

Inaugural Address

by Joseph Robinette Biden Jr.

My fellow Americans, my family, friends, and colleagues: I am humbled, we are humbled by the trust and confidence you have placed in me and in your vice president Kamala Harris, who makes history as the first black woman ever elected in that office.

Right now, we are standing at the place where twelve years ago Obama taught us that the world has changed and that we must change with it. There is no better way to describe the situation we find ourselves confronted with.

In Lincoln's day the task of our people was to preserve our Nation from disruption from within. In Roosevelt's day the task of our people was to save our Nation from disruption from without. In this day the task of our people is to save the world from invisible disruption from everywhere – a lethal virus, rising temperatures, systemic racism, ...

I will be honest with you. The challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. But at the same time, I am telling you that there has never been anything, anything we have not been able to do when we have done it together. I have pledged to you to be a president who seeks not to divide but unify. Who doesn't see red states and blue states, only sees the United States. I will work with all my heart, with all my strength, with all of you - whether you voted our 45th president or me.

Together we will restore the soul of our country. I decide, I choose – as should you – to see my opponents in that fight for what they really are – humans, Americans, people who share the same dreams, problems, and hopes.

Most of us gathered here are immigrants or their children, people who are connected and brought together by their flight from oppression, their wish for freedom, prosperity, and happiness. We are the people who deserve income equality and fair taxes for everyone. We are the people who deserve widespread access to affordable education. And we are the people welcoming our fellow immigrants who fled for the same reasons as we did, as our mostly plain ancestors did, and who deserve the same undeniable rights as we do. Because we

remember the history of our families. Because we know that Wall Street did not build America but ordinary middle-class people, people like you and I, people like the ones waiting along our borders for a chance to work and show their potential. Whether your skin color is black, brown, red, or white, you deserve to walk along the streets of that country without the fear of being shot.

Democrats, Republicans, independents, progressives, moderates, conservatives, young, old, urban, suburban, rural, gay, straight, transgender, white, Latino, Asian, Native American – I extend you my hands if you are willing to unclench your fists. Because together we are bigger than the sum of our individuals. Only together we can control the virus, lower the temperature, fight for equality, justice, happiness...

Folks, we are gathered here in the middle of a pandemic. What seemed unthinkable only a few months ago has happened. Far more than 400,000 people - or in other words 160 school classes - have died from Covid-19 in the United States of America – more than the US battle deaths from five wars combined. Many of our fellow Americans died without their loved ones in hospital rooms. Countless others never had a proper funeral. Countless Americans have lost a loved one through this terrible virus. My heart goes out to each and every one of you. I know how it feels to lose everything and I promise you – I will fight the virus with all my heart. But only if we fight together as a Nation, as one people, as the United States of America, we can and will succeed.

Our work must begin by getting COVID under control.

“[I] hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men [and women] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Which was once reached by independence must now be restored by being responsible and selfless. We, every single one of you listening – I mean it - has the power to save thousands of lives - *Life* - the greatest thing we can possess, the greatest thing we can give, greater than anything which can be bought. And therefore, we cannot repair our economy full-heartedly until we get the virus under control. In a time when we need them most, we can't hug our loved ones without risking their lives. We can't relish our precious moments - birthdays, weddings, graduations, Christmas all the moments that matter most to us. We can't live our

American Dream - until we get the virus under control, until we have secured your family's health care - affordable health care that is accessible to every single American.

Build back better!

Folks, I am not only standing here as your 46th president but also as a friend, as Jill's husband, Hunter's and Ashley's father, and my grandchildren's and their spouses' grandpa. They're my heart. I know how it feels to lose one of them and we will do everything in our power to spare you from that pain.

Twelve years ago, Obama told us that “[o]ur challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new. But those values upon which our success depends -- honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism - - these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history.” Now the time has come when we have to add health, science, and racial justice to his list.

We are at an inflection point in the history of our country and our world where we can decide between inequality or justice, between life or death. We have now the chance to choose the path which leads to a future instead of the path which leads to destruction and death.

The future of our country, our people, the earth lies in our strong hands. We might not choose the easiest path but the path which leads to life. We know that life, that love matters more than wealth. And this is why we look the climate crisis straight in the eyes - and act. The question is no more whether climate change exists or whether we as humans are responsible for the damage, which was done to our living space, the planet. The question, every single one of us has to ask herself or himself, is what our nation, what we can do as a union to lower the temperature. Yes, we can prevent the flooding of our soil, drought, and storms. Yes, we can prevent illness, hunger, poverty, and death – not by silently watching but by taking action as long as we still can. We could decide for ignorance, to be selfish but we won't. Because we have faith in tomorrow. Because we know that our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren believe in us, rely on us. We will not leave them behind with our God-given planet being destroyed but an American soil where happiness can grow on and on beyond any limits. I myself and many of you gathered right here will probably not be able to witness the great impact of us being responsible. But I assure you. Your children will thank you. We are the bridge to the future. Together we will make progress.

Folks, climate change, nuclear proliferation, international and transnational terrorism, cyber warfare, disruptive new technology, mass migration. None, none of these challenges can be resolved by the United States alone or any nation acting alone. The fates of our Nations are more intertwined than they ever have been. We are not America alone. We make America respected around the world again. We are America, the self-determined but cooperative neighbor. Whether you are from California or Alaska, whether you are from Mexico or France, we all look up to the same stars. We suffer from the same problems and share the same hopes. I believe at our best; America is a beacon for the globe. We will not lead - we will lead not only by the example of our power, but by the power of our example.

And so, my fellow Americans: We should remember John F. Kennedy's words: "[A]sk not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man. Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us the same high standards and sacrifice which we ask of you."

And now folks, let's make this vision become reality with compassion, empathy, and concern. Let's battle COVID, save our planet, restore decency, defend democracy and make the promise of the country real for everybody, no matter their race, their ethnicity, their faith, their identity, or their disability. Let's look ahead to a freer, more just, richer and healthier America with possibilities for everyone. Ahead to an America that never leaves anyone behind and never, never gives up.

We will restore the soul of America. We can do it. I know we can.

May God bless the United States of America and may God protect our troops. God loves you all. Thank you.