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**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”**  
**The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945**

**Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension**

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**1920 September 6**

**Brooklyn, NY - Campaign Speech**

SEPT. 6

EXTRACT ON OCCASION OF PLACING OF WREATH ON LAFAYETTE STATUE, PROSPECT PARK  
BROOKLYN, LABOR DAY

We are met today before this statue, erected to show visibly the invisible but eternal affection of the citizens of one country for a great citizen of another. We place this wreath at the foot of this memorial to show visibly that our personal affection and admiration are eternal and undying, and that there still lives, not as a shadowy incident of a distant past, but as a very real and present thing, deep in the hearts of every one of us, a personal love and admiration for Lafayette.

The reason for this permanency from one generation to another of our admiration for this great man, is because, in the hearts of every liberty loving American a man who gives his best for liberty will never be forgotten.

No nation has ever been so close to the hearts of the American people as France. It was to the call of France that we responded two million strong, because France in the old world stood for that love of liberty which had led us to these new shores.

This day is peculiarly, of all days in the year, the day to express anew our admiration for one of the foremost champions of liberty that France has raised, because today is also Labor Day, the day when American labor celebrates the throwing off of its mediæval shackles of the past, and proudly celebrates her independence in this new country of ours; and it is also the anniversary of that first battle of the Marne, where France, unterrified, threw back the armies of despotism and found her self thrice armed because her quarrel was just - surely three worthy anniversaries for liberty lovers to celebrate. I am proud to have been selected by the thousands of representatives of labor here assembled to lay this wreath at the foot of this statue of this great man - this man who came across the seas to help us find true liberty.

There is no finer motto in the world for a people to take unto themselves as a guide to their conduct, both as a nation and as individuals, than the motto of that great sister republic across the sea. It is inscribed on every public building in France, it dwells deep in the heart of every Frenchman, it should be remembered in every American's heart as well; Liberty, Equality, Fraternity - the three great things to be striven for in this life. There can be no real equality without fraternity - the feeling that we are brothers, and that there is a real blood relationship between us all.

The nation that learns this lesson will always be a free nation, and will always be one of the strongnations of the world. Let us take this motto as our motto, let us not be lured aside by those who preach class hatred or the rights of any one group over any other group in this great country of ours. Freedom is not accomplished by Imperial edict - it is only possible by the cooperation of all the members of a nation whose people recognize that they are indeed the same people with the same hopes and the same aim, and who have learned to forget in a brotherly way each other's faults.

To you present today who answered the call of France, who were fortunate enough to be members of that great army, whose general, standing before the actual tomb of this man whose statue towers above us, made that immortal speech - the speech which, perhaps, expressed most clearly, in the fewest words, the whole thought of this great nation - "Lafayette, we are here." To you, this anniversary of one of the great battles of the war in which you fought, has perhaps an even greater significance than to those whom fate compelled to stay at home. There has been much talk of politicians as to why you went, much subtle argument and bad logic as to the necessity of preventing your ever going again, much difference of opinion as to what course would best make this impossible. I have, as you all know, my own views of the best course, and my own hopes that you will never have to go again if that course is followed out, but I want to say now that I believe I know why you really went - that I know that the call of Lafayette and what he stood for was the real call that sent you over.

The cause of liberty is too great, and lies too deep in our American hearts even to let us close our ears when liberty is in danger - No man can tell me that we Americans are materialists, or selfish towards seeking only our fireside comforts, let destruction and anarchy reign as they will throughout the world - I know better, and there is no better proof that Americans will never forget or forsake the cause of liberty than our remembrance, unimpaired and undiminished after a hundred years, of the great Marquis de Lafayette.