can pander and plead their way to victory.

Voting should be easy. But do Democrats and Republicans want voting to be easy?

No.

Because if the entire nation had same day registration like Minnesota then things might get out of their control and people like Jesse Ventura might get elected.

You have the power. Use it.

If you watched the debates Tuesday night you saw another classic example of the stranglehold the Democrats and Republicans have on our system.

The Presidential Debate Commission is a fraud and the debate they put on was a disgrace to our constitution and an insult to our country's proud history.

Did you know that under the current guidelines, Abraham Lincoln would not have been permitted to participate in the presidential debates of 1860?

The fact is, at the time;

- Lincoln was a former one-term House member,
- was considered a regional candidate at best, and
- he belonged to a new third party—the Republicans!!

In 1992, the presidential debates were found to be the biggest single factor used by voters to determine whom they were going to support. Before the debates, Ross Perot was at 7%. After being included in the debates he ended up getting 19% of the popular vote.

In my election in 1998 I was at 10% in the polls and had a total of \$10,000 in my campaign chest before the debates.

Well, my Democratic opponent, Hubert Humphrey III, insisted that I be included in the debates. (He thought that my inclusion would take votes away from the Republican candidate and “waste” them on me)

Well, I was in the debates and on Election Day I “wasted” them both with “wasted” votes.

And today, in Minnesota, we have continued the fight against the two party system.

I am happy to say that this year the Minnesota Independence Party has over fifty candidates for state offices and a very good chance to win a congressional seat in St. Paul.

Is this a movement?

I don't know.

But it would be good for our democracy if it was.

It would be good if young people would re-engage in our political process.

And another thing that would be good is if our media would take the third party movement seriously.

But old institutions move slowly and the media is as imbedded in the two party system as our political institutions are.

What I would say to the media is that when you write a story about a two party horse race and ignore a third party candidate, you are ignoring your responsibility to serve all your readers, not just Democrat and Republican readers.

When the media ignore, or relegate third party candidates to the back pages, it only serves to perpetuate the status quo.

What the media should understand is that polls show that most American's are not strongly aligned with either major party.

Is it the media's job to re-enforce the two party system by concentrating their coverage on two candidates?

No.

It is the media's job to be fair and impartial.

And it is the media's job to educate with complete and accurate information.

Finally, it would be good for our whole country to be less focused on just two ways of doing things.

It would be good if every four years presidential candidates didn't have to pander to party extremists to get on the ballot.

Let the extreme right and the extreme left have the Republican and Democratic parties if they want them.

But don't prevent the moderates and pragmatists from being heard.

If you are not comfortable with the Democrats and the Republicans, be true to your convictions.

Like the South side boys accept me for who I am, accept yourself, believe in yourself.

You have the power. Get engaged. Be honest. Be vocal. Be provocative.

Have the courage to challenge traditional beliefs.

And above all, be confident in your beliefs.

Both you as a person, and the United States as a country, will be better for it in the long run.

Thank you.