

# PAUL V. HEBERT '68

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Floyd D. Gottwald Jr., '43 Visiting Professor of Leadership and Ethics, 2013

## **YOU CAN IMPROVE THE WORLD YOU LIVE IN – JUST STEP UP TO THE PLATE**

The sixth in a series of lectures prepared for the Class  
Lecture Series, VMI Center for Leadership and Ethics



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# You Can Improve The World You Live In – Just Step Up To The Plate

By

Paul V. Hebert '68, Ph.D.

*Floyd D. Gottwald Jr., '43 Visiting Professor of Leadership and Ethics*

Dean Schneider, faculty colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, and especially the class of 2015, it is an honor to speak to you today, the 6th lecture by a holder of the Floyd D. Gottwald Visiting Professorship in Leadership and Ethics here at VMI.

These past 3 1/2 months as a visiting professor has given me an opportunity to reflect on my 4 years at VMI that began 49 years ago, when I entered the Institute as a Civil Engineering major and football player. Much remains as it was then for cadets: the rat line, the barracks, PTs, and guard duty. I also see many changes including some new infrastructure, such as Cameron Hall, and a cadet corps that better reflects the diversity of our state and nation. Academic offerings are more diverse than anything we might have dreamed of when I was here as a cadet. More importantly, it has taken my return to VMI this semester, 45 years after graduation, for me to fully recognize and appreciate the degree that VMI teaches us perseverance under difficult circumstances, which I often faced in my international humanitarian and development work.

It has been a great semester for me and a privilege to teach among such inspiring colleagues in the International Studies Department. But most of all, I have enjoyed interacting with you cadets. I love seeing your youthful energy, your intelligence and your worldliness, as compared to cadets in my day here at VMI, and I see in all of you the potential for greatness.

I know that previous Gottwald Chair lectures have focused on great military leaders in the history of our country, including George Washington, Robert E. Lee, and George C. Marshall, inspiring professors here at VMI, and ordinary men who demonstrated valor, courage and leadership in military service. In that same vein, I will speak of four great men, but these men achieved greatness not for military accomplishments but for their leadership in civilian life for **social justice**.

These four people are Jonathan Daniels, VMI '61, Cabell Brand, VMI '44, Jimmy Carter and Andrew Young. The thread that connects these four great men is Jonathan Daniels. He is the thread because Cabell Brand, Jimmy Carter and Andrew Young all received the Jonathan Daniels Humanitarian Award here at VMI, given both to commemorate Jon's life and to recognize

the greatness of working for social justice and for humanitarian purposes.

I, quite suddenly and surprisingly, in March 2011, found myself connected with these great men when I was selected to receive the Jonathan Daniels Humanitarian Award. I simply could not believe that I belonged in their company. I thought VMI had made a mistake, had gotten my resume mixed up with someone else's, or someone had made up a new one for me. I am a very ordinary person who happened to have an extraordinary career in international humanitarian work. I now realize that all I did, like the other four men, was step up to the challenge and decide to take leadership. **That is all you need to do.**

**The four great men I will talk about today consciously decided to take a leadership role because they believed they could improve the world we live in.** These four men had no special privileges growing up – they were just like you and me. All they did was search their souls and realize that if they did not do something, then who would? **The only thing that could block your way to make a difference is not stepping up to be a leader for change.**

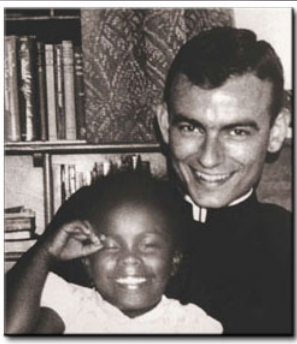
Let me start with Jonathan Daniels, who is now memorialized as one of twelve 20th century martyrs listed at Canterbury Cathedral by the Church of England. He is listed along with Martin Luther King, Jr. and 10 others. The inscription for Daniels in the Cathedral recognized that he had been shot in Haynesville, Alabama, helping in the civil rights campaign. It tells very little of his story. The detail of his death was described in the book “the Jon Daniels Story” published in 1967, and in the book, “Outside Agitator”, published in 1993. Quoting from the first book, “On August 20, 1965, Jon Daniels, a seminary student and volunteer civil rights worker, was shot to death by Tom Coleman, a white deputy sheriff, in front of a “cash” store in Haynesville, Alabama. The killing took place in broad daylight; the facts surrounding the killing were amply recorded and broadcast around the world”. His killer was later acquitted by an all-white jury, despite overwhelming evidence of his guilt, which in itself portrays the place and times as one of blatant racism and Alabama as a Southern Apartheid state.



