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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Santa Fe, New Mexico)

For Immediate Release

September 25, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO
NEW MEXICO COORDINATED CAMPAIGN VICTORY 2000 RECEPTION

La Fonda Hotel
Santa Fe, New Mexico

4:10 P.M. MDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. First, ladies and gentlemen, let me just thank you for coming here. I want to thank our hosts. And thank you, Diane; and thank you, Bill Cisneros, the Santa Fe Democratic Chair.

I thank all the tribal leaders who are here. I thank your predecessor, Earl Potter, who is here tonight. Thank you very much; I'm glad to see you.

I want to thank Congressman Udall. He's done a great job. He's really fun to work with. And as you can see, he's sort of a high-energy person. (Laughter.) And he has this idea which, there for a few years in Washington I was afraid was getting altogether too rare -- he actually thinks he's supposed to go back to Washington and get something done for you, instead of just -- (laughter.) And he's really, really good and you should be very proud of him. I like him very much. (Applause.)

I want to thank my friend of more than 30 years, John Kelly, for running for Congress and for his service as United States Attorney. And I urge you to do what you can to help him. We're just six seats short of being in the majority. And it makes a huge difference. I'll just give you an example.

Today, before I came here, I went over to a shelter for battered women and troubled children and families. And we're in this big struggle to get the Violence Against Women Act reauthorized -- which ought to be an absolute lay-down. And we clearly have a bipartisan majority in both Houses for this legislation.

But the leadership, for reasons I don't quite understand, has not

scheduled it for a vote and it's supposed to run out Friday night. If we had six more seats, it would have been reauthorized months and months ago. So I say to you, it's a big issue for all the New Mexico-specific reasons and also because your nation needs it, I think, very clearly.

I'd like to say more than anything else a word of thanks to a number of people. First, on behalf of Hillary and Al and Tipper Gore, I want to thank the people of New Mexico for sticking with us for two elections and giving us your electoral vote. (Applause.)

And I want to say even more, thank you for how much I've learned about America and specific parts of America, from the people of New Mexico; from our friends, the Sikhs, many of who were at the Indian Prime Minister's dinner the other night; from most especially the tribal leaders and those whom they represent. I was at the, you know, on the Shiprock Reservation not very long ago. And I think I'm the only American President ever to go to two Native American reservations, and I know I am the first President since James Monroe in the 1820s to invite all of the tribal leaders back to Washington to meet with me.

And I've had liaison in the White House to the Native American community since the first day I became President. And I can't begin to tell you what it's meant to me to try to work with you to meet the common challenges we face and try to help solve some long-standing problems and try to change the whole nature of the relationship between the United States and the Native American tribes.

I want to thank Tom Udall for what he said about me and my friends. You know, I have to say for my friends, I may be the only President in the entire history of the country who was literally elected because of my friends. (Laughter.) I mean, I had the lowest net worth of any President since Harry Truman when I got elected. And as my predecessor never tired of telling the American people, I was just the governor of a small southern state. (Laughter.) And when I ran, I was so naive, I thought it was a compliment. (Laughter and applause.) You know something? I still do.

And if Bruce and Alice and John Pound really thought I was going to be President in 1988, they were -- that's 75 percent of the people in the country who felt that way, my mother being the other -- (laughter). But it's worked out pretty well for America.

And that's just the last thing I want to tell you. I hope you're proud of our party and proud of where we've come, compared to where we were. And proud of the fact that -- if you listened to the debate, half the time they sound like us now. (Laughter.) Or they kind of want to sound like us; like they can't possibly admit that they're going to blow a hole in the deficit again, because being for a balanced budget and getting rid of this debt is now the thing to do. And I could go through a lot of other issues.

But what I'd like to remind you of is that ideas have consequences. I think sometimes we forget that in politics, we just kind of like the way it feels -- somebody looks good, sounds good, got a few good moves, gets through a press conference all right. Ideas have consequences. Just like they do in every other aspect of your life.

We changed the economic policy, the crime policy, the welfare policy, the education policy, the health policy, the environmental policy and the foreign policy of the United States. Did we make some mistakes along the way? Of course we did. Not everything turned out just the way we intended in every policy. But if you look back at every single one of those areas, we're stronger today and different than we were then.

So people need to understand that this is a very big election. I hope New Mexico will stick with Al Gore and Joe Lieberman. It's really, really important. We need you. (Applause.)

In the parlance of my culture, I realize I'm preaching to the saved here, so I won't belabor this. But I will tell you just, you know, what I feel, as someone who is not running for office for the first time since before some of you were born in this room. (Laughter.) Most days, I'm okay about it. (Laughter.)

But, you know, we worked so hard to turn the country around and get it to this point. And this is really the first time in my lifetime we've been in a position to build the future of our dreams for our children, because our circumstances are good. Because we have prosperity, social progress, the absence of pressing domestic crises or external threat. We've got a lot of problems, that's part of being alive. We'll always have problems as long as we're alive. And we have some big, big long-term challenges.

When all us baby boomers retire, there will be two people working for every one person drawing Social Security and Medicare. We don't want to bankrupt our kids, their ability to raise our grandchildren.

We are the most racially, ethnically and religiously diverse student population in our history and the biggest one by a good long ways. The first group of kids in the schools today, bigger than the baby boom generation, who need, even more than we did, a world-class education. We actually know now how to turn around failing schools. So the real issue is whether we intend to do it, and what the national government's role should be in that great crusade.

Tom mentioned something about environmental problems. No one denies anymore that climate change is real. We just had a fresh study last week from a huge polar icecap that demonstrated conclusively that the 1990s were the hottest decade in a thousand years. Now, this could have enormous consequences for every farmer in America. It could -- if we don't reverse it -- I worked so hard to save the Florida Everglades and in 30 years, a bunch of it could be under water. I mean, really under water, not just sort of sliding along the top like today.

How are we going to grow the economy and actually reduce the environmental threats? The truth is that there is on-the-shelf technology available today that would enable us to drastically reduce our emission of greenhouse gases without having any impact, except a positive one, on our economy, and would allow us to live in more harmony with our natural environment -- today.

And we are very, very close, if we continue the research, to developing automobiles that get 80 miles to the gallon, that operate on fuel cells or dual-use electricity and fuel. We are quite close to a chemical breakthrough in biomass fuels that is the equivalent of when people figured out a hundred years ago how to take crude oil and crack the petroleum molecule and turn it into gasoline, which changed the whole future of the world.

Now the problem with all biofuels today is it takes about seven gallons of gasoline to make eight gallons of ethanol. But if we get over the last chemical problem, we'll be able to make eight gallons of ethanol with one gallon of gasoline. And it won't just have to be corn; it can be rice hulls, it can be field grasses, it can be nearly anything. And when that happens, it will be the equivalent of 500-mile-a-gallon cars. And it will radically change the whole environmental future of America.

Are we going to pursue these things or continue in denial? Or, as my daughter's generation says, remember, Dad, it's not just a river in Egypt. (Laughter.)

This is a big issue, a huge issue. And there are lots of others. Ideas have consequences. In this election for President, in the elections for Senate and the Congress, we have different economic policies. We're for a tax cut; we're for investments in education and health care; but we believe we have to keep paying down the debt to keep interest rates down and economic growth high; that we were profligate, inexcusably, in quadrupling the national debt in the 12 years before Al Gore and I came to Washington. It was wrong.

All the economic analysis I've seen indicates that the difference in the Republican and the Democratic economic proposal -- they'll give you a bigger tax cut in the short-run, especially if you're in an upper-income group; and once they do that and partially privatize Social Security, the non-Social Security surplus is gone, long gone. We're into the Social Security spending again, interest rates will be about a percent a year higher over 10 years. If somebody in New Mexico wants to talk to you about tax cuts, tell them that if the Gore plan keeps interest rates a percent lower a year for 10 years, here's what it's worth to them in a tax cut -- a percent lower interest rates gives you, over a decade, \$390 billion in lower home mortgage payments, \$30 billion in lower monthly car payments, \$15 billion in lower college loan payments.

