

Dedication of Thoreau's Path on Brister's Hill

Introduction of Congressman Marty Meehan

Kathi Anderson, Executive Director, Walden Woods Project

It's my pleasure to introduce the congressman from the fifth district of Massachusetts. Marty Meehan's support for the Walden Woods Project has made a tremendous difference in helping us reach many important milestones in the conservation of Walden Woods. He has been a leader in the historic natural resources of this district: Minute Man National Historic Park, the Assabet, Sudbury, and Concord Rivers, and the Great Meadows National Wildlife Reserve, to only name a few. We have all benefited by having Marty in Congress. It's easy to see why the League of Conservation Voters has referred to him as an environmental hero.

Please welcome Congressman Marty Meehan.

Congressman Marty Meehan

Thank you very much, Kathi – I'm delighted to be here. I just want to say thank you to Kathi Anderson, who for many, many years has done such a great job as the executive director of the Walden Woods Project; Kathi, thank you for all you do.

And what a beautiful day it is for a celebration. I came over with my friend, John Lewis, and we were talking about days in our lives that we remember when it rained like this, and John mentioned – and Ted Kennedy was there – the day of the dedication of the Clinton Library in Arkansas when it rained and it poured, and it rained and it poured, but it was a beautiful celebration nonetheless, just as this is. I'm also reminded of my marriage ten years ago, the same day of Hurricane Bertha, when my wife said to me "Look, the more weathered the knot, the tighter the knot" and everything has worked out so far.

I thank Don Henley and Kathi for inviting me, and for all of you, literally thousands of people who have been involved in this project over the years. What a wonderful, wonderful commitment to our community, to our heritage, and to our country. Don Henley founded the Walden Woods Project in 1990 to preserve an important piece of American heritage. And over the last decade the Project has fought to protect our natural environment at Walden Woods. Thoreau once wrote, "In wildness is the preservation of the world." Today's dedication of the path on Brister's Hill represents a triumph of preservation over environmental devastation. Nearly a half-million people pilgrimage to Walden Woods each year. Like Thoreau, they too feel that where the most beautiful wildflowers grow, there man's spirit is fed, and there poets grow. A century and a half ago, Thoreau penned words that move people's souls; today, Don Henley does the same. He is among America's greatest song writers, singers, musicians. We all know Don from the ground-breaking and stunning music that he continues to make with the Eagles. And we also know Don from his highly successful solo career. He's one of the most talented, insightful musical voices and minds of our times. But it is through Don's work with the Walden Woods Project that he has become a leading voice in the environmental protection movement. This morning I read in the Boston Globe that when Don first got

involved with this project a lot of people viewed him as an outsider, but I must admit he is anything but an outsider today, though some of us from Massachusetts are a little wary of people from Texas. (And Don just said, “And rightly so!”) But Don Henley has become such an important part of our community, such an important part of this community. Don founded the Walden Woods Project and the Thoreau Institute to protect the natural environment, to preserve wildlife habitat, and educate us about the life achievements of Henry David Thoreau. We owe him a debt of gratitude for preserving Walden Woods, and preserving the rich history of those who drew inspiration from the land that we are standing on today. Above all, we thank him for his humanity. I remember on September 11, those of us from Massachusetts, from Boston, lost so many people on those planes. As I talked to people from my district who lost loved ones, I was touched by how many children had lost a mother or a father. We wanted to do something in the community that would make a difference, and the first person I called was Don Henley, and I asked him if he’d be willing to come up to the Paul E. Tsongas arena and have a concert to give money to send the young people who had lost mothers or fathers to college. And thanks to Don’s generosity, we raised over 400,000 that night at the Paul Tsongas arena.

Don’s work to protect Walden Woods has ensured that future generations will be able to experience the legacy of Thoreau. He’s a great person and he makes a difference every single day of his life. Please welcome Don Henley.

Don Henley

Thank you, Marty, for all you do on behalf of the Walden Woods Project. Massachusetts has one of the most effective congressional delegations in the country, largely due to the extraordinary leadership of Senator Ted Kennedy and Congressman Marty Meehan. I want to thank a few people for being here today. A special thanks to Congressman John Lewis, another fine congressman of 20 years of service, who has come all the way from Atlanta, Georgia to be with us here today; thank you for being here. A special thank you to my good friend, Whoopie Goldberg, for also being here. She swam here from northern Massachusetts. You all know Whoopie, she’s an Academy Award-winning actress, comedian-extraordinaire, committed humanitarian, and soon-to-be host of a syndicated radio show called “Wake up with Whoopie.” It’s also a pleasure to have Keith Lockheart with us today. My children and I will always remember the wonderful time we had last year at the Boston Pops 4th of July concert on the Esplanade (even though I made the gossip column the next day for yelling at somebody – he yelled first).

