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**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
INAUGURAL ADDRESS
U.S. CAPITOL
January 20, 1997**

Fellow citizens:

This ceremony, every four years, is a time for our nation take stock -- to look at where we have been, at where we are, and where we are going on our journey.

This day, in the presence of my fellow Americans and Almighty God, I have sworn a solemn oath. I am proud to be your servant and trustee of our common dreams. But the meaning of this oath, as old as our history, must not be reserved for Presidents alone.

Every American has a solemn obligation to preserve, protect, and defend the ideals upon which this nation was founded. For in each of our hands rests the promise of America. For only by joining together can we move forward on our American journey -- the greatest odyssey of freedom, hope, and progress the world has ever known.

America was founded not as a ~~plot of land or a race of people~~ ^{new place to plant a flag}. If was founded as a set of ideals -- values so strong they support us to this day. ~~For at every moment of challenge and change throughout our history, we still return to the wellspring of our greatness.~~ ^{an oasis of hope and a} Freedom. Equality. Opportunity for all; responsibility from all. The fundamental belief that the future could be better than the past -- and that every one of us had a moral duty to make it so.

[OR] [As Americans, we are nurtured by values as eternal as the land we call home. Freedom is our horizon. Equality is our soil. The belief that our future can be better than our past is the air we breathe. And most important of all, democracy is our great river -- from which, for more than 200 years, we have always drawn and renewed ourselves, in moments of crisis, in moments of calm, and in which, I tell you, we will renew ourselves now once again.]

My fellow Americans, the demands of this particular time are great, are different. ~~Of us -- each one of us -- they ask much.~~ ^{They as much of each one of us} But they cannot ask for too much, for we are Americans.]

From the day, almost exactly 200 years ago, that our first President passed on his office and this country to the next generation, we have written our own history. We have struggled to turn these words scratched on parchment into vivid ideals traced in our lives.

At certain moments, everything seemed on the line: A Civil War to test whether these values would long endure. A Depression in which we fought fear itself. A fiery war against fascism and a long twilight struggle against tyranny. At some moments, we were challenged by the pace of change itself. A century ago, we mastered the newly dawning industrial era,

guaranteeing a new freedom for new times and setting the stage for the greatest prosperity any nation has known.

In words that rang across this Mall, the man whose birth and life we celebrate today called us to live out the true meaning of our creed -- and in so doing, Martin Luther King's dream changed America. ~~[another sentence on values]~~ *"I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places shall be made*

Four years ago, we last gathered here at a time of division and despair. That day and in the days to come, we reached back and once again called on our most fundamental values. we willed ourselves to hope; and hope became faith. By the stands we have taken, the battles we have waged, the record we have built, we have forged a new American vision, a new consensus, rooted in our oldest values, attuned to our newest challenges, ~~that can govern our country.~~ We have begun to renew America.

Our deficit is shrinking, incomes are growing, and our economy is the strongest on earth.

From the snows of Bosnia, to the sands of the Middle East, to the cobblestone streets of Belfast, those who love peace look to America for strength and for hope.

After years in which our most vexing social problems seemed only to get worse, the American people have patiently begun to restitch the torn threads of our social fabric. Crime, welfare, poverty, inequality -- all are down. More families are staying together; fewer children are having children. We have begun to restore faith in ourselves and in our nation.

After years when the very ground seemed to shift beneath our feet, we have found a new center. We, ~~the Americans of our age and time,~~ have forged a new vision of how to realize the promise of American life.

Today we proclaim: We do not want a government that does everything; we do not want a government that does nothing; we want a government that helps give our people the tools to solve their own problems.

Government shouldn't do for people what they can do for themselves; but every American should have the chance to make the most of their God-given potential.

Today we proclaim: Citizenship is based on responsibilities as well as rights. Every American has a duty to give something back to their community and their country. We are all in it together.

