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Attorney General Installation Ceremony Address

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[AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio]

Well. Oh, so much to say. So many people who mean so much to me. Everyone here means something very special to me -- and I thank you all.

Mr. President, thank you so much for your words and your presence here today.

To say that my heart is full is such an understatement. But one does not get to this place, to this department, to this theater, or this podium alone. And I'm no different. I owe thanks to so many whom I'm so pleased to be able to acknowledge here today.

Mr. President, thank you for your faith in me in asking me to lead the department that is the conscience of this nation -- that represents more than any other the fundamental promise of America, of equal justice under the law. Thank you, sir.

Justice Sotomayor, thank you for your support here today and over the years. You are an inspiration, not just to me but to countless young who see in you a dream made possible. Thank you so much.



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Thanks also to my good friend and colleague, the Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates. She is an exemplary colleague. More than that, she's a true friend since our days as U.S. Attorneys together. It's an honor to lead this department with you, Sally, and I thank you.

Thanks to all of you who came here today -- exceptional public servants, distinguished guests, extraordinary leaders, remarkable friends. Your strength and your kindness have paved the way for all that I've been fortunate to achieve, and I thank you.

And thanks also to those without whom this day truly would not have happened -- all of those, who, from so many affiliations, worked so hard on my behalf on the road to my confirmation. You harnessed the spirit of public service, the spirit of civic contribution, as well as the spirit of sisterhood to make this dream come to fruition. I thank you all today from the bottom of my heart, not just for your presence here today, but in my life and on this journey.

And of course, I must also thank my family for their steadfast support, not only over the last several months, but always. My father, Lorenzo, who never fails to match his principles with action, taught me to think for myself and to serve others. My mother, Lorine, instilled in me a love of learning; while her faith that a more just society was possible made me imagine a world without limits. A dedicated young minister, who carried me on his shoulders to watch those not much older than I make history; and a courageous young teacher, who refused to let Jim Crow, or anyone, define her. Their commitment to justice and to public service has been the inspiration for my life's work, and it is why I dedicate this day, this event, and this achievement, to them.

I must also thank my husband Steve, my life's partner and my fearless champion, who has never wavered in his support for my dreams, and when faced with a choice, has always, always urged me to fly.

And of course, I have to thank all of my colleagues, my friends at the Department of Justice for your ongoing faith in me, and for giving me the opportunity to work for you as we go forth to implement the laws that set us free and bind us together as a nation. I would not have anyone else by my side as we work to preserve our national security and our cherished liberties, to make safe the world of cyberspace, to end the scourge of modern day slavery, and as we confront the very nature of our citizens' relationship with those of us entrusted to protect and to serve.



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These are indeed challenging issues and challenging times. Even as our world has expanded in wonderful ways, the threats that we face have evolved in measures commensurate. And every day, we seem to see an ever increasing disconnect between the communities we serve and the government we represent. We see all these things.

But let me tell you what else I see. I see people speaking out in the time-honored tradition that has made this country stronger. In their cries for justice, I hear the belief that it can be attained. And they would not cry out if they did not have faith that we would answer.

I see more. In our law enforcement partner's quest for support, I hear the guardian's call for tools to calm the waters, to keep the peace, and to comfort those who fear. Yes, we have great challenges. But our strength as Americans is to turn our great challenges into great opportunities. Many of our greatest advances in equal rights, in human rights, have come after heartbreaking loss. But they come -- because we choose not to give in to the twin pulls of revenge and retribution, but we turn to the law. And sometimes we forget that this has never been easy.

You see, over 200 years ago, we decided what kind of a country we wanted to be. And we have not always lived up to the promises made. But we have pushed ever on, and with every challenge we get a little bit closer. We have held the truth of the equality of all men to be "self-evident." We have fought to maintain a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people." And we have followed "a dream deeply rooted in the American dream."

And at every turn, when struggles threaten to tear us apart, we turn to the law to reconnect ourselves with our highest principles; to give voice to those fighting oppression; to give hope to those seeking the redress of wrongs; to give meaning to the cry of "never again"; and to protect those who call on us in the still small hours of the night when they are cold and frightened. These are our values. These are our beliefs. And when we hold on to them, we do great things.

And what we have learned from all of our challenges is not that our values are not true and good, but that every generation must commit to them and work to make them real for the challenges of their time -- that the price of freedom is constant vigilance. This is how we have succeeded as a country and this is how we will meet these challenges today.



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And if the arc of the moral universe does indeed bend toward justice, as I believe that it does, it requires all our hearts and all our hands to keep its path straight and true.

My friends, I stand before you today having been blessed beyond compare. But to whom much has been given, much is required. And so I make these pledges to you here today:

Mr. President: I pledge to you to lead this Department of Justice with integrity, with honor, and a total dedication to the cause of justice.

To the people of this great nation: I pledge to you that your protection, your liberties, and your rights will be my sacred charge.

To the law enforcement community: I pledge that this department will be your partner as we work to carry out our highest mission, the protection of the people of this great nation.

And to all my colleagues in this wonderful Department of Justice: I pledge to always remember that "the place of justice is a[n] hallowed place,"¹ and continually strive to be worthy of the trust that you have placed in me, as we work together to uphold the Constitution, to protect the American people, and to serve the cause of justice.

And to my family, my wonderful family: I pledge to strive to continue to live up to the examples that you have set.

I make these pledges to and before you all, upon the oath that I have taken and the honor I hold dear.

To everyone here in this room, thank you again for the trust that you have reposed in me, and for your faith and your confidence in me. And thank you for sharing this wonderful day with me.

Thank you, all.

¹ Sir Francis Bacon. *Essays, Civil and Moral*: "The place of justice is an hallowed place; and therefore not only the bench, but the foot-pace and precincts and purprise [sic] thereof, ought to be preserved without scandal and corruption."