I see here today so many friends and colleagues who have played significant roles in the preservation of Walden Woods. The diversity of support is what has characterized the Walden Woods Project from the beginning. People from all walks of life have shared commitment to this special place and what it represents, and I thank each and every one of you.

Henry David Thoreau loved the rain. On May 17, 1858 he wrote in his journal, “This rain is good for thought, it is especially agreeable to me as I enter the woods and hear the soothing dripping on the leaves.” So I imagine if Thoreau were here with us today, he’d

admonish us for hunkering down in this tent, rather than braving the elements. Now I'm often asked how I became interested in Thoreau and in Walden Woods. I was very fortunate to have some extraordinary teachers, both in high school and in college, who introduced me to the writings of Thoreau and Emerson. And out of that grew a very personal connection to the place that inspired many of these writings. In the fall of 1989, I happened to watch a news story on CNN that focused on the commercial development threats facing Walden Woods, including the office building planned for Brister's Hill, in this very spot. In fact, those plans would have placed a 147,000 square foot office building right here where we sit today. As a result, I was drawn into the fight to prevent the ecological and historical disaster that would have destroyed forever one of the world's most important literary landscapes. But, my story is not unique. It's similar to the stories of countless other people who have faced a challenge and turned it into an opportunity to take action and make a difference. The purpose that led me and my colleagues to found the Walden Wood Project parallels the fundamental philosophy of the organization itself, which is that through awareness, and education, and action, individual efforts can have a significant, positive impact.

There are 3 fundamental questions that I want to briefly address. The first question is: "Why are Thoreau and Walden Woods so important?" I'm amazed that people still ask me that all the time: "Well, why is this place so important? What's so important about that?" Henry David Thoreau saw the universal in the particular – he saw the universal principal in the specific case. And thus his philosophy has universal application here in the 21st century. Walden is symbolic of all the other environmental struggles taking place around the world. And the great American author, E.L. Doctoro, put it best when he wrote, "The fact that Walden is a humble place, an ordinary pond, a plain New England woods, is exactly the point. Thoreau made himself an everyman, and he chose Walden as his everywhere." Doctoro went on to write: "We need both Waldens: the book and the place. We are not all spirit anymore than we are all clay. And so we need both: the literature and the land. You have to be able to take your children there and say 'This is it. This is the wood that old Henry wrote about – you see?' You give them what is rightfully theirs, just as you give them Gettysburg, because it is theirs."

The second question is: "Why is Brister's Hill so important? Why is this spot we're sitting on so important?" There are very few places in the world today that embody the confluence of major philosophical movements. Brister's Hill is one of them. It represents all the primary facets of Thoreau's life, vision, and work; the importance of nature and conservation, ecological study, conscience, and social reform. With today's dedication of Thoreau's Path, this site becomes a tremendous educational and recreational asset for Concord, for the entire New England region, and for those visiting from around the world.

The significance of Brister's Hill is manifested by the presence of some very special guests, who I would like to introduce.

Bay Emerson Bancroft, whose great-great-grandfather was Ralph Waldo Emerson. Bay, thank you for being here. I want you to know that Emerson's essay on self-reliance had a

profound impact on me, and was, in part, responsible for my decision to embark on a career of music and song writing. Let's hope that your great-great-grandfather would view this as a positive outcome.

Next I would like to introduce Calvin Standing Bear, the grandson of the great chief Luther Standing Bear. Calvin has come all the way from Colorado to be with us today, and he is keeping the music and the traditions of his Lakota heritage alive through his talents as a flutist and composer of music richly grounded in spirituality. Thank you.

Roger Christie is the nephew of Rachel Carson. I'm sure that most of you are familiar with the works of Rachel Carson; a woman I greatly admire, not only for her intelligence, vision, and writing, but for her courage in single-handedly facing down the powerful chemical industry to ban DDT. It was an amazing achievement at the time, and continues to inspire all those who are fighting to save the Earth. Roger, thank you for coming.

