

Great Society Speech, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1964 (Modified)

I have come today from the turmoil of your Capital to the tranquility (peace) of your campus to speak about the future of your country. . .

The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time. But that is just the beginning. . .

It is harder and harder to live the good life in American cities today. There is not enough housing for our people or transportation for our traffic. . . . Our society will never be great until our cities are great. . .

A second place where we begin to build the Great Society is in our countryside. We have always prided ourselves on being not only America the strong and America the free, but America the beautiful. Today that beauty is in danger. The water we drink, the food we eat, the very air that we breathe, are threatened with pollution. Our parks are overcrowded, our seashores overburdened. Green fields and dense forests are disappearing. . .

A third place to build the Great Society is in the classrooms of America. There your children's lives will be shaped. Our society will not be great until every young mind is set free to scan the farthest reaches of thought and imagination. We are still far from that goal. . . Poverty must not be a bar to learning, and learning must offer an escape from poverty. . .

For better or for worse, your generation has been appointed by history to deal with those problems and to lead America toward a new age. You have the chance never before afforded to any people in any age. You can help build a society where the demands of morality, and the needs of the spirit, can be realized in the life of the Nation.

So, will you join in the battle to give every citizen the full equality which God enjoins and the law requires, whatever his belief, or race, or the color of his skin?

Will you join in the battle to give every citizen an escape from the crushing weight of poverty?

Will you join in the battle to build the Great Society, to prove that our material progress is only the foundation on which we will build a richer life of mind and spirit?

Source: The speech above was delivered by President Johnson as a commencement (graduation) speech at the University of Michigan on May 22, 1964.

Major Great Society Programs

War on Poverty: forty programs that were intended to eliminate poverty by improving living conditions and enabling people to lift themselves out of the cycle of poverty.

Education: sixty separate bills that provided for new and better-equipped classrooms, minority scholarships, and low-interest student loans.

Medicare & Medicaid: guaranteed health care to every American over sixty-five and to low-income families.

The Environment: introduced measures to protect clean air and water.

National Endowment for the Arts and the Humanities: government funding for artists, writers and performers.

Head Start: program for four- and five-year-old children from low-income families.

Sampling of the laws passed during the Johnson administration to promote the Great Society.

PREVENTION & ABATEMENT OF AIR
POLLUTION
(THE CLEAN AIR ACT)
DEC. 17, 1963

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ACT
DEC. 18, 1963

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964
JULY 2, 1964

URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION
JULY 9, 1964

FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAY ACT OF 1964
AUG. 13, 1964

CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT OF 1964
AUG. 20, 1964

FOOD STAMP ACT OF 1964
AUG. 31, 1964

NATIONAL ARTS CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
ACT OF 1964
SEPT. 3, 1964

SOCIAL SECURITY AMENDMENTS
JULY 30, 1965

VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965
AUG. 6, 1965

HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT ACT
AUG. 10, 1965

PUBLIC WORKS AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT ACT
AUG. 26, 1965

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN
DEVELOPMENT ACT
SEPT. 9, 1965

NATIONAL FOUNDATION ON THE ARTS &
THE HUMANITIES ACT
SEPT. 29, 1965

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF 1965
NOV. 8, 1965

CHILD NUTRITION ACT OF 1966
OCT. 11, 1966

CHILD PROTECTION ACT OF 1966
NOV. 3, 1966

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH ACT
MAY 8, 1968

Source: <http://www.colorado.edu/AmStudies/lewis/2010/gresoc.htm>