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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

September 4, 1996

ADDRESS TO THE MEETING OF THE NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION USA

Date: Friday, September 6, 1996
Time: 9:30 am
Location: Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, Florida
From: Alexis Herman
Ben Johnson

I. PURPOSE

To request support for your initiatives and to thank Dr. Henry Lyons and his organization for their past support.

II. BACKGROUND

The National Baptist Convention, USA, is the largest body of African American Baptists in the world. Founded in 1880, it has now grown to 33,000 churches and has a membership numbering over 8.2 million people. The organization promotes home and foreign missions, supports Christian Education and operates a number of black colleges and seminaries.

The organization is currently headed by Dr. Henry Lyons, a Pastor from St. Petersburg, Florida. Dr. Lyons is a Republican, but has been very supportive of you and the Vice President. At your request, he flew with you to Israel for Prime Minister Rabin's funeral last November. Additionally, he attended the Ecumenical Breakfast on church burnings in June. Dr. Lyons is also a strong supporter of Jesse Jackson. In 1988, he directed Jackson's presidential campaign in Florida. Rev. Jackson and Andrew Young addressed the convention on Wednesday.

You enjoy almost unanimous support from the group for positions you have taken on church burnings, education, the minimum wage, crime, and health care reform. The notable exception is the differences and concerns being expressed over the new welfare reform law. Privately, Dr. Lyons supports your position on welfare reform, but feels the flaws in the bill need to be addressed in the next congress to strengthen the protection for children.

Dr. Lyons has been active with the leadership of other denominations in a nationwide voter registration drive. He and other African American church leaders will meet in Washington on September 26th to speak jointly by satellite to over 3,000 churches in an effort to rally their members to the polls.

III. PARTICIPANTS

16,000 religious and lay leaders

IV. PRESS

Open Press

V. SEQUENCE

- o Upon arrival you will be greeted by Dr. Henry Lyons and officers. (see attached)
- o Dr. Lyons will accompany you to his hold for a 15 minute meeting.
- o Upon conclusion of meeting, you and Dr, Lyons proceed to stage area to be announced on stage.
- o Rosco Cooper, General Secretary of the denomination is presiding.
- o Prayer
- o Musical Praise by church Choir
- o Solo by Patricia Cooper.
- o General Secretary Rosco Cooper introduces Dr. Lyons.
- o Dr. Lyons makes brief remarks and introduces you.
- o You give remarks and depart.

VI. REMARKS

Prepared by speechwriters in conjunction with OPL

E X E C U T I V E O F F I C E O F T H E P R E S I D E N T

16-Aug-1996 10:53am

TO: James T. Edmonds

FROM: Lisa Jordan Tamagni
 Office of Communications

SUBJECT: Church

The plaques will read:

"Dedicated to the congregation of the (New Shiloh United Methodist Church) (Salem Baptist Church). We must come together as one America to rebuild our churches, restore hope, and show the forces of hatred that they cannot win."

Order of speaking is:

Prayer (probably by Rev. Bill Vaughn from New Shiloh church)
Rep. Tanner
Mrs. Gore
Mrs. Clinton
VPOTUS
Rev. Dan Donaldson
POTUS

As of right now, the idea is that the President will begin by presenting the plaque. I'll confirm this as I learn more.

Please bear in mind that they will be wearing work clothes and going inside to actually hang dry wall for an hour or so. Some people think that a single hour's work is stagey and not very significant. Personally I am of the "every little bit counts" school of thought on this one. If every person in America did one thing -- no matter how small - to try and connect with others, to overcome racial divisions -- we'd be living in a better world, no?

Anyway, I'll give you more as more becomes available.

Welfare bill signing - Roosevelt room

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REBUILDING OF SALEM BAPTIST CHURCH
FRUITLAND, TENNESSEE
AUGUST 19, 1996

Acknowledgments: Rev. Daniel Donaldson, for introduction...

Before I make my remarks I would like to present Rev. Donaldson and Rev. Bill Vaughan, the minister of New Shiloh United Methodist Church, with a plaque for your rebuilt churches that reads as follows: "We must come together as one America to rebuild our churches, restore hope, and show the forces of hatred they cannot win."

This is the best birthday gift I could have imagined. As your President, and as a fellow citizen of this great country, I am proud to stand with family and friends to help put the finishing touches on the resurrection of Salem Baptist Church. I just came from a tour of the New Shiloh Methodist Church which is also rebuilding in the aftermath of an arson fire. Both of the congregations of these churches are being assisted in their rebuilding efforts by a remarkable outpouring of support from people of all faiths and races within this community and across the nation. What you are doing together in rebuilding these churches, shows what we can achieve when we seize opportunity...take responsibility...and come together as a community to do what is right and good. It also shows us the power of faith and love. I am reminded of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, who once said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence...in a descending spiral of destruction."

Your light and your love have raised the toppled walls of this church, and fortified the spirit of America. By your working together, you are not only rebuilding churches, you are mending divisions and upholding the founding principles of our democracy -- equality and religious freedom for all. You are showing us the way we must meet every challenge of the new century -- pulling together as an American community, strengthened by our diversity, united by our values.

Government must do its part. And I am pleased that last week, we obtained guilty pleas from two former Ku Klux Klan members in connection with the burning of churches in South Carolina. We will spare no effort to catch and prosecute all those who are responsible for these crimes. But we know that in the end our success depends on people like you banding together to face down evil and build up hope.

Last week, we also indicted two other Klansmen as co-conspirators in that and other attacks

As we gather here today, let us be mindful of our many blessings as Americans. We are the freest, most prosperous country on earth. And we are standing on the brink of a new century that promises to open the door to the American Dream to even more of our citizens. But Americans have always heeded the scripture which teaches us that, "Much is required from those to whom much is given..." Thank you for showing us, once again, the meaning of those words. And thank you for allowing us to join you in living them here today. Thank you. Now, let's go to work.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(New Orleans, Louisiana)

For Immediate Release

September 9, 1994

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN SPEECH TO NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION

Ernest N. Morial Convention Center
New Orleans, Louisiana

11:10 A.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: If I could sing like that, I would have never gotten into politics. (Laughter and applause.) Reverend Jemison; your President-Elect, Dr. Lyons -- (applause) -- to Dr. Richardson -- (applause), Reverend James, Dr. Mary Ross.

To all the distinguished Louisianans here present, including Reverend Governor Edwards; I thought he did very well today. (Applause.) Senator Breaux and Congressman Jefferson and Mayor Morial and all your state officials and legislators. Reverend Jackson. (Applause.) To all the members of my staff and Cabinet who are here.

Where are the people here with the administration? They're all here somewhere. (Applause.)

I want to say many things, but first we have a duty, I think, as Americans to take a moment of silence now for the 131 people who were killed in that awful air crash in Pittsburgh. Hillary and I send our deepest sympathies and our prayers to the friends and the loved ones of the crash victims. And I know that all of you and all Americans also send your prayers to the grieving.

Our Secretary of Transportation, Secretary Pena is there in Pittsburgh. I have talked with the Mayor and the Governor this morning and with Senator Wofford. All Americans should know that we will do whatever we can to assure their safety in travel. But let us today, in the painful recognition of our fallibility as human beings, mourn with a moment of silence those who lost their lives. Amen.

Well, Dr. Jemison, I thank you for that warm introduction. I have known you as a friend for a long time. When we were standing outside, about to come up, he was reviewing his more than 50 years in the leadership of this great church. That's a long time, worthy of honor, and I give it. (Applause.)

Two years ago I had a great moment with all of you in Atlanta when I was running for

President. (Applause.) And last year, I was invited to appear and I couldn't; I had to give my regrets. I sort of felt like the boy who skipped Sunday school. (Laughter.) I promised Dr. Jemison I'd be here this year no matter what, so I showed up, and I hope you have forgiven me because I feel at home. (Applause.)

Two years ago I came to you, and you responded. I asked you to work with me to give us at least a chance to change the direction our country was headed in. We had too much debt and too few jobs. We seemed to be going in the wrong direction where ordinary Americans were ignored, and people with money and organized power were heeded, but somehow the thing was not working.

As the Vice President used to say, what ought to be up was down, and what ought to be down was up. And that was a problem. I wanted a chance to try to move this country forward again and to try to pull our country together again.

Today, having served now for not quite two years, I guess what I want to say to you is I think we're doing a pretty good job of moving forward, but not nearly a good enough job of coming together. (Applause.)

I have here in the front some of my friends and former employers from the State of Arkansas -- would you all stand up? (Applause.) Thank you and bless you for being here.

I lived in a little state to the north of here for a while, you know. And I learned that it was not healthy to say one thing to one group and one to another. You had to say the same thing to everybody and mean it every day.

I never will forget when I was running for president, one of the most memorable days I had was speaking on one day of the weekend in Macomb County, Michigan, the prototypical, what they used to call "Reagan Democrat county," where there was a lot of what they used to call "white flight." And then the next day I went to a black church in Detroit where half the people were from Arkansas. And I gave the same speech I had given the day before, and people thought that was strange. And I said, is it so strange that we should say the same thing to all Americans and try to come together?

I want to talk to you today about that. I still believe what I believed two years ago -- that the government has a role to play in the future of this country and the future of our families and our hopes and our dreams, not as savior, but not on the sidelines -- just as a partner in progress. I still believe that, together, we can meet every challenge, that we can fulfill the hopes of our children. I still believe there are a lot of things we have to do that go way beyond the reach of government into the depths of the human spirit.

Today I say to you again, I think we're making a lot of progress, and I feel good about that. But I don't think we're doing as well as we should in coming together. (Applause.) And I don't feel good about that, and I want to examine that and what I could do better and what you can do better.

I noticed a columnist wrote the other day in the newspaper, he said, there's lots of things going right in this country. The economy is booming, we've got over 4 million new jobs, the stock market is up, the deficit is down, things look good in the future. Our country was just rated the most productive country in the entire world for the first time in nearly 10 years; we've got over 4 million new jobs -- as I said, the unemployment rate is down. A lot of things are going well. (Applause.)

We see around the world real progress -- peace in the Middle East, in the Holy Land -- something that should gladden the heart of every Christian. We see peace prospects and moving forward in Northern Ireland -- something many of us thought we would never see. We see the majesty of peace and democracy and freedom unfolding in South Africa. And I want to thank Reverend Jackson for his leadership of our election team over there in South Africa, doing that process. (Applause.)

And so the writer said -- he was writing about me -- he said, if things are going so well, why are people still mad at the President? Well, what he might have said is, you remember that old saying, "If I'm so rich, why I am not happy?" (Laughter.)

Well, there are a lot of reasons for that. But let me offer one. I just got back from vacation and when I was on vacation I went to church and I heard a minister I'd never seen before from a little town in New Jersey, called Red Bank. (Applause.) You know where Red Bank, New Jersey is? (Applause.)

The first thing he did was give us dispensation for being on vacation, which I felt good about. He said, life is not all work, it is also play and rest and worship. But he went on to say it's not only important to do all those things, but to get them right. And if you don't have faith, you won't have the rhythm right. You will find yourselves working at play and playing at worship and you'll have it all messed up. (Applause.)