Complacent My fellow Americans, we face no war, no depression. But let this not be a time of satisfied contentment, a time when we nestle into the comfort of prosperity and retreat from our great public purpose. ~~For we~~ have earned a precious moment given to few generations, the chance to create an America in the 21st Century that will be a light unto the world. Let us use this era of good feelings to create an era of great accomplishments.

And let us never forget that as long as one child goes to bed hungry or one woman sleeps on a grate or one community lives in the shadow of crime and violence -- our work is not yet done.

made plain, and the crooked places shall be made straight and the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all flesh shall see it together." But we have not reached the end of our journey toward racial harmony. We must keep marching towards that dream.

We are living through a time of change as profound as any we have ever faced -- change in the way we work, the way we live, the way we relate to each other. The very store of knowledge doubles and redoubles before our eyes. A chip as small as a thumbnail sparks a revolution in information. Scientists unlock the very mysteries of life. Where 100 years ago our parents earned their bread on farms, and 50 years ago in factories, our children will work in jobs that have not been invented, in industries we cannot yet imagine.

As we look beyond our shores, for the first time in human history, more of our fellow citizens of the earth are living under democracy than dictatorship. Yet as the shackles of totalitarianism drop away, ancient hatreds are let loose to haunt and terrorize our world.

We see before us a new century, an even greater America that is within our reach if we dare to grasp it. We can, we must, make real our values yet again -- bring opportunity alive for the digital age, make equality real at a time when education matters more than ever. We can, we must seize the opportunity of this moment and imagine the America that can yet be.

I see an America in which our children reap the bounty of the world's best education, not the bitter fruit of a life on the streets *unrealized potential*

I see an America in which we lift millions from the dependency of welfare to the dignity of work.

I see an America in which families stay together, and *walls of division fall* xxx comes apart.

I see an America in which crime is the exception, not the rule.

I see an America in which the government answers to tomorrow's challenges, not yesterday's arrangements; in which our politics serves the people and not the powerful.

I see an America that leads the world by the power of example of its power -- and the power of its example.

I see an America in which our children live next to parks, not poisons.

I see an American city, any city, with factories full, with living rooms lit by the cathode glow of a computer screen, in which every single child can look out the window in the morning and see a whole community getting up and going to work, in which old people sit on their porch, and watch the children rejoice in the street, and none are afraid.

An America renewed, its faith restored, that enters this new century with its promise alive for all of our children, with every citizen feeling a part of our national community, with our dream of freedom spreading throughout the world. This can be our America in the 21st Century.

All Americans must do their part.

We on this platform, in the temples of government in this alabaster city, we must do our part. The American people, with eyes open, returned to office a President of one party and a Congress of another. They see, as we must see, that we must work together. We will have our differences -- Democrats and Republicans, the President and the Congress. But we are taught: "It is wrong to waste the precious gift of time given to us on acrimony and division." We must not waste the precious gift of this moment. Let us reach out across the lines of party and philosophy, let us work to balance our budget and balance our values, and let us make this a time when we work together for the American people.

We will attempt great things for Americans. But we should expect great things from Americans. Our nation was built on challenges, not promises. For our nation can only be as great as the greatness we inspire in our people. We must be strong; for there is much to dare.

As government grows smaller, our responsibilities grow larger. We must marshal all the forces in our society, mobilizing our citizens, our communities, our businesses, our schools to meet our challenges. Out across the great sweep of America, in 10,000 towns and homes and neighborhoods, we will forge our destiny.

So when business and community leaders join forces to provide jobs for welfare recipients -- we must be there. When parents and state legislators work to establish and uphold the toughest standards for our schools -- we must be there. When communities band together to bring values, discipline and hope to their children -- adopting school uniforms, imposing curfews, enforcing truancy laws -- we must be there -- we will be there.

For these are not the challenges of one family, one neighborhood, one community, one city -- they are the challenges of one America -- and we must meet them as one nation. For Americans, the challenge of one are the challenges of all.