I was a returning 3rd Classmen at VMI that fall, but I don't recall hearing about the incident nor talk of it at VMI that fall. Later I did hear about some cadets saying that he probably deserved what he got for interfering in matters that should be left for Alabama. It would be some 27 years later that Jon's story would resurface and Jon considered and later honored at VMI for his sacrifice.

Jon Daniels was from Keene, Vermont, and he entered VMI in 1957. He was an English major, and often described by fellow cadets as an intellectual. In view of his interest in theology and the ministry and his slight physical stature, his choice of VMI seemed an unlikely one. However, Jon was reported to have told a faculty member's wife that he chose VMI to be sure he had the makings to be a man, and that he looked to VMI to provide him with physical tolerance.

According to fellow classmates, Jon was not particularly happy at VMI, at least at the beginning. But like many of us, VMI seemed to grow on him as he progressed and flourished academically. He described his "rat" year as hellish, and as an upper classman, he was known as a "rat daddy". Jon's senior year brought him high academic and personal recognition, including selection as valedictorian and a Woodrow Wilson and Danforth graduate scholarship for studies at Harvard in English. Jon left VMI a stronger man but still not sure where his life would lead him. Jon soon decided that a graduate degree in English was not his destiny. Instead he decided that his calling was to enter the Episcopal Ministry, and he enrolled at the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge Massachusetts, where he began to acquire a passion for service to others. He knew little of race relations in the south, but he signed up in 1965 along with other divinity students to go to Alabama at the calling of Martin Luther King, Jr. He joined the civil rights movement and the famous march from Selma to Montgomery in March of 1965. He participated in the march, and then he returned to Massachusetts to continue his theological



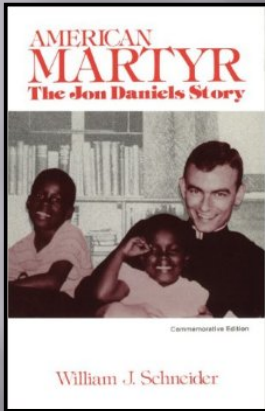
Jon Daniels in Alabama



studies, profoundly changed and committed to the attainment of voting rights and other rights for Blacks in the south. Unlike the other seminary students, he decided to return to Alabama in the summer to continue work on voter registration. Along with a number of civil rights workers and Richard Morrisoe, a Catholic Priest, he was arrested for demonstrating in the town of Fort Deposit, Alabama in early August. Shortly thereafter, all of those arrested were transferred to the Lowndes County jail in Haynesville. All of this took place in a highly stressful environment, where a group of white men carrying clubs and other weapons mingled outside the jail discussing what needed to be done to deal with these outside agitators. Eighteen individuals were being held, including a young black girl by the name of Ruby Sales. After six days, on August 20, fearing that the town would be held in contempt of Federal Civil Rights laws, the entire group was released from jail on orders from the Mayor of Fort Deposit. Without transport back to Selma, Jon Daniels and Richard Morrisoe escorted two young black girls, Ruby Sales and Joyce Baily, to the Cash Store, one of the few places in town where blacks were allowed to shop, and to buy cold soft drinks. As Jon reached to open the door for Ruby Sales to enter, a local employee of the State Highway Department, and temporary Deputy Sheriff, a Mr. Tom Coleman stepped into the doorway and shouted, "Get off this property, or I'll blow your goddamn heads off ...". Jon Daniels, wearing his seminarian's collar, pushed Ruby Sales out of the way, just as Tom Coleman fired his 12 gauge shotgun point blank into Jon Daniel's chest. He died instantly. Coleman lifted the short gun again, and fired as Richard Morrisoe was trying to flee and struck him in the back and side. Richard fortunately survived.

Jon's life was cut short. He never had an opportunity to reach his potential. However, his ultimate sacrifice spurred additional protests and helped lead to voting registration and ultimately to political representation of the black population in Lowndes county. I recently visited Lowndes County and the site of Jon's murder and it was a moving experience for me. I want to quote the parting remarks that Jon Daniels made in his valedictorian address, the last official words he spoke before his departure from VMI, "My colleagues and friends, I wish you the joy of a purposeful life. I wish you new worlds and the vision to see them." Jon saw a new world, free from prejudice and injustice and he worked for its achievement. Had he lived, I have little doubt that Jon would have been recognized in life rather than in death as an active and significant leader in the civil rights movement. His death for that cause was the ultimate sacrifice.