Well, that's kind of what's going on in our country today. We still haven't quite got the rhythm right. So that even though we are facing a lot of our most profound problems, and even though we are clearly making progress in areas too long ignored, which many of you have mentioned here, we have to say: what is the real deal here? Why aren't we happier about it?

There are many reasons, but let me offer three. One is, whenever periods of profound change occur in the lives of individuals or nations, they are unsettling. Isn't that right? Can't you think of times in your own life when you were making a change, and every day you woke up and it was like there was this scale inside your body, and on one side of the scale was hope and on the other side of the scale was fear, and it seemed like every day, the scales would be in a little bit different balance until you finally got through this change you were going through.

We can all identify with that. That's what's going on in this country today. It's happened before. At the end of the First World War, we won this great battle and we didn't know what to do with ourselves, and so we just came home and folded up our tents. We thought we could withdraw from the world. And what happened? That's when the Ku Klux Klan first started rising up. At the end of the First World War, when we lost our concentration and we lost our way and we didn't know who the enemy was anymore. It's also when we had the first Red Scare, when everybody began to be accused of being a communist if they had unconventional opinions.

Then, at the end of the Second World War, the same sort of thing happened, except we knew better than to withdraw from the world. Harry Truman said, no, no, we're going to rebuild the country here at home for the soldiers and their families, and we're going to rebuild our enemies, Germany and Japan; and our allies in Europe.

And we know who the enemy is, it's the Soviet Union and communism, so we're going to have a great wall against communism, and we're going to fight this Cold War.

But, still, there was uncertainty. There was a new Red Scare, which came to its height under Senator McCarthy. And Harry Truman had a hard time getting people to change. You know, he was at 80 percent approval in the polls after he dropped the bomb which ended the war, but by the time he sent the second health reform legislation to Congress -- that's how long we've been trying to fix the health care system -- by the time Harry Truman did it the second time, he was down to 36 percent in the polls. Now, everybody talks about him like he ought to be on Mount Rushmore. (Laughter.) But I was for a family who supported him when he was living, and I know what happened.

Change is difficult. And when you're going through a period of change, we are vulnerable to getting out of our rhythm. The second problem is, we live in a time which almost seems to glorify the negative, the cynical, don't we? (Applause.) It's the old story -- there's a lot more people prone to see the glass of water is half empty than half full than there used to be, and to tell all the rest of us we're just fools if we see it half full; it's really half empty.

And then, frankly, let's face it: We still have some problems that are real deep in this country, that all the progress we're making does not necessarily touch. We have 4.1 million new jobs, the work force is expanding more rapidly than it did 10 years ago, the last time we had any kind of economic recovery, but lots of folks still out of work. A lot of folks live in places where they don't believe new jobs are coming. A lot of people are working harder; they have their job, but they don't think they'll ever get a raise.

Five million -- five million people live in working families who had health insurance five years ago, who do not have it today. (Applause.) So we have some real problems. Governor Edwards alluded to the most heart-breaking of all -- those that involve the children of this country, their sins and their abuses, and their loss of their childhood and their innocence, and our loss of their future. The 11-year-old boy in Chicago, Robert Sandifer, who sprayed gunfire at a group of kids and killed a 14-year-old girl and then killed himself; his grandmother saying, I could not reach you.

And then in New Jersey, the 13-year-old who stole a gun to end a petty argument and the life of his 11-year-old friend. In Detroit, Rosa Parks was attacked by a crack addict for \$53. In my hometown, an 82-year-old woman, attacked by two teenagers, brutalized and sexually molested -- 82 years old. These aren't Baptist problems or Catholic problems or Jewish problems. Contrary to what some people say, they're not black or white problems. No, the 11-year-old in Chicago was black, but the teenager in New Jersey who killed, and the victim were both white.

Rosa Parks is a hero to African Americans and a hero to people who have been oppressed throughout the world, but the 82-year-old woman in my hometown was a white lady, and so were the people who attacked her.

These problems and the problems behind them that brought the children to the miserable point in life where they did what they did. These are the things that are gnawing at our spirit that we have to address so we can get the rhythm right, we can go on and face the challenges of this time, all the changes. And we can make change our friend if we know that we are grounded. That is what your faith is about. But it is also now what our citizenship must be more about.

I note that there are many voices from all sectors preaching to us today about the decline in our values. In a way I welcome them all. And whether they are traditionally our allies or our adversaries, we should listen for the truth of their words; and if they are true, we should heed them.

(Applause.)

On the other hand, I would issue two cautionary notes: We should not let the voices of despair make our insecurities even deeper. That is wrong. (Applause.) That is wrong. There have always been problems in every society and there will be until the end of time. That is the lesson of the Scripture. So for all the people who try to use the difficulties of the moment to dampen the energies of Americans, to defeat our spirits -- I say, that is wrong. The Scripture says, let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in -- we shall reap if we do not lose heart. (Applause.)

The darkness of every storm provides a new chance for renewal -- every storm. And so does this one. So to all those who preach that we need to return to the values of our faith, I say, we do. But the real issue is, what are we going to do about it? Not what are we going to say about it, but what are we going to do about it? The saying is important, for we, in words, come to visualize the future. And we need the vision so that we do not perish. But we must act on the vision. And that's where all the problems come.

You know the old story about the preacher who was preaching his best on Sunday morning and thought he had finally reached everybody in the service? And he said, I want everybody who wants to go to heaven to stand up right now, and everybody in the whole church stood up except Sister Jones who had not missed a day of church in 40 years. And he was crestfallen. It broke all his concentration. He stopped the sermon.

He said, "Sister Jones, you have not missed a sermon in 40 years. Do you mean to tell me you do not want to go to heaven when you die?" And she popped right up and she said, "Oh, I'm sorry, preacher, I thought you were trying to get up a load to go right now." (Laughter.)

Now that's a big problem, isn't it? We all want to do it somewhere down the road, but if we have to do something right now, well that's something we better think about. (Laughter.) So the challenge is, what are we going to do right now? Not later, but now. Right now. (Applause.)

I say this to the people who always say the glass is half empty, always being pessimistic, always being negative. They have it easy. That lets you out of any responsibility at all. You adopt a pessimistic, negative attitude. You be cynical. It just relieves you of any responsibility for doing because then doing doesn't matter. Right? (Applause.)

All I can tell you is, there would be no free American sitting in this place today if the pessimists and the cynics and the negative people had ruled this country all along the way. (Applause.)

Our obligation and our power flows out of two simple lessons I was taught about our whole civilization many years ago in college. One is that the future can be better than the present -- not perfect, but better. And the second is that each of us has a personal, moral responsibility to make it so. That is the simple lesson -- (applause) -- that will get our rhythm back, that will put us back in harmony, that will enable us to enjoy our progress and still keep working on the deep and profound things that are challenging us and dealing with the unsettling impact of this changing time.

My vision is that we will go into the 21st century as a country more free, more prosperous, more united -- and more open to making change our friend than we have ever been.

Yes, we are beginning to see results. Yes, the economy is doing better. Yes, we are seeing more fairness as well as more progress. We did raise taxes on the wealthiest one and a half percent of Americans to bring the deficit down, but we also gave tax cuts to 15 million working families just above the poverty line to say, you got off welfare, you're working, we're going to reward you being a parent and a worker. We did that. We are making progress. (Applause.)

We got 180,000 more kids in Head Start. We're going to immunize a couple of million more children so that by 1996 all the kids two years of age and less like this little kid here, will have their shots. We're doing more to provide job training for people who lose their jobs, and we made 20 million Americans eligible to refinance their college loans at lower interest rates with a longer repayment terms. These things are important. They matter. (Applause.)

Work -- the dignity of work is central to our ability to build a future. The second thing we have to do is not just talk about how we need stronger families, but think about what I can do and you can do to make them stronger. (Applause.)

We didn't cut taxes for those 15 million working families for just political reasons. We did it because people have got to be able to succeed today as workers and as parents. And if we want people to work and parents, we have to reward work. That's why the Family and Medical Leave Act was so important. How can you say you want people to be good family members and then fire them if they have to take a little time off to have a baby or take care of sick parent? (Applause.)

There's a bill in the Congress I really believe in, sponsored by Senator Metzenbaum, to make adoptions easier and to make it possible for people to adopt children across racial lines if nobody else is there wanting to adopt the children. (Applause.) Don't leave kids in the limbo of foster care for years and years and years. Give them a chance to do it.

The third thing we have to do is to make our communities stronger. We have to act as if we believe what we talk about all the time, that we're all in this together. The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development is here today. Henry Cisneros has done more to come up with a program to end homelessness than anybody in the last 10 years. We've been talking about it. He's trying to do something about it. It makes us stronger as a community.

The welfare reform bill is about community --empowering everybody to participate. The enterprise zones are about giving poor communities the incentive to draw capital to put people to work. These things will make our communities stronger.

And the crime bill was about communities. Because if your streets aren't safe, if your schools aren't safe, if people don't feel secure, it's hard to call them to higher citizenship. What did Edwin Everett say -- if you've got the right to vote but you're scared to go to the polling place, it's hard to talk about citizenship. That's why it was important.

We're also trying to change the way government works, reforming the way we finance our campaigns and try to at least tell you what the lobbyists are doing in Washington with new disclosure requirements, a bill that would make Congress live under all the laws it imposes on you. That's not a bad idea, I think. (Applause.) These things are important.

We're trying to prove something that I always believe -- that you can have diversity and excellence at the same time. Look at our Cabinet: Five African Americans, more than twice as many

as ever served. (Applause.) Fifteen percent of all appointments, more than twice as many appointments to the federal courts as the last three presidents combined are African Americans. (Applause.)

But what really ought to make you clap is that these judges have the highest percentage of well-qualified ratings by the American Bar Association since they have been giving out the ratings. They're not just from different racial groups and men and women; they're well qualified. (Applause.)

So there are things that government can do. This crime bill I want to talk about because it runs into the question of harmony. There are a lot of things the government can't do. There are things the government can do, and it's still not enough. I know that crime bill wasn't perfect. And I know it imposed great, great challenges for the African American members of Congress and for many people and religious faiths because it contains capital punish provisions. And many people oppose capital punishment for everyone, and many others say that African Americans are more likely to get the penalty, because poor folks are more likely than non-poor folks to be convicted and sentenced to death.

I know that there are those who say that when we build more prisons and make sentences for repeat offenders longer and tougher, that will have a disproportionate impact on the African American community. But to that, I say this: Every time you look at the evening news, there's another funeral. And there's a disproportionate number of black kids lying in those pine boxes, too. (Applause.) And that's wrong. That's what's really wrong. And we have got to find a way, imperfect though it is, to get all the Americans together, with all their different perspectives, and move forward on this issue because if people are not safe, we're in trouble. And if we put the 100,000 police on the street and do it right, they'll prevent crime, not just catch criminals. (Applause.)

If we get these assault weapons off the street --and it's now illegal for kids to own handguns -- if we start enforcing that law, and if we do something with that prevention money, if we give these kids something to say yes to, if we do something with the job money, with the job training money, with the drug treatment money, with the recreation money, if we give people at that time of their lives when they've got all this energy some constructive outlet for it, it will make a difference. (Applause.)

