

**Inaugural Speech
Hon. Luis G. Fortuño
Governor of Puerto Rico**

**Capitol Building, San Juan
January 2nd, 2009**

Our Right, Our Hope

Governors Calderón Serra, Hernández Colón, Romero Barceló and Acevedo Vilá, Presidents and members of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. President and members of the United States District Court, mayors, Mr. Secretary of State and other Puerto Rico Government Officials, distinguished guests...

And fellow Puerto Ricans.

Just as every day starts at dawn,

Just as every week has its Sunday

Just as every stage of our lives and every cycle of human experience has its beginning and its end, our democracy today is strengthened through self renovation and is replenished by the promise of progress and wellbeing.

Today, we do not celebrate a political victory obtained at the ballots. Instead, we celebrate our own capacity to dream of a better future.

What we celebrate is, at its very core, our right to hope.

Those of you present at this historic stage, as well as those who are viewing from their homes... each and every one of you, the children of this country, have the absolute right to hope. While not explicitly stated, our right to hope could well be the most important of all the rights within our constitutions, by establishing and ordering what we celebrate today.

This ceremony by which those elected freely and democratically are endowed with the gubernatorial power, is nothing less than the collective validation of our right to hope, which we constitutionally inherit from our fathers and, with the help of God, will pass on to our children.

Despite the obstacles we face and the differences that separate us, our democracy assures us that Puerto Rico will move forward. This alone is reason for all of us to rejoice. For millions around the world in the 21st century, this ceremony of renovation and hope, which to us seems normal, is no more than a far aspiration.

Because of this, as I humbly but decisively accept this position of responsibility before those who preceded me in this task, I do so conscious of our past and inspired by our future.

I do so convinced that no matter what difficulties we presently confront, this crisis will pass and Puerto Rico will greet a new dawn.

Together, we will defeat this economic crisis, fighting intelligently and decisively, but most importantly together, with generosity and selflessness.

Today is a day to celebrate that which we are fortunate to have: our strength, our idiosyncrasy, our faith, our values, our commitment with our families, and our desire as a country to overcome adversity.

Today is a day to renew our commitment with our children and grandchildren, and all the future generations of Puerto Ricans that will follow us that we will straighten our economy and rescue our values.

Today is a day were we swear to ourselves that we are going to give our children a Puerto Rico much better than we inherited, driven again in the progress route and every one's wellbeing.

Today is the day we begin to reconstruct Puerto Rico.

Today we take the lessons of the past and together stand with dignity facing the future. Today we are a people committed to facing one of the hardest stages of our life as a country with the certainty that together we will write one of the most heroic chapters of our history.

Puerto Rico needs heroes. And thank God we have them in abundance.

All of us can be heroes. But, to do so, we have to assume our individual and collective responsibilities, and that will inevitable require sacrifices from all of us.

Let us remember that true wealth and progress is not measured by the goods we possess in our homes, but by that which we collectively contribute to help our economy grow, rescue our values, and transform our society. Like Don Luis Muñoz Marín said: "Every man holds within himself something that tells him... that he must do something more than just earn a living, that he must contribute to it, not extinguish it but use it generously, for life is not earned just so we can live it, but so we can have the freedom to do something more."

The task will not be easy. Today we all know that the magnitude of the challenge we face is much larger than what anyone could have imagined.

We are living the gravest fiscal crisis in over half a century and the longest period of economic stagnation since the Great Depression.

It is for this that you have chosen, with a clear and unequivocal mandate, to change our course.

You have chosen to remind the government that the owner of its checking's account is the working people and that the government must adjust its spending to match its revenues, just like you do.

You have chosen a government that will cease borrowing more and more money to cover for its recurring deficits, when in truth it falls to our children to pay for their mismanagements.

You are convinced that the government must be smaller to be more agile and effective.

And definitely, you want a government that gives free reign to our creativity, our productivity, and our innate desire to overcome adversity.

You have reached the conclusion that the government is no longer the solution to all your problems, but rather has become a problem that we must all strive to fix.

And, don't let anyone tell you otherwise, because we will fix it. The reconstruction of Puerto Rico falls upon all of us, and together we will succeed for our combined will can reach even the highest of goals.

It is time to think as a single country and work for the good of all. We all must play our part, from the public to the private sector... from the unions to the nonprofit organizations, ... from the employee to the business owner... because we are a single country, and as such we will together do what is necessary so together we can rise again.

We are a united country and we will not allow anyone else to write this page in our history. By uniting our efforts, we will regain our ability to dream, and we will prove to the rest of the world that we all share the same end aspiration.

Today I speak to you plainly and honestly... this will take time. Our fiscal crisis and the deteriorating economy are not problems that can be solved in days or weeks. But we will solve them.

I know that you, like me, are sure that with everyone's efforts and for the good of all, we will move forward.

The reality we face does not intimidate us, but rather strengthens our commitment to give our people the change that they overwhelmingly favored at the ballots.