There is a small memorial plaque in the town square in Haynesville commemorating Jon's sacrifice and a march takes place every year in Haynesville in his honor and in honor of others who died during the



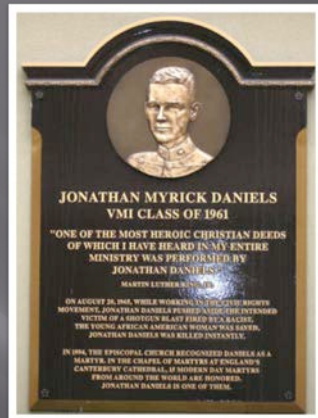
Jon's Story

Commemoration in Haynesville, Alabama



movement of the 1960s. It took some time for VMI to recognize the significance of Jon's act of valor and his dedication to an ethical life. VMI back in 1965 was as traditional as any institution in Virginia. It clung to its traditions, including being an all-white and all-male institute, as long as it could. It was the Promaji club, a service club for minority students at VMI, formed by African American Cadets, that took the step to recognize Jon and

Commemorative March in honor of Jon Daniels in Haynesville, Alabama - performed annually



Plaque in Jonathan Daniels Courtyard - VMI

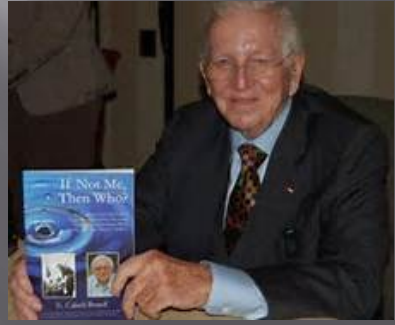


his sacrifice. They established in 1991 within the club, the Jonathan Daniels Humanitarian Award to honor individuals who have demonstrated dedicated humanitarian work in their careers and lives.

The first Jonathan Daniels award was given in 1991 by the Promaji Club to Cabell Brand of Salem Virginia, a 1947 graduate of VMI. I want to next talk about Cabell and his remarkable career and accomplishments. I also want to note here that Cabell's partner in life, his wife Shirley, passed away on 29 November, 2013. She will be missed by all who knew her and her work with Cabell. Cabell was part of the VMI class of '44, but his studies were interrupted by the war and after two years of active duty, he graduated in 1947. Cabell was honored with the Award, not for his military service, but rather for his life-long work as a civilian, philanthropic businessman, civil rights advocate, community and anti-poverty leader. Cabell Brand exemplifies what a private business person is able to do, above and beyond what is normally expected. Cabell would have been considered successful merely from his business pursuit as owner and operator of a company, which he crafted into a national mail order product supply organization. He lived and worked from Salem, Virginia, his entire professional life. From the beginning he knew that he needed to be involved in the community. He had seen the devastation and the poverty created from the War while serving with the US foreign service, implementing reconstruction under the Marshall Plan in Germany. He returned with the conviction that he could be a force to help make America a bulwark of hope for the world. He entered the business world with the objective of contributing to better, more just, and tolerant

E. Cabell Brand, VMI '44





communities in a part of the USA that was far from being tolerant and just. He believed in the power of individuals and groups to make change. Cabell decided to devote 20% of his working time every week to some action for the community, either locally or even broader. He also encouraged his employees to do the same and included this understanding when each employee was hired.

He became active in the Salem Rotary Club, in the Salem Chamber of Commerce, and in other civic groups. He became a member of the Salem Council of Community Services Board of Directors in the late 1950s. Cabell helped the Council to obtain the first anti-poverty grant from the federal government, leading to the formation of TAP, Total Action Against Poverty. The Council also obtained one of the first Grants for Head Start. They went on to promote anti-poverty actions, educational programs for adults and health initiatives. All of these activities made huge inroads to decrease poverty in the Salem area and to give young impoverished children truly a head start. The Cabell Brand Center was established in 1986, and it has provided more than 500 fellowships for college students to study poverty, environmental issues, and peace. Cabell has been and remains an advocate and strong supporter of the Shepherd Poverty Center at Washington and Lee University. During the past 50 years Cabell has achieved national recognition for his outreach and initiatives to fight poverty and to rally support for minority rights and opportunities. General Peay, on March 30, 2011, bestowed on Cabell Brand the VMI Meritorious Achievement Award for a lifetime of humanitarian efforts and for furthering the legacy of Jonathan Daniels. Cabell has received numerous other awards over the years in recognition of his service to others.