But if you really want it, to lower the crime rate, reduce violence, and save more kids' lives, all the work is still to be done. All the work is still to be done. And it's like asking Sister Jones to go to heaven -- we've got to do this right now. We have to -- if we believe there is a crisis of the spirit, a crisis of values in this country, we have to do something about it right now. (Applause.) And we've got to do it where we live.

I would like to suggest just four simple things that go beyond government programs. And you know them all, and many of you are doing them all. But every American can make a contribution. We are raising a whole generation of kids who aren't sure they're the most important person in the world to anybody. (Applause.)

Now, consider this: Today, about 40 percent of all children are born in the homes where there was never a marriage. Twenty-seven percent of all pregnancies end in abortion. I don't care what your position is, whether you're pro-choice or anti; that's too many. That's not about serious health problems or emotional problems.

So when the miracle of conception occurs, less than half of those miracles wind up being babies born into homes where there's a mother and a father and where the kid's got a better-than-even chance of having the life that most of us have, or we wouldn't be here in our neckties and nice dresses today. Now, that's just a fact.

Dr. King once said, "Whom we wish to change, we must first love." (Applause.) And I know not everybody is going to be in a stable, traditional family like you see in one of those 1950 sitcoms, but we'd be better off if more people were. I was raised by a wonderful mother who worked, who cared for me, who was a widow when I was born, went through a difficult marriage. And at least every now and then I find somebody who thinks I turned out all right. (Applause.)

So it can happen, but we have to say, who is going to care for these children?

In every single study that's ever been done of young people who did well against all the odds with terrible circumstances and all the things that could have gone wrong, it is always, always, always the case that they had a relationship with somebody who cared about them. Somebody. (Applause.)

I don't think we ought to give up on families. Yesterday I met with a number of ministers and one friend of mine who pastors a massive church in the Washington area, an African American church, has made the mission of his church the rebuilding of the family. Over 40 percent of the members are male, and he left our breakfast to go back to meet with 150 couples who had split up or never married. Some of them were divorced. Sometimes people had flown in from thousands of miles away. He was trying to get them back together for the children's sake and because it was the right thing to do. We need to do more of that. (Applause.)

But he's not just talking about it, he's doing something. If that's not an option, then somebody's got to love these children. When I was in Des Moines, Iowa, in the campaign, I saw a white lady holding an African American baby that had AIDS. She was from Iowa. The kid was from Miami. She had been abandoned by her husband. She had two children of her own. She was living in an apartment house, working at a meager job. She thought it was God's will that she take a child who was sick and abandoned. And she did it. If she could do it, a lot of the rest of us should as well. (Applause.)

Someone has got to care for these children. I've heard Reverend Jackson talk about this. I think about it all the time as my daughter grows up. We have to find in families where the mother is doing all the work and there needs to be somebody outside the family, a male figure, who can at least relate to children, who can say things like, what are you reading and how are you doing in class. This is right and this is wrong. I'd like to see your report card. What do you want to do five years from now? (Applause.)

You know, how many children do we know -- how many children, how many of these kids that are shooting one another never think about five years from now? The future to them is five minutes from now. Why is that? Because no one is asking them about it. Where there is no vision, people perish. They

cannot visualize five years from now. (Applause.) So that's the first thing.

The second thing we've got to do is help these kids at least grow up without fear -- which means we've got to keep them from getting shot and stop them from shooting. And laws can help, and policemen can help, but every two hours in this county another kid under the age of 19 dies from gunfire. A-nine-year old boy wrote me from this city right here in New Orleans and said, please do something about this. I'm afraid I could get killed. And on Mother's Day, a month after he wrote me, he got killed just walking home from school.

Now, there are things people can do in their neighborhoods to stop this. We are giving you more tools in terms of the laws and the police, but we've got to have help. Schools can be made safer. Walking routes can be made safer. Use the Crime Bill funds. The churches are eligible to participate -- and give kids something to do after school to get them off the street where they can be in recreation. (Applause.) I got so tired when we were debating that Crime Bill hearing people badmouth Midnight Basketball. I'd a lot rather have somebody shooting hoops than shooting bullets. (Applause.) But you have to make that work.

The third thing I would say is, we have to be more honest. Sometimes it is almost embarrassing, I know, but we've got to be more honest with our young people in teaching them to respect themselves -- their bodies, their souls and their futures. (Applause.)

And we always talk about how irresponsible it is for young men to father these children and run off, but we've got to get more young women to make a different choice in life too. We have simply got to find a way to deal with this.

Thirty years ago one of 40 white births was out of wedlock, now it's one in five. Thirty years ago, one in five African American births was out of wedlock, now, over half. But the white out-of-wedlock birthrate is growing much faster than the African American rate. So, we are going to have equal opportunity for all before you know it. (Laughter.)

You're laughing to keep from crying, but it's not funny; is it? We're going to see a merger of this. No more race discrimination; more than half of everybody's babies will be born where there was never a marriage. That is a disaster. It is wrong, And someone has to say, again, it is simply not right. You shouldn't have a baby before you're ready, and you shouldn't have a baby when you're not married. You just have to stop it. We've got to turn it around.

Now I want to make it clear we shouldn't stigmatize these babies and when they're born we should to take care of them. We ought to love the babies. We ought to love the parents. We ought to give them the best future we can, but we have to tell people, look at the facts. Look at what happens to people. Look at their incomes, their education levels, their future. We've got to get people out of thinking that the future is five minutes away and realize it is five years or ten years or twenty years away. And you have to do that.

I'll try to do my part, but this is not a government deal. This is the way people are behaving, as if there was no respect for themselves and no future. We have to stop.

Finally, let me say, I ask you to help lead us in bringing back an ethic of service to this nation. We're going to kick off our National Service Program on Monday which will, this year, involve 20,000 young Americans in serving their community, many of them in church groups. The Congress of National Black Churches is an active participant in national service. We want kids working with churches to solve a lot of these problems and earning credit for their college education. Year after next we'll have 100,000 young people. You can put them to work. When people are serving one another, when they're acting as role models, they'll be better people themselves. And you can do that.

All these things you can do -- help our kids be safer, help make sure every child is loved by somebody and disciplined by somebody and cared for by somebody. And help our kids change this culture which is ending family life and childhood as we know it and bring us back to the spirit of service.

Finally, let me say this: I came here to say this because I don't believe in preaching at people. I believe you are the heroes of this whole thing. A lot of you have been out there like the little Dutch Boy with your thumb in the dike against all these forces for years. A lot of you have been doing these things. A lot of you have run the day care centers and run the recreation programs and run the prison ministries and counseled the young people. You have done this. But America now knows that we must all do this.

So I say, I honor you. I honor the members of your church that get up and go to work every day and follow the law and pay their taxes and do their best to raise their kids. And let us say for the record since all America is watching this, most of the members of your church do exactly that. They play by the rules, and they work hard and they do their best. (Applause.)

But let's not kid each other, folks. I'm going to go back to Washington. And I'll keep trying to create jobs. And we'll do a good job of that. And we'll open America to the world. I'll keep working for peace and freedom around the world. I'll keep working for better education and training opportunities. I'll keep trying to solve this terrible riddle of why we can't get jobs in the inner city and poor rural areas. And we'll try to find ways to do that.

But in the end, if we're going to get the rhythm right, if we're going to enjoy the progress we're making, even in an imperfect world, we have to get the bedrock right. We have to know that the spirit that we believe in is rifling through this country and is going to work.

You know, Paul -- St. Paul -- was not Timothy's father, but he was his spiritual father. And he said, when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift

of God which is in thee. I believe and you believe that every child has a gift of God within them. When the gift dies, it is our sin as well as theirs, and our loss as well as theirs.

So let us leave here resolved to stir up the gift of God that is within us and do those things that will enable us to go forward with joy and confidence to make the future what it ought to be.

Thank you and God bless you all.

END12:52 P.M. CDT

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS TO THE NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS
SEPTEMBER 2, 1996

Acknowledgments: Dr. Edward Jones; Dr. Albert Chew; Dr. Wallace Hartsfield; Dr. Stephen Thurston; Rev. Richard Jenkins.

On the right track to the 21st Century. We have had a great week. Train trip, Convention, now bus trip thru heartland. Wanted to look at eyes, faces, hearts. We're on the right track to the 21st Century!

That should be spirit of this campaign: about ideas, not insults.
Not "who's to blame," but "what is to be done."

I want to do the things I talked about Thursday: meet challenges, protect values. Opp for all, Resp from all; come together as Comm.

Record. 10 M jobs, 4.4M new homeowners; deficit cut by 60%, wages rising. Crime down, welfare down 1.8M. Raised min. wage for 10M.
African-American community: Unempl. has been in single digits for first time since 1970s; 100,000 new businesses owned by African-Americans and women; expanded Af-Am homeownership; more African-Americans in my admin. than in any other admin. (e.g., 3 Cabinet, 42 fed. judges)

NOW, must build bridge to 21st Century. Nehemiah 2:18 - "'Rise up and build,' so they strengthened their hands for the good work." (rebuilding of Jerusalem)

Build bridge to 21st Century - Education: Tax cuts for college: 13th & 14th universal as HS; \$1,500 indiv; \$10K fam. Info Superhwy. All children read by 3rd grade.

Build bridge to 21st Cent - Protect home value: If you sell home, no cap gains.

Build bridge to 21st Cent - Balance budget & protect M, M, E, E.
Opponent's plan -- do we want mountain of debt?

Build bridge to 21st Cent - **Welfare to work**: 1M new jobs by 2000.
“From those to whom much is given, much is required.”

Build bridge to 21st Cent - **Crime**: Brady Bill success; expand to domestic violence. School uniforms, curfew, truancy.

Build bridge to 21st Cent - **families**. FMLA - Expand to parent-teacher, doctor visits.

Build bridge to 21st Cent - **Environ**: 10M kids live w/in 4 miles of toxic site; clean up 2/3 toxic waste sites.

Not divided: And as we build our bridge, we must remember: we must never be divided. Church burnings -- Rev. Mackie/“church wasn’t burned, just the building.” You can burn down the church but you can’t burn out the faith. HRC borrowed African proverb when she wrote, “It takes a village.”

Will you help us build bridge to 21st Century? Forward together -- to meet challenge of times, preserve oldest values. Best days yet to come.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Charlotte, North Carolina)

For Immediate Release

July 10, 1996

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE 87TH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE NAACP

Charlotte Convention Center
Charlotte, North Carolina

12:30 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you very much. President Mfume, I hope you do get your four more years. (Laughter and applause.) And I hope I get to hang around to work with you. (Applause.)

Madam Chair, Bishop Graves, Hazel and other distinguished members -- (laughter.) Hey, she met me outside and kissed me. (Laughter.) Brother Williams, thank you for singing for us. Reverend Hooks, you're looking young and handsome, I'm glad to see. (Applause.)

Ladies and gentlemen, last year I know the First Lady came to visit with you, and she had a wonderful time. (Applause.) And she is completing a trip that she made on behalf of our country after the meeting of the G-7 industrial countries in France. She went to a lot of the nations that used to be part of the Soviet Empire that were once communist and are now free. And she's had a wonderful trip. Last night I talked to her; she was in Finland, and so far north the sun never really goes down at this time of year. So I knew she wouldn't be mad when I woke her up at two o'clock in the morning to talk. (Laughter.) And she asked me to give you her best.