Now, if my math is right, that's a \$435 billion tax cut that goes overwhelmingly to ordinary working folks and American families, kids trying to get an education, just by keeping interest rates down. There is a huge difference. It's hard to tell through the smoke and fire of the momentary campaign. This is one of the central decisions the American people have to make: was I right or wrong to say, yes, we're going to increase our investment in education and health care and the environment, but we're going to keep driving this debt down and we get out of the deficit, then we're going to use the surplus to keep driving the debt down. Was I right or wrong? Is it the right or wrong course for America?

Someday we'll have another recession. And we may need a big tax cut. We'll have to run a deficit because in recession, unemployment goes up, which means not as many people are paying into the government; and expenses go up, which means there is more money going out.

But when I became President, we didn't even have any tools left to fight recessions with tax cuts and deficit spending, because we were running a deficit every year of over \$200 billion. This is a huge decision.

Now, this state has got a lot of people I think who are moderate Republicans and independents who think of themselves as fiscal conservative, and may find it hard to register that even after eight years, we are the party of fiscal responsibility. And it's the right thing to do. (Applause.) And it's a bigger tax cut, in lower interest rates.

We have differences in education policy. We think we ought to help these states that have growing student populations with smaller classes in the early grades, with building new schools and modernizing schools. They don't believe that's the federal government's business. I think it's America's business. I think every kid that needs to be in an after-school program or a pre-school program ought to be in it. And we've got the money to do it, and we ought to do it.

We have huge differences in health care, right? Patients' bill of rights, Exhibit A. We're for it, they're not really. Now, as we get close to the election and the heat turns up, they may kind of come across the goal line here at the 11th hour and I'm hoping. (Laughter.) Medicare prescription drugs, they want kind of a Rube Goldberg set-up where we give some money to the poorest Americans and tell the rest of them they can buy insurance. And God bless them, I've got to give it to them, even the insurance companies -- we fought so much over the last eight years, I take my hat off to them, they have been totally honest here. They have told the Republican Congress, look, you cannot have an affordable private insurance program for prescription drugs for elderly people. It won't work. We can't do that.

Nevada passed a law just like the Republicans are trying to shove through in Congress -- the exact same law. You know how many insurance companies have offered people above 150 percent of the poverty line insurance for Medicare prescription -- for drugs? Zero. I tell you, with all the fights I've had with the health insurance companies, I want to compliment them. They have been scrupulously honest here. They have told the truth. They have said there is no insurance market here, why are you doing this? We don't want to look bad when we don't offer insurance or we've got to make the premium so high nobody can buy it.

But the pharmaceutical companies are against having Medicare offer a prescription drug benefit to all the seniors who need it. It doesn't make any sense, does it? They're afraid that they'll acquire such market power they'll be able to get prices down to where they're almost as low as they are in every other country in the world.

Now, this is a big deal. These are huge differences. And there are massive environmental differences. They have made a commitment to

repeal my order setting aside 43 million roadless acres in the national forests. The Audubon Society says it's the most important conservation move in 40 years. And they are committed to reversing it. They said they may take away some of the national monuments I've set up. They say that clean air standards are too tough. We've still got a lot of little kids getting asthma in this country because they can't breathe the air.

And, goodness knows, if we haven't proved that you can clean the environment and grow the economy, then somebody hasn't been paying attention. It's good for the economy to clean up the environment. Every single time for 30 years we've raised the environmental standards, the act of raising the standards and implementing them has created more jobs than it's cost. Every single time for 30 years. But we're still debating it.

So you've got to go out across this state and say, look, there's a different economic policy, a different education policy, a different health care policy, a different environmental policy. There is a different crime policy. They're against my program to put 150,000 police on the street, and have promised to get rid of it.

Now, this is the first time ever that crime has dropped for seven years in a row. We're at a 27-year low. The country is safer than it's been in over a quarter century. One of the reasons is that we put all those police on the street. They were also wrong about the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban -- there hasn't been a single hunter in New Mexico miss a day of a season, not a day.

But even if you forget about that for a minute, they actually want to repeal the program that is putting 150,000 police on our streets, that's giving us a safer -- why? They say it's not the federal government's business. All I know is, when people don't feel safe -- that's that Violence Against Women Act we just did -- if people don't feel safe, they don't have much emotional space to worry about what your economic policy is or your education policy or your environmental policy or anything else.

So I'm just asking you to go out across this state, and talk to your friends around the country. Every one of you know and deal with people who never show up at events like this, have never been to a political event in their lives, but they'll all be there on election day, because they believe in America and they want to be good citizens.

And if people really understand the nature of the choice, we will win. We will win in New Mexico, we will win the Presidency and the Vice Presidency, John will win, we'll get the Congress back and we'll keep going forward. And I just don't want to see us give up this.

I worry. You know, sometimes it's harder to make a decision, a good decision in good times than bad times. I know people took a chance on me in '92. I know they got tired of hearing that -- you know, they got worried when they heard, he's a governor of a small southern state and, where is it? (Laughter.) It was actually a bad strategy. I mean, think how many thousand people there are in New Mexico from Arkansas. Half of Chicago, half of Detroit. (Applause.) It was a bad strategy. If you come from a poor southern state where people couldn't make a

living after World War II, you've got kin folks in 20 states. I mean, you can't lose them. (Laughter.)

Anyway, I know they were worried about it. But, come on, it wasn't that big a chance because the country was in terrible shape. We had to do something different.

Now people really do feel like they've got options. And there's not a person in this audience, at least who's 30 years of age or over, who cannot think of one time in your life when you made a big mistake, not because times were so tough but because times were so good you thought you didn't have to concentrate. You can't live three decades or more without making that kind of mistake. That's what America has to avoid in this election. And you've got to go out and tell people what the differences are and what the nature of the choice is.

When Al Gore says, "You ain't seen nothing yet," that's not just a political slogan. I believe that. I do. I believe that with all my heart. (Applause.) I believe the best stuff is still out there. I really do believe. You know, I think within 10 years, measured by today's terms, we'll be driving cars around that get 150 miles a gallon. I believe that mothers will come home with their babies, after they give birth, with little gene cards that will tell them how to plan their future, and the life expectancy of newborns will be 90 years of age.

That's what I believe. I think this stuff is going to happen. I think technology will lift the lives of the disabled people in this country to a level never before imagined. I think we'll totally re-imagine what it means to get older. I think we'll think of people 70 and 75 as sort of middle aged people -- they'll be out doing things, you know, running marathons and stuff. (Laughter.) I think all this is going to happen. It's going to be a very interesting time, if we make the right decisions.

Will there be problems? Oh, yes, there will. You'll have to worry about chemical and biological warfare and terrorists putting them in plastic containers that don't go off in airport metal detectors. There will be all kinds of challenges out there. There will be problems until the end of time. But we have a chance to make this the most peaceful, exciting and harmonizing time in history.

And I'll just close with this. I think the most important thing about our party is that we are not interested in asserting our inherent superiority over anyone. We believe in one America. I mean really believe in it. We're glad to have people in our country who have different backgrounds, different heritages, different faiths. And we want everybody to be proud of themselves, their tribe, and their faith -- everybody.

But we believe the only way we can really celebrate our diversity is if we accept the fact that our common humanity is the most important fact of life on this earth. And so we really do believe that everybody counts, everybody should have a chance. We all do better when we help each other.

And I believe the central fact of our time is not the scientific or

the information technology revolution; it is the growth of interdependence within countries and beyond national borders. We're getting more and more and more caught up in what Martin Luther King called the inescapable web of mutuality. And our party believes in it. That's what one America means.

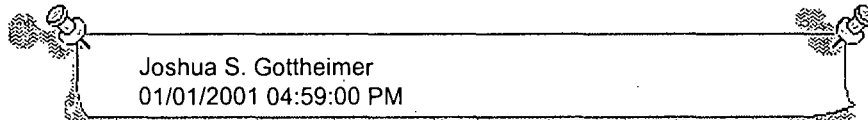
And I honestly believe that if we just keep purging ourselves of our fears of people who are different from us, we keep looking for common ground, we keep reaffirming common values, that the best is out there. But you have to share this sort of stuff with people in this election. And you just cannot assume that because we're so much better off than we were eight years ago and because the case is obvious to you, that everybody else will be there. Because, remember, the better things are, the easier it is to stop concentrating.

