

Thank you all for joining us here today as we dedicate a sculpture generously donated by the Roma Community at Kamenci. We are very proud to have been given such a beautiful and compelling sculpture, entitled "Flowers of One Garden." We hope that it will serve as a permanent testament to the value of the Roma people and the importance of appreciating all communities and cultures.

America has had more than its share of problems and more than its share of horrible examples of intolerance and discrimination. We have sometimes faltered: the destruction of Native American tribes, the enslavement of Africans, the intolerance toward each new wave of immigrants -- all speak to a tragic history. Even now we are occasionally reminded of how hard it is to get along and to really appreciate those different from ourselves, but we also know how valuable and precious each human life is and how much we can learn from those not like ourselves. We have come to appreciate the benefits of diversity.

This sculpture that we unveil today, I think, perfectly embodies this sentiment: Five children, all citizens of Slovenia, holding hands in a circle as they dance. Some Roma, some not. All are children of Slovenia, together, dancing. The children are all the same and they all are different. They accept each other as they are; they notice and appreciate the differences and the sameness of each other. Perhaps in both our countries, if we better appreciated each other, we would be better off. All Slovene citizens, regardless of whether they are Roma or not, regardless whether their ancestors came from Hungary, Italy, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia or Africa, regardless whether they are from the Right or the Left; regardless whether their families were Partisans or Domobranci, whether they are rich or poor, whether they work in factories or in offices: they are all one people; all deserving of respect and admiration.

One of my favorite passages from the Gospels is when adults are admonished for not being more like children -- for having lost their ability to simply accept other people and not to judge them. To just enjoy and appreciate everyone, as children do. We all need to become more child-like, and less childish. We need to appreciate each other. And like this sculpture shows, perhaps there is not much more to heaven than just joining our hands and dancing together in a circle of delight and friendship.