

doing something else, but maybe they'll get a chance to hear what I'm saying tonight. But whether we're Democrats or Republicans, liberals or conservatives, we ought to think about the other guy and the other gal who's working so hard to get their points across and who may be going through tragedies that we don't even understand or can't even imagine. We need to think about walking in their shoes just a little bit before we're so critical.

Time goes by so fast. I've been here 30 years, and I can remember the first day I walked up the steps of the Capitol with my family and the television camera was following me. I thought, man, this is going to last forever. I thought my kids would be with me forever, my staff would be with me forever, and my wife would be with me forever. She passed away about 11 years ago. Fortunately, I have another wonderful wife. But you go through all these tragedies, and it goes by so fast and you just don't realize it. And you don't take the time to smell the roses until you're just a little bit older and have missed so much.

If I were saying something to my colleagues tonight, I would say, Do your very best and explain yourself the very best that you can, but realize that the other guy who has a different point of view than you really believes most of the time in what he's doing, and we ought to be a little more tolerant and don't criticize him too much until you've had a chance to walk in his shoes.

According to General Patton in the movie "Patton," he said, All glory is fleeting. It's true. I see these young guys come in who are like me and these young ladies come in, and they're going to whip the world; they're going to change this world overnight. I try to talk to them in an elderly, fatherly way, I guess you would say. I'd say, Have you ever been around the Capital and looked at all the statues? And they'll say, I've looked at a few of them. I'll say, Have you ever seen some of pictures around here? They'll look and they'll say, Oh, yeah, we've seen them. I'll say, Do you know who they are? And they'll say, Well, no. I'll say, Well, they were Speakers of the House and Vice Presidents and Presidents of the United States, and you don't know who they are. And they'll say, That's right. I say, Remember this. You think you're going to be remembered. You're going to do your best, but you're just going to be a footnote in history, one line in a history book. So don't take yourself so seriously. Do the best you can, and fight for the things in which you believe, and stick by your principles. But don't go around thinking that you float on air and that you're something special because you're just another Congressman. We've had about 12,000 Congressmen and Senators in our history, and you're going to be one of them. It's an honor to be able to be numbered among those; but remember, there were Ceasars who ruled the

world, and you don't even know who they are. So be a little more realistic when you start thinking about how important you might be because, really, all glory is fleeting.

I want to read to you something here, a couple of poems. Bear with me for just a minute. The first poem is called "A Bag of Tools":

Isn't it strange how princes and kings,
and clowns that caper in sawdust rings,
and common people, like you and me,
are builders for eternity?
Each is given a bag of tools;
a shapeless mass; a book of rules.
And each must make, ere life is flown,
a stumbling block or a steppingstone.

I hope my colleagues will all try to make their lives a steppingstone.

I want to talk about a guy that served not in this Chamber, but another Chamber. He was a House Member. I'll tell you a little bit about him, and it's in a poem. It says:

A squalid village set in wintry mud.
A hub-deep ox-cart slowly groans and squeaks.

A horseman hails and halts. He shifts his cud
And speaks:

"Well, did you hear? Tom Lincoln's wife today.

The devil's luck for folk as poor as they.

Poor Tom! Poor Nance!

Poor young one! Born without a chance!

A baby in that God-forsaken den,

That worse than cattle-pen!

Well, what are they but cattle? Cattle? Tut!

A critter is beef, hide and tallow, but

Who'd swap one for the critters of that hut?

White trash! Small fry!

Whose only instinct is to multiply!

They're good at that,

And so, today, God wot! Another brat!

A squawking, squalling, red-faced good-for-naught

Spilled on the world, heaven only knows for what.

Better if he were black,

For then he'd have a shirt upon his back

And something in his belly as he grows.

More than he is like to have, as I suppose.

Yet there be those

Who claim 'equality' for this new brat,

And that damned democrat

Who squats today where Washington once sat,

He'd have it that this Lincoln cub might be

Of even value in the world with you and me!

Yes, Jefferson, Tom Jefferson, who but he?

Who even hints that black men should be free.

That feather-headed fool would tell you, maybe

A president might lie in this new baby!

In this new squawker born without a rag

To hide himself! Good God, it makes me gag!