Cabell wrote a memoir published in 2008 and updated in 2010, entitled “If Not Me, Then Who?” The theme of the book is very simple, “Get Involved.” He states that the crises before our nation in fact give each of us an opportunity and an urgency to get involved. As he states, “We all need to insist that our elected political leaders do what is right for the country and not what’s right for their own re-election.” This, he emphasizes, means getting involved personally with your community and to do what each individual can to work toward justice and opportunity for all of those in our society, particularly those who start out with a disadvantage. In my mind, Cabell Brand exhibits the kind of leadership that inspires and provides an example for anyone who decides to go into business; of how we can make a contribution beyond one’s immediate job or enterprise. Clearly, Cabell stepped up to the plate.

Let’s now turn to Jimmy Carter, someone who today is recognized more for what he accomplished after leaving the Presidency of the United States. President Carter was selected in 2001 as the first recipient of the Jonathan Daniels Humanitarian Award after it was established in 1997 as a full VMI Institute award. This was one year prior to his receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. President Carter came to VMI in March 2001 to receive the award and spoke at that time to the entire Corps of Cadets.



James Earl “Jimmy” Carter, Jr. was born on October 1, 1924 in Plains, Georgia. He was a graduate of the Naval Academy and a successful naval officer before deciding to leave the Navy in 1953 to return to Georgia following his father’s death, and to his peanut farm and politics, which eventually led to his Presidency from 1977-1981. Biographers have noted that his ideas of leadership were based on the view that individual moral character was a key ingredient to good leadership and possibly the most important one. During his administration, a period racked with high inflation and economic stagnation, he made tough decisions based on his own concept of what was morally correct and based on core values of our constitution. However, his critics were quick to attack Carter during his presidency as not having the vision to direct the country. He was called by many critics as one of the weakest Presidents ever. While this judgment was considered by many to be overly harsh, the perception of Carter as a weak president was widespread and carried over for at least 10 years after he left Office in 1981.

As President, he did have important successes that have been enduring. He created the Departments of Energy and Education. He was instrumental in bringing Egypt and Israel together to sign the Camp David Accords in 1977.

Since then no Israeli soldier has killed an Egyptian soldier and no Egyptian has killed an Israeli. He also pushed for and succeeded in giving over the Panama Canal to Panama. However, he suffered the Iran hostage crisis, Three Mile Island Nuclear accident, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Carter left the White house in 1981, having been defeated in his re-election attempt by Ronald Reagan on the same day the US embassy hostages were released. During his administration, Carter delivered competence and morality, but he was unable to work effectively with the Senate and House, even though both were under Democratic control. Some political analysts have noted that if President Carter had chosen to take military action against Iran, instead of quiet diplomacy, he probably would have been re-elected. We can only guess what military action against Iran would have costs in lives lost and further instability in the Middle East. However, it was after leaving the White House that Jimmy Carter came into his true element as an international diplomat, humanitarian and human rights activist organizer.

More than 30 years of activism by Carter through the Carter Center and his other outreach activities has gained him the respect of the highest order. He is one of the most respected diplomats, human rights advocates, and negotiators for peace of the past 30 years, and even judgments on his accomplishments as the 39th President have mellowed during this time. In point of fact, Jimmy Carter made major accomplishments to promote and maintain peace in the world during his Presidency. He is only one of 4 US presidents to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, and the only President to receive the prize after leaving Office. I do not have the time in this short lecture to go into the family history that helped Jimmy Carter to cement his concepts



Ambassador for Peace and  
Human Rights Advocate – Post  
Presidency



of morality and ethics in leadership, but it was most likely his close contact with African Americans in his childhood and their lack of basic rights and the humanitarian concepts taught to Jimmy by his mother that had the most profound influence.

