

11th Congressional District; Marietta Robinson, candidate for Michigan State Supreme Court; former Gov. James J. Blanchard of Michigan; former Senator Donald W. Riegle, Jr.; South African Ambassador to the U.S. Sheila Sisulu; former

President Nelson Mandela of South Africa; and Republican Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates Gov. George W. Bush of Texas and Dick Cheney.

Remarks at the Dedication of the Harry S. Truman Building September 22, 2000

Thank you very much, and good afternoon. Secretary Albright, thank you for your remarks and your leadership. My longtime friend Ike Skelton and the other members of the Missouri congressional delegation, thank you for this great gift to America and to our children.

John Truman and the members of the Truman family, we welcome you here. We are honored by your presence. And I'd like to say a special word of personal thanks on behalf of Hillary and myself to Margaret Truman Daniel for her uncommon kindness and concern for the First Lady and our daughter, for nearly 9 years now. We are thinking about her in what has been a hard year.

I was telling John Truman when we came out here that Margaret came to dinner with her late husband several years ago at the White House, and I rather cavalierly, along with Hillary, had her to dinner in the private dining room on the second floor. And I did a little research right before she came and discovered that that had been her music room when she was a young lady living in the White House with another First Family that had only one child, a daughter.

And so I asked her, I said, "Margaret, how do you like this dining room?" And she said, "Well, Mr. President, I like you, but I really don't think people should eat on the same floor they sleep." [Laughter] And I felt as if I were in the presence of Harry Truman all over again. [Laughter] So I dutifully got down my well-worn copy of David McCullough's great biography, and I looked at the houses of Harry and Bess Truman in Independence, and sure enough, they were two-story houses, where the bedrooms were on the top floor and the dining room was on the ground floor.

I want to say to you, Mr. Elsey, I wish you had just taken the whole program. [Laughter]

I could have listened to you for another hour and a half. And I think I speak for all the people in this audience in saying that we are grateful you are here to provide us a living account of a remarkable time and a great President. And we are grateful for your service to America, as well, and we thank you, sir.

And I want to thank James Earl Jones for being here, and also for his friendship to me over these years. I was so hoping, before I knew he would come, that there would be an African-American in this place at this time who could be the living embodiment of the remarkable steps Harry Truman took that put us on the road we still travel today.

You have made quite a showing in your life, Mr. Jones. But I can't help thinking that in more modest and less famous ways, there are hundreds of thousands of others whose lives were also encouraged and advanced by Harry Truman's courage. And we thank you for being here today to embody that.

Most of all, I would like to thank our Foreign Service and civil service employees who are here, who work every day to advance our interests and values around the world and to make us more free and more secure.

This is a very good thing we're doing today. Listen to this: In 1956, at the close of his visit to Great Britain, the London Daily Telegraph called Harry Truman "the living and kicking symbol of everything everyone likes best about America." That's a pretty good reason for putting his name on the State Department. But it really doesn't even get into the top 10, for history will credit Harry Truman for creating the architecture of postwar internationalism in politics and economics; for drawing the line against communism and for democracy, setting us squarely on the trail of freedom we continue

to blaze today; for leading America toward increasing prosperity and racial equality here at home; and for laying the groundwork for pioneering achievements in meeting America's health care needs, even though he paid a dear price for it.

We are still blessed because President Truman understood the importance not just of winning the war but of building the institutions and alliances that could maintain the peace. What a job he did: the United Nations; NATO; the Truman Doctrine; the Berlin Airlift; Korea; and the Marshall plan. Oh, yes, he was committed to military strength. But from the very beginning, he knew that peace could not be maintained and the cold war could not be won by military power alone. He told the National War College, behind the shield of military strength, "We must help people improve the conditions of life, to create a world in which democracy and freedom can flourish." That's an argument he had to make over and over and over again. I can identify with that.

In early 1947, the House cut in half President Truman's request for funds to prevent starvation and disease in occupied Germany and Japan. He knew he had to turn that mentality around, but he believed he could. He would often say, "I trust the people, because when they know the facts, they do the right thing."

So when he went before a joint session of Congress to call for emergency aid to keep Greece and Turkey from falling into the Communist orbit, he put it this way: "The United States contributed \$341 billion toward winning World War II. The assistance I recommend amounts to little more than one-tenth of one percent of that investment. It is only common sense that we should safeguard this investment and make sure it was not in vain." With the leadership and support of like-minded Members of Congress, the bill was on his desk in 2 months, passed by overwhelming majorities in both Houses. And he fought the same way to win America over to the Marshall plan.

Harry Truman's unmatched insight allowed him to see emerging patterns in history, to identify new challenges over the horizon, and to build the institutions and approaches to meet them. Thanks, in no small measure, to President Truman, we have won the cold war and now must shoulder a like responsibility for meeting the challenges of a new century and a new era in human affairs.

