

## Independence day speech by Ambassador Robert Blake



On this day each year, Americans gather with family and friends to commemorate the anniversary of the signing of our Declaration of Independence on July

4, 1776. July 4 is always a happy day for us. It is an opportunity to get together with family and friends, attend a parade on Main Street, perhaps play a little baseball, fire up the barbeque for some hamburgers and hot dogs, and then go watch fireworks at a local park.

But it is also a time for reflection, to remember the challenges our forefathers faced and to recognize their courage and wisdom. On this day 231 years ago, 56 men gathered in Philadelphia to sign the Declaration of Independence drafted by a future President, Thomas Jefferson. The Declaration eloquently set forth their grievances against the British Crown. But such grievances had been enumerated before.

What distinguished this declaration from all others was the bold and final decision it took to assert the independence of 13 free states. As President John Kennedy later put it, "That Declaration unleashed not merely a revolution against the British, but a revolution in human affairs. Its authors were highly conscious of its worldwide implications. And George Washington declared that liberty and self-government everywhere were staked on the experiment entrusted to the American people."

On the occasion of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 1976 President Gerald Ford traveled to Philadelphia and reflected on the significance of the Declaration. He told his audience that "The signers of the Declaration boldly reversed the age-old political

theory that kings derive their power from God and asserted instead that both powers and inalienable rights belong to the people. Furthermore they declared that governments are instituted among men to secure their rights and to secure their purposes, and governments continue only so long as they have the consent of the governed."

In the final words of the Declaration the signatories pledged "our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor." Those were not empty words. 5 were later taken prisoner, 12 had their homes sacked, 2 lost their sons and 9 died in the revolutionary war that followed.

Eleven years later in 1787 in that same hall in Philadelphia, another group of representatives of the people and the States met to form a more perfect union, a permanent legal mechanism that would translate the ideals of Jefferson's declaration into effective self-government. That constitution enshrined the principles of freedom, justice, liberty and equality. It also marked the beginning of what is now hailed as the world's oldest participatory democracy.

America's Constitution is a living document constantly refreshed to reflect the needs and will of the people. But throughout America's history, our basic purposes have been to keep the peace, to foster progress in human achievement, and to enhance liberty and dignity among peoples and among nations. Those principles underpin the more than fifty years of friendship between the United States and Sri Lanka. America was proud to be a partner in helping Sri Lanka during its early years with more than a billion and a half dollars in development assistance. Our young Peace Corps volunteers

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**The American Center**  
**Office of Public Diplomacy**  
**U.S. Embassy**  
**44 Galle Road**  
**Colombo 3**  
**Sri Lanka**

**Telephone: 2498100**

**Telefax: 2498101**

**Email: [amcentersl@state.gov](mailto:amcentersl@state.gov)**

**Web: [colombo.usembassy.gov](http://colombo.usembassy.gov)**

## Independence day



The United States celebrates its Independence Day on July 4th, a day of patriotic celebration and family events throughout the country. In the words of Founding Father John Adams, the holiday would be "the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more."

## Ambassador Blake's Address to the Chamber of Construction Industry Presentation on Transportation Solutions for Rapid Economic Growth

It is an honor to speak to the Chamber of Construction Industry and I look forward to hearing Dr. Walter Wickramasinghe speak on a very important and timely issue -- transportation. First, permit me if you will, to ask you a trivia question: Can anyone here name the U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka in 1987? In a moment, I will return to this question -- that will give some of you time to rack your memories.

As you know, to compete effectively, in both global trade and investment, countries must have modern, reliable infrastructure. Transport infrastructure in particular is essential for an island state that must move goods efficiently to and from its one major port. Moreover, a safe, secure and efficient transportation system can bind the nation closer together, by making it easier and faster to visit relatives, see unfamiliar parts of the country, or travel for business meetings.

Sri Lanka has an urgent need to connect, upgrade, and extend its rail, air, port, and road infrastructure. I'm reminded of this daily as I look out my office window at the trains chugging along Colombo's coast every 15 minutes. This brings me back to my trivia question, because I am told that some of those trains are the same ones that plied the tracks when Ambassador James W. Spain represented the United States here 20 years ago. Excuse me for saying so, but that is not a good sign for Sri Lanka's competitiveness.