This human-spawn

Born for a world to wipe its feet upon

A few years hence, but now

More helpless than the litter of a sow,

And—oh, well! Send the women-folks to Nance."

"Poor little devil! Born without a chance!"

Then I want to say to my colleagues one more thing, and then I'll stop. This is when you speak on the floor. I hope my colleagues will get a chance to read this because it's really important:

Drop a pebble in the water: just a splash, and it is gone;

But there's half-a-hundred ripples circling on and on and on,

Spreading, spreading from the center, flowing on out to the sea,

And there is no way of telling where the end is going to be.

Drop a pebble in the water: in a minute you forget,

But there's little waves a-flowing, and there's ripples circling yet,

And those little waves a-flowing to a great big wave have grown;

You've disturbed a mighty river just by dropping in a stone.

Drop an unkind word, or careless: in a minute it is gone;

But there's half-a-hundred ripples circling on and on and on.

They keep spreading, spreading, spreading from the center as they go,

And there is no way to stop them, once you've started them to flow.

Drop an unkind word, or careless: in a minute you forget;

But there's little waves a-flowing and there's ripples circling yet.

And perhaps in some sad heart a mighty wave of tears you've stirred,

And disturbed one who was happy, ere you dropped that unkind word.

Drop a word of cheer and kindness: just a flash and it is gone;

But there's half-a-hundred ripples circling on and on and on,

Bearing hope and joy and comfort on each splashing, dashing wave,

Till you wouldn't believe the volume of the one kind word you gave.

Drop a word of cheer and kindness: in a minute you forget;

But there's gladness still a-swelling, and there's joy circling yet.

And you've rolled a wave of comfort whose sweet music can be heard

Over miles and miles of water, just by dropping one kind word.

□ 2020

So, if I were talking to my colleagues tonight, I'd say to think about your colleagues and their families and the troubles that they have and the heartache they're feeling, and to think about the words that you're saying to them and the kind of attitude that you're creating in your colleagues and their families by the things you're saying. Fight for the things you believe in, but remember, there's another human being over there who can be helped or hurt just by what you're saying on the floor of the House of Representatives or in the United States Senate.

With that, Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

WHAT CAN YOU SAY?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 40 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Before my colleague DAN BURTON leaves the Chamber, I just want to say thank you. Thank you for your thoughtful reflections here.

I should tell the Speaker, as well as everyone who might be watching, that we were teasing you a moment ago because you said you were only going to speak for 10 minutes, and I said, DAN BURTON, you've never spoken for 10 minutes in your life. You're going to go a lot longer than that.

You held it to about 10, and your words were not only precise but deeply thoughtful and meaningful, and I think they're an outstanding tribute to you in leaving this body. I want to thank you for your personal friendship to me and for your words of admonition to the rest of us to try to be a little bit kinder, a little bit gentler.

I think it's important for people to know—and you alluded to it—that, over a decade ago, your own wife died. The caregiver for your wife, as she had cancer, was Samia, who became your friend and who became a friend of your family's, and your own children encouraged you to, perhaps, pursue a relationship with her, and now she is your lovely wife. It has been a pleasure to see you so happy in these last years of public service, but we really appreciate your dedication and passion to serving this Nation. So thank you so much.

Madam Speaker, I would like to turn to another topic now. I sat in my office last night, looking at the pictures of the precious little children who were killed in Connecticut last Friday. What can you say? My heart breaks for them and their parents and for the people of Newtown. I looked at the picture of little Caroline Previdi, one of the 6-year-old children who died. I'm sure she was a happy child, full of life's potential just like my own little Caroline, who just turned 7 a few days ago. What can you say? It's unthinkable that a person would kill innocent little children with such cravenness and violence. These children's Christmas presents are still under the tree. Their moms and dads are still looking at them.

In this town where we pride ourselves on rhetorical flourish, precision of thought, and volume of words, what can you say? What can you do other than stand in solidarity, in spirit, with the grieving families, and perhaps—just perhaps—hug those you love a little bit tighter?

Now the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy is sparking a national debate about how and why this happened and about how it might have been prevented. That debate is understandable and needs to happen. In the coming weeks, Congress will be called on to react. Questions have already arisen about guns and school safety and emergency preparedness. But these concerns and debates may bypass altogether some of the deeper, more difficult issues involved, like what we grappled with after the tragic shootings of the young people at Columbine High School and on the Virginia Tech campus.

