

President Barack Obama – Excerpts from Inaugural Address, January 20, 2009

The Price and Promise of Citizenship

My fellow citizens, I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors. I thank President Bush for his service to our nation as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition.

... Amidst gathering clouds and raging storms ... America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because We the People have remained faithful to the ideals of our forebears and true to our founding documents.

... That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood ... a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age ... We can no longer afford indifference to the suffering outside our borders, nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect ... Our time ... of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions, that time has surely passed.

... Those of us who manage the public's dollars will be held to account—to spend wisely, reform bad habits and do our business in the light of day—because only then can we restore the vital trust between a people and their government ... For as much as government can do, and must do, it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies. It is ... kindness ... selflessness ... courage ... but also a parent's willingness to nurture a child that finally decides our fate.

Our challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new. But those values upon which our success depends—honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism—these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history.

What is demanded, then, is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility: a recognition on the part of every American that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world—duties that we ... seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character, than giving our all to a difficult task.

This is the price and the promise of citizenship. This is the source of our confidence, the knowledge that God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny. This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed, why men and women and children of every race and every faith can join in celebration across this magnificent Mall, and why a man—whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant- can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath.

So let us mark this day with remembrance of who we are and how far we have traveled.

... **Let it be said by our children's children** that when we were tested, we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter, and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.