And speaking of trains, one of the biggest laughs I have drawn in nine months of public remarks here is when I told the Sri Lanka America Society a few months ago that my family and I had returned to Colombo from a trip to Nuwara Eliya by taking the train! It seems we were the only ones who were surprised when we discovered that our driver had made it back to Colombo two hours before we did. I will say though that, despite the crawling pace, the lack of service, and the unswept floors, it was a very scenic train ride. These are only one of many examples of the critical need for Sri Lanka to overhaul its transport sector.

The good news today is that, with the efforts of your Chamber and the expertise of Dr. Wickramasinghe, I

am optimistic that one of my successors decades from now will overlook a bullet train along the coast and will himself enjoy a smooth one-hour train ride home from Nuwara

## Events Calendar

### June/July

**June 12-14:** Political Consultant Anne Stone conducts a workshop in the Maldives on political party formation.

**June 18:** Farewell reception for departing Assistant Public Affairs Officer Evan Owen.

**June 24-26:** Professor John Kincaid, Director of Lafayette Lafayette College's Meyner Center for the Study of State and Local Government, visits the Maldives to discuss local governance and empowerment through republican constitutions.

**June 24-29:** Media trainer and award-winning journalist, Merle Rubine leads a five-day training course on "Advanced News Reporting and Writing" at the Sri Lanka College of Journalism for 16 mid-career journalists.

**June 28:** Luncheon meeting with the editors of four Sri Lankan national newspapers, the U.S. Public Affairs Officer Terry White, and Media Trainer Merle Rubine.

**June 29:** Ambassador Blake interviewed on independently-owned MTV for their primetime program Bizfirst - Infocus.

**June 30-July 4:** Media Trainer Merle Rubine in the Maldives to conduct journalism training.

**July 2:** The United States-Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission conducts a one-day pre-departure orientation on living and studying in the United States for undergraduate and postgraduate students departing to U.S. universities this fall. Program held at Trans Asia Hotel, Colombo.

**July 3:** Screening of "An Inconvenient Truth" on the request of Stafford International School. Sixty-seven students and six teachers to view the film.

**July 4:** The American Center distributes Independence Day supplements in four national newspapers (Daily News, Daily Mirror, Island and The Morning Leader).

### Looking Ahead...

**August:** An American expert on processes, technologies, and public-private partnerships in solid waste management will visit Sri Lanka to meet with industry leaders and government officials.

## USAID in Action

### A 'New Beginning for Vocational Education' in Sri Lanka



US Ambassador Robert Blake (left) and Minister for Vocational and Technical Training Priyasena Gamage (right)

The center at Koggala is among nine state-of-the-art facilities to be built or reconstructed and equipped on the South and East coasts by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in partnership with the Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training and the Vocational Training Authority (VTA) as part of its Tsunami Reconstruction Program.

"Of all the initiatives by the United States to help Sri Lanka recover from the tsunami, promoting vocational training is in many ways our most important project," said U.S. Ambassador Robert Blake at a ceremony marking the groundbreaking of the new facility.

### United States Opens First of 25 'Last Mile' Centers To Bring Internet to Rural Areas



USAID Mission Director Rebecca Cohn

In a new private-public partnership, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) dedicated a cyber-center that links international and local businesses to bring modern information technology to some of the furthest reaches of Sri Lanka.

The cyber-center, known as Easy Seva, the first of 25 that will be launched over the next four months by the US-based Synergy Strategy Group (SSG) with support from USAID. Additional implementing partners include multi-national firms Qualcomm, Dialog Telekom and Microsoft, and local companies InfoShare, the National Development Bank, and Lanka Orix Leasing Company.

### USAID Supports Anti-Corruption Plan



Delegates to the recent conference drafting a National Action Plan against corruption assemble around the logo of the USAID Anti Corruption Program

Under the aegis of the U.S. Agency for Development (USAID) Anti-Corruption Program (ACP), members of the ACP Consultative Council presented a draft National Action Plan against corruption at a national conference attended by more than 200 community activists from across all of Sri Lanka.

The draft Action Plan was developed with input from a series of regional workshops in 17 districts conducted for the ACP by the Center for Policy Alternatives (CPA), Transparency International Sri Lanka (TISL), Janawaboda Kendraya, and Lawyers for Human Rights and Development.

