



Speeches that have marked history

Joe Biden inauguration speech - Part 1

January 20, 2021 - Washinton D.C. - USA

Chief Justice Roberts, Vice President Harris, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Vice President Pence, my distinguished guests, my fellow Americans.

This is America's day. This is democracy's day. A day of history and hope. Of renewal and resolve. Through a crucible for the ages America has been tested anew and America has risen to the challenge. Today, we celebrate the triumph not of a candidate, but of a cause, the cause of democracy.

The people, the will of the people has been heard and the will of the people has been heeded. We've learned again that democracy is precious. Democracy is fragile. At this hour my friends democracy has prevailed.

So now, on this hallowed ground where just a few days ago violence sought to shake the Capitol's very foundation, we come together as one nation, under God, indivisible, to carry out the peaceful transfer of power as we have for more than two centuries.

As we look ahead in our uniquely American way - restless, bold, optimistic - and set our sights on the nation we know we can be and we must be.

I thank my predecessors of both parties for their presence here today. I thank them from the bottom of my heart, and I know... and I know the resilience of our Constitution and the strength, the strength of our nation. As does President Carter, who I spoke with last night, who cannot be with us today, but whom we salute for his lifetime of service.

I've just taken the sacred oath each of those patriots have taken - the oath first sworn by George Washington. But the American story depends not on any one of us, not on some of us, but on all of us. On "We the People" who seek a more perfect Union. This is a great nation, we are good people, and over the centuries through storm and strife, in peace and in war, we've come so far. But we still have far to go. We'll press forward with speed and urgency, for we have much to do in this winter of peril and significant possibilities. Much to repair. Much to restore. Much to heal. Much to build. And much to gain.

Few people in our nation's history have been more challenged, or found a time more challenging or difficult than the time we're in now. Once-in-a-century virus that silently stalks the country, it's taken as many lives in one year as America lost in all of World War II. Millions of jobs have been lost. Hundreds of thousands of businesses closed. A cry for racial justice some 400 years in the making moves us. The dream of justice for all will be deferred no longer.

A cry for survival comes from the planet itself. A cry that can't be any more desperate or any more clear, and now, a rise of political extremism, white supremacy, domestic terrorism that we must confront and we will defeat.

To overcome these challenges – to restore the soul and secure the future of America – requires so much more than words, it requires the most elusive of all things in a democracy: Unity. Unity.

In another January, on New Year's Day in 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. When he put pen to paper, the President said, and I quote "If my name ever goes down into history it'll be for this act and my whole soul is in it." My whole soul is in it. Today, on this January day, my whole soul is in this: bringing America together. Uniting our people. Uniting our nation. And I ask every American to join me in this cause.

Uniting to fight the foes we face: anger, resentment and hatred, extremism, lawlessness, violence, disease, joblessness and hopelessness. With unity we can do great things, important things. We can right wrongs. We can put people to work in good jobs. We can teach our children in safe schools. We can overcome the deadly virus. We can *rewar*, reward work and rebuild the middle class, and make health care secure for all. We can deliver racial justice, and we can make America, once again, the leading force for good in the world.

I know speaking of unity can sound to some like a foolish fantasy these days. I know the forces that divide us are deep and they are real. But I also know they are not new. Our history has been a constant struggle between the American ideal that we are all created equal and the harsh, ugly reality that racism, nativism, fear, demonization have long torn us apart. The battle is perennial, and victory is never assured.

Through Civil War, the Great Depression, World War, 9/11, through struggle, sacrifice, and setbacks, our "better angels" have always prevailed. In each of these moments enough of us, enough of us, have come together to carry all of us forward. And we can do that now. History, faith, and reason show the way, the way of unity.

We can see each other not as adversaries but as neighbors. We can treat each other with dignity and respect. We can join forces, stop the shouting, and lower the temperature. For without unity, there is no peace, only bitterness and fury. No progress, only exhausting outrage. No nation, only a state of chaos.

This is our historic moment of crisis and challenge, and unity is the path forward. And, we must meet this moment as the United States of America. If we do that, I guarantee you we will not fail. We have never, ever, ever, ever failed in America when we've acted together. And so today, at this time in this place, let's start afresh. All of us. Let's begin to listen to one another again. Hear one another. See one another. Show respect to one another.

Politics doesn't have to be a raging fire destroying everything in its path. Every disagreement doesn't have to be a cause for total war. And, we must reject the culture in which facts themselves are manipulated and even manufactured.

My fellow Americans, we have to be different than this. America has to be better than this. And I believe America is so much better than this. Just look around. Here we stand, in the shadow of the Capitol dome, as was mentioned earlier, completed amid the Civil War, when the Union itself was literally hanging in the balance. Yet we endured we prevailed. Here we stand looking out on the great Mall where Dr. King spoke of his dream. Here we stand, where 108 years ago at another inaugural, thousands of protestors tried to block brave women marching for the right to vote.

And today, we mark the swearing-in of the first woman in American history elected to national office – Vice President Kamala Harris. Don't tell me things can't change.

Here we stand across the Potomac from Arlington Cemetery, where heroes who gave the last full measure of devotion rest in eternal peace.

And here we stand, just days after a riotous mob thought they could use violence to silence the will of the people, to stop the work of our democracy, to drive us from this sacred ground. It did not happen. It will never happen. Not today. Not tomorrow. Not ever. Not ever.