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NAACP Dinner, 12/15/89

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Davis/Martin
Title: NAACP
Dec. 14, 1989
Draft: Five

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: NAACP FUNDRAISING, WALDORF, NEW YORK
8 p.m. Friday, December 15, 1989**

((Maybe we should take our act on the road. They can bill us as: "The Coz and Mister Smooth."))\

Ben Hooks, good to see you again. David Dinkins, Doug Wilder, congratulations on your victories. Governor Cuomo, great to be back in New York ((other acknowledgements to come.))

Lionel Hampton -- thank you. Good vibes from a good friend.\

((You know, when I was ambassador to the United Nations, Barbara and I lived in this very hotel, in room 42 A. And whenever I complained about anything, Barbara would just roll her eyes and say: "Just where do you think we live? The Waldorf Astoria?"))\

All in all, this is a wonderful evening, a time when Americans from different professions and political parties can come together to celebrate common ideals.

Nowhere are these ideals more visible than in the commitment and social concerns of this great association. Since the early days of the Niagara Movement, the NAACP has challenged the conscience of a nation. You have provided leadership -- not just for one people within America -- but for all of America.\

Your leadership was born of troubled times, and sharpened by adversity. You've known persecution, and through it, you gained compassion. You've been without power, and through it, you won empowerment. You've suffered the ignorance and bigotry of small minds, and because of them, you built pride and respect.\\

Go to Montgomery, Alabama, today. Stand before the granite wall of the new civil rights memorial. And through a veil of flowing water you will read these words from the Bible: ". . . let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."\\

Like a mighty river, justice can cut a channel through the hardest of stone. Like a mighty river seeking the sea, justice will, in the end, find fulfillment. It has been slow in coming. It has been impeded. But its journey is inexorable because justice cannot be denied.\\

Because of the activism of the NAACP, justice is on the rise. On November 17, I met with Ben and the leaders of the other major civil rights organizations. You challenged me with the highest ideals of your movement. Now let me challenge you to work with me and my Administration, from this day forward, on a campaign to build a better America.\\

I seek a new partnership, one that draws inspiration from the achievement of the civil rights and Solidarity movements. For after all, from the country roads of Selma twenty years ago to the city streets of Eastern Europe today, a common refrain echoes through the history of our times: "We shall overcome."

Has the world known more improbable heroes than Rosa Parks and Lech Walesa? But make no mistake, heroes they are.

So let us emulate them by working together. For in solidarity, we can reasonably hope that we will finally attain the fondest dream of the founders of the NAACP -- a society blind to bigotry, a society open to all.\

The fight against discrimination has been the historic mission of the civil rights movement -- a mission that has seen great success, but a mission that has yet to be completely fulfilled. We know that prejudice and racial tensions still exist in America. That is why I support, and intend to sign into law, a measure to collect as much information as we can on crimes motivated by religious, racial or ethnic animosity -- the Hate Crimes Bill.

And that is why I worked with the Congress in a bipartisan effort to reauthorize the Commission on Civil Rights.\ I will appoint to that Commission men and women who will fight against discrimination, and fight for the civil rights of all Americans.\

But there are other missions for the civil rights movement in the 1990s. From now on, the protection of civil rights must also mean the removal of all barriers to opportunity.

Of course, the barriers to opportunity for black Americans were much more prevalent in the past, even in the recent past. From 1973 to 1981, black employment growth lagged behind that of whites. And real black income declined sharply between 1973 to

1981 -- even as government was spending more on new social programs.

But black Americans have enjoyed enormous employment and income gains during the 1980s. Disparities remain, but they've been narrowed by the rate of progress. Since 1981, black employment has grown 27 percent -- nearly twice the 15 percent growth in white employment. Between 1981 and 1988, the real median income for black families has grown 12 percent, compared with 10.8 percent for white families.