Last, but not least, I would like to welcome Michael Muir, the great-grandson of one of my heroes, John Muir. Michael has come all the way from California to be with us today. Some of you may know that John Muir visited Concord. Michael is an avid outdoorsman, and shares his great grandfather's love of the wilderness. He's working through his organization, Access Adventure, to make the outdoors more accessible for people with physical challenges. We appreciate the work that you do, and we thank you for being here with us today.

Thank you all for being here; you honor us all with your presence. You also honor Thoreau, and Thoreau's memory, with your presence. Thank you.

Two of the most compelling issues of the 21st century are the ecological health of our planet, and global conflict and violence. Thoreau addressed both of these issues in a unique way. He believed that out of respect for nature grows a respect for ourselves, and for those with whom we share the planet. He understood that this respect was grounded in a deep sense of humility for who we are and the extraordinary responsibilities that come with being a member of the human community. He saw our so-called challenges as limitless opportunities to engage each other and the places we inhabit as amazing gifts. His words call us to action, now, in this place and time. This is the reason that the mission of the Walden Woods Project emphasizes conservation, research, and education. At a time when nearly every measure of the environment is deteriorating, we find an entire generation that is not fully equipped to deal the magnitude of global environmental issues in a thoughtful and informed way. One word: Walden has come to represent a powerful way of thinking about these important questions, and the Walden Woods Project is playing a major role in reaching young people from around the world. I believe that what Dr. Jane Goodall says is true: that one of the main reasons for hope is the determination of young people. By teaching them to care about the environment and about each other, as we've seen today with these wonderful students and their teachers, we are instilling values that will ultimately determine the future of our planet.

16 years ago, the Walden Woods Project pledged to buy Brister's Hill and to protect it perpetually. With that promise fulfilled we have reached a major milestone today. But our work is not completed; far from it. The preservation of Walden Woods must serve as a symbol to others around the world of what must happen on the global stage. Thoreau's voice can join with others of those who are represented here, calling us to a renewed commitment to our environment and to the global community. For human beings, these will be our most challenging years, and we must work together to make them our finest. Thank you.

Kathi Anderson

I understand that the students from the Edward Everett School in Dorchester have arrived; we're so glad that you made it.

It's my privilege to introduce someone for whom I have the greatest respect and admiration: Dr. Edward O. Wilson, evolutionary biologist, teacher, lecturer, mentor, Pulitzer Prize winning author. He's one of the most respected scientists in the world. Were I to list all of his awards and recognitions, we would clearly be here all day. Without question, Dr. Wilson is the most compelling and articulate spokesman for biodiversity and the preservation of our planet. We are honored to have an excerpt from his letter to Henry Thoreau appear in the reflection circle, along Thoreau's Path. Please welcome a national treasure: Dr. Edward O. Wilson.

Dr. Edward O. Wilson

I come to this spot all the way from my native state of Alabama, which is almost as far away as Texas. Having arrived here through 55 years spent at Harvard, and having settled here spiritually, I feel that I have finally found home.

I want to start by adding my own personal tribute, and I know that I speak for conservationists around this country, and around the world, to Don Henley – a truly great American in the deepest sense of that word, and he will be so remembered a hundred years from now. And a hundred years from now our descendents will also appreciate the efforts made by the citizens of this area and by their allies, which include some of our finest members of congress, two of whom are seated here, and other friends of this movement, who have turned what could have been just another piece of suburbia into the nationally and internationally sacred spot that it deserves to be and that is now vouched safe. Now, I'm going to simply give you a brief reading from my letter to Thoreau, with which I open the book *The Future of Life*, as evidence of the fact that I have tried hard to be Thoreauvian and in fact did a lot of research with the help of the fine people of the Thoreau Institute (thank you Kathi and others for that).

Let me give you a footnote before I give you this reading: I will make a reference, and I will imitate a green frog at the end, and being a pedant from Harvard, I can not help but warn you, as Thoreau did, that he must mean a bull frog. I'll tell you that bullfrogs go "jug-a-room" and green frogs give the sound that I will imitate.

I read you this now as evidence of my own attempt to glimpse the heart of Henry David Thoreau, as so many have done and so well.

“Henry! [A little loud so as to wake him up] Now prophet of the conservation movement, mentor of Gandhi and Martin Luther King...