To all Americans, in all walks of life, we say: This moment is your moment; this time is your time; this burden is your burden.

To all Americans we say: we must shoulder the burden of living with one another, together. Long before we were so diverse, our nation's motto was E Pluribus Unum, out of many, we are one. We must be one, as neighbors, as fellow citizens, not separate camps, but family, white, black, Latino, all of us, no matter how different, who share basic American values and are willing to live by them.

Here, as we close one century and begin another, we have a special responsibility: to redeem the promise and sacrifice of all who came before us, by finishing the unfinished business of this century, and by keeping that promise alive for all who come after us. Let no debts be carried over into this new time. Let us say, on this short day of winter, that we will work through the night, so that our children can make a clean start in a fresh century.

We look around us, at stately monuments to Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln. We may think to ourselves: Once, giants walked this ground; we are not fit to follow in their path. But

now, it is our turn to lead on the path. Now, we must cast ourselves against the wheel of history, joining together in a community of purpose and moral clarity.

This, then, must be our task. To us, then, it falls to build the bridge to the future. Not so much for ourselves, as for those who come after. Let us take on that task humbly, but full of the certain knowledge that if we hold to the ideals that brought us this far, we reach the land that glows ahead.

Heaven is not gained at a single bound; the bridge we are building will not be completed overnight. But every span that we lay before us . . . and every step that we take across ... will bring us closer to the dream we share.

Scripture tells us that even when we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, even when we are faced with the weight of the past, we can shape a future even greater than our brilliant past. Let us build our bridge, wide enough and strong enough, on the solid foundation of freedom, and "run with patience the race that is set before us." [get terry's ending ...]

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
INAUGURAL ADDRESS
U.S. CAPITOL
January 20, 1997**

Fellow citizens:

Almost exactly 200 years ago, the Father of our Country, the man for whom this city is named, passed on his office and this country to the next generation.

From that day forward, each generation that has followed has set out to meet the tests of time and the challenges of change, and to build their dream into a reality. Today, once more, we gather at a moment of national reflection -- a time to take stock of our dream and of our journey -- the greatest odyssey of freedom, hope, and progress the world has ever known.

Today should not be a moment of individual triumph, but a moment in which we return to the wellsprings of America's greatness.

This day, in the presence of my fellow Americans and Almighty God, I have sworn a solemn oath. I am proud to be your servant and trustee of our common dreams. But the meaning of this oath, as old as our history, is not the province of Presidents alone. Every American shares this solemn obligation -- to preserve, protect, and defend the ideals upon which this nation was founded. In each of our hands rests the promise of America.

We face no war, no depression. The challenge of our time is to take this precious moment, given to few generations, and to create an America in a new century that will be a light unto the world. The education of our children; the strength of our families; the safety of our streets; the force of our freedom: These are not the challenges of one family, one neighborhood, one community, one city -- these are the challenges of one America -- and we

must meet them as one nation. For in America, the challenges of one are the challenges of all.

[America was founded not as a plot of land or a race of people. It was consecrated to a set of ideals -- values so strong they support us to this day. Freedom. Equality. Opportunity for all; responsibility from all. The fundamental belief that the future could be better than the past -- and that every one of us had a moral duty to make it so. At every moment of challenge and change throughout our history, we have struggled to turn these words, scratched onto parchment, into vivid ideals traced in our lives.]
[OR]

[As Americans, we are nurtured by values as eternal as the land we call home. Freedom is our horizon. Equality is our soil. The belief that our future can be better than our past is the air we breathe. And most important of all, democracy is our great river -- from which, for more than 200 years, we have always drawn and renewed ourselves, in moments of crisis, in moments of calm, and in which, I tell you, we will renew ourselves now once again.]