Some would say this signals the victory of the War on Poverty. But we know better. It was in 1965 that Lyndon Johnson declared his war -- a war of liberation -- a war he said was a struggle not simply to support people, but a struggle to give people a chance. It was a noble effort, but despite all the good news I just relayed to you, the War on Poverty fell short. It fell short because the cruelest forms of poverty cannot be fought with dollars alone.

First and foremost -- there is a poverty of the spirit. Government can't teach young men and women to have faith in themselves if their mothers and fathers have lost all faith. Government can't teach that achievement is to be found in quiet moments and subtle rewards, instead of the murderous materialism of easy drug money. But, in a new solidarity, we can instill these values. We can cultivate character -- as leaders, as parents, as teachers, as communities working with our churches.

Let me give you another example of another form of poverty - the higher incidence of disease and early death in the black community is a kind of poverty, a poverty of health. Cancer, strokes, heart disease -- all afflict black Americans in greater proportions. This unacceptable disparity in the health of black Americans is the foremost concern of our Secretary of Health and Human Services, Doctor Louis Sullivan. And so let us tonight join in solidarity against disease and early death.\\

There are other forms of poverty. Many Americans lack basic shelter and affordable housing. My HOPE initiative -- Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere -- seeks shelter for the homeless, affordable housing and homeownership for low-income families, help for first-time home-buyers and up to 50 new enterprise zones to create jobs in our most distressed communities.

But opportunity in jobs and housing is not enough. When people, going about the ordinary business of their lives -- waiting for a bus, walking to a corner grocery store -- must fear for their lives -- then fear has stolen a most precious possession -- freedom. And it is always these communities that can least afford it, that are already economically depressed -- that are the most tragic victims of crime and drugs.

Last week, in Houston, I saw such a community when I revisited the district I represented as a Congressman. I also saw a community that had enough of fear, had enough of crime, had enough of dope. Just as the people of Berlin are standing up for

freedom, so the people of this poor Houston neighborhood are rallying together, using people power to fight for another kind of freedom -- from crime, from drugs -- freedom from fear.

You've heard me speak of the thousand points of light. Well, there is no brighter stars than those brave men and women who lead their communities to stand up to drugs and crime. Their journey to this freedom is long and hard. But you and I must march with them in solidarity, side by side, block by block, city by city. Let us declare tonight our new solidarity against crime and drugs.\\

Then there is yet another kind of poverty, a growing poverty of knowledge and skills.

Many young men and women in this country -- white, as well as black -- are simply not learning -- **not learning** -- the basic skills they need to hold down a job or to raise a family. **That is a national disgrace.**\\ For the first time in history, we face the prospect that the sons and daughters of America could be less educated than their mothers and fathers. Well, let me tell you - - that is unacceptable and this President is not going to sit by and watch that happen.\\

Neither will American business, because business needs new talent as never before. We are used to thinking of unemployment as a case of too many people, and too few jobs -- a game of musical chairs. All too often, it is minorities who are left standing when the music stops.

But the in the years to come, our problem will be just the opposite: more than enough jobs -- and too few people qualified to fill them. New workers will be in demand -- and the simple fact is that eight of every ten new workers will be women, immigrants or minorities.

Think about what that means. For every child growing up today -- black or white -- there will be a job waiting.\\ The question is whether they will have the education and the skills to seize that opportunity. The new service and manufacturing industries will require higher skills, more training and, at the very least, literacy. Education -- quality education -- is a prerequisite to making a decent living in America.

So we must work together, as never before, to reform our schools. Our mission must be to find a way to bring knowledge and enlightenment to a new generation of Americans. **Let us stand in solidarity for the liberation of young minds.**

You know my proposals. First, I believe parents deserve choice. They deserve the power to choose their children's child-care, whether that means a grandparent or a church-affiliated center. And then they deserve the power to choose their children's school.

