



BY LARRY MOHRING—THE WASHINGTON POST
Clinton acknowledges applause from crowd at the West Front of the Capitol.

A Recasting of Themes Speech Offers a Simple Statement of Values

By Dan Balz

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President Clinton took the themes from a thousand stump speeches and recast them yesterday into an eloquent and simple statement of the values he will carry with him to the White House.

The ideas that launched his candidacy—the hunger for change and the need to satisfy it by instilling an ethic of service, sacrifice

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and personal responsibility—echoed from the West Front of the Capitol yesterday.

But he also gave strong voice to a lesson he had learned from the long campaign as he crisscrossed the country listening to voters in diners and town squares. The new president sent an unmistakable message to the capital that this election was about changing the way Washington works as much as it was about changing the country.

"Let us give this capital back to the people to whom it belongs," Clinton told dignitaries on the podium and the throng gathered be-

fore him under the brilliant, midday sun.

Clinton's inaugural Address was everything his long-winded acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention was not: It was short—14 minutes almost to the second—and crisply delivered, with a fresh cadence rarely achieved in his other major speeches.

There were no gimmicks or laundry lists or self-conscious family references. If it lacked for soaring rhetoric, neither was it a hodgepodge of paragraphs strung together.

Clinton pledged an end to "deadlock and drift." But given his first chance as president to explain just how he would reverse a decade of conservative Republican policies, Clinton stopped short.

When the last change of parties occurred 12 years ago, Ronald Reagan delivered a ringing, ideological call to arms in his inaugural. Government was not the answer as the Democrats had always maintained, he said. It was the problem.

Yesterday, Clinton, who ran as a

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'On the Pulse of Morning'

... Here on the pulse of
this new day
You may have the grace to
look up and out
And into your sister's eyes,
and into

Your brother's face, your
country
And stay simply
Very simply
With hope
Good morning.

EXCERPTED FROM THE INAUGURAL POEM BY MAYA ANGELOU, WHICH APPEARS ON PAGE A26.

"different kind of Democrat," avoided that question.

What he hopes to be about, he said yesterday, is "bold, persistent experimentation" in the style of Franklin D. Roosevelt. But he offered only a muted sense of his own ideology or solutions.

Instead, he underscored his belief that the terms of the relationship between government and the people must be changed. "We must do what America does best," he said. "Offer more opportunity to all and demand responsibility from all."

He has sounded that theme in every important speech he has delivered on his way to the White House, from his address to the Democratic Leadership Council in May 1991 to his formal announcement of candidacy in October 1991 to his acceptance speech last July in New York.

In the past he has called this a "New Covenant," and when one of his advisers was asked a few weeks ago whether the inaugural would be a restatement of the New Covenant, he replied, "I hope so, but without the words."

Clinton also played off the theme of generational change by invoking the same sense of idealism of the last young president 32 years ago, his hero John F. Kennedy.

Just as he had accepted Kennedy's challenge to public service as a teenager in the 1960s, Clinton yesterday challenged today's young generation "to act on your idealism" on behalf of others.

He challenged his own generation—now fully in power—to "do what no other generation has had to do before:" simultaneously to reinvest in the country and shrink a federal budget deficit that threatens the economy.

In place of prescriptions, he listed the reasons he was standing in the sunshine of a new administration while

"We must do what America does best. Offer more opportunity to all and demand responsibility from all."

Bush was preparing to fly to Houston. "We inherit an economy that is still the world's strongest, but is weakened by business failure, stagnant wages, increasing inequality and deep divisions among our people," he said.

Clinton elaborated on the theme by ticking off many of the changes that brought about a sense of fear and anxiety among the voters, from unemployment to the crushing cost of health care to the threat of urban crime to the lost lives of America's underclass. "We have not made change our friend," he said.

Ironically, Clinton blended his long-stated notion of reinventing America with the image of an "American renewal," which just happened to be part of the title of

former President Bush's economic program, delivered too late in the campaign to save his presidency. And in other ways, some of Clinton's rhetoric yesterday was suggestive of Bush's four years ago, when Bush attempted to step away from some of the unpopular aspects of Reagan's government.

Even if a bit of language appeared to be borrowed, the inaugural speech yesterday seemed authentic Clinton, distilled from campaign rhetoric of a dizzying year and repackaged for the Inauguration, when unity and solemnity are the order of the day, when realism merges with optimism.

"There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America," Clinton said.

Unpopular decisions await Clinton. All he would say yesterday about his intentions is that they will require something from everyone. "It will not be easy," he said. "It will require sacrifice. But it can be done, and done fairly, not choosing sacrifice for its own sake but for our own sake."

Clinton bid farewell to Bush by thanking him for half a century of service to the country—and by implication reminded people that those years cover his own lifetime.

He invoked the shadows of the Cold War and the prosperity of the post-war era to remind his audience that as "an old order passes" around the globe, new dangers exist that will require forceful leadership from this new government.

"While America rebuilds at home, we will not shrink from the challenges, nor fail to seize the opportunities, of this new world," he said. "Together with our friends and allies, we will work to shape change, lest it engulf us."

Throughout the long transition since his election, Clinton has promised to reach out continually to the people, to stay in touch and to recall the reasons they sent him to Washington. Yesterday he reminded the powerful and the privileged surrounding him on the West Front stage of the message his election carried for them.

"This beautiful capital, like every capital since the dawn of civilization, is often a place of intrigue and calculation," he said. "Powerful people maneuver for position and worry endlessly about who is in and who is out, who is up and who is down, forgetting those people whose toil and sweat sends us here and pays our way."

It was similar to the toast he gave in December at a private dinner of Washington powerbrokers given in his honor.

But it is a message he will be required to repeat in word and deed if he wants his presidency to succeed.

Yesterday he called for Washington to reform itself "so that power and privilege no longer shout down the voice of the people," but his own administration has started off on an uncertain note in this regard, with controversies over Cabinet ethics and a corporate-underwritten inaugural bash.

It is as much this challenge to his own administration as to the country that will determine whether the promise of his Inaugural Address will become the reality of his government.