

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

Opening Ceremonies of America's
Millennium Celebration
Washington, DC

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Office of the Press Secretary

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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AND THE FIRST LADY
AT OPENING CEREMONIES OF AMERICA'S MILLENNIUM CELEBRATION

12th and Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

11:51 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Thank you, good morning, Happy New Year. Thank you, Senator Daschle, to other members of the Congress who are here. Thank you, Mayor Williams, for your kind comments to Hillary and to me, and for your outstanding leadership in this city. Thank you, Robert Pinsky, for being here today, and for opening the ears and eyes and hearts of so many young children to the wonders of poetry. Thank you, Dean Baxter.

I want to thank the Children's Choir and the Military Band. They were wonderful today - (applause) -- and the Singing Sergeants who have left. (Applause.) I want to thank Ellen Lovell and the members of our Millennial Council, and Terry McAuliffe and all those who made it possible for us to have all these wonderful events today. (Applause.) I also want to thank the Lord for this wonderful weather, so we all feel good being out here. (Applause.)

The New Millennium Choir sang "Rising Like The Sun." Their vitality and their voices are living proof that the light may be fading on the 20th century, but the sun is still rising on America. Even though this is an opening ceremony, what we celebrate did not begin today and it won't end tomorrow.

Two years ago, Hillary and I created the White House Millennium Council to bring Americans together, in her words, "to honor our past and imagine our future." Since then, she has hosted Millennium Evenings at the White House with some of our nation's most gifted scholars and artists. And people all over the world have participated on the Internet. She has criss-crossed America to save our historical treasures, from Harriet Tubman's home to Thomas Edison's factory, to Native American pueblos. This morning, we kick off not only a weekend of celebrations, but a whole series of events throughout the coming year, that will further mark our new millennium.

This is more than a unique moment for our calendar. It is also a unique moment for our country. Our economy is strong; our social fabric is on the mend. We're moving forward on America's remarkable journey of creating a more unified nation, a more just society, a more perfect union.

There is no better moment to reflect on our hopes and dreams, and the gifts we want to leave our children; no better opportunity to open a new chapter of progress and possibility for all people; no better time to join hands and build the one America of our dreams; no better time to be a truly good neighbor to the people of the world who share this smaller and smaller planet of ours.

So as we honor the past, let us truly imagine the future. I hope every single one of you, sometime today, and everyone within the sound of my voice, will take just a little time to dream about what you want for your grandchildren and their grandchildren, and what you would like the story of the 21st century to be.

Now it is my privilege to present the person who has done more than anyone else in America to help us appreciate, and properly celebrate, the dawn of the new millennium. Ladies and gentlemen, the First Lady of the United States. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: Good morning. Thank you all for being here this morning, on this glorious day, to be part of the Millennial celebrations. I, too, wish to thank our Poet-Laureate, Robert Pinsky, and Reverend Baxter, for their beautiful, wise, and inspiring words. And it has been a delight to hear the voices and music of so many generations -- a World War II veteran, our current servicemen, and the New Millennium Choir.

I look forward to hearing from Washington, D.C. native, Denise Graves, who always sounds magnificent. I thank Senator Daschle for joining us here today and for his extraordinary remarks. And I also thank the other congressional co-chairs of America's Millennium, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, Speaker Dennis Hastert, and Minority Leader Dick Gephardt.

My thanks also go to the Kovler Family Foundation and the Smithsonian Institution, and Rashid Chaudry and Kamran Khan for hosting this opening ceremony. I also thank Terry McAuliffe and the America's Millennium Leadership Committee, particularly InfoUSA.com, SlimFast Foods Company and Cisco who have done so much to make these days possible. (Applause.)

I particularly thank Mayor Williams and the City of Washington for the extraordinary effort they have put in to making this celebration one that is accessible and free to all of the residents of the greater D.C. area. And I thank the members of the President's Cabinet who are joining us.

There are many distinguished guests in this vast audience, including some of our team leaders for our explorations in space, which is one of the ways we imagine the future. I know that Donna Shirley is here, who led the team that landed the Rover on Mars, and at least two astronauts, Roger Crouch and Wendy Lawrence. They will all be speaking later today at the

National Air and Space Museum, to which you are invited. And I thank the various AmeriCorps volunteer teams who are helping us this weekend. (Applause.)

So to everyone who, under the leadership of Ellen Lovell and the White House Millennium Council, have made these days and this event possible, we appreciate all of your efforts.

Now, just think for a minute of the items, the events and the ideas of this century that you would put into a time capsule, that you think would really represent the United States and the American century: A transistor? Louis Armstrong's trumpet? A piece of the Berlin Wall? Take any of these items, and it alone could tell a story of the 20th century. It was, after all, the transistor that launched the Information Age, and enabled man to walk on the moon. It was Satchmo's trumpet that heralded the rise of jazz and of American music all over the world. And it was a broken block of concrete covered in graffiti from the Berlin Wall that announced the triumph of democracy over dictatorship. These are just some of the items that will be placed, along with scores of other objects representing the ideas and innovations that shaped the American century, into our National Millennium Time Capsule.