So you go out and take some time every day between now and the election and share this with our fellow citizens and bring us home a great victory.

Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 29, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO CONGREGATION AT SHILOH BAPTIST CHURCH

Shiloh Baptist Church
Washington, D.C.

9:40 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

THE PRESIDENT: Reverend Smith, Mrs. Smith, honored guests, members of the church family. All I could think about for the first 30 minutes is how much I wished I were in the choir today. (Laughter and applause.)

I want to say how honored I am to be here, and to be here with so many members of the White House staff, including two ministers. Some would argue we need more. (Applause.) Zina Pierre, who works in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, and Kevin Johnson, the Deputy Director of our Community Empowerment Board, under the Vice President. We also have a lot of other folks, as you know, who are here who wanted me to come here I think so they could be sure to show up. (Laughter.)

I, too, want to thank Lorraine Miller, one of your members and one of my advisors, for all she did to make this possible; and all the others who have been mentioned. I want to thank this church for your outreach, to love not in word, but, indeed, in truth. I want to say a special word of appreciation to my friend, your delegate in Congress, Eleanor Holmes Norton, for being here. (Applause.)

I've known Eleanor a long time, and we have worked closely together since I was trying to become President, in 1992. We have shared high moments and low moments. We shared a disappointment last week when the Supreme Court said the people of D.C. shouldn't have full voting rights -- I believe you should, and I always have. (Applause.)

But I think we can take a lot of pride, as your pastor just said, about the economic revitalization of the District of Columbia, and I am very honored that I could work with Eleanor to alleviate the extraordinary financial burdens on this city, and have the national government pay for the responsibilities that in any other circumstance would be done by a state government. And we took that off your shoulders; I think it will help.

I am proud of the D.C. College Access Act, which now has 3,000 of your young people going to college in other places for low in-state tuition. (Applause.) And I am still hoping we will succeed in passing our New Markets program and some extra incentives for people to invest in the District of Columbia, to bring it all the way back.

So, I thank you, Eleanor. I thank you for the work that you've done to get Frederick Douglass's home established as a national memorial. (Applause.) And the preservation of the Carter G. Woodson home, which is near here, just up the street, I think. (Applause.)

This is a very kind of emotional day for me. I was thinking back -- this is the first time in 26 years I haven't been on the ballot somewhere. (Laughter.) And so I started kind of visiting around almost 27 years ago. And when you were singing and having your service, I was both here and my mind was wandering back over those 26 years. I thought of a time once when I was in an African American service at night in the Mississippi Delta, in 1976, early. And it began to hail. And the building I was in was a tin-roof building. And it began to hail just as a lady got up to sing, "If I Can Help Somebody" -- a cappella. She had

perfect pitch, and she just kept on singing through the hail.

And I thought of so many other things that have happened over the years, because I have had the opportunity to be blessed in churches like this one -- to come as a fellow believer and a child of God and a fellow sinner, to say, thank you. So, thank you. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

I don't know what ex-Presidents do exactly. I wonder if anybody will ever ask me back when I leave. He finally did -- Reverend Smith did. (Laughter.) One of my predecessors told me that he was lost for the first four months after he left office because when he walked in a room nobody played a song anymore. (Laughter.) He was never sure where he was. (Laughter.) I am quite sure of where I am today. And I thank you.

I thank you for giving me the chance to serve these last eight years, to give America a government that looks more like America. (Applause.) For working to create an economy that helps all Americans. I am very proud that we have achieved the lowest African American and Hispanic unemployment ever recorded since we've been keeping these statistics. (Applause.) And that we have record home ownership, and that we've tripled the number of small business loans to minorities, and we have the lowest crime rate in 27 years, and the African American teen birth rate has dropped one-third since 1991 -- one-third. (Applause.)

We have 2.5 million children with health insurance who didn't have it. Over 90 percent of our children immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time in the whole history of the country. For the first time ever, African American children are graduating from high school at the same rate as white students. (Applause.) The number of African American children taking advance placement tests up 500 percent over the last six years, 300 percent in the last three years alone. (Applause.)

And all over the country -- this relates to something that's in the Pastor's Letter today, which I urge you to read. I'll say more about it in a minute, but all over the country one of the most hopeful things is that schools where children weren't learning are being turned into places where children are learning.

I was in a little town in western Kentucky the other day where, three years ago, this grade school I visited was one of the worst schools in the state -- 12 percent of the children reading at or above grade level; 5 percent doing math at or above grade level; none of them doing science, not one, at or above grade level. Three years later, 57 percent doing reading at or above grade level; 70 percent doing math at or above grade level; 63 percent doing science at or above grade level. You can turn these things around. (Applause.)

I was in Harlem the other day in an elementary school where two years ago, 80 percent of the children were reading and doing math below grade level. Two years later, 74 percent doing reading and math at or above grade level. All children can learn and we can turn these schools around. They can be made to work. (Applause.)

So I'm grateful. I'm grateful that we've had the longest economic expansion in history and that everybody has gone along for the ride. I'm grateful that we have the lowest crime rate in 27 years, and the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years, and the environment is cleaner, and we've got more kids with health insurance, and the schools are getting better. I'm grateful for all that.

But in America our public life must always be about tomorrow. It's very interesting to go back and study the founding of this country and to read very carefully the words of the founders. Look, these guys weren't stupid. They knew God created somebody besides white male property owners. (Laughter and applause.) They weren't stupid. You ought to read -- Thomas Jefferson just wrote one book, called "The Notes On The State of Virginia." I have a copy, original copy, going back to the late 1700s. This is before he was ever President. And he has a stunning little, one-paragraph indictment of slavery. So they weren't fools, they knew what they were doing.

They were creating a system which would force people to slowly give up their hypocrisy, and as we broadened our horizons, would force us to keep going further and further toward God -- toward the good, toward the common humanity that is in us all. So what did they pledge their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to? To form a more perfect union. Not a perfect union, we don't get to do that on this Earth. But it would always become more perfect.

Now, that's what this election season is about. I'm now 54 years old. In my lifetime, we have never gone to the polls, ever, with so much economic prosperity, so much social progress, so little domestic crisis, so few foreign threats to our security -- ever, not once. Now, I argue that that imposes on us a profound responsibility.

This is more a subject for a preacher than a political leader, but it occurs to me that everybody who is over 30 in this congregation today can remember at least once in your life when you made a huge mistake, not because things were going so badly, but because things were going so well you thought you didn't have to concentrate anymore. Right? Everybody who has lived a certain length of time has made one of those mistakes. (Applause.)

So I grew up in the civil rights era and the Vietnam War era; I remember the energy crisis; I remember the hostages in Iran; I remember all the troubles this country has had just in my lifetime. So here we are. We went from record deficits to record surpluses. We went from quadrupling the debt to paying the debt down. We're all going forward together, and here we are -- we have the first election of the 21st century. And all the evidence is a lot of people don't think, as the Pastor's Letter said, they don't understand what the differences are, and maybe they shouldn't go.

And I just came here to say, and to say to you and through you to the country, in my lifetime we've never had an election like this. Not one. Where there was so much prosperity, so much social progress, so few domestic crises and foreign threats. And we have the chance, therefore, to think about the big challenges and build the future of our dreams for our children. To save Social Security and Medicare, so when

the baby boomers retire we don't bankrupt our kids. To give an ever more diverse group of children, all of them, an excellent education.

Now you have over half the married couples with children in America now both work, both the husband and wife work; 59 percent of the women in America with a baby under 1 work. We have to do more to balance work and family. I sometimes think the best law I signed the whole time I was here was the first one, the Family and Medical Leave law, because over 20 million people -- (applause) -- over 20 million people have taken some time off when a baby was born or a parent was sick, without losing their job. We have to do more things like this to help people balance work and family.

