

# **Remarks by Ambassador Cui Tiankai**

## **At the China-US Dialogue and Screening of “Better Angels”**

October 30, 2018

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

Good evening! It is a very great pleasure for me to be here with all of you, old and new friends, for the screening of “Better Angels”. Let me thank the China General Chamber of Commerce-USA for organizing this event. And I want to pay tribute to all the people who have helped to produce this documentary. Your work will shed new light on the theme of today’s dialogue: the path forward for China-US relations.

Many of us are now deeply concerned over some of the recent developments in China-US relations. Under such challenging circumstances, this relationship needs what Abraham Lincoln referred to as the touch “by the better angels of our nature”.

But where can we find the better angels? They are right here with us. As you will see, featured in this documentary are not only world leaders who always hold

political spotlight, or diplomats who fly across the world. Also highlighted in this documentary, or even more highlighted, are ordinary men and women:

A former US Marine soldier who teaches English and coaches American football in a Chinese school;

A Chinese abacus teacher working in the United States, helping American students with arithmetic;

And a Chinese entrepreneur who funded the Sino-US Friendship House in Muscatine, Iowa.

These people and their stories are both ordinary and extraordinary. Ordinary because they are no different from people we see on the streets every day. Yet they are extraordinary, because their stories are excellent examples of how people of two countries with very different cultures have been able to find common ground and get to understand each other, and because they epitomize the ever-growing exchanges and friendship between the Chinese and American peoples.

From these ordinary men and women, we know why the China-US relationship is firmly grounded, and why we should be confident in its future. It is not because they have accomplished a feat never done before; but because of their work day

after day, building bridges between the two peoples and contributing to people-to-people ties, that our relations keep forging ahead. They are the “better angels” for our relations.

In a couple of months, we will be celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and the United States. The relationship has come a long way in the past four decades. It has made great strides, while also has had its share of setbacks. But every time it risked being stranded, every time its future was cast into doubt, the people of our two countries would be there, quietly but persistently, doing their part, lifting it out of the quagmire, and moving it forward. And thanks to their unrelenting efforts, we have been able to rise above differences and ensure sustained and steady growth of our relations; thanks to their unwavering commitment, we have blazed a trail of win-win cooperation and seen our interests as closely tied as never before.

But these days, what has been going on between our two countries has kept many people on tenterhooks. Over the past year we have heard enough of trade war threats, assertions about strategic rivalry, sabre-rattling in the South China Sea and even unfounded accusations against Chinese students and scholars. It looks as if rivalry and confrontation became the prevailing aspect for our path ahead and people cannot but again call for the touch of “better angels”.

Sometimes we wonder if they have just vanished or if they are overshadowed by the dark side of human nature?

I believe that you will arrive at the same conclusion as I did after seeing this documentary: the better angels are still there. They are always there, rain or shine. The ordinary and great people of China and the US are there, doing their part, showing their goodwill, wisdom and magnanimity, and paving the path forward for our relations. When our relations are smooth sailing, they will be there injecting greater driving forces; and when our relations are at a low ebb, it is also our people who will firmly support the bonds of friendship and turn the tide of China-US relations.

Therefore, there is no reason why we should not stay optimistic and confident. I am convinced that the better angels in the documentary and among our two peoples will always come to guide us to a better path of the China-US relationship and move it forward for the benefit of our peoples and of the entire international community.

The ancient Chinese philosopher Mencius said that the tendency of man's nature to good is like the tendency of water to flow downwards and that there are none but have this tendency to good, just as all water flows downwards. He also pointed out, however, that men could be made to do what is not good if force is applied to distort their nature.

Therefore, the task before us now is to make sure that the better angels of our nature will always prevail over any dark force, so that the Chinese and American peoples will together build a strong and lasting friendship between us for the good of mankind. I hope and believe that the documentary we see tonight will be a good source of inspiration for us in this joint endeavor.

Thank you.