

## U.S. SEN. SAM BROWNBACK

August 30 – September 2, 2004

Remarks during the Republican National Convention

Statement: “The Culture, the Family, & Human Dignity”

My friends, it is a privilege to be with you here.

I come before you tonight to discuss a principle that is under assault both abroad and here at home. It is a principle that is the very heart of America’s founding, one that is critical to our nation’s present and its future: The inherent dignity, equality, and value of each and every person.

Americans of every background and walk of life are united in an unwavering belief that all men and women are created equal. We are bound by a strong conviction that our precious endowment of liberty is not gained by our own actions, but is a gift from our Creator.

We are a people who understand that liberty is a birthright for every human being, and that no man or woman has a right to abuse it for the benefit of another.

Each and every life is beautiful, unique, sacred...a never-to-be-recreated child of the living God.

Therefore, each and every life must be honored, respected, and protected.

We are a people who do not measure the value of a life by physical prowess, birthright, or achievement. We respect the inherent dignity and equality of every person, because every life is sacred.

This party’s foundational principle, enunciated at our very first convention, was that America is of a land of liberty and equality for all. Slavery in the United States was a grave injustice. And we denounced it.

The issue then was whether a slave was a person or a piece of property. We put our very existence as a nation in the balance so that no man could own another, so that no man could treat another as a mere property. In the end, our nation emerged stronger and more resilient as a result of this painful fight.

We, too, cannot escape history. Our nation is again called to the defense of freedom and human dignity: against the scourge of one man owning another.

Although nothing can really compare with the horrific nature of the African slave trade in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, around the world slavery still exists. Human beings are owned...bought and sold.

Today’s ownership of another is more insidious but no less diabolical. Today we see young girls bought and sold like commodities across international borders by criminal organizations that consign them to a life of prostitution and degradation.

Recently, I met with 14 young women from eastern Europe and central Asia who had been caught up in this brutal trade. These girls were poor and without hope; they were lured away from their homeland by promises of jobs and opportunity. Instead, traffickers sold them into a life of forced prostitution. They were imprisoned, often denied food, water, and clothing. Their bodies were abused, and their souls crushed under a weight of fear and suffering imposed by their masters.

Once they became too sick to work in this grotesque traffic in human beings, they were thrown out on the street, replaced by other hapless women sold into a life of sexual slavery. Each woman was regarded as nothing more than a commodity, to be bartered, bonded, depreciated, and ultimately disposed of. Treated as a disposable person.

Instead of a life filled with potential and promise, these women faced a life of brutality and inhumanity at the hands of their oppressors.

Stories such as these shock our consciences. They offend our values. We feel the injustice of human bondage and we act to end it, because the chains of another rub raw our skin as well.

We understand that to strip away the dignity of any human being is to take away from the dignity of all. We understand that *no life* is worth less than another, that *no life* is disposable. We understand that every person, no matter who they are or where they reside, is precious.

Human life is a gift...it is not for sale.

We understand that it is our duty, our calling, our sacred trust, to protect and preserve liberty and human dignity—now and for future generations. Every American understands this because it is written on our hearts and lives in our souls. We are, indeed, our brothers' keepers, but no one is his brother's master.

We believe and we fight for equality and liberty for all. We are fighting aggressively to put an end to the practice of sex trafficking around the globe. We have called on other governments to pass laws making such abuse a crime—and many have risen to the challenge.

We will not cease in our efforts until all men and women who are created equal are treated as equals!

Another form of enslavement endangers our world: It happens when the youngest and most vulnerable among us are treated as products to be used and exploited by those who are stronger. It is wrong to create human life for the purpose of research and destruction. It is wrong to clone human beings.

The fundamental issue, really, is the same one we debated and resolved at our first convention: Can a person, any person, be treated as property?

What does it do to a society if it allows the use of the weakest among us for the benefit of the strong? It demeans human dignity. And if we degrade the value of one class of humans, all of us are degraded.

Human dignity is the right of all—not the privilege of a few.