At certain moments, everything seemed on the line: A Civil War to test whether these values would long endure. A Depression in which we fought fear itself. A fiery war against fascism and a long twilight struggle against tyranny. At other moments, it was the pace of change itself that challenged us. One century ago, we mastered the dawning industrial age, securing a new freedom for new times and bringing forth the greatest prosperity any nation has known.

At other times, our values have called us to a special obligation. 34 years ago, in words that rang across this Mall, the man whose birth and life we celebrate today called us to live out the true meaning of our creed -- and in so doing, Martin Luther King, Jr. redeemed the promise of America.

Four years ago, as today, we stood at the dawn of another new century. We gathered in hope, but we stood in the shadow of drift, division, even

dream of America's greatness. Martin Luther King changed America and changed us for the better.

despair. That day, and in the days to come, we called again on our most fundamental values. Our hope became action, and our action became faith. And by the stands we have taken, the battles we have waged, the record we have built, we have begun to renew America.

We have brought down our deficit, we have given opportunity to our people, and our economy is the strongest on earth.

After years in which our most vexing social problems seemed only to get worse, the American people have patiently begun to restitch the torn threads of our social fabric. Crime, welfare, poverty, inequality -- all are down. More families are staying together; fewer children are having children. We have begun to restore faith in ourselves and in our nation.

Our nation is as strong as it has ever been. From the snows of Bosnia, to the sands of the Middle East, to the cobblestone streets of Belfast, those who love peace look to America for inspiration and for hope.

And after years in which the ground seemed to shift beneath our feet, we have found a new center, and that center can hold. We, the Americans of our age and time, have forged a new vision and shaped a new consensus, anchored in our oldest values, aimed at our newest challenges, to realize the promise of America.

Today we proclaim: We do not want a government that does everything; we do not want a government that does nothing; we want a government that helps give our people the tools to make the most of their own lives. We must offer opportunity, but we must demand responsibility. We all have fundamental rights, but we all have essential obligations -- to give back to our communities and our country. We will rise together, or we will fall together.

My fellow Americans, the demands of this particular time are great, are different. Of us -- each one of us -- they ask much. But they cannot ask for too much, for we are Americans.

Our moment is driven by change as profound as any we have ever faced -- change in the way we work, the way we live, the way we relate to each other. The very store of knowledge doubles and redoubles before our eyes. A chip as small as a thumbnail sparks a revolution in information. Scientists unlock the very mysteries of life. Where 100 years ago our parents earned their bread on farms, and 50 years ago in factories, our children will work in jobs that have not been invented, in industries we cannot yet imagine.

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Let us use this era of good feelings to create an era of great accomplishments.

I see an America in which our children reap the bounty of the world's best education, not the bitter fruit of a life on the streets.

I see an America in which we lift millions from the dependency of welfare to the dignity of work.

I see an America in which we help parents to be parents, and children do not have children.

I see an America in which crime is the exception, not the rule.

I see an America in which the government answers to tomorrow's challenges, not yesterday's arrangements; in which our politics serves the

people and not the powerful.

I see an America that leads the world by the power of example of its power -- and the power of its example.

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An America renewed, its faith restored, that enters this new century with its promise alive for all of our children, with every citizen feeling a part of our national community, with our dream of freedom spreading throughout the world. This can be our America in the 21st Century.

All Americans must do their part.

We on this platform, in the temples of government in this alabaster city, we must do our part. The American people, with eyes open, returned to office a President of one party and a Congress of another. They see, as we must see, that we must work together. We will have our differences -- Democrats and Republicans, the President and the Congress. But we are taught: "It is wrong to waste the precious gift of time given to us on acrimony and division." We must not waste the precious gift of this moment. Let us reach out across the lines of party and philosophy, let us work to balance our budget and balance our values, and let us make this a time when we work together for the American people.

We will attempt great things for Americans. But we should expect great things from Americans. Our nation was built on challenges, not promises. For our nation can only be as great as the greatness we inspire in our people. We must be strong; for there is much to dare.