Carter and his wife Rosalynn founded the Carter Center in 1982, a nongovernmental, not-for-profit organization that works to advance human rights. He has traveled extensively to conduct peace negotiations with the two Koreas and for other conflicts, and advanced disease prevention and eradication in developing nations. Carter was a key organizer of Habitat for Humanity, and also remains particularly vocal on the Israeli-Palestine conflict. It is remarkable that nearing age 90 Jimmy Carter is still active with the Carter Center and has achieved Global respect for his leadership mostly based on his accomplishments since leaving the Presidency. He has inspired so many in so many places around the world. I am confident that historians will write about James Earl Carter, Jr. as one of the most influential leaders and promoters of human rights and social justice of the 20th Century. Jimmy Carter stepped up to take on leadership roles several times in his lifetime and continues to do so.

I now turn to a third person who embodies the spirit of Jonathan Daniels, Ambassador Andrew Young, who received the Jonathan Daniels humanitarian award in 2006. Andy Young devoted his life to the fight for civil rights in the south, and then he used that experience to carry the fight further to champion civil and human rights on a global scale as a representative to the US Congress, as United States Ambassador to the United Nations, as Mayor of Atlanta, Georgia, and as a private businessman and promoter of economic development in Africa. He was the first African American to be thrust into such diverse leadership roles and to have made such an impact.



Andrew Young was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1932, and it was his parents who instilled in him a devout faith in Christianity and a strong work ethic. His father demonstrated how to get along with all sorts of people of different races and ethnicities. This trait served Andy Young well throughout his life and career. Andy graduated from Howard University and received a divinity degree from Hartford Seminary in 1955. After a brief period as a pastor of a church in Alabama and then working with the Youth Division of the National Council of Churches in NY, Andy and his wife moved to Georgia in 1961, the same year Jon Daniels graduated from VMI. Andy began his civil rights work joining the Southern Christian Leadership

Conference and became executive director in 1964, where he served as a principle confidant of Martin Luther King, Jr. Andy worked hard for black voter registration, and he was arrested several times in this period during protest marches. As achievements were made in the civil rights movement and following the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., Andy became interested in the movements for freedom and independence of African states from colonial rule. He also became a strong advocate for non-violent means to achieve these ends. Andy Young was elected to Congress in 1973 and served until 1977. He was the first African American to be elected to Congress from the South since 1903. As a representative from Georgia he was active in seeking sanctions against Southern Rhodesia and worked against apartheid in South Africa. He proved during his years working with King and as a representative a unique ability to work with different groups of people. He was a mediator and had a way of finding solutions to complex problems. President Carter recognized his unique talents and nominated him to be his Ambassador to the United Nations. He was confirmed in that post in January, 1977. In this position, Andy worked tirelessly promoting the application of the universal declaration of human rights in Africa, seeking to end minority white rule in Southern Rhodesia and to fight apartheid in South Africa. He was outspoken and was ready to meet with anyone that might be helpful in solving complex problems. He was forced to leave his position in 1979 because he met with the representative of the Palestinian Liberation Organization at a time when the Israelis had made an agreement with the US that the US would not have any official meeting with PLO representatives.

Andy returned to Atlanta and was soon encouraged to run for mayor. He did so and was elected mayor in 1981 and re-elected in 1985 with more than 80% of the vote in his favor. Andy became known as a mayor diplomat as he promoted Atlanta around the world as an international center for business and commerce. He also promoted African development through a number of initiatives focusing on private enterprise. He promoted Atlanta for the 1996 Olympics, and the city was indeed selected for those games. What I strongly feel sets Andrew Young apart from many other leaders has been his readiness to put himself out front, **in the line of fire**, unflinching in standing up for what he felt was the right and just thing to do. It often created controversy and at least in one instance, it cost him his job. But the causes he stood for, fought for and sometimes went to jail for, usually had a just outcome, including the end of white rule in Southern Rhodesia and creation of Zimbabwe, the end of apartheid and white minority rule in South Africa, and the ability of African Americans to have the right to vote. Andy Young did not serve in the military. Nevertheless, he served his country, made sacrifices for his country and provided a style of leadership that has been recognized and respected.



