

PASSAGE – INAUGURAL ADDRESSES

HUMANITIES: Passage A is adapted from Second Inaugural Address of William J. Clinton (©1997 by William J. Clinton).

Passage B is adapted from Inaugural Address of Jimmy Carter (©1977 by Jimmy Carter)

Passage A by William J. Clinton

My fellow citizens, at this last Presidential Inauguration of the 20th century, let us lift our eyes toward the challenges that await us in the next century. It is our great good
5 fortune that time and chance have put us not only at the edge of a new century, in a new millennium, but on the edge of a bright new prospect in human affairs, a moment that will define our course and our character for
10 decades to come. We must keep our old democracy forever young. Guided by the ancient vision of a promised land, let us set our sights upon a land of new promise. The promise of America was born in the 18th
15 century out of the bold conviction that we are all created equal. It was extended and preserved in the 19th century, when our Nation spread across the continent, saved the Union, and abolished the awful scourge
20 of slavery. Then, in turmoil and triumph, that promise exploded onto the world stage to make this the American Century. And what a century it has been. America became the world's
25 mightiest industrial power, saved the world from tyranny in two World Wars and a long cold war, and time and again reached out across the globe to millions who, like us, longed for the blessings of liberty. Along the way, Americans produced a great
30 middle class and security in old age, built unrivaled centers of learning and opened public schools to all, split the atom and explored the heavens, invented the computer
35 and the microchip, and deepened the wellspring of justice by making a revolution in civil rights for African-Americans and all minorities and extending the circle of citizenship, opportunity, and dignity to
40 women. Now, for the third time, a new century is upon us and another time to choose. We began the 19th century with a choice: to spread our Nation from coast to coast. We

45 began the 20th century with a choice: to harness the industrial revolution to our values of free enterprise, conservation, and human decency. Those choices made all the difference. At the dawn of the 21st century, a
50 free people must now choose to shape the forces of the information age and the global society, to unleash the limitless potential of all our people, and yes, to form a more perfect Union.

Passage B by Jimmy Carter

55 For myself and for our Nation, I want to thank my predecessor for all he has done to heal our land. In this outward and physical ceremony we attest once again to the inner and spiritual strength of our Nation. As my high school
60 teacher, Miss Julia Coleman, used to say: "We must adjust to changing times and still hold to unchanging principles." Here before me is the Bible used in the inauguration of our first President, in 1789, and I have just taken the
65 oath of office on the Bible my mother gave me a few years ago, opened to a timeless admonition from the ancient prophet Micah: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to
70 do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Micah 6: 8) This inauguration ceremony marks a new beginning, a new dedication within our Government, and a new spirit among us all. A
75 President may sense and proclaim that new spirit, but only a people can provide it. Two centuries ago our Nation's birth was a milestone in the long quest for freedom, but the bold and brilliant dream which excited the
80 founders of this Nation still awaits its consummation. I have no new dream to set forth today, but rather urge a fresh faith in the old dream. Ours was the first society openly to define itself in terms of both spirituality and of
85 human liberty. It is that unique self- definition which has given us an exceptional appeal, but it also imposes on us a special obligation, to take on those moral duties which, when

assumed, seem invariably to be in our own
90 best interests. You have given me a great
responsibility--to stay close to you, to be
worthy of you, and to exemplify what you are.
Let us create together a new national spirit of
unity and trust. Your strength can compensate
95 for my weakness, and your wisdom can help to
minimize my mistakes. Let us learn together

and laugh together and work together and
pray together, confident that in the end we will
triumph together in the right. The American
100 dream endures. We must once again have full
faith in our country--and in one another. I
believe America can be better. We can be even
stronger than before.

Sources

Inaugural addresses of the presidents of the United States : From George Washington 1789 to George Bush 1989. Avalon Project - Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy. (n.d.). https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/carter.asp

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