I also want you to know what I did -- the last thing I did before I got on the helicopter at the White House to come here today was to meet with Mickey Kantor, our Secretary of Commerce, and Michael Brown, Ron Brown's son, and the delegation who are leaving today to finish the mission Ron Brown started in Bosnia and Croatia. (Applause.)

And I was especially proud that almost all the companies who lost executives on that terrible day sent replacements to go on this mission to finish the work of advancing the cause of peace. (Applause.) And I want to thank you, Mr. President, and all of you, for the tribute

that you gave to Secretary Brown yesterday.

I am honored to be here today because of what the NAACP has meant to America. As a young boy growing up in the segregated South, it was the NAACP that gave all of us hope that there could be a better day. (Applause.) I told Myrlie -- I don't think she quite believed it -- that in early 1974, when I started my political career, I actually purchased a membership at the Malaloo (phonetic) AME Church in Fort Smith, Arkansas. I came to a meeting one Sunday afternoon and bought myself a membership card. (Applause.) I hate to say that because I'll get a letter from Kweisi next week pointing out that I have not kept up my renewals over the last 20 years. (Laughter and applause.)

What a difference a year makes. Last year you announced your new leadership, a new sense of partnership, a new spirit of commitment to go into the 21st century. You elected Myrlie Evers as your chairman -- (applause) -- you elected this great former member of Congress -- that's right, give her a hand. (Applause.) You elected this great member of Congress as your new president and CEO, Kweisi Mfume. (Applause.) As you might imagine, given the way things are around here in Washington, I miss him more than ever. I was riding in with Congressman Mel Watt, from Charlotte today, from the airport and we were talking about -- where's Mel? He's here somewhere I think, Congressman Watt. (Applause.) And we were talking about what a great voice Kweisi was in the Congress. But I think we gained a greater leader in the struggle for equality and progress in America when he changed jobs. (Applause.)

I want to thank you for making your voice heard again, for economic justice, for the empowerment of all voters, for educational excellence for our children. And I want to thank you especially for your effort to bring young people back into this organization and into the spirit of citizenship in America. (Applause.) We need these young people -- after all, they have more tomorrows than yesterdays. (Laughter.) There are some days when I resent that, but it's true. (Laughter.)

And we can't remake our yesterdays, we can only make tomorrows. And we can't afford to have young people saying, well, oh, this doesn't matter. It doesn't matter whether I am involved in the NAACP. It doesn't matter whether I vote. It doesn't matter whether I'm in a community group to try to help save my peers from drugs and gangs and give them a bright future and a better life. It does matter. It matters. (Applause.)

And because of the dedication of Mr. Mfume to the young people of his congressional district and to the young men in his own family, he brought that conviction that he could inspire young people to his work here. And in a way, it may be the lasting legacy of this period of reform of the NAACP that you brought the young blood of America back into this organization, fighting for the future and working together. (Applause.) And I hope he will stay with us. I'm glad that us gray-haired people still have a role in it, however. (Laughter.)

My fellow Americans, our nation, as you all know, is at a crossroads. We are only four

years away now from a new century in a new millennium. Anytime you change the calendar in that way, people start to think in bigger ways. They start to imagine the great significance of the moment. But it happens to be true now, for we are undergoing a sweeping change in the way we work, the way we live, the way we relate to the rest of the world.

We are leaving the Cold War that dominated most of our lives behind and moving into a new global village, if I can use my wife's term, with lots of opportunity and a lot of troubles -- some of them new and some of them very old. We are moving away from the Industrial Age into a new era dominated by information and technology, where more people will have more opportunities ever before, but unless they have the capacity to seize those opportunities, they'll be left behind faster than ever before. (Applause.)

So, when I sought this office, I did so because I wanted to get our country ready for the 21st century, because I thought there were three simple things that we had to do. One is to make sure we enter the next century with the American Dream alive for everybody who is willing to work for it, without regard to their race, their gender, their region or where they start out in life -- high, low or somewhere in the middle.

Secondly, I thought we had to find a way to resist these destructive winds that are blowing in so many other countries to divide people by race and religion and ethnicity and, instead, come together in a greater sense of community -- to bridge our divisions, respect our diversity, extol our shared values and make America stronger because of our diversity, not weaker because of it.

And the third thing I wanted to do is to make sure that in this new world our country continues to be the world's strongest force for peace and freedom and prosperity. It matters in Haiti. It matters in South Africa. It matters in Northern Ireland. It matters in the Middle East. It matters in all these countries, but it matters to us here at home, when we can work with the Russians to reduce our nuclear arsenals; when we can work with other countries to stop the proliferation of dangerous weapons; when we can cooperate with other countries to prevent terrorist incidents before they occur -- it matters that America is a force for peace and freedom and prosperity. It matters to every single one of you.

My strategy to achieve that vision was remarkably simple. I thought we had to reassert the basic bargain in American citizenship -- more opportunity for everyone, and responsibility from all. And the understanding that that responsibility includes our common responsibility not just to make the most of our own lives and our family's lives, but to be good citizens for our communities and for our country.

At this time of decision, that's what I hope the discussion will be about in this election year. We've come a long way in the last four years, but we've got a long way to go. (Applause.) When I -- four years ago, when I became President, the economy was stagnant, we had the slowest job growth since the Great Depression, the deficit was spiraling, we had quadrupled our national debt in only 12 years from what we'd done in the previous 200.

We put in place an economic plan designed to cut the deficit, expand trade for American products on free and fair terms, and invest more in the people of this country, wherever they lived and wherever they were starting out in life. And four years later, it's made a difference.

I said four years ago that if the Congress would adopt my plan I thought it would cut the deficit in half and produce 8 million jobs. Well, in three and a half years, we know it's cut the deficit by more than half and produced over 10 million jobs. That is a good beginning for the American people. (Applause.)

For much of the last four years the African American unemployment rate has been in single digits for the first time in 20 years. (Applause.) There are 100,000 new African American-owned businesses. After falling by \$2,000 in the previous four years, median income for African American families has increased by \$2,400, or 11 percent, in just the first two years of this administration. Average wages are going up now for the first time in a decade. Home ownership is the highest in 15 years -- there are 3.7 million new American home owners. The growth of home ownership among African Americans is higher than the national average. And one reason is we have a Secretary of Housing and Urban Development in Henry Cisneros that has worked to cut the closing costs on those homes by \$1,000 for first-time home buyers. (Applause.)

So we're moving in the right direction. But we have to keep working until all of our people can reap the rewards of this time for change, including those that have not been reached by the recovery, those that have been downsized in competition, those that are stuck in place because they don't have the education and the skills to move up. So we have to keep working on balancing this budget because that keeps the interest rates down, the investments coming, and takes the burden off these young people you're trying to get interested in their own future.

But we have to do it in a way that recognizes our obligations to each other, that keeps the community together. Yes, reform Medicare, but don't create a two-class system and make the oldest, the poorest and the sickest seniors more vulnerable. (Applause.) Yes, slow the inflation rate in Medicaid, but don't give up the guarantee that we have a national responsibility to take care of poor pregnant women, poor infant children, people with disabilities in families all over this country, and elderly people who have to go into nursing homes. I think that's our common responsibility. We don't have to give that up. (Applause.)

Neither should we reduce our commitment to excellence in education and to the environment in the name of balancing the budget, because that's not necessary to be done. We have to go on with the cause of health care reform. There's still too many people in this country that don't have health insurance or that lose it. That's what the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill is all about. It simply says you don't lose your health insurance if you lose your job, you're moving from job to job, or if someone in your family has been sick. A simple little guarantee that could immediately benefit over 8 million Americans who are working in this country trying to support

their kids and hold their families together. And I hope the Congress will pass it without delay. (Applause.)

I was very happy that yesterday the Senate voted to pass a 90-cent increase in the minimum wage, something we need very much. (Applause.) Ten million of our hardest-pressed workers will get a raise. And I urge Congress to go on and pass it now. It's passed the House and passed the Senate. Let's go on and pass it just as soon as possible. Get it on up here so I can sign that bill and we can give people a raise. (Applause.)

In addition to the minimum wage, there's some other provisions in that bill that I'm very proud of that have, to be fair, bipartisan support. One is -- and for all of you in small businesses, it will matter a lot -- we're going to increase the expensing provision of small businesses, their write-off capacity from \$17,500 to \$25,000 a year. That's important for a lot of you here in this room. (Applause.) It was only \$10,000 when I took office, and the small business community said it ought to be \$25,000. If that bill gets to my desk, it will be \$25,000. (Applause.)

The other thing that I think is very important is that this bill contains a package of pension reforms which will make it easier for people who work for small businesses and people who are self-employed, and especially for people who have to change jobs a lot -- people who are out there selling computer software or otherwise have to move from job to job -- to take out a pension, to keep it when they're unemployed and to keep it when they move from job to job without being interrupted. People ought to be able to save for their family and save for their own retirement even if they're working in little businesses, even if they're self-employed, even if they have to move across the country, even if they have to change jobs. That is in there with the minimum wage bill, too. (Applause.)

Four years ago we had a lot of rhetoric on crime, but not a lot of action, and the crime rate was at unbelievably high levels. But there was a quiet change going on in many of our communities, who recognized that we had to have more police on the street, trying to prevent crime, not just catch criminals; relating to people in the communities, working with the parents, working with the children. They recognized that in addition to tougher punishment for serious offenders, we needed more prevention programs for community activists who wanted to help save these kids.

And when I became President I asked the Congress to pass that kind of crime bill, and they did. And now we're putting 100,000 police back on the street. We're taking guns off the street with the assault weapons ban and the Brady Bill. We're increasing penalties for people who should be punished more, but also giving our young people something to say yes to.

Under the direction of General McCaffrey, who this week is chairing a conference in El Paso, Texas, on how to stop drugs at the border, we are targeting a drug strategy to help young people. We cannot let another generation of our young people fall into the trap of drugs and gangs and crime. (Applause.)

We're working with communities all over this country with innovative strategies -- not telling people what to do, but saying, if you want to do this, we'll help you. School uniform policies in places like Long Beach, California, or Las Cruces, New Mexico. We're working on enforcing the truancy laws. Kids ought to be in school, not on the street during school hours, I think. (Applause.) And helping people do that. We're working on community-based curfews. And I'm holding up to this country especially the example of New Orleans, where they had a huge drop in juvenile crime not only because they imposed a curfew system, but because when they caught a young person out after curfew, instead of just punishing the person, they took these young people to a curfew center and said, tell me about your life, what's going on in your life, what are your problems, what can we do to help? It was a positive as well as a disciplinary move. (Applause.) And the juvenile crime rate is going down dramatically.

These things are working all across America. We set up a framework in Washington, but all we're really trying to do is help people at the community level come together and take responsibility for their own kids and their own future. And we are now seeing the fourth year in a row where the crime rate is going down. And that's something to be proud of. (Applause.)

Now, having said that, you'd be cheering from the rafters but for two things. Instead of polite applause, we'd get a roaring cheer, but there's two things that keep you from giving a roaring cheer. What are they? Number one, the crime rate's still too high. So what if it's lower, it's still way too high. And that means it's important. We dare not turn back on a strategy that's working. We've got to keep strengthening our community efforts -- putting more of these people out on the street who can be community police officers.