Almost three years ago, when the White House Millennium Council began planning a celebration for the National Mall, built around our theme, "to honor the past and imagine the future," we decided that an important way to capture this moment in time would be by filling a national time capsule -- filled not only with the symbols and achievements of the century just past, but with our hopes and dreams for the next. We invited the thinkers and builders and creators of this century -- all the past recipients of our nation's highest honors in the arts and humanities, in science and technology, in citizenship and leadership, as well as builders and creators of the future, the students who are taught by the state teachers of the year across America. We asked them all to help us fill this time capsule, and their responses have been overwhelming.

Teachers and students nominated computers, while scientists nominated the transistors that made them possible. Bruce Peniman's English class in Amherst, Massachusetts, sent a highlighted copy of Ralph Ellison's "The Invisible Man;" while novelist Philip Roth recommended works by William Faulkner and Saul Bellow. June Moore's second grade class in Laramie, Wyoming, selected the sport of baseball; while playwright, August Wilson, suggested a recording by Bessie Smith. When it came to hopes for the future, the young people and adults spoke as one: world peace, cures for cancer and AIDS, an end to hunger and racism.

I was also impressed by how children were determined to shape the future for themselves. "Helping others is at the very top of my list of careers," wrote a student from Nevada. While another 7-year-old from Idaho wrote, "I wish that all children can have a loving family. I wish someday I will help the world."

In a few minutes, we will invite some of these students and leading citizens to share their nominations for the time capsule. Now, the prototype is sitting right there. It was created by Pentagrams Design, Inc., and the time capsule will be made of three metals: steel for the Industrial Age, copper for the Information Age, and titanium for the age to come. As you can

see, it is molded in the shape of a waving American Flag, symbolizing our optimistic country that is always in motion, always moving forward, always pushing back the frontiers of technology and progress, of tolerance and justice.

This prototype will go on display in The National Museum of American History. And at the end of the year, after all of the items have been received and selected, the actual time capsule will be exhibited and sealed at the National Archives, where it will remain until it is opened 100 years from today.

Throughout the weekend, the President and I invite you to visit the capsule and to enjoy the various programs at the Smithsonian, from symposia on great Americans of the past and present -- Thomas Jefferson, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and B.B. King -- to sessions pondering the future of American taste and the future of American democracy. And we invite you to take your children to the Story Circle at the National Museum of American History. And, of course, you are all invited to come to the Lincoln Memorial tonight to join us in a national celebration of America's Millennium.

But by no means will the celebration end at the stroke of midnight tonight. Throughout this millennial year, the White House Millennium Council will lead even more efforts to honor the past and imagine the future. We will continue to recruit more citizens to work together to save America's treasures, whether it's the home of a great American, such as Harriet Tubman, or letters from a soldier in wartime, or a family's scrapbook that may just be sitting in the attic somewhere. We will continue to open new millennium trails in our most scenic parks and historic sites. And through the Millennium Green program, we hope to inspire every single American to plant a tree for future generations to enjoy. And through the National Endowment for the Humanities project "My History is America's History," we hope to help every child in America value their own family history, and honor our nation's immigrants, past and present.

This time capsule is one of our gifts to the future, a gift that will convey to our great-grandchildren and their children what it was like and what we were thinking at the end of the 20th century. In many ways, what our descendants find inside this capsule can be viewed not merely as a relic of the past, but as this generation's promise to the future.

There will be a photo of Rosa Parks in the days after that fateful bus ride, to serve to remind us not only of her courage, but of our solemn pledge to move forward in the long march toward justice, and to live even closer to our ideals of freedom and equality. The model of the DNA double helix will be placed in the capsule, not just as a symbol of one of the greatest scientific breakthroughs of all history, but of our commitment to completing the Human Genome project, cracking the code of life and putting it to work for the good of humanity. And the film of Neil Armstrong's walk on the moon must also be our pledge to keep America the world's leading space-faring nation.

So all of us have a chance to work to give these gifts, and so many others, to the future -- the gift of our natural monuments and historic places preserved; the gift of safe schools and a world-class education for our children; the gift of quality affordable health care for all Americans; the gift of peace and justice on Earth. If we make this historic millennial weekend,

and the millennial year to come, a time for thanksgiving, each one of us will be able to do as the President suggested -- not merely to think of what we might want, or what we would wish for, but what we can do to create the future we all hope and dream for.

I hope that all of us, as we contemplate this passing of the calendar, will think of our own ways of giving gifts to the future, and imagine the kind of world we could help to create.

Now I would like to invite our special guests to step forward and to announce their contributions to our National Millennium Time Capsule. Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

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12:07 P.M. EST