

You all probably know that Jefferson, that inveterate designer, even designed his own tombstone, and specified the only things it was to say about his life: that he wrote the Declaration and Virginia's Statute of Religious Freedom, and that he was Father of the University of Virginia. Of how many other men can it be said that their having served two full terms as President of the United States—which I think we all agree is no shabby achievement!—was in the second or third tier of their accomplishments?

Some will object that all this praise fails to do justice to the flaws in our subject. And that is true enough. Should we then begin, as is overwhelmingly the fashion today, by emphasizing Jefferson's complexity, his contradictions, his shortcomings? That might not seem very charitable, or in keeping with the spirit of the occasion. But it would have the Jeffersonian virtue of honesty. And there are negative aspects of Jefferson's life and career that simply cannot be denied.

No one can deny that although Jefferson opposed slavery in theory, he consistently failed to oppose it in practice, including notably in the conduct of his own life at Monticello.

No one can deny that Jefferson's racial views, particularly as expressed in his book *Notes on the State of Virginia*, are appalling by today's standards.

No one can deny that Jefferson often practiced a very harsh brand of politics. His famously conciliatory words "We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists" in his First Inaugural Address were quickly belied by his ferocious partisanship, which was relentlessly aimed at stigmatizing the Federalist party and driving it out of existence.

Nor can one deny that his greatest act as President, the Louisiana Purchase, and his worst, the Embargo Act, both represented a complete repudiation of his most basic principles about the dangers of big government and strong executive authority.

These are not small flaws, nor are they the only ones. We are not wrong to insist upon their being remembered, even on this day. Still, the compulsion to criticize Jefferson has gone too far. Jefferson is, I believe, one of the principal victims of our era's small-minded rage against the very idea that imperfect men can still be heroes—and that we badly need such heroes. We have been living through an era that feels compelled to cut the storied past down to the size of the tabloid present. Perhaps the time has come for that to change.

For when all is said and done, Thomas Jefferson deserves to be remembered and revered as a great intellect and great patriot, whose worldwide influence, from Beijing to Lhasa to Kiev to Prague, has been incalculable, and whose belief in the dignity and unrealized potential to be found in the minds and hearts of ordinary people is at the core of what is greatest in the American democratic experiment. It is in this sense that James Parton was absolutely correct in making the following proclamation: "If Jefferson is wrong, America is wrong. If America is right, Jefferson was right."

Of course, we want to know more than Jefferson's words; we want to feel that we know the man himself. But that is exceptionally hard with Jefferson. He eludes our grasp. He may well have been the shyest man ever to occupy the office of President, awkward and taciturn except in small and convivial settings, such as small dinner parties, where he could feel at his ease, and shed some of his reticence.

He loathed public speaking, giving only two major speeches while President, and none on the campaign trail. He often felt that the work of politics ran against his nature, and complained that the Presidency

was an office of "splendid misery," which "brings nothing but increasing drudgery & daily loss of friends."

Add to that the fact that he had more than a little bit of the recluse in him. Twice he withdrew entirely from public life, first in the 1780s, after a disappointing term as governor of Virginia, then the second time at the conclusion of his presidency, when he left Washington disgusted and exhausted, anxious to be rid of the place. As he wrote a friend, "Never did a prisoner, released from his chains, feel such relief as I shall on shaking off the shackles of power." Never was he happier than when ensconced in his Monticello retreat, his "portico facing the wilderness" that he loved and found renewal in.

At bottom, I think Jefferson is best understood as a man of letters. Literally. Jefferson wrote almost 20,000 letters in his lifetime, and it is in these letters that he seems to have felt freest and most fully himself. Although he complained to John Adams that he suffered "under the persecution of letters," the opposite seems to have been the case. This was a man who lived much of his life inside his own head, and it is in these letters that he comes most fully alive for us. He seems to have needed the buffer of letters interposed between himself and the world; but with that buffer in place, the otherwise awkward and taciturn Jefferson became more open, wonderfully expressive and responsive to his correspondents.

It was in his letters to Maria Cosway that we glimpse his passionate nature, and the struggles between head and heart that preoccupied much of his inner life. It is in his letters to his nephew Peter Carr that we see his thoughts as a preceptor and wise guide to the world's ways. And it was in his magnificent correspondence with his old rival John Adams, a dialogue that spanned fifty years until their deaths in 1826, that Jefferson most fully explored the deeper meaning of the American experiment. He was constantly using his correspondence to organize and sharpen his thinking, and it is there that we see him most fully and vividly.

