

grandchildren will have to pay. According to the Social Security Trustees, waiting just 1 year adds \$600 billion to the cost of fixing Social Security. If we do not act now, Government will eventually be left with two choices, dramatically reduce benefits or impose a massive, economically ruinous tax increase. Leaving our children with such a mess would be a generational betrayal.

We owe it to the American worker to fix Social Security now, and our reforms begin with three essential commitments. First, if you're receiving your Social Security check or nearing retirement, nothing will change for you. Your benefits are secure. Second, we must not increase payroll taxes on American workers because raising taxes will slow economic growth. Third, we must give younger workers, on a voluntary basis, the option to save some of their payroll taxes in a personal retirement account.

Unlike Social Security benefits, which can be taken away by politicians, the money in a personal account would be yours. And unlike the money you put into Social Security today, the money in personal accounts would grow. A child born today can expect less than a 2 percent return after inflation on the money they pay into Social Security.

A conservative mix of bonds and stocks would over time produce a larger return. Personal accounts would give every younger worker, regardless of income, the chance to save a nest egg for their later years and pass something on to their children.

Saving Social Security is an economic challenge, but it is also a profound moral obligation. Today's young Americans deserve the same security their parents and grandparents enjoyed. Because the system is broken and promises are being made that Social Security cannot keep, we need to act now to strengthen and preserve Social Security.

I look forward to working with Members of Congress from both parties to keep the promise of Social Security.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:25 a.m. on January 14 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 15. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 14 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Remarks at Georgetown University's "Let Freedom Ring" Celebration *January 17, 2005*

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Thanks for the invitation. Laura and I are pleased to join you on this national holiday as we honor two exceptional Americans who we're proud to call friends.

I want to thank Dr. DeGioia and Georgetown University for sponsoring the John Thompson Legacy of a Dream Award. I want to thank the Georgetown Gospel Choir for sharing their gifts at this celebration. I want to thank John Thompson for being here and for setting such a great example. I appreciate the thoughtful words

from one of the most recognized voices in America, Tom Joyner. I can't wait to hear Aaron Neville. I want to thank the Members of Congress, the members of my administration, and all the distinguished guests who are here today. I also want to thank Dr. Dorothy Height for joining us this afternoon.

Every year on this day we reflect the history of civil rights in America. It's a story of our Founders—among them, slave-owners—who declared a standard of equality and justice that would one day be used

to put an end to slavery. It's a story of a terrible war that freed men and women from bondage but not from oppression and segregation. It's a story of generations "not having received the promises but having seen them afar off." And it's a story of Americans like Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who held our Nation to those promises and would not rest until they were written into law.

Dr. King was a minister of the Gospel who could have had an easy life in a respected pulpit. Today he would be just 76 years old. Instead, he chose to minister in the spirit of John Wesley, who said, "I look upon all the world as my parish." The Nation first took notice in the 1950s and in the 1960s, when he wrote, "I am in Birmingham because injustice is here." In the space of just a few years, through the power of his intellect, the truth of his words, and the example of his courage, he left this country a different and better place and made his own journey to a different and better place.

Dr. King believed so fully in the ideals of America that he was offended every day that they were violated. He had studied the founding documents and found no exceptions to the promise of freedom. He was disappointed in the unfair practices of his country. Yet he said, "There can be no deep disappointment where there is not deep love." Dr. King loved America enough to confront its injustices, not compromising the truth and not fearing any man, and America loves him in return.

Martin Luther King also knew that man's right to be free is rooted in something far beyond the charters of a country. He believed and he knew that the image of God we share is a source of our dignity as human beings and the basis for our equality. He believed and he knew that the teachings of Jesus stand in eternal judgment of oppression. He believed and he knew that the God who made us for freedom will bring us to freedom.

By observing and honoring Dr. King's birthday, we teach the next generation lessons that must never be forgotten. We need our children to know how great the struggle for racial justice in our society has been and how much work remains to be done. We need them to know that the greatest causes sometime involve the greatest sacrifices and that history moves forward on the strength of those sacrifices. And we need the children of America to know that a single life of conscience and purpose can touch and lift up many lives.

The influence of one good life is also the message of the Legacy of a Dream Award—in this case the influence of two good lives. Alma and Colin Powell are among the most admired people in our country. For these 4 years, they've also been America's representatives to the world. They are honorable people who bring honor to this Nation, and America is grateful for their example of service.

As their friends know, Alma and Colin met on a blind date. [*Laughter*] Alma has said she remembers the future general looking like a lost 12-year-old. [*Laughter*] That's the side of the man I've never seen before. [*Laughter*] For his part, Colin has said that night he was "mesmerized by a pair of luminous eyes, an unusual shade of green." And from that day to this, he has been fortunate to have this beautiful, accomplished woman at his side.

Colin Powell has lived his own inspiring story, a story of exceptional accomplishment that started before segregation ended. When he was a young officer, someone told him, "You are the best black lieutenant I have ever known." He later wrote, "Inside me, I was thinking, if you intend to measure me only against black lieutenants, you are making a mistake." [*Laughter*] He went on to write, "I'm going to show you the best lieutenant in the Army, period."

