

Cuba, the only country that has not embraced our common vision, becomes a member of our community of democracies. By doing so, we can ensure that all the people in our hemisphere share in the blessings of freedom and in the promise of the global economy, living and working and raising their families in dignity and with hope for the future.

Now, Therefore I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Friday, April 14, 2000, as Pan American Day and April 9 through April 15, 2000 as Pan American Week. I urge the Governors of the 50 States, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the officials of other areas under the flag of the United States to honor these observances with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eighth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 12, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 13.

**Proclamation 7289—National
Former Prisoner of War Recognition
Day, 2000**

April 8, 2000

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

As we stand at the dawn of a new century, we reflect with pride on all that our Nation has accomplished in the 224 years since we first declared our independence. Today we enjoy unprecedented peace and prosperity, and, as it has for generations, America shines as a beacon of democracy, freedom, and opportunity for peoples around the world.

Yet the blessings we rejoice in today were won at great cost. Millions of young Americans who stepped forward in times of crisis or conflict to defend our Nation and uphold our values around the world sacrificed their freedom and lost their lives. The century just past will forever be known as the American century, not only because of our economic strength, military might, and technological prowess, but also because of the character, determination, and indomitable spirit our people demonstrated time and again.

That character and spirit have never been more evident than when Americans have been held captive as prisoners of war. Suffering hunger, fear, isolation, and uncertainty, stripped of their freedom and often subjected to physical and psychological torture, American POWs nonetheless continued to serve our Nation with honor, dignity, and remarkable courage. For many, the long, agonizing days stretched into years, and the loss of freedom and the cruel separation from family, home, and friends left scars that the passage of time can never erase.

We owe a profound debt of gratitude to these heroes who stood face to face with the forces of tyranny and oppression, true to our country and to the spirit of freedom even in captivity. We owe a debt as well to their families, whose faith and fortitude have been an unceasing source of strength to our Nation in many of our darkest hours. As we observe this special day for the first time in this new century, let us remember and honor the sacrifices of America's prisoners of war and their families; and let us keep faith with them by remaining resolute in defending liberty and securing a just and peaceful world for the generations to come.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 9, 2000, as National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day. I call upon all Americans to join me in remembering former American prisoners of war who suffered the hardships of enemy captivity. I also call upon Federal, State, and local government officials and private organizations to observe this day with

appropriate ceremonies, programs, and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eighth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

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**Remarks Following a Performance of
“Messiah 2000” in Alexandria,
Louisiana**

April 8, 2000

Well, I am rarely at a loss for words. I use words for a living. I have done reasonably well at it. And I am virtually speechless.

First, I want to say to my friend Anthony—we were talking, oh, maybe 6 months ago, about how much I wanted to come down here one more time before I left office and see this “Messiah” service as President. And it worked out for me to be here. I wish Hillary could be here. I wish Chelsea could be here. We came, the three of us, 11 years ago. Chelsea and Miquell were just little girls; Gentry was so small he was almost invisible. [Laughter] And our friendship goes back long before that, to 1977.

So I just want to say how much this has meant to me. I thank you for acknowledging all the people who came down with me, and I’d like to thank the people from your church from Arkansas who came: my good friends Keith and Janice Sjostrand, and brother Bill Harden, Mrs. Harden, and the others who came. Thank you for coming to be with us tonight. I love you, and I’m glad to see you.

We’ve had an unusual relationship, Anthony and Mickey and Hillary and I and our kids. We’re sort of an odd couple. I say that so that you will not hold him responsible for anything I have ever done you disagreed with. But we love each other a lot. I bet I cried through more of this tonight than anybody else here.

I want you to know something about this guy. There for a period of time, a day or two at least, there was some question about whether I would finish my term. He called me on the phone, and he said, “Mickey and I want to come spend 20 minutes with you. And we won’t spend more than 20 minutes, because we know you’ve got a lot to do.” I said, “You’re going to come all the way to Washington, DC, from Alexandria, for 20 minutes?” And he said, “Yep. And we won’t stay long.” So I said, “Okay, come on.”

So he shows up. She shows up. First thing they did was give me a tape of a song she sang, wrote and sang for me, that I was supposed to listen to every day to keep my head in the right place—[laughter]—which I dutifully did. Then he gives me about seven pages of points he wants me to study up on every day to make sure I know where I want to be. [Laughter]

Then he says, “I don’t know how this is going to come out.” But he said, “I know you. You are my friend. We have raised our children together. I love you. I was here when you were going up. If the ship starts to sink and other people start to bail out, you call me; I want to go down with you.” He said, “I will be there. If not another living soul were standing there, I would be there.”

And I say that not for some personal reason but because that was the embodiment of his Christian faith and the witness of the Pentecostal Church that I have been blessed by for 23 years now. And I just want you to know I’m grateful to you and your wife and kids and both sets of parents that are here and your extended family, for what you meant to me and Hillary and to our daughter.

And I’m grateful that you gave me the chance to help your church advance the cause of liberty in—last time I counted, three or four different countries, now. I would have done it for anybody, but you gave me the chance to do it for you.

And I’m grateful that one more time in my life I got to sit here and be bathed in the glorious love of all these singers and actors and all the people that put together this “Messiah” service. It was a blessing that I will have with me for the rest of my life.

Thank you.