As government grows smaller, our responsibilities grow larger. We must marshal all the forces in our society, mobilizing our citizens, our communities, our businesses, our schools to meet our challenges. Out across the great sweep of America, in 10,000 towns and homes and neighborhoods, we will forge our destiny.

So when business and community leaders join forces to provide jobs for welfare recipients – we must be there. When parents and state legislators work to establish and uphold the toughest standards for our schools – we must be there. When communities band together to bring values, discipline and hope to their children -- adopting school uniforms, imposing curfews, enforcing truancy laws -- we must be there -- we will be there.

To all Americans, in all walks of life, we say: This moment is your moment; this time is your time; this burden is your burden.

To all Americans we say: we must shoulder the burden of living with one another, together. Long before we were so diverse, our nation's motto was E Pluribus Unum, out of many, we are one. We must be one, as neighbors, as fellow citizens, not separate camps, but family, white, black, Latino, all of us, no matter how different, who share basic American values and are willing to live by them.

Here, as we close one century and begin another, we have a special responsibility: to redeem the promise and sacrifice of all who came before us, by finishing the unfinished business of this century, and by keeping that promise alive for all who come after us. Let no debts be carried over into this new time. Let us say, on this short day of winter, that we will work through the night, so that our children can make a clean start in a fresh century.

We look around us, at stately monuments to Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln. There was a wide division of principle and policy among them. But there was a unity of purpose to move America forward, to make it a place of opportunity for all its people, and to keep it the greatest force for peace and freedom in the world. We may think to ourselves: Once, giants walked this

ground; we are not fit to follow in their path. But now, it is our turn to lead on the path. Now, we must cast ourselves against the wheel of history, joining together in a community of purpose and moral clarity.

This, then, must be our task. To us, then, it falls to build the bridge to the future. Not so much for ourselves, as for those who come after. Let us take on that task humbly, but full of the certain knowledge that if we hold to the ideals that brought us this far, we reach the land that glows ahead.

Heaven is not gained at a single bound; the bridge we are building will not be completed overnight. But every span that we lay before us . . . and every step that we take across ... will bring us closer to the dream we share.

Scripture tells us that even when we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, even when we are faced with the weight of the past, we can shape a future even greater than our brilliant past. Let us build our bridge, wide enough and strong enough, on the solid foundation of freedom, and “run with patience the race that is set before us.” [get terry’s ending ...]

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 20, 1997

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF
PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON

U.S. Capitol

12:05 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: My fellow citizens:

At this last presidential inauguration of the 20th century, let us lift our eyes toward the challenges that await us in the next century. It is our great good fortune that time and chance have put us not only at the edge of a new century, in a new millennium, but on the edge of a bright new prospect in human affairs -- a moment that will define our course, and our character, for decades to come. We must keep our old democracy forever young. Guided by the ancient vision of a promised land, let us set our sights upon a land of new promise.

The promise of America was born in the 18th century out of the bold conviction that we are all created equal. It was extended and preserved in the 19th century, when our nation spread across the continent, saved the union, and abolished the awful scourge of slavery.

Then, in turmoil and triumph, that promise exploded onto the world stage to make this the American Century.

And what a century it has been. America became the world's mightiest industrial power; saved the world from tyranny in two world wars and a long cold war; and time and again, reached out across the globe to millions who, like us, longed for the blessings of liberty.

Along the way, Americans produced a great middle class and security in old age; built unrivaled centers of learning and opened public schools to all; split the atom and explored the heavens; invented the computer and the microchip; and deepened the wellspring of justice by making a revolution in civil rights for African Americans and all minorities, and extending the circle of citizenship, opportunity and dignity to women.

Now, for the third time, a new century is upon us, and another time to choose. We began the 19th century with a choice, to spread our nation from coast to coast. We began the 20th century with a choice, to harness the Industrial Revolution to our values of free enterprise, conservation, and human decency. Those choices made all the difference. At the dawn of the 21st century a free people must now choose to shape the forces of the Information Age and the global society, to unleash the limitless potential of all our people, and, yes, to form a more perfect union.