Following discussion and refinement of the plan at a two-day session at the Bandaranaike Memorial Conference Hall, the organizers will finalize a document that addresses the practical manifestations of corruption and methods of mitigating corruption in the short, medium, and long terms. This final plan will be presented to representatives of Government and Parliament at the end of July.

### Independence day ...

*From page 1*

helped to teach English and other skills that your young nation needed. Today America is Sri Lanka's largest export market and world class American businesses such as Citibank, Chevron and AES are investing here to reinforce your dynamic private sector as the engine of growth.

As a member of the Co-Chairs of the Tokyo Donor Conference the United States is a committed partner in Sri Lanka's quest to reach a negotiated settlement to the conflict that has divided your beautiful country for so many years.

As America's forefathers knew, this will require bold leadership, a determination to set aside narrow party, regional and ethnic considerations so that you also can build a great, united and prosperous nation. In America you will continue to find a strong friend and partner.

Let me conclude with a quote from the Declaration of Independence that is as relevant today as it was 231 years ago.

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*

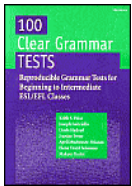
## New Additions at the American Center Library

### BOOKS



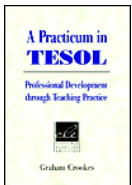
#### Federalism in America : an encyclopedia

This encyclopedia provides a comprehensive reference explaining the major concepts, institutions, court cases, epochs, personalities, and policies that have shaped, or been shaped by, American federalism. It describes federalism's creation and evolution, and its influence on governmental institutions, procedures, and policies at the local, state, and national levels. The models used to explain the various historical eras in the development of federalism are also included.



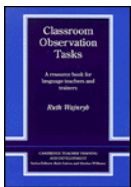
#### 100 clear grammar tests : reproducible grammar tests for beginning to intermediate ESL/EFL classes

The first of its kind, *100 Clear Grammar Tests* contains 100 photocopiable tests, written to test students' comprehension of the most essential beginning and intermediate ESL grammar points. The tests are arranged by topic in a sequence that matches the one found in the *Clear Grammar* series but can also be used with other grammar series on the market.



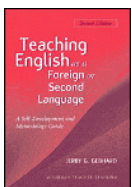
#### A practicum in TESOL : professional development through teaching practice

A Practicum in TESOL is a valuable source book for both teacher educators and classroom teachers. It ranges widely across key areas of practice - from the nitty-gritty of lesson planning and classroom management, through conceptual areas such as motivation and observation, to crucial if more abstract aspects, such as teachers' beliefs and values. It also delves into the moral and political dimensions of teaching.



#### Classroom observation tasks : a resource book for language teachers and trainers

In the past, classroom observation was usually understood only in judgment terms--assessment, evaluation, probation. This text will help teachers use classroom observation as a tool in enabling them to discover more about the processes of teaching and learning.

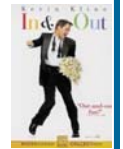
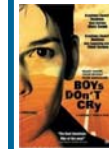
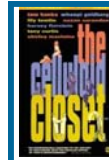


#### Teaching English as a foreign or second language

"Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language, Second Edition, is designed for those new to ESL/EFL teaching and for self-motivated teachers who seek to maximize their potential and enhance the learning of their students. This guide provides basic information that ESL/EFL teachers should know before they start teaching and many ideas on how to guide students in the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

### DVD

- An Inconvenient Truth
- Boys Don't Cry
- Broadcast News
- Celluloid Closet
- Color Purple
- Front Page
- It's Your Life Educate youth on HIV/AIDS
- The Laramie Project
- Network
- Live From Baghdad
- Shattered Glass



#### InfoUSA CDs 2007-2008

These CDs provide a wealth of resources on U.S. business, education, government, media, and culture. InfoUSA aims to promote understanding of the principles and institutions that shape American values and the peoples who have come together to make up our population.



#### eJournalUSA

Electronic Journal of the U.S. Department of State, June 2007

This issue of eJournal USA analyzes the increasing internationalization of the film industry, both in terms of audiences and filmmaking talent; the rise of a more personal style of independent filmmaking in recent years; the market for foreign-produced films in the United States; and the effects of the Internet and the digital revolution on how movies get made and distributed. Shorter pieces focus on film festivals like Sundance that seed young talent and some film studios' efforts to go green in making movies.