With global interdependence growing daily, creating ever-new opportunities and new and different vulnerabilities, the need for U.S. leadership in the world has never been greater. The need for building on Harry Truman's legacy has never been greater.

But the old American pull of isolationism—or at least, in this age, cut-way-back-ism—is still there. We should remember what he said: "Lasting peace," President Truman reminded us, "means bread and justice and opportunity and freedom for all the people of the world." My fellow Americans, this is a great day, and this is a good thing. But we should do more than dedicate this building to Harry Truman. We should rededicate ourselves today to fulfilling his vision in the new century.

To paraphrase what he said so long ago, it means we have to put a small percentage of the resources we put into winning the cold war to work in the world in keeping the peace, advancing global prosperity, reducing poverty, fighting AIDS, battling terrorism, defending human rights, supporting free press and democracy around the world.

We need to move forward with debt relief for the world's poorest nations, to give them the lifeline they need to fight AIDS and educate their children and become better partners for us in the world. These are the kinds of investments Harry Truman proved decades ago could keep our soldiers out of war. If we do not want to overuse our military, we must not underfund our diplomacy.

I believe if President Truman were here today, he would tell us that if we truly want to honor him, we should prepare for the future in our time, as he prepared for our future in his. Those of us here today know that that means not only investing in foreign affairs; it also means investing in the capacity of our own people at home.

Truman once said, "The success of our foreign policy depends upon the strength of our domestic policy." Well, he tried it, and it worked. By the close of his administration, he had helped to create 11 million new jobs; unemployment was at a record low; farm and business incomes at all-time highs; the minimum wage had increased; Social Security benefits had doubled; 8 million veterans had been to college on the GI bill; and our country had moved closer to one America, across the lines of race that divided us.

In 1947 President Truman was the first President ever to address the NAACP. His biographer, David McCullough, called it the strongest statement on civil rights heard in Washington since the time of Lincoln. President Truman said, "I meant every word, and I'm going to prove it." And so he did, desegregating the Armed Forces and the Federal civil service and continuing to fight for civil rights gains.

He also envisioned a new system of health care for the elderly and affordable health insurance for all Americans. He led America on the first leg of a long march that would end in 1965, with the creation of Medicare. He endured vicious attacks, and his party lost the Congress in a record way, in no small measure because he simply thought that people, when they needed a doctor, ought to be able to get one.

But at the signing ceremony for Medicare several years later, the guest of honor was Harry Truman. President Johnson gave him the very first Medicare card and said, "It was really Harry Truman who planted the seeds of compassion and duty which have today flowered into care for the sick and serenity for the fearful."

So at home and around the world, if we truly wish to honor President Truman, we will do in our day what he did so brilliantly in his: see clearly the long-term path we must follow, take the first steps without hesitation.

This is a kind of time Harry Truman must have dreamed of at the end of World War II, at the dawn of the cold war, in the bitterest, bleakest days of the conflict in Korea: an America at peace, with prosperity, social progress, no crippling internal crisis or external threat.

Like our victory in World War II, this opens a whole new era for us. It gives us great opportunities, enormous challenges, profound responsibilities. At home, we have the chance and the

duty to meet the challenge of the aging of America; of the largest and most diverse group of schoolchildren in our Nation's history; of families struggling to balance the obligation to work with the more important obligation to raise their children well; to explore the far frontiers of science and technology in a way that benefits ordinary Americans and protects our most cherished values; to get this country out of debt for the first time since Andrew Jackson was President.

Around the world, we have to face the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, narcotrafficking, the persistent, enduring ethnic, religious, tribal, and racial conflicts that grip so many places in the world, and new and different threats that could profoundly affect us all, including global warming and the rise of AIDS and other infectious diseases, along with the breakdown of public health systems around the world.

But we're well-positioned to deal with this, thanks in no small measure to what Harry Truman and his generation did so long ago. He gave us the opportunities we have today. It's a good thing that we say, thanks, Mr. President, by naming this building for him. It would be a far, far better thing if we would follow his lead and give the same set of opportunities to our grandchildren. I pray God that we will.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:33 p.m. outside the Harry S. Truman Building. In his remarks, he referred to President Truman's grandnephew, John Ross Truman, and daughter, Margaret Truman Daniel; George M. Elsey, former administrative assistant to President Truman; and actor James Earl Jones, master of ceremonies.

The President's Internet Address

September 22, 2000

Good afternoon. We Americans are truly fortunate to be living at such an exciting time. Computers and the Internet are revolutionizing the way we work, live, relate to each other and the rest of the world. They also have the potential to fundamentally transform and improve the

way Government serves the American people. Today I want to talk about a major step we're taking toward that goal.

When I became President, there were only 50 websites on the entire World Wide Web. Today, there are almost 20 million. Under the