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**Collection:** Speechwriting, White House Office  
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**Folder Title:** Nancy Reagan: Statue of Liberty  
Ribbon Cutting. July 5, 1986

**Box:** 437

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REMARKS FOR STATUE OF LIBERTY RIBBON-CUTTING

JULY 5, 1986

-- THANK YOU, WALTER. I AM SO DELIGHTED TO BE HERE AND PARTICIPATE IN THIS HISTORIC EVENT. THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME.

-- ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO WHEN THE S.S. ISERE (EE-ZERE) SAILED FROM FRANCE TO AMERICA, THE CHILDREN OF OUR COUNTRY EMBARKED ON A PROJECT TO COMPLETE THE PEDESTAL FOR WHAT WAS THEN THE LARGEST STATUE IN THE WORLD -- REPRESENTING THE MUTUAL LOVE OF FREEDOM SHARED BY FRANCE AND AMERICA. THEY

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PAGE 2

SACRIFICED THEIR PENNIES AND IN APRIL 1886, THE LAST BLOCK WAS SET.

-- AND NOW, ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER, AS WE REDEDICATE THE STATUE OF LIBERTY, CHILDREN ARE ONCE AGAIN PLAYING A MAJOR ROLE. THROUGH A SPECIAL FUND-RAISING CAMPAIGN IN OUR SCHOOLS TO HELP RESTORE LADY LIBERTY, STUDENTS RAISED FIVE MILLION DOLLARS -- FROM SELLING COOKIES AND CANDY TO COLLECTING TIN CANS AND POP BOTTLES. AND EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEY

WENT BEYOND THE FUND-RAISING AND FOCUSED GREATER ATTENTION ON THE MEANING OF THIS SPECIAL SYMBOL. THEY PAINTED MURALS, PERFORMED PLAYS, AND WROTE BOOKS ON HER HISTORY -- SO MUCH THAT THEIR EXCITEMENT STIMULATED AN ESSAY CONTEST, GIVING THEM A CHANCE TO EXPRESS WHAT LIBERTY MEANS IN THEIR LIVES.

-- BECAUSE THE CHILDREN OF FRANCE HAD BEEN SO INVOLVED WITH THE STATUE OF LIBERTY ORIGINALLY, FRENCH CHILDREN WERE ALSO INVITED TO WRITE ESSAYS, RECALLING THEIR NATION'S INFLUENCE

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ON OUR LIVES AS AMERICANS.

-- THE CONTEST TOOK ON AN EVEN GREATER MEANING FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN AFTER THE HEARTBREAKING TRAGEDY OF THE SPACE SHUTTLE. AND IN MEMORY OF THE FIRST TEACHER IN SPACE, THEY RECOMMENDED IT BE RENAMED THE "CHRISTA MCAULIFFE ESSAY CONTEST."

-- WE ARE HONORED TO HAVE CHRISTA'S HUSBAND AND CHILDREN WITH US ON LIBERTY ISLAND. I KNOW I SPEAK FOR ALL AMERICANS,

ESPECIALLY THE CHILDREN, WHEN I SAY THAT SHE INSPIRED US WITH HER HOPES AND AMBITIONS FOR A BETTER TOMORROW -- THROUGH EDUCATION.

-- I WISH I COULD READ TO YOU EVERY SINGLE ESSAY WRITTEN BY THE CHILDREN HERE TODAY. THEY WERE ALL SO WONDERFUL AND THE PRESIDENT AND I WERE DEEPLY MOVED BY THEIR WORDS. WHILE THEY ARE ALL "WINNERS" FROM EACH OF THE FIFTY STATES, JASON VERHELST, OF MADISON, WISCONSIN, HAS BEEN SELECTED TO

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READ HIS ESSAY ON BEHALF OF ALL AMERICAN CHILDREN.

[AMERICAN CHILD READS ESSAY]                      THANK YOU, JASON.

-- IN FRANCE, WHILE THE AMERICAN CONTEST WAS UNDER WAY, FRENCH STUDENTS WERE ASKED TO WRITE ON THE "BIRTH AND HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES." WINNERS OF THAT CONTEST WERE THEN CHOSEN TO WRITE ESSAYS ON WHAT LIBERTY MEANS TO THEM. AND TODAY, REPRESENTING FRENCH CHILDREN, LAURENCE LEMOINE,

(LAU-RANCE LEM-JUAN)

WILL READ HER ESSAY FOR US.

[FRENCH CHILD READS ESSAY]

THANK YOU, LAURENCE (LAU-RANCE).

-- AND NOW, ON BEHALF OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY-ELLIS ISLAND FOUNDATION, WE WANT TO THANK EACH AND EVERY STUDENT WHO PARTICIPATED AND CONTRIBUTED TO THIS GREAT MOMENT IN HISTORY. WE ALSO WANT TO THANK THEIR TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND ESPECIALLY THE SPONSORS WHO MADE THEIR TRIP TO THIS CEREMONY POSSIBLE.

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-- I WOULD LIKE TO CONCLUDE BY READING A SHORT POEM WHICH I FEEL EXPRESSES IT ALL. IT WAS WRITTEN FOR THE CONTEST BY BRAD TRAVIS, A FOURTH GRADER FROM LOUISIANA.

OH, LADY OF LIBERTY

TEACH ME TO SEE

WHERE I NEED TO GO

AND WHAT TO BE.

LET ME BE LIKE YOU;

TALL AND PROUD AND FREE,

OUR STATUE

TEACHER OF LIBERTY.

-- THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU.

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