What we must do is be honest. Yes, there were guns involved. Yes, there are issues of school safety. Yes, there was a collapse of mental health intervention. But I have not heard a significant discussion of the broader cultural context in which this and other tragedies have happened.

All of these tragedies happened against a backdrop of a culture that in-

creasingly devalues and degrades human life. Graphic acts of violence and inhumanity pervade popular culture, entertainment, and other venues that vie for our attention. In flipping through the channels recently, I saw on a "Law and Order" show, ironically, a man shot in an elevator and the blood splashing on his attorney. Seconds later, we move on to the next scene or to the next commercial without consequence.

We are supposedly entertained by this, and of course the producer gets the profit, but who really pays? Society grows increasingly numb to the increasing levels of wanton brutality, cruelty, and indignity, all celebrated for profit. Perhaps most of us can shake it off or just turn it off, but what happens when a person of limited stability sees these images over and over again? We preach tolerance for one another, but we fill our culture with grotesque and inhuman depictions and expect that there will not be consequences.

Madam Speaker, I am sure there are any number of Ph.D.s out there who will somehow refute that there is a correlation between this aggressive assault of images constantly before us and the recurring violence that is all around us. Instead, we want simple answers and quick fixes, and then we'll just move on.

I suggest that we look inward to regain a deeper understanding of what it means to be in community, in a common bond with neighbors, where persons are not in isolation, where check mechanisms are so ordinary that persons are not simply roaming around, disconnected from communities of concern, family life, mental health treatment, or swift enforcement action, whatever is needed. A single and simple policy response from Washington cannot fix this. We all want to have a more caring and supportive society, but the fragmentation of family, civic, and our Nation's community life lends itself to isolation, anger and, for some, even despair.

Let's be clear: this tragedy is the result of a deeply disturbed person who committed unspeakable crimes. That is where the blame rests. But perhaps an outcome deserving of these children who died is that we all take some responsibility for the degradation of culture—what we think about, the way we conduct ourselves—and perhaps strive for that which is noble, for that which is good, and for that which is just.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

MY DAYS IN CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) is recognized for 32 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. BARTLETT. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I would like to echo the concerns of my colleague. We are changed, we are affected by what we see, by what we hear, by what we listen to, by what we watch. You cannot swim in a sea of violence and not be affected by it. I know we have a Constitution and an amendment which guarantees freedom of speech, but you don't have a right to do what is wrong, and it is wrong that our entertainment media is placing before, particularly our impressionable young people, these unending scenes of violence in these video games.

□ 2030

You know the unbridled expression of when one right infringes on another, we limit that right. You do have a right of freedom of speech; but still, you can't yell "fire, fire" in a crowded theater if there is no fire because people could get hurt in trying to get out. That same philosophy, I think, would permit us to limit the kinds of entertainment and violence that pervade our society.

I know there are many factors as to what caused this tragedy, but certainly this could be one of them, particularly to people who don't have all of the faculties that the average of us have for contending with changes in our environment.

I would like also to refer back to comments that my good friend DAN BURTON made that so little is known about us here. We kind of appear here, Madam Speaker, almost as if we were the products of spontaneous generation and there we are in front of the microphone and a million, a million and a half people out there are watching us. Just who are we? So I thought I would spend just a moment doing what I probably should have done 20 years ago and kind of introduce myself.

I was born in 1926. If you are doing some quick math, yes, that means I'm in my 87th year. Our family hardly knew that there was a Great Depression. We were just as poor before the Depression as we were during the Depression.

I was the first member of my immediate family to graduate from college. I wanted to be a medical missionary, and so I was studying theology and I was taking science courses so that I could go to med school. And I had a really, really good science teacher, and I took all of the courses he offered and enough more so that when I graduated from college, I not only had a degree, a major in the Bible and a minor in homiletics—that's a degree in theology—I also had a major in biology and a minor in chemistry. And I had decided not to go to medical school, and I wanted to go into the ministry; but I was 21 years old and I looked 17 and I wasn't married, and you don't have a big, immediate, bright future in the missionary looking 17 and not being married and so they advised me to occupy myself until I got older and got married.

And so I went to graduate school, and I got a master's and a doctorate and