

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICAN SCHOLARS
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Good afternoon, everyone! I'm very happy to join you today for this virtual conference of the Society of North American Scholars. I wish to express my thanks to Dr. Zeynep Isik-Ercan from Rowan University for asking me to speak with all of you today. I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Isik-Ercan after speaking to a conference at Harvard, and I was happy to hear from her when she extended the invitation to deliver the keynote for your conference.

So today we're all gathered here from institutions across the country and perhaps even around the world, yet could we have imagined something like a "virtual conference" as recently as five years ago? Who came up with the idea for people to meet, see each other, and hear each other, without ever having to leave their offices or even their homes? Two and a half years ago, most people never heard of "Zoom," but now we are so accustomed to it, that we don't give it another thought as we go about our busy lives.

All my life, I've been curious about how new things are created. How do people think of new things, things that never even existed before; new things that no one ever heard of? How does anyone come up with an idea that has never even been thought of before? There are things as simple as the paper clip, or the pen that writes upside down, or the adjustable shelf that my laptop sits on, or my laptop! All of these are examples of items that never existed not all that long ago, or not even imagined. Less than 20 years ago, there was no such thing as a smart phone, except maybe in comic books, and yet today they have become indispensable to us. Someone had the thought of combining a phone, and a camera and a computer all into one device that fits into a pocket. Just saying it out loud sounds crazy, but today we cannot be without our portable electronic devices!

I still marvel that we landed men on the moon. I remember President Kennedy giving a speech and talking about making a manned lunar landing a national priority. Think of all the pieces that had to fit together just exactly right for the lunar landing to happen. Think of all the hundreds – the thousands of people who came together, each with their own responsibilities and their own challenges, solving problems never even considered before. Yet it all came together