I am at the site of your cabin on the edge of Walden Pond. I came because of your stature in literature and the conservation movement. I came because of all your contemporaries, you are the one I most need to understand. As a biologist with a modern scientific library, I know more than Darwin knew. I can imagine the measured responses of that country gentleman to a voice a century and a half beyond his own. It is not a satisfying fantasy: the Victorians have for the most part settled into a comfortable corner of our remembrance. But I cannot imagine your responses, at least not all of them. You left too soon, and your restless spirit haunts us still.

I am here for a purpose: to become more Thoreauvian, and with that perspective better to explain to you, and in reality to others and not least to myself, what has happened to the world we both have loved. . .

The natural world in the year 2001 is everywhere disappearing before our eyes--cut to pieces, mowed down, plowed under, gobbled up, replaced by human artifacts.

No one in your time could imagine a disaster of this magnitude. Little more than a billion people were alive in the 1840s. They were overwhelmingly agricultural, and few families needed more than two or three acres to survive. The American frontier was still wide open. And far away on continents to the south, up great rivers, beyond unclimbed mountain ranges, stretched unspoiled equatorial forests brimming with the maximum diversity of life. These wildernesses seemed as unattainable and timeless as the planets and stars. That could not last, because the mood of Western civilization is Abrahamic. The explorers and colonists were guided by a biblical prayer: May we take possession of this land that God has provided and let it drip milk and honey into our mouths, forever.

Now, more than six billion people fill the world. The great majority are very poor; nearly one billion exist on the edge of starvation. All are struggling to raise the quality of their lives any way they can. That unfortunately includes the conversion of the surviving remnants of the natural environment. Half of the great tropical forests have been cleared. The last frontiers of the world are effectively gone. Species of plants and animals are disappearing a hundred or more times faster than before the coming of humanity, and as many as half may be gone by the end of this century. An Armageddon is approaching at the beginning of the third millennium. But it is not the cosmic war and fiery collapse of mankind foretold in sacred scripture. It is the wreckage of the planet by an exuberantly plentiful and ingenious humanity.

The situation is desperate--but there are encouraging signs that the race can be won. Population growth has slowed, and if the present trajectory holds, it is likely to peak between eight and ten billion people by century's end. That many people, experts tell us, can be accommodated with a decent standard of living, but just barely: the amount of arable land and water available per person, globally, is already declining. In solving the problem, other experts tell us, it should also be possible to shelter most of the vulnerable plant and animal species.

In order to pass through the bottleneck, a global land ethic is urgently needed. Not just any global land ethic that might happen to enjoy agreeable sentiment, but one based on the best understanding of ourselves and the world around us that science and technology can provide. Surely the rest of life matters. Surely our stewardship is its only hope. We will be wise to listen

carefully to the heart, then act with rational intention with all the tools we can gather and bring to bear.

Henry, my friend, thank you for putting the first element of that ethic in place. Now it is up to us to summon a more encompassing wisdom. The living world is dying; the natural economy is crumbling beneath our busy feet. We have been too self-absorbed to foresee the long-term consequences of our actions, and we will suffer a terrible loss unless we shake off our delusions and move quickly to a solution. Science and technology led us into this bottleneck. Now science and technology must help us find our way through and out.

Kathi Anderson

Our next speaker is the grandson of Mohandas K. Gandhi known and respected worldwide for his philosophy of nonviolence to end prejudice and achieve equality for people of all races. The inspiring words of Mohandas Gandhi appear in the reflection circle. Arun Gandhi is continuing in his grandfather's legacy as the founder and president of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence. There programs are developed that apply principals of nonviolence locally, nationally, and internationally to prevent violence and resolve conflicts through education, research, and outreach. Please welcome Arun Gandhi.

Arun Gandhi

Thank you very much. It's a great pleasure to be here today on this auspicious occasion. In my tradition in India, they say when you have an auspicious occasion and it rains, then God is blessing us. So I am glad that God is blessing us today in this event, and I hope that his blessings will not be overwhelming.