When last we gathered, our march to this new future seemed less certain than it does today. We vowed then to set a clear course to renew our nation.

In these four years, we have been touched by tragedy, exhilarated by challenge, strengthened by achievement. America stands alone as the world's indispensable nation. Once again, our economy is the strongest on Earth. Once again, we are building stronger families, thriving communities, better educational opportunities, a cleaner environment. Problems that once seemed destined to deepen now bend to our efforts: our streets are safer and record numbers of our fellow citizens have moved from welfare to work.

And once again, we have resolved for our time a great debate over the role of government. Today we can declare: Government is not the problem, and government is not the solution. We -- the American people -- we are the solution. (Applause.) Our founders understood that well and gave us a democracy strong enough to endure for centuries, flexible enough to face our common challenges and advance our common dreams in each new day.

As times change, so government must change. We need a new government for a new century -- humble enough not to try to solve all our problems for us, but strong enough to give us the tools to solve our problems for ourselves; a government that is smaller, lives within its means, and does more with less. Yet where it can stand up for our values and interests in the world, and where it can give Americans the power to make a real difference in their everyday lives, government should do more, not less. The preeminent mission of our new government is to give all Americans an opportunity -- not a guarantee, but a real opportunity -- to build better lives. (Applause.)

Beyond that, my fellow citizens, the future is up to us. Our founders taught us that the preservation of our liberty and our union depends upon responsible citizenship. And we need a new sense of responsibility for a new century. There is work to do, work that government alone cannot do: teaching children to read; hiring people off welfare rolls; coming out from behind locked doors and shuttered windows to help reclaim our streets from drugs and gangs and crime; taking time out of our own lives to serve others.

Each and every one of us, in our own way, must assume personal responsibility -- not only for ourselves and our families, but for our neighbors and our nation. (Applause.) Our greatest responsibility is to embrace a new spirit of community for a new century. For any one of us to succeed, we must succeed as one America.

The challenge of our past remains the challenge of our future -- will we be one nation, one people, with one common destiny, or not? Will we all come together, or come apart?

The divide of race has been America's constant curse. And each new wave of immigrants gives new targets to old prejudices. Prejudice and contempt, cloaked in the pretense of religious or political conviction are no different. (Applause.) These forces have nearly destroyed our nation in the past. They plague us still. They fuel the fanaticism of terror. And they torment the lives of millions in fractured nations all around the world.

These obsessions cripple both those who hate and, of course, those who are hated, robbing both of what they might become. We cannot, we will not, succumb to the dark impulses that lurk in the far regions of the soul everywhere. We shall overcome them. (Applause.) And we shall replace them with the generous spirit of a people who feel at home with one another.

Our rich texture of racial, religious and political diversity will be a Godsend in the 21st century. Great rewards will come to those who can live together, learn together, work together, forge new ties that bind together.

As this new era approaches we can already see its broad outlines. Ten years ago, the Internet was the mystical province of physicists; today, it is a commonplace encyclopedia for millions of schoolchildren. Scientists now are decoding the blueprint of human life. Cures for our most feared illnesses seem close at hand.

The world is no longer divided into two hostile camps. Instead, now we are building bonds with nations that once were our adversaries. Growing connections of commerce and culture give us a chance to lift the fortunes and spirits of people the world over. And for the very first time in all of history, more people on this planet live under democracy than dictatorship. (Applause.)

My fellow Americans, as we look back at this remarkable century, we may ask, can we hope not just to follow, but even to surpass the achievements of the 20th century in America and to avoid the awful bloodshed that stained its legacy? To that question, every American here and every American in our land today must answer a resounding "Yes." (Applause.)