## Film Screenings at the American Center

Every Tuesday at 6.30pm

July 2007 – Baseball – Cricket's Cousin and America's Pastime

July 3, 2007

**A League of Their Own (1992, 116 minutes)** *To achieve the incredible you have to attempt the impossible.*

Penny Marshall's popular 1992 comedy sheds light on a little-known chapter of American sports history with its story of a struggling team in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. The league was formed when the recruiting of soldiers during World War II resulted in a shortage of men's baseball teams. The AAGPBL continued after the war (until 1954), and Marshall's movie depicts the league in full swing. It's a conventional Hollywood sports story but the stellar cast is delightful, and the movie's filled with memorable moments, witty dialogue, and agreeable sentiment.

July 10, 2007

**Bull Durham (1988, 108 minutes)** *It's all about sex and sport. What else is there?*

*Bull Durham* is about minor league baseball. It's also about romance, sex, poetry, metaphysics, and talent--though not necessarily in that order. Susan Sarandon plays a loopy lady who just loves America's national pastime--and the men who play it. The film, directed by its writer, Ron Shelton, a former minor league player, is rich in subtle detail. Kevin Costner's clear-eyed, slightly vitriolic performance is devastatingly sexy and keenly witty. The love scenes, though tasteful, are almost as humorous as they are hot. How can you not love a movie with such a wicked sense of humor?

July 17, 2007

**Eight Men Out (1988, 120 minutes)** *The scandal that rocked a nation*

*Eight Men Out* illustrates how the system of American sports collapsed in 1919, the year the Chicago White Sox threw the World Series. John Cusack and Charlie Sheen lead a superb ensemble of actors delivering striking performances in this mesmerizing story about the infamous 1919 Chicago White Sox scandal, certainly one of the saddest chapters in the annals of professional sports. Buck Weaver (Cusack) and Hap Felsch (Sheen) are young idealistic players with the Chicago White Sox, a pennant-winning team owned by Charles Comiskey - a penny-pinching, hands-on manager who underpays his players and treats them with disdain. *Eight Men Out* gives us powerful lessons in which everyone lost: players, gamblers, and especially the fans who love the game.

July 24, 2007

**Major League (1989, 107 minutes)** *When these oddballs try to play hardball, the result is totally screwball.*

A baseball and romantic comedy rolled into one, this one actually works as entertainment, if not as a piece of cinematic mastery. A has-been manager is hired to lead the last-place Cleveland Indians whose owner wants them to lose so she can sell them. But the team of has-beens and never-will-bes that he assembles (including Tom Berenger, Charlie Sheen, Corbin Bernsen, and Wesley Snipes) develops a sense of pride and turns the team around. There's plenty of rowdy humor about sex, race, and whatever else they can make fun of. Look for Rene Russo (in her first role) as Berenger's romantic interest; Snipes also had his first showy role as Willie Mays Hayes, the team's base-stealing ace.

July 31, 2007

**Field of Dreams (1989, 106 minutes)** *All his life, Ray Kinsella was searching for his dreams. Then one day, his dreams came looking for him.*

You don't have to like baseball to love this movie. A phenomenal hit when it was released in 1989, *Field of Dreams* has become a modern classic and a uniquely American slice of cinema. It functions effectively as a moving drama about the power of dreams, a fantasy ode to our national pastime, and a brilliant adaptation of W.P. Kinsella's exquisite baseball novel *Shoeless Joe*. A meditation on family, memory, and faith, the film balances humor and magic to strike just the right chord of thoughtful emotion, affecting audiences so deeply that the baseball field created for the production has now become a mecca of sorts for dreamers around the world.

Movies begin promptly at 6:30pm every Tuesday. Entry is free. Seating is limited and is first-come, first-served. Bring photo ID for entry.

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The American Center  
Office of Public Diplomacy  
U.S. Embassy  
44 Galle Road  
Colombo 3  
Sri Lanka

Phone: 2498100  
Fax: 2498101  
E-mail: [amcentersl@state.gov](mailto:amcentersl@state.gov)

Web:  
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