The best lieutenant in the Army went on to a distinguished military career that ended with four stars on his shoulder. Along the way, he earned two Purple

Hearts, the Bronze Star, the Soldier's Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Congressional Gold Medal, and two Presidential Medals of Freedom. I'm not through yet. [Laughter] I'm just getting started. [Laughter] See, he's been an official in the administration of six Presidents, including service as the National Security Adviser to President Reagan, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Presidents Bush and Clinton.

More than 4 years ago, when I needed a Secretary of State, I knew what I was looking for. I wanted someone who believed deeply in the values of our country and could share them with the world, a person of wisdom and decency, a leader who could bring out the best in people. I found all this and more in Colin Powell. Our 65th Secretary of State became one of the most effective and admired diplomats in America's history. He has helped to rally the world in a global war and to resolve dangerous regional conflicts and to confront the desperate challenges of natural disaster and hunger and poverty and disease. He's been tireless and selfless and principled. In the work he and I have shared, he has become a great friend, and I appreciate all he has done for our wonderful country.

His proudest achievements probably have little to do with public service. See, he's a wonderful dad to Michael and Anne-Marie and Linda. Over the years, he's been a mentor to young people. As a founder of America's Promise, Colin has drawn countless others to become involved in the lives of children and to give them the hope and confidence they need for a successful life. Today we honor not just Colin Powell's lifetime of leadership, but we honor his great kindness and his compassion.

The same kinds of idealism and character have marked the life of Alma Johnson Powell. Like her husband, she was raised by strong and decent people. And Birmingham, where Martin Luther King was jailed—Birmingham, which—where he was

jailed, was also the home of the Johnson family. That's where she was raised, in other words. [Laughter] Alma remembers her father during the worst of days sitting up at night with a shotgun by his side to protect his wife and his children. Mr. Johnson was a high school principal, and he was a legend to generations of students who remember his high standards and his imposing presence. His daughter, Alma, has always been impressive as well because of her grace and her principle.

For many years, Alma served America as a soldier's wife, moving the household 18 times and leading the family when the Army—anyone who wants to know the meaning of duty and unselfish love can look at our military families, like the Powells. This good-hearted mother and grandmother shares her love with others as the chair of America's Promise. People here at the Kennedy Center know her as the leading member of the board of trustees. She's a noted author of several children's books and a volunteer who gives her time to help young people make good choices in life. Alma Powell is one of the finest people Laura and I are privileged to know. And she is a superb choice for the Legacy of a Dream Award. I'm not kidding, either.

You have chosen, on this important day for America, to pay tribute to a woman and a man who have upheld the highest ideal of American citizenship. In their love of country and their heart for service, they show the same character found in the life of Dr. Martin Luther King. Thank you for the privilege of joining you this afternoon and for the pleasure of being able to honor these fine, fine Americans.

May God bless the Powells, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:16 p.m. at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In his remarks, he referred to John J. DeGioia, president, and John Thompson, former head men's basketball coach,

Georgetown University; radio show host Tom Joyner; entertainer Aaron Neville; and civil rights leader Dorothy I. Height. The Martin

Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday proclamation of January 14 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Remarks “Saluting Those Who Serve” January 18, 2005

At ease. Thanks for the warm welcome. It is such a pleasure to be with the courageous men and women of the United States Armed Forces. As we prepare to celebrate our Nation’s 55th Presidential Inauguration, I can think of no better way to begin than by giving thanks for our freedom and those who make it possible.

Please be seated. It may be a long speech. *[Laughter]*

Whether you serve in the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard, each of you has stepped forward to serve. You have risked your lives in far-away mountains and arid deserts, in perilous skies and on the high seas, to defend liberty and to free those trapped by tyranny. As I prepare to take the oath of office, I want you to know how grateful I am for your service and sacrifice and how proud I am to be your Commander in Chief.

And I am really proud of our First Lady, my wife. I love her dearly. I appreciate so very much the service and advice and friendship of our Vice President, Dick Cheney. Like me, he married well. *[Laughter]* It’s good to see my mother and father. Secretary Rumsfeld, thank you for your great service to our Nation, and it’s good to see Joyce.

I appreciate the military commanders who are here. I want to thank the members of my administration who’ve joined us, Members of Congress, members of the active military, wounded troops, Congressional Medal of Honor recipients. Family members of our fallen soldiers, thank you so much for being here today.

Our troops watching from Baghdad, Iraq, and Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan, God bless you all.

I thank Kelsey Grammer—what a fine man. I appreciate his patriotism and being the emcee of this fantastic event. I want to thank all the other entertainers who have taken of their time to entertain our troops and really to say—what they’re doing here is to say, “Thank goodness for your service.”

The Inauguration of a President is a great moment in the life of our country. With an election behind us, the American people come together in unity to celebrate our freedom. A Presidential Inauguration is a testament to the power of democracy, a symbol of our confidence in the popular will, and a sign of hope for freedom-loving people everywhere.

We are blessed to live in hopeful times, when the promise of liberty is spreading across the world. In the last 4 years, more than 50 million people have joined the ranks of the free. The people of Afghanistan have thrown off an outlaw regime and chosen a President in the first free elections in that nation’s 5,000-year history. And in coming days, the Iraqi people will have their chance to go to the polls, to begin the process of creating a democratic government that will answer to the people, instead of to a thug and a tyrant.

These are landmark events in the history of liberty. And none of it would have been possible without the courage and the determination of the United States Armed Forces.