I'd like to thank Don Henley for the wonderful work he's done in preserving this place. We need to preserve the rest of the world also. Because this was the vision that both Thoreau and my grandfather shared: the vision of peace and harmony prevailing on the Earth. But their vision of peace and harmony was not the same as the vision we have today. Our vision of peace and harmony is that, if we don't have any wars or we don't have any violence in society, then we are living in peace. But that is not true, because we connect violence in many, many ways, and that is what Thoreau and Gandhi recognized very early in their lives – that we have to be concerned with our relationships, not only our relationships between human beings, but our relationships between human beings and nature, and all of God's creation; that we human beings are not masters of nature; that we have to survive and live together, and so we have to preserve nature and preserve everything around us so we can all live and enjoy life.

Unfortunately in our arrogance, we have created an exploitative society. Human beings everywhere have become exploiters. We not only exploit each other for our own selfish gains, but we exploit nature and we exploit the resource of the Earth and everything for our benefit. And this is destroying us. It is destroying our humanity, it is destroying our soul. We are gradually dying a slow death. And we have got to stop this from happening. We have got to recognize the vision that both Thoreau and Gandhi had, and have got to try to make that vision become reality. This is something that all of us can do; one of the most famous statements that my grandfather made is that "we have to

become the change that we wish to see in the world.” It has to begin with us each individually, and it’s only when we change that we can eventually change the whole world. Today we wait for the other person to change first, and so all of us are waiting, and none of us are changing. But if we begin the change ourselves, and start the ball rolling, I think we can help the rest of the world change. What Don Henley has been able to achieve here is that small change that he has shown that one person can help make. And if all of us gather and do our little thing, we can all transform this whole world, and make it a much more peaceful and harmonious place to live.

On September 11, 1906, my grandfather launched his first major campaign of non-violence. On September 11, 2006, it’s going to be the hundredth anniversary of that event. And we’ve been very blessed that the Park Service has given us the use of the Mall in Washington, DC to hold a rally to celebrate this occasion – and not only to celebrate the birth of non-violence, but to pray for peace on Earth. We are going to invite all the faith traditions that exist in the United States to come together and pray for peace. That will be another small step in the direction of creating peace and harmony in the world. And I’d like to invite all of you who are here today, who love peace and want to pray for peace in the world, to join us on that occasion in Washington, DC and let us show the world that we can work for peace, just as we can work for creating a society that future generations will be happy to see.

I think that this will be a major step in trying to make the life of Thoreau and Gandhi worthwhile; that they didn’t waste their efforts and they didn’t waste their lives, but that they have shown us a way that we can create peace and live. I can remember a very poignant statement that my grandfather made just weeks before he was assassinated. He said of the Indian people “that they will follow me in life, worship me in death, but not make my cause their cause.” And I’m sure that Thoreau would say the same thing. If we only remember them on special occasions, we need to imbibe their teachings, we need to live it in our daily lives, and transform this world. So let us work together so we can create that kind of society.

I’d like to end with one small story that my grandfather was fond of telling us when I was living with him as a 12-year old boy. It’s a story of an ancient Indian king who once became very curious about the meaning of peace. And he invited all the intellectuals in his kingdom to come and explain, but no one could really satisfy him. And then a few days later there was an intellectual from another town who came on a visit, and the king asked him to explain the meaning of peace. And this person said that “the only person who can give you a satisfactory answer is an old sage who is living outside of your kingdom but he is so old that he can not come to you; you will need to go to him to ask him this question.” And so the next day the king went to the sage and asked him the meaning of peace. The sage went to the back of the house, came back with a grain of wheat, and placed that grain of wheat in the palm of the king and said, “Here is your answer.” And of course the king didn’t know what a grain of wheat had to do with peace, and he wasn’t about to show his ignorance, so he clutched that grain of wheat and he went back to the palace and he found a little gold box, and he placed that grain of wheat in the box, and every day he would open the box and look for an answer. And he

couldn't find any answers. A few days later when this intellectual came back on a return visit the king asked him to explain and said, "You sent me there and he gave me this grain of wheat, and I don't know what this grain of wheat has to do with peace." He said, "It's very simple. As long as you keep this grain of wheat in this box, nothing is going to happen: it will eventually rot and perish, and that will be the end of the story. But if you allow this grain of wheat to interact with all of the elements, then it would sprout and grow and very soon you could have a whole field of wheat there." And that is the meaning of peace: that if we have found peace and we keep it locked up in our hearts for our own personal gains, it will perish with us. But if we let it interact with all of the elements, it will sprout and grow, and very soon we could have a world of peace. So I think that what Thoreau and Gandhi gave us was that grain of wheat, and we should not let it rot and perish, but let it interact, so that all of us together create the kind of world that they both wanted. Thank you.

