

Module 10: How Will Historians Treat Richard Nixon?

Evidence 9: Title of Peacemaker: Inaugural Address, January 20, 1969

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Question to Consider

- How does the evidence below refute or support the views of the three historians outlined in the Conclusion of this module?

Document

Inaugural Address
January 20th, 1969

The greatest honor history can bestow is the title of peacemaker. This honor now beckons America--the chance to help lead the world at last out of the valley of turmoil and onto that high ground of peace that man has dreamed of since the dawn of civilization. If we succeed, generations to come will say of us now living that we mastered our moment, that we helped make the world safe for mankind. This is our summons to greatness. I believe the American people are ready to answer this call. I know that peace does not come through wishing for it--that there is no substitute for days and even years of patient and prolonged diplomacy...

I also know the people of the world. I have seen the hunger of a homeless child, the pain of a man wounded in battle, the grief of a mother who has lost her son. I know these have no ideology, no race. I know America. I know the heart of America is good. I speak from my own heart, and the heart of my country, the deep concern we have for those who suffer and those who sorrow. I have taken an oath today in the presence of God and my countrymen to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States. To that oath I now add this sacred commitment: I shall consecrate my Office, my energies, and all the wisdom I can summon to the cause of peace among nations. Let this message be heard by strong and weak alike: The peace we seek the peace we seek to win--is not victory over any other people, but the peace that comes "with healing in its wings"; with compassion for those who have suffered; with understanding for those who have opposed us; with the opportunity for all the peoples of this earth to

choose their own destiny.

Only a few short weeks ago we shared the glory of man's first sight of the world as God sees it, as a single sphere reflecting light in the darkness. As the Apollo astronauts flew over the moon's gray surface on Christmas Eve, they spoke to us of the beauty of earth-and in that voice so clear across the lunar distance, we heard them invoke God's blessing on its goodness. In that moment, their view from the moon moved poet Archibald MacLeish to write: "To see the earth as it truly is, small and blue and beautiful in that eternal silence where it floats, is to see ourselves as riders on the earth together, brothers on that bright loveliness in the eternal cold--brothers who know now they are truly brothers." In that moment of surpassing technological triumph, men turned their thoughts toward home and humanity-seeing in that far perspective that man's destiny on earth is not divisible; telling us that however far we reach into the cosmos, our destiny lies not in the stars but on earth itself, in our own hands, in our own hearts. We have endured a long night of the American spirit. But as our eyes catch the dimness of the first rays of dawn, let us not curse the remaining dark. Let us gather the light. Our destiny offers not the cup of despair, but the chalice of opportunity. So let us seize it not in fear, but in gladness-and "riders on the earth together," let us go forward, firm in our faith, steadfast in our purpose, cautious of the dangers, but sustained by our confidence in the will of God and the promise of man.

Source:

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<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu>.