I won't be satisfied with this crime problem until we can meet this test -- we will never purge the country completely of crime because you can't -- at least the President doesn't have the power to alter human nature. The preachers here can call on a higher power, but I can't. So we'll always have some crime. What will be the test for you -- when you know that the crime rate is at a manageable, acceptable level in a civilized country? When you go home at night after a long day at work and you flip on the evening news, and the lead story is not a crime story, or if it is, you're surprised instead of deadened by it. You're really surprised. Then you will know that we got the crime rate going in the right direction for good. (Applause.)

The other thing that bothers people is that even though the crime rate's going down in the country as a whole, the rate of crime and violence by people under 18 is going up. We've still got too many innocent kids being killed in crossfires by drive-by shootings. We still have too many kids that are out there raising themselves in the streets, so they wind up in gangs, because everybody wants to be part of something. Most people can't just live wandering around as hermits all alone. So if you put people out there on the street and they have to raise themselves, they wind up in gangs because people don't want to be alone. There's not another compelling alternative. We have to fill that gap. And we have to do the things that are responsible, those of us who are responsible for the future. We cannot lose another generation

to gangs and guns and drugs. We cannot waiver on it. (Applause.)

We cannot show weakness, and we dare not cater to special interest groups on this. We are determined to stand by the ban on 19 deadly assault weapons. It was the right thing to do. (Applause.) We are determined to stand by the Brady Bill's requirement of waiting periods.

Let me just tell you, I know when we passed the Brady Bill and when we passed the assault weapons ban in 1994 --and Mr. Mfume will tell you this -- we lost some members of Congress who actually lost their seats in Congress because they voted for these bills. People went into their districts, called voters on the telephone, sent them letters, ran ads saying these people are trying to take your guns away from you; they're trying to end your ability to go out in the country and hunt. That's what they said. And, you know, most people who work hard don't have time to keep up with what's going on every day. A lot of people didn't know, and they went right in and dutifully voted against these members of Congress. And some of them gave up their seats.

But you know what? It's been two years now -- two deer seasons -- (laughter) -- two ducks seasons, two turkey seasons, two quail seasons, two squirrel seasons -- (laughter) -- and everybody in this whole country that likes to do that is still shooting at those animals with the same gun they had before we passed the Brady Bill and the assault weapons ban. (Applause.) Every single soul. So they didn't tell the truth.

But I'll tell you who doesn't have guns. Because of that Brady Bill, 60,000 felons, fugitives and stalkers have not been able to get handguns and pull the trigger on innocent American citizens. We were right and they were wrong about that, and we've got to stand tough on it. (Applause.)

Now, this year, we've gone through a great debate about whether or not to repeal the assault weapons ban. I couldn't believe it. Just four months ago the House of Representatives actually voted to repeal the assault weapons ban. They want to take Uzis out there and shoot at the deer. (Laughter.) Wild turkey fly fast; you need lots of bullets -- (laughter.) I'm kind of laughing to keep from crying about this.

And let me say, there's now a lot of talk about you know where the major candidates ~~li~~ stand on this repeal of the assault weapons ban, who will push for it, and won't, and whatever. But I will say one thing that the Republican candidate for president has not said, and probably will not and cannot say. I will veto any attempt to repeal the assault weapons ban or the Brady Bill. I will veto it. (Applause.)

We should stand with law enforcement; we should stand with the victims of crime. You can't tell me it doesn't make any difference. I'll never forget a handsome young businessman from northern California I met a couple of years ago when we were fighting this battle. He had a beautiful young daughter, but his beautiful young daughter no longer had her beautiful young mother, because the beautiful young mother just happened to be in a high-risk one day when a

madman happened to walk in and cut loose with an assault weapon.

Now, people go crazy; these things happen. But if he'd had a revolver instead of an assault weapon, there wouldn't be so many people dead in that building. And this is important. This is an important issue.

So I ask you all to think about this and talk about this. And let me just tell you something that makes, again, Kweisi's attempt to bring all the young people in here so important. Just starting in grade school now, we have the largest group of young Americans more diverse than ever before in terms of their racial and ethnic backgrounds -- the largest group of young Americans entering our school system since the baby boomers entered right after World War II.

It was thought for a long time we would never have a group of youngsters that large again. This group is larger. They are more likely to be people of color. They are quite likely to come from families with difficult situations, or at least difficult economic situations. We must turn this problem of juvenile violence and gangs around before they reach their adolescent years if we don't want to reap the whirlwind of this. (Applause.)

One way we have to do it is with the right kind of welfare reform. Three-quarters of the people in America on welfare are already under welfare reform experiments because of the action our government has taken to encourage strategies to move people from welfare to work.

My criteria is simple. I don't mind being tough on requiring people to work, but we ought to want for people on welfare what we want for ourselves. What do we want? We want to succeed at home and at work. We want to be good parents and we want to be good from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. We want to feel good about ourselves when we come home from work, but we want to feel good about ourselves when we leave home with our kids behind. That is the simple test. So I say, tough on work, yes; tough on kids, no way. Be good to the kids. Invest in child care. (Applause.)

And we've had time enough now to see who is right. We have 1.3 million people less on the welfare rolls today than the day I took the oath of office as President of the United States. (Applause.) That's the way to move people from welfare to work -- support them with child care and then require those work requirements.

And the most important thing we can do is make a wholesale commitment to educational excellence and educational opportunity in this country. We have got to do more. People say we've done a lot on that in the last 15 years. Not nearly enough. We've expanded Head Start, but not enough. We've worked to shrink class sizes and help teachers be retrained. We've worked to encourage states to set high standards and to give them the flexibility they need to meet the standards. We've worked to open the doors of college wider than ever, increasing the Pell grants, changing the student loan program so that people could borrow the money at lower costs with less hassle and then have the option to pay it back as a percentage of their income,

so that no young person should ever drop out of school because of the burden of a student loan. (Applause.)

But we have to do more. I am determined to see every classroom and every library in every school in the United States of America hooked up to the Internet by the year 2000 so the poorest kids can get the richest education and have access to all the information that any student anywhere in the world had. (Applause.)

I believe that the best tax cut we could give the American people is a tax deduction for the cost of college tuition up to \$10,000 a year. (Applause.) I believe that we ought to make at least two years of college after high school just as universal as a high school education is today. (Applause.)

I think everybody out to have access to it. That's why I have proposed a \$1,500 refundable tax credit -- enough to pay the entire tuition cost at the typical community college in the United States, so that everybody of any age can at least go back and get two years of college, so they can do well in the world toward which we're going. (Applause.)

If you want to inspire young people of the future, you at least ought to be able to tell them -- you at least ought to be able to tell them -- you ought to be able to look them right in the eye and say, you will go to college if you do this. (Applause.) That's the least that we can do in Washington to help those of you who are out there in our neighborhoods help to rescue this generation of young people and give them something to say yes to and a bright future to embrace.

So these are the things that I think we ought to be focusing on. Things that help people make the most of their own lives -- not a guarantee, but an opportunity. Things that help build strong families. Things that help build strong communities. They'll build a strong country. And it's one thing to preach to people that they ought to be responsible -- and I'm for that -- but if they are responsible, they ought to be rewarded with opportunity. The two things should go together as a bargain. (Applause.)

Let me say one other thing. Now that the Cold War is over, we have, unfortunately, not a world free of danger, we've got a lot of security problems. You know it as well as I do. We just dealt with it with a terrible, terrible loss of our Air Force personnel in Saudi Arabia.

What is leading to all this terrorism around the world? What does it have in common, when the Hutus and the Tutsis just slaughter each other in Rwanda or Burundi? What does that have to do with people rioting in Northern Ireland? What does it have to do with the Bosnians, the Muslims, the Croats and the Serbs and what they did to each other for four years after living together in peace for decades? What does it have to do with the continuing tensions in the Middle East?

Well, I think it has to do with human nature being vulnerable every day to taking the

easy way of defining ourselves in terms of who we're not, instead of who we are; defining ourselves in terms of who we can look down on, instead of what we can look up to. What leads to an Oklahoma City bombing? What were those people thinking in that group in Arizona where our federal officials broke it up the other day before -- when they had that massive weapons cash and all those -- at least they have been charged with plans to blow up all kinds of federal facilities? What are they thinking about when they burn all those churches and synagogues -- or, in a few cases, mosques and Islamic centers? What are they thinking about?

I'm telling you, it's something endemic to human nature, something you have to teach your kids about all the time -- something we all have to fight. It's almost like, every day you wake up and the scales are going inside you -- you know, hope and fear, hatred and reconciliation. But there are people all over the world that look like they just can't exist unless they go out and kill somebody who is different from them -- or at least keep them at arm's length.

And nobody has ever perfectly solved this problem. There are no perfect answers because, again, it deals with the human spirit and the things that are endemic to human nature. But that's why I know that even though we desegregated our schools and threw racism out of public facilities and elected African Americans and Hispanics and Asian Americans to Congress, passed civil rights laws, this job is a never-ending job -- here and around the world. It's a never-ending job. (Applause.)

That's why, notwithstanding the political movement of the moment, after I studied it for several months, I thought we could and should make some changes in the affirmative action laws, but that we should mend them and not end them. I thought it would be a mistake to end them and walk away. (Applause.)

I think it's a mistake not to try to keep working for voting rights and greater impact of voting rights. And, notwithstanding the recent Supreme Court decisions which, of course, we will all honor, we still have to be on a mission of making sure that the Congress of the United States represents the American people in a fair way. (Applause.)

And it's why we have to keep standing against this rash of church burnings. You know, it's hard to think of anything an American could do that didn't kill a lot of people that would offend our sense of decency more than burning a house of worship. This whole country got started in part by people coming here so they could build their own churches and worship God in any way they pleased, and they wouldn't be oppressed here. That's how we got started. (Applause.)

In the darkest hours of our country, when we lived with the awful curse of slavery, and then later with the problems associated with the attempt to escape it, if it had not been for the African American church -- if it had not been for the African American church what would have happened? (Applause.) We might have plunged this country into an orgy of violence and killing, and lost tens of thousands more people, and hardened our hearts against one another in

ways that it would have taken a century or more to overcome.

An attack on a house of worship, whether it's a big old Southern Baptist church, or a big old black Baptist church, or a tiny synagogue, or a Muslim mosque that only a few people ever frequent, is an attack on the whole idea of America. And it represents our problem in dealing with this curse of hatred based on race and religion and ethnicity that is sweeping the world and fueling so much of this terrorism.

I want to thank you for what you have done. The NAACP has worked with law enforcement and government and business and religious leaders to help us catch and prosecute people, and to help us rebuild, and to help us prevent these burnings. You know that my administration stands behind you. We created a national task force on these church burnings, headed, I might add, very ably by two of the finest African Americans in our administration -- Deval Patrick, the Assistant Attorney General for Civil rights; and Jim Johnson, the Assistant Secretary of Treasury for enforcement.

