

## **Former President George W. Bush**

(400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Weekend May 2006)

The story of Jamestown will always have a special place in American history. From these humble beginnings the pillars of a free society begin to take hold. Private property rights encouraged ownership and free enterprise. The rule of law helped to secure the rights of individuals. The creation of America's first representative assembly ensured the consent of the people and gave Virginians a voice in their government. It was said at the time that the purpose of these reforms was quote, 'to lay a foundation whereon a flourishing state might in time by the blessing of Almighty God be raised. Not all people shared in these blessings. The expansion of Jamestown came at terrible costs to the native tribes of the region who lost their lands and their way of life. For many Africans the journey to Virginia represented the beginnings of a life of hard labor and bondage. Their story is a part of the story of Jamestown.

It reminds us that the work of American democracy is to constantly renew and to extend the blessings of liberty. That work is continued throughout our history. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century our founding fathers declared our independence and dedicated America to the principle that all men are created equal. These values took root at Jamestown four centuries ago. They had flourished across our land, and one day they will flourish in every land. May God bless you and may God bless America.