And where disadvantaged children are concerned, Congress appropriated an increase of \$151 million in the funding of Head Start to serve up to 37,500 more eligible 4-year-olds. I want to go further. I challenge Congress, when it reconvenes, to

increase Head Start funding by \$250 million, to serve up to 95,000 more children.

To provide opportunity to our young people, we need new and innovative economic tools. The training wage, just passed by Congress, is one such tool. But we need more, much more, from merit pay, to magnet schools, to more effective programs to fight illiteracy. And I believe we need the steps we've taken this year to strengthen and support the Historically Black Colleges and Universities of America. Our proposals respond to the needs of many communities -- of every color. They seek to provide opportunity because civil rights means opportunity, and opportunity requires education, safe streets, and a drug-free community for all Americans. In each these measures and so many more, I want and need your active support, your solidarity.

((Ben, as a Baptist minister, I'm sure you heard the story of the young preacher who was well into a sermon, and more than a little nervous about how he was doing, when he noticed his wife in the congregation holding up a little sign with the word "Kiss" scrawled on it. Inspired, he went on to speak for another half hour, and afterwards, asked his wife what she thought of the sermon. "Awful," she said. "Don't you know what I mean by 'Kiss.' It stands for 'Keep It Short Stupid.'"))\\

So in this same spirit, I want to say something in conclusion, but straight from the heart. In November, we started a new era of cooperation, the first of many working sessions on the problems that plague America. Now is no time for mere

politics. Now is the time to band together -- not for our sake -
- not for temporary partisan gain -- but in solidarity, for
generations to come.

When I talk to young people about what they want out of
life, one word keeps cropping up -- adventure. The generation
that is coming of age today is poised for a truly great
adventure. The world they will know will be as different from
today's world as ours is from that of W.E.B. Du Bois. Winds of
freedom are sweeping the globe. New democracies are being born.
Technology is leading us toward new worlds. And Americans must
be prepared, as never before, to provide the leadership for the
new century.

To take the lead, young Americans must be healthy, in body
and mind. They must be ready, in knowledge and purpose. They
must be free of soul-sapping poverty. And they must be free from
discrimination.

I spoke earlier of the Biblical proverb that compared
righteousness to a mighty stream. This same vision can be found
in a poem by Langston Hughes, who compared the odyssey of black
men and women to the crossing of many rivers. And with each
crossing, their souls have grown deep -- deep, like the rivers.

This odyssey shaped the soul of a people, and because of
your leadership, it also shaped the soul of our nation. Thank
you, God bless you, and God bless America.

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Dec. 14, 1989

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Through: CHRISS WINSTON
From: MARK DAVIS
Subject: NAACP Dinner

I. SUMMARY: You will address more than a thousand people -- major donors, CEOs and NAACP leaders -- before dinner, at the Waldorf Astoria at 8 p.m., Friday, Dec. 15. This is a fundraising event, marking the NAACP's 80th year. At the moment, you are scheduled to be introduced by Bill Cosby. Music will be provided by Stevie Wonder and Lionel Hampton. Your remarks will be teleprompted.

II. DISCUSSION: This speech discusses the whole array of Administration initiatives on civil rights, housing, drugs and crime, health and the struggle for opportunity.

Davis/Martin
Title: NAACP
Dec. 15, 1989
Draft: Six

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Thank you, Ben, for that gracious introduction. ((As you can probably tell, I'm a bit under the weather. If I had lost my voice altogether, then I guess I would now be reduced to giving you a slide show of our summer vacation. As it is, I hope you'll forgive me if my remarks are brief.))

Secretary Sullivan, Ginger, John and Patricia Kluge ((Klu-GEE)), Ben and Frances Hook, Mayor-to-be David Dinkins, Governor-elect Doug Wilder, congratulations on your victories. Stevie Wonder, the Duke Ellington band, thank you for the tunes. It's great to be back in New York -- especially now that the Big Apple is decked out in its finest Miracle on 34th Street look.

