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The approach of the  
Americas: convocation address  
delivered before the  
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**Fundação Joaquim Nabuco**

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CONVOCATION ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO AUGUST 28 1908

THE APPROACH OF THE  
TWO AMERICAS

By  
JOAQUIM NABUCO  
Ambassador of Brazil

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## The Approach of the Two Americas

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I am proud to address this University, worthy of a city which, for its sudden gigantic growth, is the wonder of the world and which is the foremost of all the great experiment stations of Americanization. In Chicago, better than anywhere else, one can follow the short process by which any foreign plant is made to bear in one or two seasons of acclimation genuine American fruit. Here we are at one of the gates of the world, through which enter new social conceptions, new forms of being; at one of the sources of modern civilization. The tribute to science, from which this University sprung, is the most beneficent tribute which wealth could ever pay to mankind. To increase the rate at which science grows is without comparison the greatest service that could be rendered to the human race. Religion will be powerless to bring to earth the kingdom of God without the help of science at a state of advancement of which we cannot yet even have an idea. By increasing the number of men able to use the delicate tools of science, to understand its many languages, and to acquire its higher senses, the Universities work faster than any other agency for that advanced state of knowledge, through which the condition of man will some day be entirely transformed.

Words fail me to express my appreciation of the call I received to speak before you. I am bound to take the honor as a distinguished personal obligation, but allow me to see in it chiefly a sign of your sympathy with the work of drawing the two Americas close together. Much as the future generations will wonder at the progress of our time they will wonder still more that the two great sections of our Continent did remain so late in history almost unknown to each other. One reason of their isolation was that



many spirits in Latin America were for a long time afraid of a too close contact with you, owing to the great difference of power between this and every other American nation. On its side the United States, being a world by itself, and a world growing faster each day, has always opposed to any such movements the strongest of all possible resistances, that of indifference. Fortunately a new cry begins already to resound everywhere. Suspicion is being replaced by confidence, and, if the Universities take in hand the policy of Secretary Root, indifference, in its turn, will give way to the feeling of continental kinship.

In Brazil, I must say, the leading statesmen were never afraid of associating with this country. As soon as the Message of President Monroe, of December, 1823, was received in Rio de Janeiro, the Brazilian Government proposed to the United States an offensive and defensive alliance on the basis of that Message, alleging that sacrifices such as those implied in it for the benefit of Latin America should not be accepted gratuitously. The proposal was delayed in transmission and there was another delay in the acknowledgment; Henry Clay, who in the meanwhile had been made Secretary of State, answered at last that the American Government did not foresee any danger that would justify an alliance; but from the spirit of that offer we never had cause to deviate, and, as no disappointment ever came to us, we never expected any would come to others from adopting the course we had followed since our Independence.

It was once said that the society of any Latin country with you reminded one of the company in Lafontaine's fable of the earthenware with the iron pot. I do not think the comparison just to any of the Latin Republics. With an unbreakable cohesion none has anything to fear for its nationality. What is essential for a nation is to crystallize;



to bring all its parts to a same symmetrical form of its own, the design of a common national sentiment; once that done, and I think such is the case with all Latin America, it would never break like earthenware. You with your high civilization can do no wrong to any nation. Intimate contact with you will, therefore, under whatever conditions, bring only good and progress to the other party.

The only certain effect I can see of a permanent and intimate intercourse of Latin America with you is that it would be slowly *americanized*; that is, that it would be, in different measures, penetrated with your optimism, your self-reliance and your energy. It would be a treatment by electricity. I do not mean that we would ever attain your speed. Nor do we wish it. You have broken the record of human activity without breaking the rhythm of life. You have made a new rhythm for yourselves. We could never do that. For the Latin races *festina lente* is the rule of health and stability. And let me say it is good for mankind that all its races do not go at the same step, that they do not all run. The reign of science has not yet begun, and only in the age of science mankind might attain to uniformity without beginning at once to decay. Dignity of life, culture, happiness, freedom, may be enjoyed by nations moving slowly, provided they move steadily forward.