The best things about the welfare reform law was that we spent more money on child care and training and transportation to help people succeed as parents, as well as in the work force.

The pastor talked about the ozone hole -- the world is getting warmer. The 1990s were the warmest decade in a thousand years. And that relates to this energy crisis we've been toying around with here lately, where we're all concerned about. We need to develop a whole different long-term future.

General Motors just announced a car getting 80 miles to the gallon; we need to get it on the market, all of them. We've got researchers with Department of Agriculture grants trying to figure out how to make fuel from biomass -- that's a fancy word for corn or rice hulls, or even grasses. You know it as ethanol today. And the problem with ethanol is it takes 7 gallons of gas to make 8 gallons of ethanol. But if they get their job done in the laboratory, you'll be able to make 8 gallons of ethanol with 1 gallon of gas. And that means that, in effect, we'll all be driving around getting 500 miles to the gallon. But we've got to do it. We've got to do it.

So you've got all these challenges out there. We've made a lot of progress in building one America, but our work is not over. We still have racial profiling; we still have debates over affirmative action; we still have qualified African American judges who can't even get a hearing before the Senate. (Applause.) We have the lowest childhood poverty in 20 years, and we had the biggest drop last year since 1966, but it's still way too high. We've got poverty among people over 65 below 10 percent for the first time in the history of the entire country, but poverty among our children is still too high.

We may have 90 percent of our schools hooked up to the Internet, thanks to the e-rate that the Vice President fought so hard for, to give a discount to the poorest schools. But there's still a digital divide, and it will have a huge impact unless we close it.

On Friday I signed a bill, HR 2879, which authorizes, appropriately, the placement of a marker commemorating Dr. King's I Have a Dream speech at the Lincoln Memorial. (Applause.) I say that -- if you go back and read that speech, part of it was "I dream that one day certain things will happen and that everything will be all right," but part of it was a dream that we would just keep on working on our more perfect union.

Read the Pastor's Letter. You do not have to become too political to say that we're having an election in which there are vast differences that will have vast consequences for the way we live together as a people. And, actually, I think it's something we ought to be celebrating. We don't have to say anything bad about anybody running this year. Maybe part of the story the last eight years is that I got to take all the poison out of the electorate. (Laughter and applause.) I'm just glad you folks were there to administer the serum, or I wouldn't be here. (Laughter and applause.) But this could be a happy time. We ought to get up every day and thank God we're alive and all this good stuff is going on. We should be happy, happy about our country. (Applause.)

And then we need to imagine what kind of future we want and figure out the choices we have to make and which leaders are most likely to take us there. But I promise you, this is an election that is not only profoundly important, where we make a terrible mistake thinking because things are going well it's not important -- but it is one in which there are real choices.

The Pastor's Letter mentioned some -- the choices on affirmative action and education, on appointments to the courts, on the nature of tax policy. But there are others. The pastor talked about sacrifice -- you know, a lot of members of my party sacrificed their seats in Congress in 1994 because they voted in 1993 to get rid of the deficit. Because when you have deficits and you have big debt, interest rates are high. The interest rates are high because the government is borrowing money that you'd like to borrow and there's not enough to go around, so the price of money goes up. It's not very complicated.

So now we're paying off the debt and interest rates are lower. So one big decision you have to make is, do you want a bigger tax cut now, even if it means we don't get out of debt and interest rates stay high, or should we first say we're going to keep getting this country out of debt, we'll take what's left, give what we need to to education and health care and our children and our future, and take what's left and have a tax cut? (Applause.)

Let's go back to the theme of the sermon today -- I think it's better to think about the future and keep getting us out of debt, and keep the interest rates down. It also, by the way, is like a tax cut. If you keep interest rates one percent lower every year for 10 years, do you know what that's worth to you -- \$390 billion in lower home mortgages; \$30 billion in lower car payments; \$15 billion in lower college loan payments -- by thinking about tomorrow.

But anyway, it's a choice. Some people disagree with that. And they make their case. But don't pretend there's no difference that won't have any impact on you. It will have a huge impact, which decision we make.

There are differences in education policy, in health care policy, and environmental policy, and crime policy, and our foreign policy -- arms control, and how we relate to Africa and the rest of the world. Just a ton of things here that you need to know -- and you need to show

-- on election day. (Applause.)

The pastor mentioned Congressman John Lewis, and what a great leader he was for civil rights, and how he came a long way from his little Alabama farm and a childhood when he stuttered so bad he could hardly speak, and now he bellows his speeches in the Congress. And America listens. One of the greatest honors of my presidency was walking across the Edmund Pettus Bridge with John Lewis and Josea Williams and Coretta Scott King and Jesse Jackson -- (applause) -- on the 35th anniversary of the Selma march. And on that day, I gave a little talk which basically said, we still have bridges to cross.

Now, we're going to cross some bridges. The questions are, are we going to be walking in the right direction -- (applause) -- are we all going to walk across, or just a few of us; and if we all walk across, are we going to walk arm-in-arm, with outstretched hands instead of clenched fists.

I tell you, I look at the young children in this audience -- the young girls in this audience that still have the time of giving birth to their own children ahead of them, because of this Human Genome Project, a lot of these children will have -- they'll be having babies within 5 or 10 years that have a life expectancy of 90 years. A lot of us that are moving into our later years, if we're lucky, the Human Genome Project will give us a cure for Parkinson's, cancer, even the ability to reverse Alzheimer's before our time is done.

But, as I was reminded the other day when I met with the bishops of the Church of God in Christ, and I thought I was being kind of cute when I said to the head bishop, you know, I wanted to come here and meet with some leaders who aren't term-limited -- I thought that was pretty funny -- (laughter.) And the bishop looked at me and said, Mr. President, we're all term-limited. (Laughter.)

So I say to you, we're all just here for a little while. We've got to decide how we spend our time and what we care about. We're supposed to live with troubles, as well as good times. For whatever reason, God has blessed us all -- me, most of all -- to make this a good time. And now we're going to be judged on what we do with the good time.

We still have bridges to cross; we still have dreams to build for our children. The choices are stark and clear and will have great consequences. And we can say that with a happy heart today, honoring our opponents, not condemning them or criticizing them, or saying anything bad about them, but just going out like America was supposed to work all the time, and making our choice.

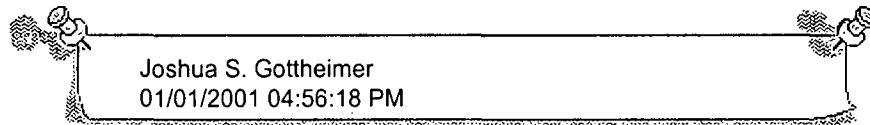
But I am pleading with you -- I have done everything I know to do to turn this country around, to pull this country together, to move us forward. I have done everything I know to do --(applause.) But, you remember this, the best things are still out there; it's still out there. And as long as we keep striving for that more perfect union, tomorrow will always be out there. But in order to do it, you have to show.

So talk to your friends, talk to your neighbors, talk to your

family members, talk to your co-workers, and make sure nobody takes a pass on November 7th. Learn, decide, and choose.

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

END 10:10 A.M. EST



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Subject: native americans

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 19, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT DNC LUNCHEON

Private Residence
New York, New York

1:55 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. First of all, I want to say a real thank you to Jack and to Phyllis for having us here. I've been in their home in New Jersey; I've never been here before, and I wanted to come. And as you can see from the pictures on the wall, the Vice President has been here. (Laughter.) And I've been rather jealous of this. (Laughter.) To say this is an interesting house would be an understatement. (Laughter.) And I'm just delighted to be here. And I thank them for opening their home to us.

I also want to thank Gerry Farraro for being here. And, Congressman -- thank you for being here. And I want to thank Joe Andrew and Beth Dozoretz and Fran Katz and everybody at the DNC for the work they've done.

You know, Joe and I just finished a western swing -- Joe and Beth and I, we've been out on the west coast. And about every time he got up to introduce me, he said, you know, we're going to win every election from the White House to dog catcher. And I keep pointing out to him that that is not such a great distance. (Laughter.) He acts like that's such an encompassing term, you know. (Laughter.) He hasn't been paying attention to Washington lately. (Laughter.)