((You know, for two years, when I was ambassador to the United Nations, Barbara and I lived in this very hotel, in room 42 A. And whenever I complained about anything, Barbara would just roll her eyes and say: "Just where do you think we live? The Waldorf Astoria?"))\ \

All in all, this is a wonderful evening, a time when Americans from different professions and political parties can celebrate common ideals. Nowhere are these ideals more visible than in the commitment and social concerns of this great association. Since the early days of the Niagara Movement, for

eighty years, the NAACP has provided leadership -- not just for one people within America -- but for all of America.\\

Your leadership was born of troubled times, and sharpened by adversity. You've known persecution, and through it, you gained compassion. You've been without power, and through it, you won empowerment. You've suffered the ignorance and bigotry of small minds, and because of them, you built pride and respect.\\

Go to Montgomery, Alabama, today. Stand before the granite wall of the new civil rights memorial. And through a veil of flowing water you will read these words from the Bible: ". . . let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."\\

Like a mighty river, justice can cut a channel through the hardest of stone. Like a mighty river seeking the sea, justice will, in the end, find fulfillment. It has been slow in coming. It has been impeded. But its journey is inexorable because justice cannot be denied.\\

On November 17, I met with Ben and the leaders of the Black Leadership Council. You challenged me with the highest ideals of your movement. Now let me challenge you to work with my Administration, from this day forward, on a campaign to build a better America.\\

I seek a new partnership, one that draws inspiration from the achievement of the civil rights and Solidarity movements. For after all, from the country roads of Selma twenty years ago to the city streets of Eastern Europe today, a common refrain

echoes through the history of our times: "We shall overcome."
Has the world known more improbable heroes than Rosa Parks and
Lech Walesa? But heroes they are.

So let us emulate them by working together. For in
solidarity, we can reasonably hope that we will finally attain
the fondest dream of the founders of the NAACP -- a society blind
to bigotry, a society open to all.\

The fight against discrimination has been the historic
mission of the civil rights movement -- a mission that has seen
great success, but a mission that has yet to be completely
fulfilled. We know that prejudice and racial tensions still
exist in America. That is why I support, and intend to sign into
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And that is why I worked with the Congress in a bipartisan
effort to reauthorize the Commission on Civil Rights.\ I will
appoint to that Commission men and women who will fight against
discrimination, and fight for the civil rights of all
Americans.\

But there are other missions for the civil rights movement
in the 1990s. From now on, the protection of civil rights must
also mean the removal of all barriers to opportunity. Of course,
we can be thankful that many black Americans enjoyed enormous
employment and income gains during the 1980s. But there are

forms of poverty that cannot be measured or solved by dollars alone.

First and foremost -- there is a poverty of the spirit. Government can't teach young men and women to have faith in themselves if their mothers and fathers have lost all faith. Government can't teach that achievement is to be found in quiet moments and subtle rewards, instead of the murderous materialism of easy drug money. But, in a new solidarity, we can instill these values. We can cultivate character -- as leaders, as parents, as teachers, as communities working with our churches.

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To provide opportunity to our young people, we need new and innovative economic tools. The training wage, just passed by

Congress, is one such tool. But we need more, much more, from merit pay, to magnet schools, to more effective programs to fight illiteracy.

I wish I could go on, because what is in my heart is greater than my ability to voice it tonight. But it all comes down this: To take the lead, young Americans must be healthy, in body and mind. They must be ready, in knowledge and purpose. They must be free of soul-sapping poverty. And they must be free from discrimination.

I spoke earlier of the Biblical proverb that compared righteousness to a mighty stream. This same vision can be found in a poem by Langston Hughes, who compared the odyssey of black men and women to the crossing of many rivers. And with each crossing, their souls have grown deep -- deep, like the rivers.

This odyssey shaped the soul of a people, and because of your leadership, it also shaped the soul of our nation. God bless you, God bless America -- and Merry Christmas to you all.

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