Take one common point in our destiny. We must all be immigration countries. But in order to be able to oppose to whatever foreign immigration a national spirit capable of turning it quickly into patriotic citizenship, as you do, the assimilating power of the Latin organism need everywhere be much increased. Immigration countries must have the necessary strength to assimilate all that they absorb. For that a strong patriotism does not suffice. Patriotism is intense in almost every nation and in



none perhaps more so than in the tribes without history. The Romans were not more patriotic than the Lusitanians. It is not patriotism that conquers immigration. Through our intercourse with you we would see what it is that conquers it. You owe your unparalleled success, as an immigration country, first of all to your political spirit. Without it you would have, owing to your soil and your race, no end of foreign guests; you would not have the endless number of citizens that they soon become here. The American political spirit is a combination of the spirit of individual liberty with the spirit of equality. Liberty alone would not convert the foreign immigrant into a new citizen; we do not hear of foreigners taking the nationality of the free European countries to which they emigrate. Equality is a more powerful agent. The European immigrant rises socially in America, and that is what makes him wish to be an American. But if your progress did not offer him something also of which to be proud as a citizen, he would not take so generally a new nationality. It is the progress of your country, the place it has made for itself in the world, that helps with national pride the spirit of liberty and equality in winning over to you the millions of immigrants who try life in America. Intercourse with you would teach the American countries the secret of winning over the immigrants that come to them and of attracting them in larger numbers. That would be by far the most useful teaching they could receive, because when they knew and succeeded in transforming into true citizens their immigrants, the great national problem would be solved for each of them. To understand that they must all be immigration countries and to create the proper immigrant-*habitat* they need study immigration in your laboratory.

I would not end if I attempted to mention all the good that Latin America would derive from a close intercourse



with the United States. What you perhaps would prefer to hear is what good would you derive from that intercourse. I will tell you frankly that that good would be, at first, only the good that comes from making friends; but I believe there is no more substantial good than that for a nation which is the leader of a Continent.

The question is to know if you have made up your mind that this Continent should be for each of its nations a prolongation of her native soil; that some kind of tie should make of it a single moral unit in history. Was the Monroe Doctrine inspired to you only by the fear of seeing Europe extending its parallel spheres of influence over America, as it has later on done over Africa, and as it almost succeeded in doing over Asia, endangering in that way your solitary position? Or were you also moved by the intuition that this is a new world, born with a common destiny? I strongly believe that the Monroe Doctrine was inspired even more by this American instinct, take the word *American* in the sense of continental, than by any fear of danger to yourselves. By all means in that *doctrine* was outlined a whole foreign policy, from which this country has never swerved, from Monroe to Cleveland and to Roosevelt, from Clay to Blaine and to Root. This constancy, this continuity, is the best proof that your American policy obeys to a deep continental instinct and is not only a measure of national precaution and self-defence. That policy has kept you away from the maze of European diplomacy, in which without the Monroe Doctrine you would probably have been induced to enter.

One understands very well the traditional reluctance of the United States to contract war alliances. The allies of to-day are the rivals of a few years ago, and the system of alliances must ever be a revolving one. But there is a foreign policy that is passing and dangerous and another



that is permanent and safe. The passing foreign policy is any by which a nation secures help thinking of herself only, that is, by which it uses another nation as her instrument; the permanent foreign policy is that by which a nation tries to accomplish with another a common destiny. The difference between the permanent and the temporary foreign policy is that the latter must take the form of a written alliance, of a formal engagement, with a fixed term of duration. Alliances are transitory, unelastic, and full of dangers, while the spontaneous concurrence in the same lines of action is the natural development of each nation's destiny. Alliance supposes war; free co-operation supposes peace and mutual help through sympathy and good will. You keep away from *the entangling alliances* which the Father of your country deprecated, and yet a concentration of the American Republics with the idea that they all form, under different flags, a single political system is already a moral alliance.

This idea has made much progress in the last four years, and I trust it will not lack in this country the enthusiasm it needs to grow. Secretary Root's visit to Latin America will indeed remain a historical landmark in the relations of our continent, like Monroe's Message of 1823, and Blaine's initiative of the Pan-American movement. One can call this policy a dual creation, because, if Blaine moulded the group of the United American nations, it was Root who put in it life and movement.