Marty Meehan

Walden Woods is a special place for many reasons. Thoreau's writings inspired both environmental and civil rights movements. We have learned that Brister's Hill was named for Brister Freeman, a freed African American, former slave, and veteran of the Revolutionary war. Scholars believe that Brister Freeman was born Brister, but by the time of the American Revolution he had also named himself Freeman, or Free Man. Brister was an early revolutionary in the fight for freedom. Today we are very fortunate to have a modern-day revolutionary, and a hero with us, Congressman John Lewis. I'm proud to serve with a true icon, not only of the civil rights movement, but of American history. John has dedicated his life to ensuring that America fulfills her promise of freedom to all of her citizens. He was one of the original six people that started the civil rights movement in America. He started as a student at Fiske University where he joined SNCC, Student's Non-violent Coordination Committee, and there at Ashville and other places across the south they made a difference with non-violent protests and in sit-ins at all-white lunch counters. He then was one of the 1961 Freedom Riders, where he drove busses from terminal to terminal in the south. John nearly gave his life and was almost beaten to death. I've had the honor of serving with John Lewis in Congress. John brought me to visit the national civil rights museum and the old Raindt Hotel where Dr. King was assassinated. We were there on a campaign finance reform meeting with a...

...and cross the Edmund Pettis Bridge as John did to make history years earlier. John Lewis continues the fight: he is now part of a bipartisan group leading Congress today to reauthorize the voting rights act. When Lyndon Baynes Johnson gave that great speech to a joint session of congress, the "We Shall Overcome" speech that helped move America, John Lewis was with Dr. King. John Lewis is also leading the charge of our nation's public health. I've been honored to work with him as he fights in the congress to find a way to deal with asthma, which disproportionately victimizes our poorest citizens.

Of all the honors that come with serving in the Congress of the United States, my greatest honor is to serve with a towering American historical figure who has made such a difference in this country and has given so much. Please welcome my friend, our friend, Congressman John Lewis.

John Lewis

Thank you. Thank you, Marty Meehan, for those kind words of introduction. I'm delighted, very happy, and very pleased to be here. Don Henley: Thank you so much, thank you so much Don, for not giving up, for not giving in, for keeping your eyes on the prize. Thank you Don Henley, thank you. I'm happy to be here with two of my wonderful friends and colleagues from the Congress. Don, you're right again: This state has the very best congressional delegation. To have Senator Ted Kennedy and Marty Meehan and others, you're more than lucky – you're very, very blessed. Thank you for allowing me to serve with you, thank you.

I feel honored to be able to be here, to feel the same earth under my feet, and view the beautiful landscape that so deeply inspired Henry David Thoreau. For many of us he was a light shining in darkness; he was a light of hope shining on a bleak future for those of us struggling against racial injustice in America. Long before the sit-ins in 1960, long before the freedom rides in 1961, long before the march on Washington in 1963, long before the march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965, there was a question raised by Henry David Thoreau in his essay "Civil Disobedience" that was he posed to every American citizen. He said, "Unjust morals exist, but shall we continue to obey them? Struggle to change them, and obey them until we succeed, or shall we disobey them at once?" He challenged his reader to stand on principle that government should **** the people, and not the other way around. And he declared that it is our moral responsibility to resist all evil, wherever we might find it: in our laws, in our society, or in ourselves.

As a young boy growing up in rural Alabama during the '40's and the '50's, I saw those signs that said "White Men," "Colored Men," "White Women," "Colored Women," "White Waiting," "Colored Waiting." I used to ask my parents, my grandparents, my great-grandparents: "Why segregation? Why racial discrimination?" And they would say, "That's the way it is; don't get into trouble, don't get in the way."

My friend Martin Luther King, Jr. read the words of Henry David Thoreau, and other great philosophers. He began to want to do what their spirits would do: he began to find a way to get in the way, he got into trouble, and he, along with Thoreau, inspired me to get in the way, and to get into trouble.