This is the heart of our task. With a new vision of government, a new sense of responsibility, a new spirit of community, we will sustain America's journey. The promise we sought in a new land we will find again in a land of new promise. (Applause.)

In this new land, education will be every citizen's most prized possession. Our schools will have the highest standards in the world, igniting the spark of possibility in the eyes of every girl and every boy. And the doors of higher education will be open to all. The knowledge and power of the Information Age will be within reach not just of the few, but of every classroom, every library, every child. Parents and children will have time not only to work, but to read and

play together. And the plans they make at their kitchen table will be those of a better home, a better job, the certain chance to go to college,

Our streets will echo again with the laughter of our children, because no one will try to shoot them or sell them drugs anymore. Everyone who can work, will work, with today's permanent under class part of tomorrow's growing middle class. New miracles of medicine at last will reach not only those who can claim care now, but the children and hardworking families too long denied.

We will stand mighty for peace and freedom, and maintain a strong defense against terror and destruction. Our children will sleep free from the threat of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. Ports and airports, farms and factories will thrive with trade and innovation and ideas. And the world's greatest democracy will lead a whole world of democracies.

Our land of new promise will be a nation that meets its obligations -- a nation that balances its budget, but never loses the balance of its values. (Applause.) A nation where our grandparents have secure retirement and health care, and their grandchildren know we have made the reforms necessary to sustain those benefits for their time. (Applause.) A nation that fortifies the world's most productive economy even as it protects the great natural bounty of our water, air, and majestic land.

And in this land of new promise, we will have reformed our politics so that the voice of the people will always speak louder than the din of narrow interests -- regaining the participation and deserving the trust of all Americans. (Applause.)

Fellow citizens, let us build that America, a nation ever moving forward toward realizing the full potential of all its citizens. Prosperity and power -- yes, they are important, and we must maintain them. But let us never forget: The greatest progress we have made, and the greatest progress we have yet to make, is in the human heart. In the end, all the world's wealth and a thousand armies are no match for the strength and decency of the human spirit. (Applause.)

Thirty-four years ago, the man whose life we celebrate today spoke to us down there, at the other end of this Mall, in words that moved the conscience of a nation. Like a prophet of old, he told of his dream that one day America would rise up and treat all its citizens as equals before the law and in the heart. Martin Luther King's dream was the American Dream. His quest is our quest: the ceaseless striving to live out our true creed. Our history has been built on such dreams and labors. And by our dreams and labors we will redeem the promise of America in the 21st century.

To that effort I pledge all my strength and every power of my office. I ask the members of Congress here to join in that pledge. The American people returned to office a President of one party and a Congress of another. Surely, they did not do this to advance the politics of petty bickering and extreme partisanship they plainly deplore. (Applause.) No, they call on us instead to be repairers of the breach, and to move on with America's mission.

America demands and deserves big things from us -- and nothing big ever came from being small. (Applause.) Let us remember the timeless wisdom of Cardinal Bernardin, when facing the end of his own life. He said: "It is wrong to waste the precious gift of time, on acrimony and division."

Fellow citizens, we must not waste the precious gift of this time. For all of us are on that same journey of our lives, and our journey, too, will come to an end. But the journey of our America must go on.

And so, my fellow Americans, we must be strong, for there is much to dare. The demands of our time are great and they are different. Let us meet them with faith and courage, with patience and a grateful and happy heart. Let us shape the hope of this day into the noblest chapter in our history. Yes, let us build our bridge. (Applause.) A bridge wide enough and strong enough for every American to cross over to a blessed land of new promise.

May those generations whose faces we cannot yet see, whose names we may never know, say of us here that we led our beloved land into a new century with the American Dream alive for all her children; with the American promise of a more perfect union a reality for all her people; with America's bright flame of freedom spreading throughout all the world.

From the height of this place and the summit of this century, let us go forth. May God strengthen our hands for the good work ahead -- and always, always bless our America. (Applause.)

END

12:30 P.M. EST