But let me say, I just came -- a lot of you know this, but I just came from a remarkable event, with Senator Moynihan and the Governor and

a lot of the transportation authorities here. We announced new plans for the new Penn Station and the old Farley Post Office Building. And a lot of you -- you probably saw, the last day or two the New York Times had a nice piece on the architectural plans and what was going to be done. And this is something that Pat Moynihan talked to me about way back in '93. And I also announced that we were going to put \$60 million in our budget over the next three years to help pay more of the federal share to build this. But I wanted to sort of use it as a metaphor for the point I want to make here.

For whatever reason, I think nearly everybody who has been involved in this project has been captured by the idea of it. And most everybody with any sense of the past at all deeply regrets the fact that the old Penn Station was destroyed, and with it a lot of memories of New York and of magnificent architectural creation.

And so, anyway, this little project, it was like a lot of Pat Moynihan's ideas, it was a little bit ahead of its time and it took a while to catch hold. But I signed on early and told him to just call me back when there was something to do.

And so slowly it sort of picked up steam and people got together. So we announced it today and everybody felt so good about it. And I was trying to think to myself why they felt so good about it. I think it's because it captures the past and it also throws people into the future in a way they feel good about, because beautiful public spaces really help us to build a community across all the lines that divide us. Maybe because nearly everybody alive can remember sometime in his or her life -- maybe when we were all much younger and had more free time -- when we were sitting in a train station just watching people go by, felt free and kind of elevated by it.

But I say that because to me what I've tried to do for the United States is to give us a sense that we could meet all our challenges, but that we had to meet them together. That meant that everybody had a role to play and some citizen responsibility. It also means that with all of our diversity, which ought to be celebrated -- not just tolerated, but celebrated -- we have to realize that what binds us together is even more important.

And the story of the last six years has been an effort to try to take the ideas that I developed over a long period of time and that I developed a belief in, and that I talked to the American people about in '92 and again in '96, and turn those ideas into policies that then could be made real in the lives of the American people.

And I'm very grateful for the good things that have happened in this country. But I came here today to say to you that for whatever role I played in it, I think the far more important contributing factor was that we had the right ideas, rooted in the right vision of America, and we had a good team and we showed up for work every day. And we intend to continue doing it down to the last day.

That elicited a few laughs, but anybody that's ever watched any national capital in politics knows that it's no small achievement to get your team to show up for work every day, because an enormous amount of

time and energy is always devoted to trying to divide your team and distract them and wonder who's dropping the dime on whom in the morning paper, so they won't work. Instead, they'll spend all their time calling each other names or being torn up and upset or worrying about something other than the people's business.

So I am here today because for whatever role I have played in this, I know the most important thing was that we had the right vision and the right ideas, and we brought teamwork and we showed up for work every day. And we need to keep doing that. And America needs to make that decision again. And every time you give the people a chance to have a referendum on whether they want politics to be about politicians and the politics of personal destruction, or whether they want it to be about people and progress and unity, they always make the right choice. But you have to put the choice before them -- which means we need good candidates and they have to be adequately financed, and we have to keep the message out there.

The other point I'd like to make rather briefly is that I think it's quite important for us, even though we have now reached a point where presidential elections almost take two years, which I think is wrong -- I actually -- I announced in October of '91, 13 months before the election. And that was a short campaign. I waged a short campaign. But I think it's very important, particularly for the Democrats, because we have been the party of vision and progress and of trying to pull the country together, and not drive wedges among the people -- it's particularly important for us to keep working, to keep working, to keep producing.

There are things which won't wait until 2001. For example, Jack mentioned that we'd balance the budget, and we now have the biggest surplus ever. I have offered the Congress a plan that would save Social Security and Medicare and actually pay the publicly held debt of the United States down to its lowest point since before World War I in 15 years.

Now, why do I think that's a good idea? Because I think it will keep interest rates lower and investments higher, and create more jobs, and raise incomes. It will also make us relatively less dependent on international capital markets at a time when I am doing my very best to stabilize them so we don't have another Asian financial crisis and we don't have to worry about spending an enormous amount of money to keep it from spreading to Brazil or all the things that those of you in finance know we have been working on the last two years.

But I can't say for sure what will happen 10 years from now. I can say for sure, 10 years from now, that if we have a terrible recession and we have to deficit spend, it will be a lot better to do it if we've got a much lower debt base than we have. I can say for sure that if there's another round of global turmoil 10 years from now, we'll be much more immune to it if we've got a smaller debt and our interest rate structures are smaller.

So these are important things. We need to do them now. We don't need to be waiting around. We need to continue our efforts at educational excellence. Today I introduced a bill into Congress -- I

announced it just before I came up here -- every five years we have to reauthorize the general bill by which we give federal money to public schools in New York and everywhere else. It's called the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. By and large, this money is given to help schools that have a lot of poor kids, or a lot of kids whose first language is not English, or a lot of kids who have special needs -- disabilities -- they targeted aid. And a lot of it is given to provide for other kind of special purposes -- technology in the schools and things like that.

None of it, however, is related to results. I have been working for six years to get everybody to embrace the idea that we had to have standards and accountability and we ought to do a better job making sure teachers know the subjects they're teaching and all this. But we've never really been able to move these standards into the schools. So it's basically -- whether they're being observed or not is a function of the character of the local leadership or the commitment of the local political leadership or the state leadership.

We now have a chance to actually change the way schools work. If we say, okay, for the next five years we're going to take all the research that has been done and take the uncontested findings and make the pursuit of those findings a condition of the money -- no social promotion, but don't say the kids are failures; give them all summer school or after-school programs -- this works. Identify the schools that are failing and turn them around or close them down, let the kids go some place else. Have charter schools, have district-wide school choice. Do something to give the kids other choices.

Those are just a couple of examples of the kinds of things that I think we have to do. We also -- I have to tell you, though, it's not -- the federal government and others are going to have to find a way to put more money into teaching because we're going to have a 2-million teacher shortage the next decade, with more kids coming into the schools.

Now, we already have too many teachers out there teaching science and math courses, especially, for which they have not been academically prepared -- and which they, themselves, have not passed performance exams. So it's all very well -- we've got to invest more money in this and we've got to be more flexible about getting people into teaching in all kinds of ways that actually know the subjects we expect them to teach.

So these are some of the things that are in this bill. I think this is quite important. This could have a lot to do with what America looks like 10 years from now. If we can't give -- everybody knows we've got the best higher education system in the world and, relatively speaking, a higher percentage of people going into colleges than other countries. No one seriously believes that we're giving all of our kids the best elementary and secondary education in the world. And until we can do that we won't be able to take full advantage of this astonishing diversity in our student body.

And I think this is, by the way, a huge asset for us in the global economy, to have all these kids from all these different countries. Just go to the New York school system and look -- this is a big deal,

this is a plus, not a minus. This is a good thing in a global society to have this. But only if we can give these kids a chance to learn what they need to know to do well in the world they will become adults in.

Let me just mention one or two other things. The aftermath -- Hillary and I are going out to Littleton, Colorado tomorrow. And the aftermath of that shooting, I think, has had an even more profound impact on the country than all the school shootings last year did. And you can see it by what is happening in the Congress now. I think there is finally a feeling that it's time for everybody to stop making excuses, it's time for everybody to stop trying to place blame, and instead just basically say, I would like to assume whatever my share of responsibility is for giving a safe childhood back to our children.

And there's something for the gun people, the entertainment people and the government people to do. There's also something for the school people and the parents to do, and the kids, themselves. But I would just like to make a couple of points.

Number one, the American people can take a lot of pride in the fact that in the United States Senate that would never have passed any reasonable gun control on a bet six months ago. Over 70 senators last night voted to impose child trigger locks on the gun manufacturers. They voted to raise the age of handgun ownership to 21. And they voted on -- I don't like the bill they voted for because it's got too many loopholes, but at least they're moving toward closing the gun show loophole.

