



WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON

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Warm greetings to everyone gathered in Savannah for the second anniversary celebration and completion of the Haitian Memorial Monument at Franklin Square.

Our nation was built on the dreams and deeds of immigrants from every region of the world. Haitians made a profound and lasting impact on American history in 1779, when their soldiers joined the fight for our independence. This monument will stand as an enduring reminder of those soldiers' contributions during the Siege of Savannah. It also commemorates the abundant gifts made to us by the Haitian people ever since -- gifts that have helped make our country strong and our heritage rich.

The people and country of Haiti hold a special place in my heart. In May, I was invited by the UN Secretary-General and the government of Haiti to become the UN Special Envoy for Haiti. In this role, I've been working with the Haitian government, the Haitian diaspora, nongovernmental organizations, business leaders, civil society, and foreign government donors to assist Haitians in implementing their vision for their country. Specifically, we're working together to help Haiti "build back better" from storm damages in 2008, to create good jobs and sustainable businesses, and to strengthen the infrastructure with improved roads, hospitals, schools, energy production and distribution, watersheds, clean water, and agricultural production. I accepted this role because I believe firmly that, despite economic and environmental challenges, Haitians are better positioned today to achieve their aspirations than at any time since I first visited the country in 1978.

I also am working with Haiti through the Clinton HIV/AIDS Initiative (CHAI). Together with the Haitian government, we are expanding access to HIV/AIDS care and treatment, and strengthening the systems required to deliver primary health care services.

As I continue these efforts dedicated to Haiti's future, it gives me great pleasure to join you in recognizing the accomplishments of past generations of Haitians and Haitian Americans. I hope you'll join our efforts to build on -- and, in so doing, to honor -- their legacy. I thank the men and women of the Haitian American Historical Society for hosting this event and for their role in bringing the Haitian Memorial Monument to reality, and I send my best wishes you all for a memorable celebration.

*Bill Clinton*