In any event, it is for his ideas, above all else, that we honor Jefferson; and for the cause of human freedom and human dignity that he so eloquently championed. His failings may weigh against the man, but not against the cause for which he labored so mightily. That should be a lesson to us today. Like Jefferson, we are carriers of meanings far larger than we know, meanings whose full realization cannot be achieved in our lifetime, or even be fully understood by us, but which we are nevertheless charged to carry forward as faithfully as we can.

But unlike Jefferson, we have the benefit of being able to stand on his shoulders, with his words to direct and inspire us. "We knew" about Jefferson's faults, said the civil rights leader, Representative John Lewis. "But we didn't put the emphasis there. We put the emphasis on what he wrote in the Declaration. . . . His words were so powerful. His words became the blueprint, the guideline for us to follow. From those words you have the fountain."

It is the same fountain that today, 265 years after Jefferson's birth, still nourishes our lives, and shows no sign of running dry. Today is a good day to drink from it anew.

empowerment, self-sufficiency, and an end to cycles of destructive behavior and relationships by at-risk girls and young women. The organization began as the National Florence Crittenton Mission, founded in 1883 by 19th century philanthropist Charles Crittenton of New York City a year after his daughter Florence died at the age of 5. His goal was to assist girls and young women in trouble, and in the years that followed, Florence Crittenton Homes became famous in communities across the United States and in foreign countries as well.

One of the leading members of the Foundation today is the Crittenton Women's Union in Boston, which began as a Florence Crittenton Home in the city in 1896. It was launched by a pioneering group of women activists who wanted it to be a "big sister" to "unfortunate New England girls" young unmarried mothers in need of shelter and moral guidance.

In the years that followed these two organizations joined forces and combined with other organizations to create the Crittenton Women's Union, which today empowers low-income women in our city by providing safe housing, caring support services, education, and workforce development programs.

In addition to using its on-the-ground experience to shape public policy and achieve social change, Crittenton Women's Union is also Massachusetts' largest provider of transitional housing for homeless mothers and their children and the founder of New England's first transitional home for victims of domestic violence. The organization continues its innovative approach to today's compelling social problems through its focus on workforce development and post-secondary school training to enable women to become economically self-sufficient.

Its services are further strengthened by its unique partnership with the National Crittenton Foundation, which gathers valuable insights from its nationwide network of frontline agencies and provides a forum to share best practices and shape national policies to benefit all young women and girls at risk.

Today, 125 years after Charles Crittenton began his historic work as an agent for positive change for young women and girls, Crittenton Women's Union and the National Crittenton Foundation remain true to his vision. I welcome this opportunity to commend the Foundation and its extraordinary members on this special anniversary for their continuing vision and commitment to their goals in Massachusetts and throughout the Nation.

#### 125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL CRITTENTON FOUNDATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, today marks the 125th anniversary of The National Crittenton Foundation, the nationwide organization that supports

#### TRIBUTE TO YVONNE BRATHWAITE BURKE

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I honor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, who is retiring at the end of 2008, after a distinguished and illustrious career spanning 50 years as a

public servant in the State of California.

I wish to extend to Mrs. Burke, who served as a Representative of California's 37th Congressional District from 1973 to 1979, my sincere congratulations for the decades of dedicated service that she has given to her Nation, her State, and her county.

She is currently serving as chair of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and is in the final year of her fourth term on the board.

For the past 15 years, she has represented the Second Supervisorial District.

Supervisor Burke will be remembered as a devoted public servant who amassed numerous accomplishments and countless awards—in addition to inspiring women and minorities to pursue careers in public service.

As a product of the Los Angeles Unified School District, Mrs. Burke developed an interest in public speaking and participated in several citywide competitions during her high school years.

Her involvement in these events and many extracurricular activities helped her to obtain scholarships to the UC Berkeley and later at UCLA.

In 1956, Mrs. Burke received a law degree from the University of Southern California School of Law.

It was difficult for women, particularly African Americans, to practice law, because many private law firms showed little interest in hiring women as attorneys.

So Mrs. Burke opened her own law office in Los Angeles.

She specialized in immigration and civil rights and fought segregation in real estate law.

Mrs. Burke was active in the civil rights movement with memberships in various local and national organizations.

She subsequently landed a staff attorney position on the McCone Commission, which investigated the causes of the 1965 Watts riots in Los Angeles.

She became a spokesperson for the underrepresented and, through a grassroots campaign, won her first political office in 1966 as a California State assemblywoman.