The Speaker of the House yesterday came out for closing the gun show loophole and for raising the gun ownership age to 21. This is good. The Democrats who have been for this for years should reach out the hand across the aisle and say, look, this is good. We've come a long way since 1994 when one of the principal reasons we lost the House of Representatives in the '94 election was the lobbying of the NRA against our members who voted for the crime bill, with the Brady Bill and the assault weapons ban. Ask the gentleman from Pennsylvania, he knows. We lost at least a dozen and perhaps as many 20 seats solely because of this. This is a different country than it was then.

And the grieving of the American people for these children and the recognition that these two young men, who had gone to such a dark place in their own minds, had a Tec-9 and were making bombs, large numbers of them, I think it's really registering on people. And we have a chance, therefore, to do something good.

While I was in California last weekend I told the entertainment community I thought that they should stop advertising that is violent that might be shown to kids who couldn't see the movies or rent the movies or the video games; that the advertising -- people who are exposed to the advertising ought to be rated in the same way that the people who are exposed to the underlying product; and that the whole rating system ought to be reevaluated in terms of gratuitous violence.

Now, this doesn't mean that the people that manufacture guns or the people that manufacture movies or video games are personally responsible for anything. But it does mean -- we know this -- we know

that kids are spending more time on their own, less unsupervised time, that their parents when they're with them are more tired because they're often working two jobs, than at any previous time. We know this. And therefore, we know that there will be more of them who will be vulnerable.

And if that is true, and you have easier access to guns and explosives, on the one hand, and on the other hand, you have now over 300 studies that say that sustained exposure to violence -- the average 18-year-old has now seen 40,000 televised murders on movies and TV or video screen -- 40,000 -- and we know that the vulnerable among us are made more vulnerable, then the whole mixture is a caldron out of which some dramatically terrible things will happen.

And you don't have to blame anybody personally for this, but we all have to say, look, we've got to do something about this. Then I think there has to be a national grass-roots campaign in every community involving religious institutions and schools and other groups patterned on what the Mothers and Students Against Drunk Driving did, patterned on the national anti-teen-pregnancy campaign. Grass-roots, value-based, personal contact with all these kids to try to really dramatically reduce this. And believe me, it can be done.

The last thing I'd like to say is I've been in a lot of schools and there are -- some schools do better than others with counseling programs, with peer mediation programs, with intervention programs that ultimately lead to mental health for the kids who need it, and also with just trying to set an environment in which people are encouraged to be in groups, but the groups are not encouraged to look down on one another and provoke social discord.

I mean, there's a lot that can be done in the schools by the students. And finally -- a person came up to me the other day -- everybody says, we need to do more to try to make it easier for parents not to lose touch with their kids. And anybody who has ever raised a child through adolescence knows that it's an interesting challenge. I mean, you want your child to become independent, to have space, to begin even to have things that aren't necessarily shared with you. But you don't want to lose the connecting cord.

And we have -- it's interesting, isn't it, that we think we should get help in education and instruction and support for everything from losing weight to improving our athletic skills, to figuring out how to use a computer to how to make money in the stock market. And yet, we don't think anybody ought to have instruction in the most important things in life. And this grass-roots campaign ought to be out there helping parents to deal with the challenge of having their children come of age and get that independence they're entitled to without severing the cord that they don't want severed. This is a big deal.

And, you know, our family and Al and Tipper Gore, we've worked on a lot of these issues for years and years and years. And we're going to spend a lot of time on this in the next 18 months.

The last thing I'd like to say -- I'd like to say just a word about the world, because people are so interested, especially in the

crisis in Kosovo now. We have tried in the last six years to be a force for peace, from Northern Ireland to the Middle East to Bosnia. We've tried to be a force for reducing the threat of weapons of mass destruction, and we've made a lot of progress in that -- and for standing up against terrorism and the emerging threat of biological and chemical weapons in the hands of organized criminals or terrorists. We've worked on all that. And we've tried to expand global prosperity through trade initiatives.

But I think it's ironic -- and Jack said it at lunch, he said, it's interesting to me, in this great, modern world we live in, we still can't figure out what to do about genocide -- since that's what World War II was really about. And I think if you think about what characterizes the modern age in a positive sense -- an explosion of technology, especially in the telecommunications area; computer science increasingly being merged with the biological sciences, so that when the human genome project is completed we'll be able to get a map of -- the genetic map of ourselves and our children and our grandchildren, and it should move us very rapidly over the next 15 years to another dramatic increase in life expectancy.

So that's the first thing -- this explosion of technology and its immersion with telecommunications and with the biological sciences.

And then the second thing is the world getting closer together, national borders becoming more porous, the inter-connections of people becoming closer. Isn't it ironic when we're dreaming of our children all learning how to speak different languages, having e-mail pen-pals in Asia and Africa and Latin America, and all this sort of interesting stuff that we want to dream about, that the number one problem we're facing in the world today is the incredible, durable persistence of the oldest demon of human society, the fear of people who are different from us. And the fear leads to loathing; the loathing leads to dehumanization; the dehumanization leads to the justification of killing. And the justification of killing then often leads to the justification of systematic killing, based on racial or ethnic or religious difference.

But it is the oldest problem of human society. And it is a true irony that when we -- I look at these young people here and I think, gosh, the world they'll live in 30 years from now will be full of things that I can't even imagine. Will they really be burdened by this premortal madness that manifested itself in Bosnia, or in the little village of Rwanda, where 700,000 people at least were hacked to death in a hundred days -- in a country not a colonial creation, those people had been living together for 500 hundred years. Or Bosnia, where a quarter of a million people died and 2.5 million people were made prisoners, and mosques were burned and libraries and museums were burned up, and books were destroyed that were priceless. Or what's going on in Kosovo.

Will the people of Northern Ireland take the last step that's still hanging them up to make peace? Will the evident desire of the voters in Israel for peace and security find a concrete expression in the next few months?

The biggest problem to all of it is when it gets right down to the

lick log, it's hard to hold hands with somebody who's really different from you and jump off into a common future. It's hard.

And I know a lot of people that question what I have done and how I have done it in Kosovo. All I can tell you is I'm convinced that I've done the right thing in the best available way. And one of the things you hire a President to do is to think about all the implications of all the options that are available. But I would far rather be here today answering the questions that I have to answer to the American people and to the press about what we have done and why we have done it and how we have done it, than I would like to be here today asking you to contribute money to our party and to our cause if I were sitting on my hands and letting those people be butchered and thrown out of their homes and plundered, and their records erased.

And I think the fact -- it's amazing to me how many American Jews have told me they support what we are doing for Kosovar Muslims. It is a great thing. It is something special. We have no territorial ambitions there; we have no economic ambitions there. We, in fact, are going to have to spend more money to help them rebuild the area and build it higher than it was. What we want is for our children to be able to live in the world where they can maximize the explosion of technology and maximize the openness of borders, and you cannot do that in a world where you're worried about being blown up by a terrorist who is driven by ethnic, religious, or racial hatred.

That is what this is about. It's very much in our security interests to do this. But it's because of the world towards which we're going. If this were 1950, it wouldn't be. The world we're going to live in does not need a Europe consumed, even at its edge in Southeastern Europe, by this kind of hatred.

Let me just close with this story. I've been telling this for five days now, but I was overwhelmed last week, I had an experience which to me embodies the best in this country. Last week, at the request of our leader in the Senate, Senator Daschle, and the other four Democratic senators from North and South Dakota and Montana, we hosted in the White House a meeting of 19 Native American tribal leaders from the upper plain states.

They are the poorest of all of our Indian tribes. And most of them don't have any gambling. They don't have any population density. And it's a long way from here to there, so they don't get a lot of new investment. And they haven't been part of this great booming economy -- they haven't noticed that the stock market went from 3200 to 11,000 in the last six and a half years. It just totally escaped them. I mean, they haven't felt this.

So they came to the White House. And the first thing they did was, they said, well, now -- and we met in the Roosevelt Room, which is a room that some of you have been in -- it's commemorated, basically dedicated to Franklin and Eleanor and Theodore Roosevelt. And Theodore Roosevelt's Nobel Peace Prize is on the mantelpiece there, which he got for helping to end the Russo-Japanese War in 1905.