We've got over 200 FBI and ATF agents working to solve these crimes, going through the evidence, doing the investigations. And we're making arrests. In just the last three weeks, arrests have been made in connection with fires in Missouri, North and South Carolina, Texas, Virginia and Washington. (Applause.) And just this past Monday, while you were here, two members of the KKK were charged with the burning of the Mt. Zion AME church in Greeleyville, South Carolina, where I visited just last month. (Applause.)

This morning before I left the White House, I met with a bipartisan group of congressional leaders to thank them for quickly and unanimously passing bipartisan legislation to make it easier to prosecute arson attacks against houses of worship. (Applause.) Also, that legislation authorizes a \$10-million Department of Housing and Urban Development loan guarantee program to be used for church rebuilding -- to work with the money that's been raised by the National Council of Churches, the guarantees of volunteers that have been given by Habitat for Humanity and others.

But we must do more. Two weeks ago, I began to convene religious leaders and governors and others in the White House to talk about what else we can do. I asked the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, James Lee Witt, who's used to working with local community groups when we have natural disasters, to work with the Justice and Treasury Departments, with the governors to frame a national prevention initiative. One of the big problems here in preventing these crimes is that you've got so many of these little churches that are out on country roads, and they're old wooden structures, and they don't even have a full-time staff, so they can't afford to have full-time people there as night watchmen.

Keep in mind, so far there's no evidence of a national conspiracy. Most of these people are not armed when they sneak in in the middle of the night to do this. If you just had bright lights and somebody hanging around most of the time it wouldn't happen.

Last week I transferred \$6 million to local communities in 13 states across the South -- that's enough to pay for one new police officer in a county to drive around on these back roads to patrol the churches at night, or for lighting, or for whatever else they want to use it for to try to prevent, prevent the fires from occurring in the first place. (Applause.)

And tomorrow the Vice President is meeting with leaders of the insurance industry at the White House to build on their pledge to work in partnership with all of us to prevent these crimes, and to make sure that we can still get insurance for these churches. I've heard a lot about that from people, and it's important. (Applause.)

So we're going to do everything we can to stop these fires, to catch who is doing it, to rebuild. But I say again, this work we're doing here is dealing with a flaw in the human spirit that all of us have to fight always. We cannot -- we cannot -- let significant numbers of the American people turn into cowards, acting in the dark of night, on racial, ethnic or religious bigotry. We cannot do that. (Applause.) We cannot let people in this country develop terrorists cells to manifest their hatred of their own government in the greatest experiment in self-government in human history.

If we are going to continue to be a force against terrorism and against hatred in the rest of the world, we have to continue to purge ourselves of it. (Applause.) That's why earlier this month I signed a proclamation designating July as the national month of unity for Americans. I asked religious leaders of all faiths and citizens from all walks of life to reach out to one another, to strengthen the ideals that light our way and keep this country strong.

We have not always lived up to our promise. We're people, we're human, we make mistakes, we're imperfect. But we have never stopped trying. And we have never stopped moving. And as we enter this great new century, we have got to say that we're going to stamp out the fires of hatred and bigotry. (Applause.) We have got to say we are going to find a way to reject intolerance and heal our divisions. We have got to find a way to say, as your president has said, this is the new day begun. (Applause.)

I just want to leave you with this thought. A couple of nights ago I met with a group of businesspeople to talk about a number of issues, and one of them said to me -- he said, Mr. President, I've been in business for over 30 years, I've built facilities in more than 25 nations; I have seen this world changed a lot. He said, there is no country in the world today in better shape for the next century than the United States. And he said, our diversity, the fact that we are all so different is an enormous asset in a global economy where information and ideas have to be exchanged at a rapid rate and people have to understand each other and deal with each other. He said, that's why it's so important that we learn how to work together and be together, because if we do, there is no stopping this country. (Applause.)

I've said several times in the last few weeks -- I'll just close with this -- it seems like my life as your President has been dominated by fires in the last couple of weeks -- arguably, for longer than that. But, I mean, literally. On the one hand there's the church fires, which are

the symbol of everything that is wrong, that we want to reject when it occurs in our country. And on the other hand, there is the fire that burns in the Olympic flame that's making it's way to Atlanta.

And I'm sure every one of you has read as this flame has moved through your states of all these community heroes who are picked to carry the torch for a kilometer. Some of them were in wheelchairs and had to roll along. Some of them were very old and had to walk along. Some of them were great athletes and could fly along so fast the flame almost went out. But every one of them had one thing in common -- they were picked to carry that torch because they were, first and foremost, great citizens.

There was a 74-year-old woman in Nevada that had taken 100 kids in who had been abandoned, so she took them in. There was a man who came in in Washington, one of the torchbearers at the White House, probably about 60, African American man, who had devoted his life to rescuing the lives of children. And he walked up with 12 of his kids, and they were white, black, brown, and Asian Americans. He had given his life to them.

There was a Catholic nun who had devoted her whole life to fulfilling the Catholic social ministry in her community. There was the deaf president of Galludet University, our nation's deaf university, who is in his late 50s. And when he left what he was doing with us, he was going that week to run a 100-mile race. There was a young woman who played basketball at the University of Tennessee whose body was crushed in an accident and she thought her whole -- her life was nearly over, her athletic career was certainly over. But by sheer force of will, she got herself back into shape, resumed her basketball career, helped them win a national championship, and is one of the leaders on our basketball team.

All of these people shared one thing in common -- they're all different races, all different religions, all different backgrounds -- they lived their citizenship. They bridged the differences between us. They were looking for the future. They saw themselves in terms of who they were, not in terms of what they weren't. In terms of what they could become, not who they were supposed to hate. (Applause.) In terms of what kind of partnerships and teamwork they could build, not how they could be divided.

That is the mission that the NAACP will carry, with great success and energy and commitment and conviction, to the hearts and minds of these young people into the 21st century. That is the mission we must be on. And that is what I hope and pray we will be discussing in this election season: How can we give to our children the kind of America they deserve to have.

Thank you, and God bless you all. (Applause.)

END

1:21 P.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(New Orleans, Louisiana)

For Immediate Release

May 30, 1996

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
OF THE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST

Ernest N. Morial Convention Center
New Orleans, Louisiana

11:55 A.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: I'm having such a good time I hate to interrupt it. (Laughter.) Please be seated.

PERSON IN AUDIENCE: We love you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you. (Applause.)

Bishop Owens, you don't have to calm this crowd for me, I like it the other way. (Applause.) Mother Crouch, thank you for letting me come to your meeting. Now, I know whose meeting this is. (Applause.) And I know that this is supposed to be about the spirit, but if you will forgive me, this is also one fine looking crowd today. (Applause.)

Last night my wife called me to check in, as we always do when one of us is away from home, and she was on her way to California. And Hillary said, "Well, what are you doing tomorrow?" And I said, "Well, I'm going to the Women's Convention of the Church of God in Christ." (Applause.) And she said, "Well, you finally figured out where the power is." (Applause.)

The bishops will find a way to make me pay for that, I think, but I had a good time. (Laughter.)

I'm glad to be here with some other friends today. I brought two of Louisiana's Congressmen down here with me, Congressmen Bill Jefferson and Congressman Cleo Fields. I'm honored to be here with them. (Applause.) Many of these bishops here have had me in their churches -- Bishop Brooks, Bishop Patterson, Bishop Blake, Bishop Quick. I've been in their churches. My friend, Bishop Clark from Pennsylvania; Bishop Winbush. Bishop Hamilton gave us a good prayer and got us started off well. I thank Bishop Clemons, Bishop Haynes, Bishop Anderson, all the distinguished leaders of this great church.

I thank that Women's Mass Choir and Natalie Green. It's too bad she has no range to her voice, isn't it? (Laughter.) Let's give them another hand. She was wonderful and they were wonderful. (Applause.)

And I thank Bernard Johnson for coming out here on no notice to play. Bishop Owens and I were sitting there and I said, "Bishop, I love all this music, but where's that man that played the saxophone for me in 1993 in Memphis? I want to hear him again." (Applause.)

I want to say a special word of thanks, if I might claim a personal privilege to the two bishops here from my native state of Arkansas, without whom I might well not be here today -- Bishop L.T. Walker and Bishop D.L. Lindsey, thank you for your friendship for so many years and God bless you. Thank you. (Applause.)

I'm glad to be back in New Orleans. The last time I was here, I was riding in that pretty presidential limousine on Tchoupitoulas Street and we lost our hubcap. (Laughter.) And budget cutting got so bad in Washington, I was sent here to fetch it back. (Laughter.)

I think all of you who were there know that not only one of my best days as President, but one of the most memorable days in my life was when I met with you in 1993 at the 86th Annual Convocation in Memphis. (Applause.) I will never forget that as long as I live. Our good friend, Bishop Ford, was still living then and he was my friend and my confidant. (Applause.)

Back in 1993, in that magnificent church where Martin Luther King spoke his last sermon, I asked that we honor his memory by remembering what he lived and died for and by working to tackle the crushing problems of our young people. Since then, I am more certain than ever that there is not a problem in America -- and certainly not the problems our young people face -- that cannot be solved if we will take responsibility for them and work together to make things better.

As I have said so many times, when we Americans take responsibility and we work together, we always seem to succeed. But when we deny our responsibility and when we are divided, we defeat ourselves. Long before Abraham Lincoln said it, our Savior reminded us that a city or a house divided cannot stand. (Applause.) Today, I'd like to take up where I left off back in 1993 and talk about what we can do to help our children build better lives.

We stand on the threshold of a new century, indeed, a new millennium. It will be an age of great possibility and enormous challenge. I have worked hard to see that all our children enter that century with the opportunities they need to make the most of their God-given abilities -- to stand against the forces of division and destruction, to stand for rewarding work and honoring families, reducing crime and protecting our environment, celebrating our diversity, not running away from it, and building a strong, secure, vital democracy that is still a model for the world.

I am pleased at the progress which has been made. Compared to four years ago, we have 8.5 million more jobs. We have the lowest unemployment rate among African Americans since the 1970s. (Applause.) We have 1.3 million families going from welfare to work, 1 million families moving from food stamps to self-sufficiency. (Applause.) The crime rate has gone down for four years. We are fighting for the minimum wage, and we've fought for other things to help families like the Family and Medical Leave Law and a tax program that would reduce the taxes of our hardest-pressed working families so they would have more money to raise their children on. Those things are making a difference. (Applause.)

And we've fought against some things as well. We've fought against budget cuts that were too harsh and Medicare in Medicaid and education and the environment, that would have raised taxes on working people and given people like me a tax cut. I was against that, but I'm for balancing the budget; we just ought to do it in the right way. (Applause.)

We have fought to mend affirmative action, but not to end it. It should not be ended until there is no need for it anymore, and I'm sorry to say there's still some need for it. (Applause.) We have fought to define religious freedom and the Constitution's requirement that the state should not impose any religious views on anybody.

We have fought to make it clear that our public schools don't have to be religion-free zones as long as nobody's imposing their view on anybody else. We've fought against racial discrimination in all its forms. And I tell you today, we are fighting hard to get to the bottom of this rash of black church burnings and to find out who is responsible and to prosecute them to the full extent of the law. (Applause.) We cannot let people of faith be persecuted by people of hate again in America. (Applause.)

