

Administration of William J. Clinton



President Clinton enjoys company of two-year-old Hilario Mendez and surging crowd at Adelup.
Photo by Jojo Santo Tomas

1998



The Honorable Carl T. C. Gutierrez, Governor of Guam

Remarks

President Clinton's Address to the People of Guam

4:00 p.m. November 23, 1998

Ricardo J. Bordallo Governor's Complex, Adelup

Mr. President, people of Guam.

Today is a very proud day for the 150-thousand American citizens of Guam. It is certainly one of my proudest moments as Governor, to welcome you, Mr. President, to our shores. And while you have not left Asia, you have already come home to Guam, America's home in Asia.

Throughout our history, despite our size, Guam has been a place where the forces that have shaped world history have intersected, merged, and sometimes collided. A cascade of events -- from Magellan's landing; to the raising of the first American Flag exactly 100 years ago; to the occupation of Guam during World War Two; to our role in Vietnam, Korea, and the Persian Gulf Wars, all are a testament to the flow of world forces which have shaped our destiny and brought us to this point where our economic value has become as powerful as our strategic importance.

Today, we have matured into a showcase of Democracy in Asia as the explosive growth in the region has resulted in a Tourism Industry that is the underpinning of our \$3 billion dollar economy.

Mr. President, we are proud of what we have achieved under the American Flag. And the key to our success, has been our people, a native Chamorro people, who reflect a shared ancestry with much of Asia and the Pacific, and who share an island world-renowned for hospitality, generosity and beauty, an island which today, we share with you, Mr. President.

And, as you deepen your understanding of who we are, we hope you will be able to see the extraordinary possibilities that await us in the coming millenium, if the American Dream is allowed to be fully realized. There are rich opportunities within our grasp, if we are able to move from our colonial past into a future partnership that sets free the economic vitality locked up in land that must be returned. There is a brighter future for our children and grandchildren if we maximize our commercial and strategic potential as "America in Asia", a potential that can only be realized if the political and economic constraints that inhibit us are removed.

Just as dramatic as President Kennedy's liberating action in 1962 lifting military security clearance restraints on our civilian population and all visitors which prevented personal travel and commercial investment, there is again an opportunity, now, 36 years later, for a President of the United States to unlock the doors . to a more fair and just future for Guam.

A decade after President Kennedy's bold actions, Guam saw our first tourist. A decade after that, we had built a billion dollar economy. Now we turn to a President, whom I truly believe, has the will and the willingness to do right by his American brothers and sisters in Guam.

Mr. President, you have proven something here today, by making history with this visit. Your presence here is proof of something that I knew from the first moment I met you, that deep in your heart, you truly care about people, you care about the people of Guam.

And if Guam has ever had the opportunity to move forward, it is now. Mr. President, you have long been an advocate for us in Washington. But being in Washington is not the same as being here, on this island. You can be 10-thousand miles away, but unless you step onto this hallowed soil, you cannot feel the vibrations, the patriotism, you cannot truly understand what it is we were, what we are, and what we could be.

We know that if any president can work in partnership with Guam to realize the fullest potential of what "America in Asia" can be, it is you. Much has been achieved, but much more needs to be done.

Most important is the attainment of a just and dignified political relationship for Guam, and the Chamorro people's right to self-determination. For these hundred years under the American Flag, we have taken to heart the high ideals of representative democracy. Today, we seek the ability to be embraced as full Americans, with meaningful participation in the creation of the laws that govern our lives.

Mr. President, we are nobody's constituency.

Someone in Washington needs to stand up and do what is right by the Americans in Guam. And we firmly believe, Mr. President, that you are that person. This is what makes your visit here so special. Not just because you came here, but because you cared to come here, to see for yourself, and meet for yourself, your fellow Americans in Guam.

Thank you, God Bless You, Si Yu'os Un Benendisi.

The End