If all men and women are truly created equal, how can location, or age, or physical condition determine the value of a life?

Conversely, if we uphold the value of all human life, and see each person as a being of infinite worth, doesn't it enhance the dignity of all of us? And truly, don't we all want a culture of life and love, not a culture of death?

In a time when our nation has gained a new appreciation of freedom, and is fighting to expand human dignity around the world, do we wish to return our society to a time of some human beings owning others or abusing others according to their own whim?

In the future we will find cures for diseases like cancer, diabetes, Parkinson's, malaria, and HIV-AIDS. We can...we must...and we will. But we must not do so at the expense of our very humanity.

We know that it does not have to be this way. With advances in adult stem cell research, we can now use a person's own stem cells to heal them. I have had two women testify before my committee who were paraplegics because of massive spinal cord injuries. As a result of adult stem-cell therapy, they now have feeling throughout their bodies and walk with braces. And for Susan Fajt and Laura Dominguez, I look forward to the day when I can see them fulfill their dreams and dance again.

We must defend freedom and human dignity, because these principles are right and true for all people everywhere. They are *uniting* principles. America must not waver from this vision, for we are at our best when we stand on our principles, and at our worst when we forget them.

This is compassionate conservatism.

Compassionate conservatism is universal in outlook. We have a responsibility to ourselves and to the world.

This is why we have worked hard to help those with HIV-AIDS in the poorest of countries, by providing \$15 billion—the most ever—to fight the spread of HIV.

To whom much is given, much is required. We are a nation rich in ability and resources. We must use those abilities and those resources in the service of all the world. Those lives in [Uganda, Zambia, Senegal, Guyana, and Haiti] are precious, unique, and of infinite worth. We are helping them to regain their promise, their hope, and their liberty. This is what George Bush and compassionate conservatism are all about.

Finally, let me talk for a moment about a difficult, but critically important issue for our culture—one that relates directly to how new life is brought into this world, cherished, nurtured, and valued. It's the issue of marriage.

Marriage is the union of a man and a woman. It is man's law, but it is also the law of nature and nature's God. We violate it at our peril.

Marriage is a foundational institution for our society—the context in which new life is created and nurtured. Within this union, we find the best place—not the only place, but the best place—to raise the next generation.

The courts, not legislative bodies, are attempting to redefine marriage as something based only on the affection of adults for each other.

But this is not marriage.

Marriage is two becoming one. Two different halves making one unique whole. Each contributing their differences and uniqueness in a lasting bond that produces life. No amount of redefining can change the truth of what marriage is.

And, according to all the evidence, this is the setting in which children are most likely to thrive: In a stable home with a mom and a dad bonded together for life. We know in our hearts that this is the case, and social science confirms it.

Let's keep pulling our culture toward the best, even if we fail to always achieve it.

We will—we must—work together to protect and respect every human life, no matter where it is. It is the sacred heritage of this nation and this party. Whether it is a 14 year old girl trafficked and sold into prostitution or an HIV-AIDS patient in Rwanda, this nation and this party will fight for you; whether it is a young mother struggling to care for her children or an older man struggling with life itself, this nation and this party will fight for you; whether it is a child in the womb or the mother carrying it, this nation and this party will fight for you; whether it is someone being held in prison in Vietnam for exercising their religious faith or someone in a North Korean gulag accused of political crimes, this nation and this party will fight for you; whether it be people in the western Sudan driven to a refugee camp because of the color of their skin or workers in factory sweatshops in China or anywhere else in the world, this nation and this party will fight for you. Why? Because all of you are beautiful, sacred, and unique and the battle to uphold your human dignity deserves our utmost effort.

My friends, some are saying that hope is on the way. But each of us knows that hope has been here all along in the American ideals that have transformed the world.

Our call is a call to action; it is a call to defend the values and virtue of life and liberty that make our nation strong and free, a beacon for all the world. Life—for everyone—is a beautiful choice.

God bless you and God bless America!