Andy Young as a  
young Preacher

Andy Young as Mayor of Atlanta



These four individuals, Jonathan Daniels, Cabell Brand, Jimmy Carter, and Andrew Young share a common thread and connection to VMI. They share solidarity in humanitarian sacrifice and dedication. They each have demonstrated a strong moral fiber and ethics in their character and style. They have each worked for peace, ending poverty and promoting civil and human rights, and social justice both at home and abroad. It has been men and women like these four who are responsible for the end of apartheid, ensuring equal voting rights, and creating opportunities for African Americans and other minorities to have equal education opportunities in this country. The changes in the past 30 years allowed the possibility to have an African American President, and a concept of universal human rights. Each of these men also shared also a common vision. Like Nelson Mandela, who passed away on December 5, 2013 in South Africa, they shared a vision of a world that can exist in peace and harmony among all people no matter their race, religion, or ethnicity. Nelson Mandela was released from 27 years in prison in 1990, before most of you in this audience were even born. If you haven't studied his life, I urge you to do so.

Each of these four men I have discussed today decided to step up to the plate. Jon Daniels could have stayed in Cambridge, completed his studies and settled down to be an Episcopal Minister in New England. Cabell Brand could have concentrated only on his business and led a comfortable life, recognized as a successful businessman. Jimmy Carter could have settled down as a peanut farmer, or he could have retired comfortably as a former president occasionally visiting his presidential library. Andrew Young could have remained as a country preacher in Alabama or Georgia. But, as their stories reveal, each of these men took the extra steps necessary to be leaders beyond the ordinary. Each of us has that same opportunity in our own lives

to be leaders in our own way. **Where will you need to step up to the plate in your lives? What will be the difficult challenges you will decide to tackle?**

Let me close this talk by naming a few challenges that I see for the future that you may decide to work on yourselves.

1. The need for social and environmental justice continues, as urgently as in the past.
2. We will see in this century dwindling supplies of cheap fossil fuels, which have allowed the tremendous economic growth and wealth of nations during the past 100 years and which we take completely for granted. We need an army of professionals to develop a sustainable energy strategy and action for our country and the world that emphasizes conservation and renewable sources of energy. Without serious conservation, and an equitable distribution of energy, I fear that the world will sink into violent competition for the remaining supplies of fossil fuels and other resources, such as water and rare minerals.
3. Climate change is real, and we need to start now to plan for its consequences and to do what is possible to mitigate the potential impacts. This will require legal, engineering and regulatory initiatives and a host of professionals to work on these issues. It will also require a change of attitude and sacrifice by us all.
4. Nearly one third of the urban population of the world live in slums and in Africa and Asia this figure is more than 60%.
5. We are currently seeing the largest extinction of species in the past 10,000 years, caused by population increase, destruction of habits, and pollution of our oceans, atmosphere, and land. We need to stop this destruction, lest we lose the very life support system we depend upon. We need to develop a systems approach to production and resource use, so that a closed system of use and recycling back to the environment is achieved.
6. We face another challenge, a moral challenge, a modern form of slavery called human trafficking, which is the fastest growing segment of organized crime. The Atlantic reports that there are at least 27 million people in slavery today, more than at any time in the history of the world. The US State Department estimates that 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders every year, many ending up in some form of slavery. This is connected with and catalyzed by a global proliferation of a \$100 billion-a-year pornography industry.



Our youth are now exposed to explicit pornography at the average age of 11, but our society is not talking about it or taking serious action against it. We have little appreciation for the negative impact this industry is having on relationships and society.

Without development and opportunity, the youth of today and tomorrow in less developed parts of the world will see their futures only at the end of a gun, and we will continue to respond through use of “drones” and other remote killing machines.

More than anything we will need leaders with high moral and ethical standards in both civilian life and in the military to tackle these issues. We need businessmen who can use their skills to ensure that along with a successful business they also support successful communities. We cannot hope to create sustainable livelihoods on our planet if we are in a state of war and conflict. We must have leaders who are ready to work to find diplomatic rather than military solutions to these problems.

Cabell Brand notes in his book that the greatest advocates for peace have been great military leaders who have experienced the horrors of war. He quotes Dwight D. Eisenhower at the close of the Korean conflict “Every gun that is made, every warship that is launched, every rocket that is fired, signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who are hungry and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed, the sweat of laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.... This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of violence and war, it is humanity hanging from an iron cross”. Eisenhower’s words have not been fully heeded.

As the four men I have talked about today did in their lives you have an obligation and not just the opportunity in your lives to step up to the plate, to help guarantee a better life for the children of today. Your humanitarian and ethical leadership will be necessary to achieve this end and to ensure that we as Americans help to chart a path to a just and peaceful world.

I wish you well on your exams and a great Christmas Holiday.

Thank you