It was a position she held for the next 6 years.

In 1972, Mrs. Burke became the first African American woman—west of the Mississippi River—to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

She was selected to serve as vice chair of the 1972 Democratic National Convention in Miami and later on the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

She also was the first Congresswoman to give birth while in office.

Mrs. Burke did not seek re-election to Congress in 1978 but instead ran for attorney general of California.

She won the Democratic nomination, but subsequently was defeated in the general election.

In 1979, Mrs. Burke was appointed by the Governor of California to fill a va-

cancy in the Fourth Supervisorial District in Los Angeles County and served in that capacity until the end of 1980.

She also was appointed by the Governor to serve on the Board of Regents of the University of California in 1982.

Two years later, Mrs. Burke was selected to serve as vice chair of the 1984 U.S. Olympics Organizing Committee.

In 1992, she became the first African American elected to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

She played a significant role in the 2000 Democratic National Convention, hosting an event for hundreds of African American elected officials nationwide.

Supervisor Burke represents nearly 2.5 million residents in the Second District of the Nation's largest county.

Her efforts primarily have focused on improving the lives of children, encouraging economic development, and improving transportation throughout Los Angeles, as well as promoting public social services, health care for the uninsured, and affirmative action for women and the economically disadvantaged.

In addition, she has taken the lead in establishing a county archives system.

These are just some of Yvonne Brathwaite Burke's significant accomplishments.

On behalf of the U.S. Senate and the State of California, I extend my heartfelt gratitude for her immeasurable contributions throughout her renowned career.

With sincere best wishes, I congratulate Supervisor Burke upon her retirement from elective office.

And I am pleased to join her many coworkers; her family: her husband William, her daughter Autumn and stepdaughter Christine; friends; and associates in wishing her health, happiness, and continued good fortune in her future endeavors.

#### CONGRATULATING EASTER SEALS

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I wish today to commend a standout chapter of a renowned organization, one that has been responsible for bringing light to the lives of countless Americans throughout its existence. Easter Seals Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore is celebrating its 60th year of providing critical help to those in need.

In 1948, the organization was started to meet the needs of children with disabilities, and it has grown exponentially since then. This chapter served 18,000 Delawareans last year through eight locations, and they now have an annual operating budget of \$15 million.

The services provided by the staff and volunteers at Easter Seals are well known: speech and hearing therapy, assistive technology, and job training are just a few of the ways they help children and adults with disabilities lead independent lives in their communities.

As we embark on spring this year, it is appropriate to recall the symbol of

Easter Seals: the lily. The lily makes us all think of rebirth and new life, which is exactly what Easter Seals provides to those they help. It is why the lily has appeared on every Easter "Seal" produced since the 1950s.

I would be remiss if I thanked Easter Seals Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore without recognizing its driving force for the last half century. Sandra Tuttle, who has been associated with the organization for nearly 50 years—including as its president and CEO since 1978—is stepping aside from her formal role. Her leadership has been the engine of this remarkable organization; her devotion, professionalism, and guidance are known to all associated with Easter Seals.

I wish her the best of luck in all her future endeavors and thank her from the bottom of my heart for what she has helped this organization become. The lives she has touched are without number. She truly is an angel walking among us.

I know I am not the first to thank Easter Seals in this Chamber, and I doubt I will be the last. This incredible organization, started by a few people trying to make a difference for disabled children, has blossomed into the model for all such groups in America. I thank my local chapter for its work, congratulate it on this momentous occasion, and hope that its influence will continue to grow for years to come.

#### CONGRATULATING THE STATE OF ISRAEL

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, it is a privilege to be able to offer my most sincere congratulations to the State of Israel as it celebrates its 60th anniversary of independence. I am so proud that Israel has not only survived, but has become one of the most prosperous and successful democracies anywhere in the world.

The Israeli National Anthem, *Hatikvah*, means, "The Hope." That is really what the modern State of Israel has been about over these 60 years. Founded after the horrors of the Holocaust, the Jewish people created a place where their faith and history could be secured and passed from generation to generation. In this place, never again would dictators or fanatics be able to systematically persecute, terrorize, and murder entire communities or an entire people.

Hope sustained the Jewish people through 3,000 years of persecution that culminated in the evils of the Holocaust. And for the last 60 years, that same sense of hope for the future has allowed the people of Israel to persevere in the face of continual assaults on its very existence, whether they are in the form of war, terrorism, or assassination.

As Israel celebrates this milestone, I am proud to say that the United States has been by its side, offering support and assistance, and watching it grow