In the civil rights movement, we didn't just wake up one morning and decide to have a march or to have a sit-in; we studied what Gandhi attempted to do in South Africa. We studied the way of civil disobedience. We studied the philosophy so well that 46 years ago, when I had all my hair and was a few pounds lighter, a group of us – 8 or 9 students, blacks and whites – were sitting-in at a lunch counter in Nashville, and we were orderly, and peaceful, and we were arrested, and taken to jail. To be exact the date was February the 27th, 1960. Well, all of us had copies of the "Do's and Don'ts" on us, and they said something like: "Sit up straight, don't talk out, don't talk back" and at the end it said "Remember the teachings of Jesus, Thoreau, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr. May God bless you." And we all went to jail. We did not hate those that hated us; but we believed that our passive resistance could be a healing bond. It could be a way to bind

and wound our attacker, and reconcile our enemy to the truth: We are one people, one nation, and one family. When they put lighted cigarettes in our hair and down our backs and beat us, we did not hate. It was good trouble; it was necessary trouble. And when we were lead out from the store by the police, we started singing “We Shall Overcome,” and the crowd that had gathered all around us began to cheer. When we got to jail we remembered Thoreau’s struggle against the poll tax in his native state, and when someone offered to release us, we decided to stay in jail. We did not believe that we had committed any crime. We were defying local authority, local tradition, yes, but we felt we were appealing to a much higher law.

When I was preparing for this little talk, I took a copy of Thoreau essays to the floor of the House of Representatives. Marty, you may recall we had six votes, so I knew I had time to reacquaint myself with the words of an old friend. It struck me in those moments that his message still rings true today. He talked about the tendency of the government to serve itself, to impose its will on the people, instead of liberating citizens from their own destiny. As I ***** today, as well as last week, against a tax reconciliation bill, which places an unfair burden on the sick, the poor, the elderly, the weak; as I decided to cast my vote against approving an appropriations bill for the Defense Department engaged in an unjust war, I realized that we might need great men, now more than ever before, like Thoreau. There’s still a need to change. Thoreau would say today that there’s still a need to get in the way, to build a better community. And if we use our power, and use the philosophy of Thoreau, the philosophy of Gandhi, and of Martin Luther King, to love and not to hate, to build and not to tear down, to heal and not to kill, then we once again can create a non-violent revolution, a revolution of values, a revolution of ideas in America and around the world. I remain deeply inspired by the words and the work of these great men –Thoreau, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr. We can still build a people, a nation, and a world community at peace with itself. Thoreau said that we are one people, we are one family, we are one house, one planet, and we must learn to live together as brothers and sisters, in harmony with all living creatures.

Thank you very much.

Don Henley

Thank you Congressman Lewis. It is my pleasure to introduce a good friend of mine, and of the Walden Woods Project. A man I respect, and admire, for his life-long commitment to public service and to the people of Massachusetts, as well as to the country as a whole. Whether fighting for clean air, clean water, or the protection of our oceans and rivers, for our national parks and the conservation of our natural resources, there is no more effective person than Senator Ted Kennedy. Since being elected to the Senate in 1962, he has been a champion of the environment, has been a leader on every important issue, including those relating to human rights, providing affordable healthcare for all Americans, protecting social security, and addressing the needs of people with physical challenges. He speaks with a clear and strong voice for those whose voices would not otherwise be heard. Simply put, he is one of the greatest senators this country has ever had. Please welcome Senator Edward M. Kennedy.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy

Thank you very much, Don Henley. He is really something else, isn't he? I'll tell you, he is really something else. As I have been listening to all of these incredible talks, I just wish the United States Senate, the House of Representatives, and this President of the United States could have listened to what we all heard today. This is something else.

I want to thank Don. We all admire him as a musician, and everyone in this room admires him for the magnificent job he's done at Walden. I grew up in a family that believed that individuals could make a difference, and that everyone should try. And I'll tell you: No one has made a greater difference with his life, in this wonderful gift to our humanity, and our decency, and our hearts, and our souls, than Don Henley, and I thank him so much for all that he's done for all of us. Don, I thank you.

It's good to be here, considering that last Saturday night I was in a plane that got hit by lightning and all the instrumentation went out, so it's good to be here [audience laughs] ...*anywhere* these days! [More laughs.] I thank you so much.