So they say, well, can we get all this stuff out of here and sit

in a circle? That's our custom. So we get the table out and everybody is sitting in a circle. And a lot of Cabinet members were there. And their spokesperson was a 6'6" tribal chief named Tex Hall -- (laughter) -- not exactly your Native American name, but anyway, that's his name. (Laughter.) So he gets up and speaks and then everybody speaks, and they talk about the education concerns and the health care and the economic concerns.

And I came in about midway through the meeting, they all were talking. So at the end, Chief Hall, he stands up again and he said, I want to tell you something. He said, there's something else we want to do before we go. He said, we have a proclamation here we have signed supporting what you are doing in Kosovo -- representing the poorest Americans, right? He said, you see, Mr. President, we know something about ethnic cleansing. And our country has made a lot of progress, and here we are today and we think we should stand up against it.

And then this other young man said that he wanted to speak. And he represented one of the tribes in South Dakota. He wasn't very tall, and he had this beautiful piece of Indian jewelry on around his neck, silver jewelry. And he said this -- you think about this when you leave here today, about what kind of country you want in the 21st century -- he said, Mr. President, I had two uncles. One of them was on the beach at Normandy. The other was the first Native American fighter pilot in the history of the American military. My great-great-grandfather was slaughtered by the 7th Calvary at Wounded Knee. He said, and here I am in the White House.

He said, we have come a long way from my great-great-grandfather to my uncles to this day. I have only one son and he means more to me than anything. I would be proud for him to go and fight against ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. He said, we know what is right now. And you could not hear anyone breathe in that room.

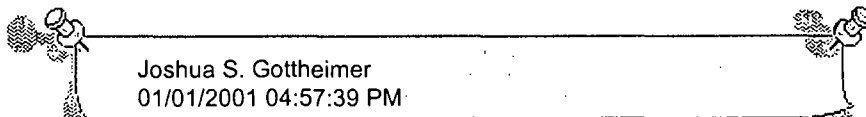
I ask you to think about that. This is a different country than it was six and a half years ago. It needs to be a different country six and a half years from now. We have still so much to do. But if you make me choose one thing I could do in the next nearly two years I've got left, it would be to bring the American people closer together. Not to give up our fights and our disagreements and our arguments, but to just remember this is quite an extraordinary place. We have had quite a journey. We have a lot to do at home and abroad and we'll be able to do it if we don't forget that what binds us together is more important than all the things that divide us.

Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)

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2:27 P.M. EDT

----- Forwarded by Joshua S. Gottheimer/WHO/EOP on 01/02/2001 09:42 AM -----

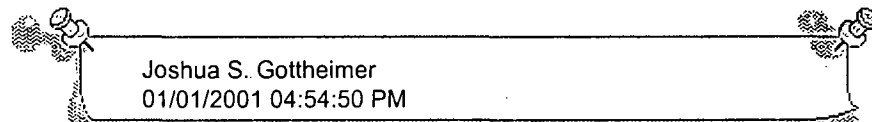


Thank you, and God bless you.

END

2:14 P.M. EDT

----- Forwarded by Joshua S. Gottheimer/WHO/EOP on 01/02/2001 09:42 AM -----



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Subject: conversation on race

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

July 8, 1998

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN PBS DIALOGUE ON RACE

WETA TV, PBS Studio

2:00 P.M. EDT

MR. LEHRER: Good evening. I'm Jim Lehrer. Welcome to an hour of conversation with President Clinton about race in America.

And welcome to you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jim.

MR. LEHRER: The President's conversation will be with eight Americans -- four NewsHour regulars, essayist Richard Rodriguez of the Pacific News Service, Roger Rosenblatt and Clarence Page of the Chicago Tribune, and regional commentator Cynthia Tucker of the Atlanta Constitution; plus four others; Roberto Suro of The Washington Post, author of a recent book on Hispanic Americans; Kay James, dean of Regent University's School of Government, Elaine Chao, former head of United Way of America, now at the Heritage Foundation; and Sherman Alexie, novelist, poet, and screenwriter.

Keep in mind, please, that whatever their affiliation and most importantly, their race, each is here as an individual speaking only for him or herself.

Richard Rodriguez, what do you think is the single most important thing the President could do to improve race relations in this country?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: I think, Mr. President, I think America is growing more and more complicated and it seems to me that our conversation is not keeping up with that complexity. This year began -- this year of dialogue began with John Hope Franklin, the head of the Race Commission, saying that the unfinished business of America is black and white. But it strikes me that after this year, what we really need to do is to understand how complex this country is, with Samoan rock groups and Filipinos and Pakistani cab drivers. And the racial relationships now in America are so complex and so rich that it seems to me we don't have a language even to keep up with that complexity.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I basically agree with you about that. As a Southerner like Dr. Franklin, I think that there are unique and still unresolved issue between black and white Americans, and there are some conditions in America which disproportionately involve African Americans. Some of them are not old. Today there was just this Journal of American Medical Association story saying that African Americans metabolize nicotine in a different way than other races as far as we know, and therefore, even though blacks smoke fewer cigarettes, they're more likely to get lung cancer -- interesting thing.

But to get back to your main point, I have tried to emphasize that America is becoming a multiracial, multiethnic, multireligious society, and therefore it would be more important both to understand the differences and identify the common values that hold us together as a country.

And I often cite, since we're in Northern Virginia where this program is being filmed, I often cite the Fairfax County School District, which is now the most diverse school district in the country, with people from over 100 different racial and ethnic groups with over 100 different languages, actually, in this school district. And I think that's a pattern of where we're going. I've got a friend who is a Southern Baptist minister here, he used to be a minister in Arkansas. He's got a Korean ministry in his church. That's just one tiny example of the kind of things you're going to see more and more of in the country.

MR. LEHRER: Cynthia, is the unfinished business still black and white?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I think that there are, as you just said, Mr. President, some issues that are unique to black Americans and white Americans, and some conditions, especially, that disproportionately affect black Americans, and the most striking is poverty. In fact, I think that what many people think of as racial differences are often class differences. I worry not just about black poverty, the disproportionate amount of black poverty, but also about the growing wealth gap.

There are blacks who are disproportionately poor, and that causes them to resent whites, because they blame whites; but there are also working-class white whose incomes are stagnating or declining and they blame blacks and immigrants. So it seems to me that the wealth gap has at least something to do with continuing racial problems in America.

THE PRESIDENT: There's no doubt about that. And I think that whenever possible if you think that there is a class-related or income-related element in the difficulties we have with race, we ought to have income-based solutions to it.

A lot of things that I've asked Congress to do over the last five and a half years, a lot of things that are in this budget now are designed to address that, with greater incentives for people to invest in inner cities and Native American reservations and other poor areas; tax systems, which would disproportionately benefit working people on the lower income of the scale. I think those things are very important because -- and there is, by the way, some evidence that in the last couple of years, the income inequality has begun to abate some.

But I think it's very important not to confuse the two. I mean, I believe the primary reason for income inequality -- increasing inequality in America is that we have changed the nature of the economy. That is, if you go back to 100 years ago, and you see when we moved from an agricultural to an industrial economy, we also had a big influx of immigrants. There was a huge increase in inequality, not so much because the immigrants, but because the way people made money changed. The whole basis of wealth changed. That's what's happened in this computer-based information economy, and the premium on education these days is so much greater than it's ever been, that there's a lot of stagnant incomes out there from people who have worked hard all of their lives, but aren't part of the modern economy. And I think that we need strategies to identify the people that aren't winning and turn them into winners. And at the very least, turn their children into winners.

MR. LEHRER: Kay James, class or race?

MS. JAMES: You know, it's interesting to me that when we have conversations about race, how quickly it turns to class, and I guess one of my experiences in America is that no matter how middle class you become, if you're still black, you're still discriminated against in many areas. And I guess I would also want to make the point that it's very important for us not to immediately go there, it's not immediately important to go the issues of poverty and class, because race is so important that it bears us spending some time there, I think, to talk about racism in America. Class is a very important discussion, and poverty is a very important discussion, but they don't necessarily immediately go into a discussion of race.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, obviously, I agree with that, or I wouldn't have set up this initiative. I think that the point I wanted to make is to whatever extent you can have an economic approach that embraces people of all races, if it elevates

disproportionately -- racial groups that have been disproportionately depressed, you'll help to deal with the race problem.