A change in favor of good government... a government by the people and for the people.

A change led by the people for the good of the people.

A people that will responsibly and efficiently manage public finances.

A people that will ensure its economic progress by promoting, not impeding, the healthy growth of not only the public sector, but our entire society, including our nonprofit organizations.

A people who will promote values, by serving as examples and living in peace and harmony.

A decent people, who will not tolerate corruption.

A people that will make parents and teachers the authorities on education, and will provide a first class education for all children

A people who will protect our island's natural resources and environment.

A people who value and defend our American citizenship, and will fight to protect and perfect our permanent union with the rest of the United States.

In the upcoming weeks, I will present a plan to revitalize our economy and attend the present fiscal situation. The plan will be based on the principals I have reiterated during this past year, those which were chosen by you at the ballots by conferring upon us a mandate of change

For a government that refrains from spending more than it earns

For a smaller, more agile, and more efficient government

For a government where the laws, regulations, and government programs that no longer work or no longer serve a particular purpose are eliminated, rather than continue indefinitely

That a dollar in the hands of the people will last longer than a dollar in the hands of the government.

That we are all responsible for our collective wellbeing.

That the economic development and environmental protection are no incompatible, but rather mutually indispensable

That the motor of our economy is not our government, but our people.

And the motor of the private sector is the individual, in his capacity to create, produce, save, and invest in his/her future, and that of his/her children

Our plan, founded upon these basic principles, will help us return to the path of economic development and fiscal responsibility. Consumers and investors will once again trust in our economy and we will all, starting with the public employees, will once again trust in our government.

It is time to restart our economy's motor, to control government spending, and ensure you retain a larger portion of your money. But let me be clear: we will not forgo any of these basic principles which you demanded before the ballots.

Undoubtedly, there will be those who will attempt to undermine our efforts. Some, for example, will claim that the necessary medicine to restore the health of our finances and our economy is much too bitter, and urge us not to take it. And, undoubtedly, it will be bitter. However, would any of you allow your child to remain sick simply because he refuses to take the necessary medicine?

There will be others who will claim we lack the capacity to overcome these enormous challenges. I am certain that not only do we have the innate capacity to overcome any adversity, but we will also regain our ability to dream once more.

Often times, I have reflected on the extraordinary endurance that Puerto Ricans demonstrate every time we are confronted with a natural disaster. And while I never wish a hurricane to strike our soil, no one doubts that after every devastating storm Puerto Rico lives its finest moments... when we lead and witness truly heroic examples of solidarity, selflessness, bravery, and sacrifice.

Moments when the average Puerto Rican ignores his own needs and works to help his fellow man, like we did after Hurricane Georges and the disaster at Mameyes.

During a crisis, when we confront the adversity created by a natural disaster, not a single Puerto Rican dares step out or not contribute or claim that they are not willing to sacrifice that which they have earned.

On the contrary, everyone wants to help his neighbors, the rescue crews, the refugees, the public order authorities...

If we are capable of such heroic collective efforts in the aftermath of a hurricane, filled with generosity and selflessness, how could we do less now when confronted with a graver crisis?

Puerto Rico has heroes in abundance. Today, I ask you to wake within yourselves that heroic spirit of generosity and selflessness, a spirit of strive, strength and solidarity that characterize the Puerto Ricans during adversity. Today I ask you to work together, so that together we can reconstruct Puerto Rico.

For we must all understand that not only during difficult times, but in our daily living, it is not the government who writes our history...

The pages of our history are written by the hundreds of thousands of anonymous heroes that wake every morning to work with resolve, love, and dignity.

These pages are written by the sixth grade school teacher who often pays out of his/her own pocket to cover for the lack of materials in the schools.

They are written by the police man who risks his/her life to ensure our safety.

They are written by the administrative assistant of a company who never gets the credit for making her boss look good

They are written by the emergency room nurse who dedicates her life to save others

They are written by the pastor who attends our spiritual needs in times of need, and provides shelter for the homeless and women who have suffered from domestic abuse

They are written by our students, who day by day seek to improve themselves in hopes of contributing to the future of this island that saw them grow

They are written by the thousands and thousands of mothers and fathers who sacrifice themselves every day to be a good example for their children, promoting positive values for their children so that they can be heroes in the future.

These are the individual stories of heroism that will give us the Change we hope for Puerto Rico.

We all have in ourselves that heroic capacity to change what is bad to good, with our work, efforts, discipline, and firmness as well as our creativity, intelligence, respect, and generosity. As Don Luis A Ferré taught us: "Our country isn't a flag, or an hymn, or noise. Our country is creative effort, it is the sense of social responsibility, respect for reason, and love of liberty."

Today I ask you to search within yourself that capacity to overcome adversity and to aspire to higher goals... the capacity we all have to help us move forward individually

With that heroic will, inspired by the hope of a better tomorrow for Puerto Rico, I ask you to accompany in this endeavor for Change that we begin today.

May God Bless you.