I could listen to John Lewis forever. John, as Marty has pointed out, is an authentic American hero. Our founding fathers didn't get it right on the issues of slavery at the time of the Constitutional Convention. We didn't get it right even at the time of the Civil War. But leaders like Dr. King and John Lewis and others moved us to knock down the walls of discrimination on race, on ethnicity, on religious discrimination, on gender, and disability. And John Lewis, as Marty pointed out, was there at the lunch counters and freedom rides. He was there at that magnificent presentation of Dr. King at the Lincoln Memorial and he was in Indianapolis *****. A very special man – so we thank him for being here.

And Marty is just wonderful. In the Senate we work closely together. He's a real leader in the House of Representatives on so many issues of importance and consequence. Many of the 188 families in Massachusetts that were directly affected by 911 have said that he has always been there for them. I've admired him, for many reasons, but his humanity is certainly one of the most important. So I thank you, Marty.

Professor Wilson: a legend. I just got a longer reading list sitting over here with all of your wonderful books – we thank you for your message this morning. Arun Gandhi reminds us all about a very, very important philosophy and we admire the fact that this person here would take up the message of his grandfather and continue to speak the truth and to help all humanity. Thank you for joining with us here today. This day is very special for us in Massachusetts, and we thank all of those who have come back: Whoopie Goldberg, an old friend; Keith Lockhart; Vicki is with us today, my wife; I know Virginia McIntyre and Steve Burrington. But I want to just thank Kathi Anderson. Kathi Anderson is a real hero for all of us and has been. I think all of us understand in this business that we need Kathi Andersons or we could never be successful. She's been a wonderful long-time personal friend, someone that I was fortunate enough to work with in the business center and she just opened so many different vistas with regards to the environment, and continues to live her passion here. Don is very fortunate to have her,

and she is very fortunate to have Don, so they are an extraordinary pair here, and we thank them.

Being here today brings back some very powerful memories to me. I spent many weekends in these woods as a child. My mother grew up not far from Walden. And she loved it here, and she often brought us to the Pond for family outings. And at the visits to Walden, Mother would ask us to think about how long the woods had existed and the memories of so many who had enjoyed them before us, and the importance of preserving them for the future. They were the lessons for a lifetime. And in our home, Mother never tolerated the “civil disobedience” that Thoreau supported, but she did instill in each of her children a respect and love of nature and the environment. My mother would be very pleased that President Kennedy’s words are inscribed in one of the granite stones in the Reflection Circle along Thoreau’s Path. He said, “It is our task, in our time and in our generation, to hand down undiminished to those who come after us, as was handed down to us, by those who went before us, the natural wealth and beauty which is ours. To do this will require constant attention and vigilance, sustained vigor, and imagination.” We try our best to be ***** of those words. The restoration of Brister’s Hill and the creation of Thoreau’s Path is an excellent example of that approach. Brister Freeman was a freed slave who lived here, and it’s an historic site studied extensively by Thoreau. Many of our modern scientific principles about the growth of forests came from Thoreau’s setting aside land for conservation. And he wrote, “Each town should have a park, or rather a primitive forest, of five hundred or a thousand acres, where a stick should never be cut for fuel; a common possession forever, for instruction and recreation.”

And now thanks to the efforts of the Walden Woods Project and its supporters, all of you, Brister’s Hill will be protected forever – a fitting place for reflection and preservation. The men and women whose timeless words are inscribed in the Reflection Circle created an American ethic of land preservation of our natural resources. So it’s very moving and a special honor for me to be here at the dedication of Thoreau’s Path on Brister’s Hill. It’s impressive to see the enthusiasm and the excellent artwork and writing of the students here with us today. Edward Everett students, are you glad to be here? [“Yeah!!” from students]. There you go, that’s the right answer.

Brister’s Hill offers a wonderful opportunity to learn about both nature and the conservation and social justice themes highlighted on Thoreau’s Path. In the years to come people will come and be inspired by the peace that they could find. It’s an impressive accomplishment and I commend all those who have done so much. Don has brought us together here to do what is right for the important parcel of land and for the legacy of Thoreau and Walden Woods. We know the job isn’t finished. More land needs to be preserved before Walden Woods is fully protected and I strongly support this effort. Because of Don, and all of you who have joined him in this effort, the extraordinary heritage of Walden Woods will continue. It’s a proud day for Concord and our Commonwealth, and I congratulate each of you. May the powerful words of past giants, in the cause of conservation, the environment, nonviolence, and tolerance, inspire

us and future generations to honor those ideals too. This is truly an inspiring place – well done, and thank you very much.