

## Remarks on the 200th Anniversary of the Capitol and the Reinstallation of the Statue of Freedom

*October 23, 1993*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, distinguished leaders of the House and Senate, Mr. Justice Blackmun, my fellow Americans.

We come here today to celebrate the 200th birthday of this great building, the cornerstone of our Republic. We come here to watch our Capitol made whole 130 years after the beautiful Statue of Freedom was first raised above this Capitol.

This is a moment of unity in this great city of ours so often known for its conflicts. In this moment, we all agree, we know in our minds and feel in our hearts the words that Thomas Jefferson spoke in the first Inaugural Address ever given on these grounds. He said that people of little faith were doubtful about America's future, but he believed our Government was the world's best hope.

What was that hope? The hope that still endures that in this country every man and woman without regard to race or region or station in life would have the freedom to live up to the fullest of his or her God-given potential; the hope that every citizen would get from Government not a guarantee but the promise of an opportunity to do one's best, to have an equal chance, for the most humble and the most well born, to do what God meant for them to be able to do.

That hope was almost dashed in the great Civil War. When the Statue of Freedom was raised, many people questioned whether Abraham Lincoln should permit this work to go on. But he said, during the war when so many thought our country would come to an end, that if people see the Capitol going on, it is a sign we intend the Union to go on. In 1865, Abraham Lincoln gave the first Inaugural Address ever given under the Statue of Freedom.

And he said, "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in." And in that, the greatest of all Presidential Inaugural Addresses, Abraham Lincoln gave us our charge for today, for the work of keeping the hope of America alive never finishes.

It is not enough for use to be mere stewards of our inheritance. We must always be the architects of its renewal. The Capitol is here after 200 years, this beautiful Statue of Freedom can be raised, renewed after 130 years, because our forebears never stopped thinking about tomorrow.

We require the freedom to preserve what is best and the freedom to change, the freedom to explore, the freedom to build, the freedom to grow. My fellow Americans, I tell you that perhaps the biggest of our problems today is that too many of our people no longer believe the future can be better than the past. And too many others, most of them young, have no connection to the future whatsoever because their present is so chaotic. But the future, the future has a claim on all of us.

We have, because of our birthright as Americans, a moral obligation to face the day's challenges and to make tomorrow better than today. All we really owe to this great country after 200 years is to make sure that 200 years from now this building will still be here and our grandchildren many generations in the future will be here to celebrate it anew.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:33 p.m. at the West Front of the Capitol.

## Remarks at the B'nai B'rith 150th Anniversary Havdalah Service

*October 23, 1993*

Thank you very much. Mr. Schiner, Mr. Spitzer, distinguished platform guests, ladies and

gentlemen. Hillary and I are delighted to be with you tonight, honored to be a part of your