That's all good, but it's not enough. We now we have to do more and we know we have to do it together. All around us, we see evidence of our society's need for renewed commitment for the moral leadership you provide. Yes, we do need more economic advancement, but that may not be our biggest need, for it is said in the Scriptures, and we must remember, that man does not live by bread alone.

Every day our children are bombarded by influences that would turn them from a positive, good path. You are here this week to talk in real terms about what you can do to build better homes and better communities and better schools and better tomorrows for our children. You are here to reach out -- not to curse the darkness, but to light a candle, put it on a

candlestick and give that light to all of America's house.

And you are, for you are working every hour and every day to keep our children free from harm, free to grow up, free to make the most of their own lives; laying the spiritual foundation that is now, because of this church's efforts, helping thousands of young boys develop into men of courage and character with programs like Rights of Passage and God's Male Choice. Teaching young boys and girls how to say no to sex and yes to the rest of their lives through the purity classes that you run in your churches. (Applause.) Strengthening families and futures by your efforts to increase the involvement of parents in their children's schools and education.

I thank you for this more than any of you can imagine. I want the rest of America to know what you are doing, and I want the rest of America to do what you are doing. That is what we have to do together. (Applause.)

I want our country to reject the voices of division and hatred that would weaken our nation, to walk away from the cynicism which is the chief excuse for inaction, to work together for solutions. There is no more powerful force in this country than the force of conscience and commitment. And that is the force we all feel in this room today.

All of us must step up to the challenges our children face. As I said, I have worked hard to help them where government can help. I am glad that African American unemployment is in single digits for the first time since the Vietnam War; that during the past four years more than 100,000 African American businesses have been created. I am proud that homeownership is at a 15-year high, with record increases in homeownership among African Americans. But all of the homes in the world don't mean a thing if the children can't play outside in the yard or on the street in front of them. (Applause.)

I'm glad that more of our children are taking more challenging courses and that we are seeing at long last some improvement in the performance across the country in many of our educational areas. But all the schools in the world don't mean a thing if children are afraid to walk to and from those schools. All of the opportunity and hope that comes from a job, that doesn't mean much if our children are raised in fear, seduced by the false allure of drugs or crime or gangs, into a world of distorted values and diminished hope and ultimate disappointment.

We simply cannot go into the 21st century with children having children, children killing children, children being raised by other children, or raising themselves on the streets alone. (Applause.) That is not the America I grew up in, not the America you grew up in, not the America we can pass on to our children and their children. (Applause.)

Let me say again what I have said many times to my countrymen and women across this land. Sometimes, I think people just give up on these problems. You haven't given up. So if we send one message out today, let's tell America: We refuse to accept that crime and drugs

and rampant teen pregnancy and children being killed and dragged down and destroyed are things that we can't do anything about. We can do something about it. You are doing something about it. Our country must do more about it. (Applause.)

In Washington, that's why I worked so hard to pass the Crime Bill, to put 100,000 police officers on the streets. The sheriff here of Jefferson Parish is pointing out how much the crime rate in New Orleans had gone down because they use these people not just to catch criminals, but to prevent crime, to work with neighbors, to work with children, to find things that will help us to identify people who are problems and not only catch criminals, but stop it from happening in the first place. And that's why I am committed to keeping on until we have every one of those 100,000 police officers in a uniform walking the street, getting the crime rate down, making people feel safe.

That's why we took on the interest in Washington that we're so powerful in the gun lobby to try to take guns out of the hands of criminals -- taking 19 kinds of assault weapons off our street, passing the Brady Bill that requires a waiting period to buy a handgun.

You know, some people in our country were told that if those bills passed, they would lose their hunting weapons. Well, we now have quite a few seasons and we've hunted everything you can imagine in America, and everybody that wanted to is still hunting with the weapon they had the day I signed those bills. There's only one group of people that don't have the weapons they wanted -- 60,000 people with criminal records who couldn't get handguns because the Brady Bill passed. And it's a good thing. (Applause.)

That's why I supported zero tolerance for weapons in our schools and community based programs not only to punish criminals, but to prevent crime in the first place; to help our kids stay out of trouble; to give them something to say yes to as well as something to say no to. I think people ought to be able to say yes to jobs in the summertime, yes to staying in schools after hours if they don't want to be on the street, yes to adult supervised recreation, yes to things that will enrich their lives and give them a good group to hang out with. I think that is important.

And yes, I am pleased with the progress. I'm glad that the crime rate is down. I'm glad the welfare roles and the food stamp roles are down. I'm glad the teen pregnancy rate is finally coming down. But the truth is, it's not good enough. Because even though the crime rate's coming down in America as a whole, random violence among people under 18 is going up. Even though drug use is coming down, random careless use of marijuana among people under 18 is going up. And, unbelievably enough, after 20 years of working at it, smoking among teenagers is going up as 3,000 young people a day take up a habit that will end 1,000 of their lives earlier than what otherwise would have happened.

So there are a lot of challenges still out there. And we need you. We also need you to reach them. How many mothers, I wonder, in this country hold their breaths in fear when their kids leave home? How many wonder whether their kids will be shot by a gang or pressured to

buy drugs or robbed of their money or beat up because of their clothes? This is no way to live.

It has not always been this way. We have shown we can make progress. It does not have to be this way. We do not have to tolerate it. But we all have to be willing to do something about it. (Applause.)

There are some more things we can do in Washington. We ought to ban those cop-killer bullets that pierce the bullet-proof vests our law enforcement officers wear. They're not needed to shoot anything in the woods. (Applause.) We ought to do more to preserve the safe and drug-free school program so that every school will be able to do things like stay open later or open earlier, or bring in the DARE officers or others that are helping our children and supporting the work our parents are trying to do.

We ought to have welfare reform that moves people from welfare to work, but there ought to be enough child care support in there so that the kids aren't hurt, and supervision of children is not sacrificed. (Applause.) And we have to do more to inspire every community to protect our children.

I challenged one million citizens the other day across America to join the anticrime patrols in their community. There are 20,000 anticrime groups in America today. If every one of them could just get 50 more folks to show up and help prevent crime, that would be one million Americans, and it would change the future and increase the safety of our children. They deserve that.

We are taking steps to give parents more control over the things that influence their children. We've passed legislation that requires parents be given in new television sets something called the V chip so that you can screen out TV programs you think are inappropriate for your young children to watch, and the entertainment industry is helping by providing a rating system. (Applause.)

We're taking steps to prohibit advertising being specifically directed toward young people with cigarettes because of the dangers that that is causing that I mentioned. We're trying to help communities do what they can to bring more order and discipline and structure into their children's lives. One of the things that we have supported is giving every community in America the option -- not the requirement, but the option -- to consider whether schools ought to have a uniform dress policy and have uniforms for the students.

Let me tell you, I was out in Long Beach, California the other day, the third largest school district in California, where they adopted a uniform policy and they let the kids and the teachers pick what their uniform was going to be in every school. They got up a little fund for the children who couldn't afford their own uniforms. And I listened to the children talk about what had happened. I listened to one young man say that his school picked a green and white uniform because that would clearly show to everybody that they weren't in any of the gangs around since none of them used those colors, and now the children will walk to and from school

in safety.

I listened to a young girl say that the uniform policy had not just been good for the poor children in school, it had been good for the wealthier children and the middle class children because they stopped judging each other by what they had on, instead by what was inside. (Applause.) And nobody gets rolled anymore because of their jacket or their shoes.

Now, people ought to have the option to see if that works. All I know is there is more order, more learning, less violence and the kids feel better.

Today, as the summer approaches, I want to talk to you about another idea that New Orleans has made the most of, and that's community-based curfews, to keep young people off the street. These are just like the old-fashioned rules most of us had when we were kids. (Applause.) "When the lights come on, be home, Bill." (Laughter and applause.) How many of you were told that? When the lights come on, be home. They're designed to help people be better parents. They help keep our children out of harm's way. They give parents a tool to impart discipline, respect and rules at an awkward and difficult time in children's lives.

Different cities have different ways of enforcing their curfews. Some of them take a kind of a punitive approach. Some of them, even a few have gone so far as to find parents if the kids aren't home. But some have done much to go the other way to say that the parents can decide whether they want the curfews to apply to their children; they just have to tell the police and decide.

But the evidence shows that wherever these curfews are in place, they are working. The Justice Department in Washington has just completed a study of seven of these programs that are up and running -- in Dallas, in Phoenix, in Chicago, in Denver, in Jacksonville and in North Little Rock, Arkansas. They also looked at one that works perhaps the best right here in New Orleans. And I want to thank Mayor Morial and law enforcement officers who are here today. Where's the Mayor? Stand up, Mayor. (Applause.) Our host Mayor.

He is here with his police chief, Richard Pennington, and Deputy Chief Ronald Ducette, who is in charge of juvenile enforcement, with two pastors I want to talk about in a moment -- Reverend Harold Mayberry and Reverend Kenneth Thompson, with the Sheriff of this parish, Harry Lee, and the FBI Special Agent, James De Serno (phonetic). And the most important thing of all is, he brought two of the young people that have been in his program. I'd like to ask them to stand if they're still here, Shelita Smith and Anthony Anderson. I think they're here. (Applause.) Where are they? Right over there. Let's give these young people a hand here. (Applause.) And the pastors, stand up. Let's give the pastors a hand. Thank you. (Applause.) And the law enforcement officers. (Applause.)

Now, let me tell you what all these folks are part of here. New Orleans, when I became President, had one of the highest crime rates in the country -- very high rates of violence of all kinds. They were worried about the rampant increase in juvenile crime. But this Mayor and

an army of concerned parents said, enough is enough, we have to do something about this.

They put in place, in this city that is famous for its nightlife, a dusk to dawn curfew -- 8:00 p.m. on school weeks, 9:00 p.m. in the summertime, 11:00 p.m. on the weekends for people under 17. Now, it basically says, if you're young, after a certain amount of time you ought to be home and not on the street where you can get shot or fall in with a bad crowd. (Applause.)

Now, you want to know if it works? During the very first year, youth crime dropped by 27 percent during the curfew hours, armed robberies dropped by a third, auto thefts fell by 42 percent. This is working. (Applause.)

But I want to tell you the most important thing about it, because this is consistent with your mission in the Church of God and Christ. Maybe the most important thing is what do they do with people who they find out after curfew? Dozens of police officers hit the street to enforce the curfew, but they picked up children and didn't send them to jail. Instead, they took them to a central curfew center staffed with counselors, doctors and nurses and police officers and, most important, an energetic and committed local religious community represented by those two fine pastors I just introduced. (Applause.)

A local group of ministers called -- listen to the name -- All Congregations Together has several ministers at the curfew center to counsel young people and their parents or guardians, and I met with these folks earlier, as I said. I'm very grateful to them.

I also was told the story of one city council member who worked in the curfew center who found a seven-year-old child picked up from the streets shivering from fear. He was having trouble walking up the stairs, so she just picked him up and carried him up. She said, "Do you want to sit down?" And the boy said, "No." "Well, what do you want?" she said. "I want you to hold me," he replied. That's what a lot of these kids need -- somebody to care, somebody to hold on. (Applause.)

I'm sure that a lot of the teenagers think this curfew is too strict. It was a long time ago, but I can still dimly remember what it was like to be that age. But they must also know that it's a dangerous world out there, and these rules are being set by people who love them and care about them and desperately want them to have good lives.

