

America is not defined by ethnicity. It's not defined by geography. We are a nation born of an idea, a commitment to human freedom.

And over the last five decades, there have been countless times when people made the mistake of counting on America's decline or disengagement. Time and again, those voices have been proven wrong, but only because of the service and sacrifice of exceptional men and women, those who answered the call of history and made America's cause their own.

Like the country he served, Richard contained complexities. So full of life, he was a man both confident in himself and curious about others, alive to the world around him with a character that is captured in the words of a Mathew Arnold poem that he admired:

But often, in the din of strife,  
there rises an unspeakable desire  
after the knowledge of the buried life;  
[the] thirst to spend our fire and restless  
force  
in tracking our true, original course;  
a longing to inquire  
into the mystery of this heart which beats  
so wild, so deep in us—to know

## Statement on the Situation in Tunisia *January 14, 2011*

I condemn and deplore the use of violence against citizens peacefully voicing their opinion in Tunisia, and I applaud the courage and dignity of the Tunisian people. The United States stands with the entire international community in bearing witness to this brave and determined struggle for the universal rights that we must all uphold, and we will long remember the images of the Tunisian people seeking to make their voices heard. I urge all parties to maintain calm and avoid violence and call on the Tunisian Government to respect human

whence our lives come and where they go.

Richard is gone now, but we carry with us his thirst to know, to grasp, and to heal the world around him. His legacy is seen in the children of Bosnia who lived to raise families of their own, in a Europe that is peaceful and united and free, in young boys and girls from the tribal regions of Pakistan to whom he pledged our country's friendship, and in the role that America continues to play as a light to all who aspire to live in freedom and in dignity.

Five decades after a young President called him to serve, we can confidently say that Richard bore the burden to assure the survival and success of liberty. He made a difference. Let us now carry that work forward in our time.

May God bless the memory of Richard Holbrooke, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:33 p.m. at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In his remarks, he referred to Kati Marton, wife, Anthony and David Holbrooke, sons, and Elizabeth Jennings, stepdaughter, of former Ambassador Holbrooke.

rights and to hold free and fair elections in the near future that reflect the true will and aspirations of the Tunisian people.

As I have said before, each nation gives life to the principle of democracy in its own way, grounded in the traditions of its own people, and those countries that respect the universal rights of their people are stronger and more successful than those that do not. I have no doubt that Tunisia's future will be brighter if it is guided by the voices of the Tunisian people.