

# JOHN F. KENNEDY

UNITED STATES CAPITOL  
INAUGURATIONAL ADDRESS

FOR I HAVE SWORN BEFORE  
**YOU AND  
ALMIGHTY GOD**  
THE SAME SOLEMN OATH  
OUR FORBEARS PRESCRIBED NEARLY  
**A CENTURY AND THREE-QUARTERS AGO**

**THE  
WORLD  
IS  
VERY  
DIFFERENT  
NOW**

For man holds  
in his mortal  
hands the  
power to  
abolish all  
forms of  
human poverty  
and **all** forms  
of human life

And yet the same  
revolutionary  
beliefs for which  
our forebears  
fought are still at  
issue around the  
globe—the belief  
that the rights of  
man come not  
from the generosity  
of the state

**BUT  
FROM  
THE  
HAND  
OF  
GOD**

**WE DARE NOT FORGET TODAY THAT  
WE ARE THE HEIRS OF THAT FIRST**  
Let the word go forth **REVOLUTION.**  
from this time and place, to friend  
and foe alike, that the torch has  
been passed to a **NEW GENERATION**  
of Americans--born in this century,  
**tempered by war**, disciplined by  
a hard and bitter peace, proud of  
our ancient heritage--and  
unwilling to witness or permit the  
slow undoing of those  
human rights to which this nation  
has always been committed, and  
to which we are committed today  
at home and **around THE  
WORLD**

**WE OBSERVE TODAY**

not a victory of party but a  
celebration of **freedom** --  
symbolizing an end as well as a  
beginning -- signifying renewal  
as well as **change.**

To those people in the huts and  
villages of half the globe  
struggling to break the bonds  
of mass misery, we pledge our  
best efforts  
to help them  
help  
themselves,  
for whatever period is  
equiped not because the  
communists may be doing  
it, not  
because we  
seek their  
votes, but  
because it  
is right.

**TO  
SISTERS  
SOUTH  
OF  
BORDER**

we offer a special pledge to  
convert our good words into  
good deeds in a new alliance for  
progress to assist free men  
and free  
governments  
in casting off  
the chains of  
poverty. But this peaceful  
revolution of hope cannot  
become the prey of hostile  
powers. Let all our neighbors  
know that  
we shall join  
with them to  
oppose  
aggression or subversion  
anywhere in the Americas.  
And let every other power know  
that this Hemisphere intends to

remain the master of its own  
house. To that world  
assembly of sovereign states,  
the United Nations, our last  
best hope in  
an age  
where the  
instruments  
of war have far outpaced  
the instruments of peace,  
we renew our pledge of  
support to prevent it from  
becoming  
merely a  
forum for  
invective--to  
strengthen its shield of  
the new and the weak  
and to enlarge the area  
in which its writ may run.

**FINALLY TO THOSE NATIONS WHO WOULD**

**MAKE THEMSELVES OUR ADVERSARY**

**WE offer NOT  
a PLEDGE  
BUT a REQUEST**  
that both sides begin anew  
**FOR PEACE**  
BEFORE the **DARK Powers**  
of **DESTRUCTION**  
UNLEASHED by science engulf **ALL HUMANITY**  
**IN PLANNED OR ACCIDENTAL SELF DESTRUCTION**

**WE DARE  
NOT TEMPT  
THEM  
with WEAKNESS**

For only when  
our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain  
beyond doubt that they will never be employed. But neither  
can two great and powerful groups of nations take comfort  
from our present course--both sides overburdened by  
the cost of modern weapons, both rightly alarmed by the  
steady spread of the deadly atom, yet both racing to  
alter that uncertain balance of terror that stays the  
hand of mankind's final war. So let us begin  
anew--remembering on both sides that  
civility is not a sign of weakness, and  
sincerity is always subject to  
proof. Let us never negotiate  
out of fear. But let us  
never fear to  
negotiate.



LET EVERY NATION KNOW,  
WHETHER IT WISHES US WELL OR ILL,  
THAT WE SHALL PAY ANY PRICE,  
BEAR ANY BURDEN,  
MEET ANY HARDSHIP,  
SUPPORT ANY FRIEND,  
OPPOSE ANY FOE  
TO ASSURE THE SURVIVAL  
AND THE SUCCESS OF LIBERTY  
THIS MUCH WE PLEDGE  
AND MORE

To those old allies whose cultural and spiritual origins we share, we pledge the loyalty of faithful friends. United there is little we cannot do in a host of cooperative ventures. Divided there is little we can do--for we dare not meet a powerful challenge at odds and split asunder. To those new states whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny.

We shall not always  
expect to find them supporting our

VIEW

BUT WE SHALL  
always hope to  
find them **STRONGLY**  
**SUPPORTING**  
their own **FREEDOM**  
and to remember that, in the past  
**THOSE**  
**WHO**  
**sought power by riding**  
**FOOLISHLY**  
**THE BACK**  
**OF THE**  
**TIGER**  
**ENDED**  
**UP INSIDE**

LET BOTH SIDES,  
EXPLORE what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us.  
for the first time, **FORMULATE**

serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms--and bring the absolute power to destroy other nations under the absolute control of all nations.

**UNITE** to heed in all corners of the earth the command of Isaiah--to "undo the heavy burdens ... (and) let the oppressed go free."

**SEEK** to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terrors. Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths and encourage the arts and commerce.

And if a beachhead of cooperation may push back the jungle of suspicion, let both sides join in creating a new endeavor, not a new balance of power, but a new world of law, where the strong are **just** and the weak secure and the peace preserved.

ALL this WILL NOT  
BE COMPLETED IN THE FIRST  
100 DAYS  
nor will it be  
completed in the first  
1000 DAYS  
NOR IN THE  
life OF THIS  
ADMINISTRATION

nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin. In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe. Now the trumpet summons us again--not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need--not as a call to battle,

Though embattled we are-- but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation"--a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself. Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, that can assure a more fruitful life for all mankind? Will you join in that historic effort?

JOHN F. KENNEDY

In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility--I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it--and the glow from that fire can truly light the world.

my fellow **AMERICANS**  
ask not what your  
country can do for you--  
ask what you can do for your country.  
**MY FELLOW CITIZENS**  
**ASK NOT WHAT AMERICA** WILL DO FOR YOU  
*but* **WHAT TOGETHER**  
**WE CAN DO**  
*for the*  
**FREEDOM OF MAN**

# OF THE WORLD:

*Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us here the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's*

**WORK MUST TRULY BE OUR OWN**

— **JOHN F. KENNEDY**  
PRESIDENTIAL INNAUGURATION 1961