The Pan-American Conferences, besides the work they achieve with their periodical meetings, do much good simply by being a permanent institution. In this way they act even during their intervals of four years. Take the movement which led to the experiment now being tried in Central America, of an international court, which is really an essay of organized Peace in a region so much tried by po-



litical shocks. You can see in it the development of the interest which the United States has frankly avowed of seeing order and peace permanently established beforehand in the whole zone around the future Panama Canal; but no doubt the co-operation of the United States, and Mexico, with the Central American Republics was a development also of the mutual confidence created through our Continent by the Pan-American Conferences, chiefly by the last one of Rio de Janeiro. It would be indeed a pity if those proud and brave little nations, whose citizenship is open to each other in a spirit unknown among any other countries of the world, did not succeed in reducing politics to a contest under strict rules to be maintained by their own appointed umpires. The Carthago Court should be hailed as one of the most deserving of modern political undertakings. All America is in sympathy with those brave small communities, strongly imbued with the national spirit, in their effort to create a Peace Amphictyony in the tract of land dividing the two oceans and uniting the two Americas.

But the Pan-American Conferences are not sufficient to carry out the idea which inspired their creation. No doubt the Governments speak in them for the nations and the views they present are national views, which would have the support of all the Parties; but Congresses of official delegates do not touch at the delicate points, which there is everywhere a tendency to hide from public view. The Pan-American Conferences are diplomatic assemblies; the peoples do not mix in them to tell each other their wrongs, to appeal to each other's sympathy; the question of the internal progress of any community is not one in which diplomacy could openly help. So by the side of our Conferences there is place for a larger factor, to which Mr. Root has once alluded: for a Pan-American public opinion.





In our days we saw the parliamentary principle more or less recognized by the old absolute monarchies: Russia, Japan, Persia, and now Turkey. No one would wonder if China joined them. That is the best evidence of the leveling force of the world's opinion. This opinion of the world no doubt exercises already a considerable influence upon all the American countries. One cannot say that any American Republic has been impervious to it. It would be absurd to imagine any nation of our Continent insensible and closed to an influence which has affected and transformed politically Buddhist and Mahometan societies. Revolution has become much rarer in Latin America. In regions where it used to be frequent it has not been heard of for nearly half a century; the area where revolution continues active at long intervals has become much reduced; but even where revolutions occur frequently the old general revolutionary state of anarchy has ceased to exist, order is always shortly restored. Revolution seems the act of the man to whom the power of keeping order has passed; it is a terrifying storm, but no longer a sweeping hurricane. Still, together with that distant and dispersed opinion of the world, which has already done much, we need a common American opinion, magnified by concentration and by direct reflection from nation to nation.

Only the progress of that opinion can, for instance, render obsolete the right of asylum. The Positivist saying is as true as it is deep: "One only destroys what one replaces." You can not destroy the right of asylum, if you do not put in its place some other thing that will fulfill better the function which called it forth. That "right" was only replaced in the world by the progress of justice. If law and justice were to become intermittent, the right of asylum would again reappear everywhere. This is one of the most ancient and the noblest traditions of mankind.



You could not suppress it by killing pity and generosity; they cannot be killed; you can only suppress it by increasing the protections of the law and the sense of justice.

A common American public opinion will polish to the greatest perfection the political institutions of all the American States, but that general opinion is still in formation. Its initial or preparatory phase is bound to be Continental publicity; publicity, not only unfettered, but dispassionate, enlightened and true, beginning with inviolate freedom of the Press. When that opinion will be fully grown, the membership of the Union of the American Republics will mean immunity for each of them, not only from foreign conquest, but also from arbitrary rule and suspension of public and individual liberty.

In the influence of that opinion common to all America a large part is reserved to the Universities of the Continent, to its educators, and none of our countries could be compared to yours for the extent and the multiplication of its educational works. No doubt the principal agents of that opinion will be the book and the Press. Allow me to express the hope that in all our countries the writers will think of the sensitivity of the foreign Nations. Sympathy is always necessary to do good. First of all one should educate himself to tolerate diversity in the human race. The world would be very near its end, if all the countries spoke the same language. Let all feel sure that God must have had some good reason for creating different human races, instead of only one. By accustoming themselves to this idea the foreign critic will have more forbearance, more patience, will make greater effort to understand, and with that his interest will grow, his mental range will become enlarged and he will then be able to improve, instead of only exasperating, the condition with which he finds fault.





Understanding that the reason for my being here was your wish to show interest in the new Pan-American policy, I have made of that policy the theme of my address. I hope I was not wrong in the belief that the subject was in harmony with the spirit of the present occasion. This ceremony could be compared to the launching of new crafts on the sea of American active citizenship. At the starting of their career, I wished to express to them my earnest hope that together with the world-wide transformations to be brought about in their time, and which we cannot even imagine, they will see all the States of the two Americas knowing, loving and entertaining each other as members of one same family among the Nations.

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