And there is one thread that seems to run through all of these curfew programs across the country, and that is, once they are put in, the most intense supporters of the curfews are young people who know that they are too often at risk of being victims of violent crime. They want our protection and we ought to give it to them. (Applause.)

So today, I directed the Attorney General to distribute this report we did on curfews that are working, to mayors and community leaders all across this great country. We want to share what is working -- not to tell every place they need it; maybe they don't -- but at least to let

them know that it's out there, that it's a tool, that people have made it work, that children's lives have been saved and their futures have been rescued.

We've read enough of the other kind of stories; it's time to read some of the good stories. I want everybody to know about the school uniforms in Long Beach and the curfew in New Orleans. I want people to know that if we work together and we put our children first, we can make a difference and rescue their lives. That's what I want people to know. (Applause.)

This past January I had the great honor of speaking at the funeral of my friend and one of this country's most eloquent women, the great Barbara Jordan. She devoted her entire life making sure this country lived up to its promise, and she once said, and I quote, "We must address and master the future together. It can be done if we restore the belief that we share a sense of national community, that we share a common national endeavor. It can be done."

Ladies and gentlemen of this great church, my fellow Americans, can there be any greater national endeavor than saving our children, saving all of our children? Don't we have to remember -- you know, a lot of people in public life love to quote the Scripture and all of us probably do it selectively. But there are hundreds of admonitions in the Bible, hundreds, to take care of the children, especially the poor children: Even as you have done it unto the least of these, you have also done it unto me. If that was true for Jesus, surely it must be true of America.

So I say to you, I honor your commitment, I honor your actions. We must honor these actions I have cited today, but most of all, we must believe that if we will take responsibility for these children, and if we will work together, it can be done. (Applause.)

God bless you all, and God bless America. (Applause.)

END

12:25 P.M. CDT

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**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS TO GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE AME ZION CHURCH
WASHINGTON, D.C.
JULY 29, 1996**

[Acknowledgments: Board of Bishops; Bishop Ruben L. Speaks, senior bishop of the board of Bishops; Bishop Milton A. Williams, host Bishop; General Officers of the Church, delegates, other guests]

Thank you, Bishop Johnson for your kind introduction. [It's good to see you again.] I have to admit that I'm nervous at the thought of speaking before so many bishops and preachers, so I'm delighted that a fellow Arkansan is here to share the stage with me.

I am honored to be here today at this Bicentennial General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. On behalf of the President, I want to welcome all of you to Washington. Let me thank you -- bishops, preachers, and laity -- for your commitment to your churches and for all you are doing to nourish the spirits of our families and our communities.

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the AME Zion church, an institution that has witnessed and weathered all the decisive events in our country's history. You have been a refuge, a beacon, a source of strength for millions of African-Americans today and in the darkest hours of our country. Some of our greatest Americans, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Frederick Douglas have found inspiration and spiritual renewal in your sanctuaries. And for all Americans, this church has served as a voice of compassion and conscience.

The President, Chelsea and I had the privilege of sharing in the AME Zion tradition when we worshipped with your host pastors, the Reverends John and Diana Cherry, one Sunday morning two summers ago. We were moved by the powerful sermon, the wonderful hymns, and the warm hospitality of the congregation at Full Gospel.

The Cherrys made a lasting impression on my family. The President and I think of them often to remind ourselves of how one or two committed individuals can make positive differences in the lives of so many.

As many of you know, families are the focus of the Cherrys' ministry. Over the years, they have helped more than a hundred couples save their marriages and keep their families together. Because of the Cherrys, hundreds of children have been spared the heartbreak, the confusion, and financial hardship of divorce and growing up in single-parent homes. Instead, they will have better opportunities to flourish, to grow to become successful adults under the love, support, and constant guidance of a mother and a father.

The Cherrys are on to something. Families are the bedrock of our society. And God has entrusted families with the primary responsibility for raising and nurturing our country's most precious resource: Our children.

Today, I want to talk about children and how we can all work together to strengthen our families and cherish our children. Children need us. They are not rugged individualists. And while they depend first and foremost on their own parents, children rely on so many other adults in their communities -- the police officer patrolling the neighborhood, the government official who monitors food and water quality, the business owners who employ their parents, and the executives who decide what shows go on television.

We know so well what Jesus said to his disciples while holding a small child in his arms: "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not me, but the one who sends me." If we could only keep that in mind, and take the image we have of Jesus and transpose it onto the face of every child we see. Then we would ask ourselves "How could I deny that child the health care that child needs? How could I write-off that child because of who his parents are?"

As adults, we have to start thinking and believing that there isn't really any such thing as someone else's child. My child, your child, all children everywhere, must live and make their ways in a society and in a world that's becoming smaller, yet more complex.

That's why we all must work together to create a better world for our children. A new millennium is just a few short years away. We are undergoing sweeping changes in the way we work, the way we live, the way we relate to the rest of the world. The Cold War is over. And today we find ourselves living in a new global economy, in which jobs and capital and technology and ideas move across borders at lightening speeds. These are developments that present Americans with great opportunities -- but only if we are equipped with the tools to seize those opportunities.

My husband believes that America cannot afford to waste any of our citizens. He is working hard to see that all our people, especially our children, enter the next millennium with the tools and opportunities to make the most of their God-given abilities.

We are on the road to achieving this vision. Our economy is the healthiest it's been in decades. The President's economic plan has cut the deficit in half. America has 10 million new jobs. The African-American unemployment rate has been in single digits for the first time in 20 years. There are 100,000 new African American owned businesses.

The President has implemented policies proven to help families like the Family and Medical Leave Law. The law guarantees workers unpaid leave from their jobs to take care of sick family members. He has boosted the Earned Income Tax Credit, a tax program that reduces the taxes of our poorest working families.

So we're moving in the right direction.. But we can do more. The President is waiting impatiently for Congress to send him two bills that will make a huge difference to American families -- the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill, which says that workers cannot lose their health insurance if they lose or change jobs, or if someone in their family has been sick, and a bill raising the minimum wage to \$5.15 an hour.

We must not allow anyone to undermine our common and basic responsibility to the poor pregnant women, children, disabled and senior citizens who depend on Medicaid and Medicare.

We must also stand for the right kind of welfare reform. The President has already given waivers to many states who want to try new strategies of moving people off welfare and into the permanent workforce. The right way to move people off welfare is not only to require work, but also to offer them child care so that they can go to work without having to worry about their children. We will only transform this broken system if we do right by children and put people to work so they can earn a paycheck, not draw a welfare check.

And we have to keep working until all of our people can reap the rewards of this time of change, including those who have not been reached by the recovery, those who have been downsized by the new global economy, those who are stuck in place because they don't have the skills to move up.

Education will be crucial in meeting this challenge. The President is working to put more computers in our schools and to hook every classroom to the Internet. He is proposing a \$10,000 tax deduction for families putting children through college. And last month, the President introduced a proposal that will make two years of college as accessible to all Americans as the first twelve. America's Hope Scholarships would offer a refundable \$1,500 tax credit -- enough for tuition at a typical community college -- to any American who wants to study hard and get ready for the future.

Still, those computers and that chance at a college education will mean little if our children are afraid to walk to and from school, if they are raised in fear, seduced by the false allure of drugs, or crime or gangs into a world of distorted values, diminished hope, and ultimate disappointment.

We simply cannot go into the 21st century with children having children, children killing children, children being raised by other children, or raising themselves on the streets alone. This is not the America I grew up in, not the America you grew up in, not the America we can pass on to our children and their children.

There are too many people in this country who have given up on these problems. But so many of you -- the leaders and members of this great church -- have not and must not give up. On behalf of the President, I thank you for staying on the front lines in the war against drugs and violence.

The President stands with you. That's why he worked to pass the Crime Bill, to put 100,000 police community police officers on the streets. These are officers who are walking the beats in our neighborhoods, getting to know the people they serve, sniffing out the troublemakers, serving as role models to our children. They aren't just catching criminals, they are making people feel safe, and preventing crimes from happening in the first place.

The President signed the Brady Bill, taking 19 assault weapons off our streets and making sure that all guns stay out of the hands of tens of thousands of people with criminal records. He supports school uniforms so that children do not hurt or kill each other over designer jackets or gang colors; community-based curfews, and other programs to help our children stay out of trouble. He knows that children need something to say yes to as well as something to say no to. I think our children should be able to say yes to jobs in the summertime, yes to staying in schools after hours of they don't want to be on the street, yes to supervised recreation, yes to things that will enrich our lives and surround them with positive role models.

Like it or not, our children also learn much of their behavior from the things they see on TV. A psychologist once noted that children are like little VCRs who repeat everything they see on TV. Too often, the things they see encourage violent and destructive behavior. So the president fought for a V-chip to be installed in all TV sets that will allow parents to block out objectionable programming. And today, the President, Vice President, Mrs. Gore and I met with TV executives to see what we could do to strengthen children's television programming.

But the government can only go so far. We can move forward as a country if we reassert the basic bargain of American citizenship -- opportunity for everyone and responsibility from all. We must understand that that responsibility includes our responsibility not just to make the most of our own lives and our family's lives, but to be good citizens for our communities and for our country.

I call upon each of you, the members of the AME Zion church, to lead this effort to restore hope, responsibility, and opportunity to our communities. There is no more powerful force in this country than the force of conscience and commitment. And that is the force we all feel in this room today.

Being good citizens begins with a committed effort to reject the racism and hate that continue to poison our communities. As President has said so many times, we need to reject the voices of division and hatred that encourage so many of us "to define ourselves in terms of who we're not, instead of who we are; define ourselves in terms of who we can look down on, instead of what we can look up to."

And while we all work toward a time when the fires of racism will be doused forever, we need to support initiatives that create a more inclusive, equal-opportunity society. That's why after careful study last year, the President decided that while we could and

should make some changes in affirmative action laws, it would be mistake to end them and walk away.

We also have to keep standing firm against this recent rash of church burnings. This whole country was founded by people seeking the freedom to worship God in their own way in their own churches. An attack on a house of worship, whether it's a big Southern Baptist church, an AME Zion church, a tiny synagogue or Muslim Mosque is an attack on the whole idea of America.

The President has created a national task force to investigate these church burnings -- headed by two top law enforcement officers, Deval Patrick, the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights; and James Johnson, the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Enforcement. More than 200 FBI and ATF agents are working to solve these crimes. And arrests have been made in Missouri, North and South Carolina, Texas, Virginia and Washington. The Administration is also working hard to encourage and organize efforts to rebuild churches and prevent fires from happening in the first place.

We are discovering that some good has come out of these fires. All across the south, white churches are helping black churches rebuild. Suburban teenagers are traveling to small southern towns to shingle new roofs, plaster new walls, and polish new altars. They and the African-American parishioners with whom they work side by side are learning that they have much more in common than they thought they did.

They are realizing that much more unites us than divides us. And that our differences only make our country stronger and more resilient. And perhaps in these churches they are re-learning and recognizing the truth of that old song from Sunday school, "Jesus loves the little children of the world, red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight."

So let us commit ourselves to working together, to building bridges, to a new season of hope for America and for our children.

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