But there is -- no one could look around the world -- if you forget about America, just look at the rest of the world -- no one could doubt the absence of a deep, inbred, predisposition of people to fear, look down on, separate themselves from, and when possible discriminate against people who are of different racial and ethnic groups than themselves. I mean, this is the primary factor in the world's politics today at the end of the Cold War.

MR. LEHRER: Sherman, does a poor Native American starting out face more hurdles than a poor white American starting out?

MR. ALEXIE: A poor Native American faces more hurdles than a poor anybody.

THE PRESIDENT: Anybody?

MR. ALEXIE: Anybody, in this country, certainly. We're talking about third-world conditions -- fourth-world conditions on Indian Reservations. I didn't have running water until I was seven years old. I still remember when the toilet came. So -- and there are no models of any success in any sort of field for Indians. We don't have any of that, so there's no idea of a role model existing. An Indian has not sat on this kind of panel before. So me being here for the first time is something amazing.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me ask you something. I'd like to start, because I think this will help us to get to the race issue you talked about. Let's just talk about the Native American population. When I was running for President in 1992, I didn't know much about the American Indian condition, except that we had a significant but very small population of Indians in my home state, and that my grandmother was one-quarter Cherokee; that's all I knew. And I spent a lot of time going around to the reservations and to meet with leaders and to learn about the sort of nation-to-nation legal relationship that's supposed to exist between the U.S. government and the Native American tribes.

I concluded that the American Indians had gotten the worst of both worlds -- that they had not been given enough empowerment or responsibility or tools to make the most of their own lives, and the sort of paternalistic relationship the U.S. government had kept them in was pathetic and inadequate. So they literally got the worst of both worlds. They weren't given enough help and they certainly didn't have enough responsibility and power in my view to build the future.

So what do you think the most important thing is for Americans to know about American Indians? And what do you think the most important thing American Indians should be doing for themselves or should ask us to do to change the future?

MR. ALEXIE: I think the primary thing that people need

to know about Indians is that our identity is much less cultural now and much more political, that we really do exist as political entities in sovereign political nations. And that's the most important thing for people to understand, is that we are separate politically and economically and should be.

For Indians, themselves, I think we have to recognize the value of education, which is something culturally we have not done. And with the establishment of the American Indian College Fund and the 29 American Indian colleges on reservations and in the communities throughout the country, I think we've begun that process of understanding that education can be just as traditional, just as tribal as a powwow or any other ceremony, that education should become sacred.

MR. LEHRER: Elaine Chao, where do the Asian Americans, what kinds of obstacles do they start out with, compared to white Americans or Native Americans, or black Americans, whatever?

MS. CHAO: I think what exacerbates the relationship between the races is, in fact, the feeling of inequity, that somehow somebody else is getting a better deal through unfair means. And Asian Americans are a much maligned minority. On the one hand, they're sometimes counted as minorities when it's convenient for others to do so, and other times when they skew the figures in a less favorable way, like university admissions, then they're counted as white.

So Asian Americans suffer the brunt of both worlds. But in many ways, Asian Americans are now the victims of being an under-represented minority, which means they are excluded from many of the equal opportunities that are available in this country. And I think this is a very, very serious problem that I hope that your great panel will be able to address.

THE PRESIDENT: Give us an example.

MS. CHAO: Well, there's a single mother by the name of Charlene Lo (sp) in San Francisco, and she's raised two boys. One boy, Patrick, is applying to a school in San Francisco. It is a school system, unified San Francisco school system that has basically implemented a quota system through a consent -- and Patrick has always -- he scored 58 on his testing scores out of 69, was barred admission to the high school of his choice because there were "too many Chinese Americans." They had already fulfilled the Chinese quota. There are different standards in that school system for different students of different color.

If you are white, you have one standard. If you are Asian American you have the toughest standard to meet. And of course, other races have other standards as well. That is a horrible example of preferential treatment and of unfair treatment based on race. And I think something has got to be done about it.

THE PRESIDENT: Let's go back to what Kay said. What do you think the roots of racism are?

MS. JAMES: I think the root of racism, and it's out of vogue and out of style in this country to even use that kind of language, but I believe it, and so, I say it. I believe the root of racism is nothing but a very sinful and a very black and dark heart. I mean, after all, racism is a heart problem, a character problem, an integrity problem.

And that's why I think when we have a conversation about how we overcome race in America, it's important to talk on those issues and on those terms. I think the government and I think you, Mr. President, can do a great deal to end discrimination in America. And that's an important topic to talk about. What can we do to end racism? And I think that's going to happen as relationships are formed in communities, as people come to trust each other, as people come to spend time with one another, get to know one another. And that's when the stereotypes are dispelled. That's when people have the opportunity to set aside their preconceived notions, their prejudice, and they get to know each other as individuals.

THE PRESIDENT: Do you think young people -- and you're a dean of a school of government -- do you think young people are less racially prejudiced than their parents on the whole?

MS. JAMES: Well, that's interesting. I remember when I was a part of the group that integrated the schools in the South and, in particular, in my hometown of Richmond. And I can remember going into that school and hearing the young people parrot what their parents had said to them. And while the government took the correct and appropriate action of forcing immigration, I have to tell you it was the most segregated integrated environment I'd ever been in.

The good news is that over a period of time, there were relationships that were established. There were individuals that became friends for life out of that. And so I think we break down the barriers of discrimination and then we deal with the human condition and the human heart in terms of stereotyping and prejudice and bigotry.

MR. LEHRER: Roger Rosenblatt, how would you answer the President's question? Where do we get our attitudes about race? Where do they come from?

MR. ROSENBLATT: Well, they come from fear I guess, and they come from ignorance, and they come from a general sense of otherness, which doesn't only apply to us, it applies to everybody perceiving something different and then backing off in some way. For the worst of those who back off, it takes a form of hatred; for the best, just a kind of shy retreat.

But what Kay was saying about integration came back to something you were saying, too, Mr. President -- what can the President do on this major issue, the deep issue. I would love to see the goal of integration be boisterously set again. You and I and others around this table remember -- they were hard, but the best of times in the early '60s when, frankly, people now at each other's

throats, were all on the same side -- most people who believed in that side. Since then, Cynthia mentioned blame; that's all we've had is context of blame since -- or theories, or bigotry, or separatist notions.

If the race issue is a microcosm of what the country ought to be, then the solving of racism ought to be the solving of the country. We are one place; one complicated, broiling, difficult place in which a great deal of progress has been made, and that ought to be said, too. But if you could reaffirm the idea, remind us that integration is the goal, I think that would be a huge first step.

THE PRESIDENT: What about what Elaine said, though? Let me give you a little background, although I don't know about the facts of this case. California, I give them a lot of credit -- California is trying to have within the public school system a much higher performing school by, among other things, going to charter schools, which seek to have the benefits of public education with the strengths of private, standard state education. And San Francisco has a number of schools -- this is probably a part of their school choice program -- where they basically create schools, they get out from under the rules and regulations of central administration and they hold the kids to high standards.

But apparently, they've made a decision also that they think they ought to have some diversity within their student body. And so, is it fair for a Chinese student who may be the fifth best Chinese student, but also the fifth best overall student who has to get in a class, to be deprived of the chance to get in the class? And if it's not fair, if this child was unfairly treated, what do you do with the kids who didn't do very well and what school should they go to and how can you guarantee them the same standards?

MR. LEHRER: How would you answer that, Roberto?

MR. SURO: It's seems to be the sort of dilemma that points up the need to go beyond the black-white paradigm that we've worked with for so long. I mean, it's very hard to apply a matrix of a white majority and non-white minorities when you get to a situation as complicated as the San Francisco schools. And we don't have a language even to describe these situations, let alone mechanisms that are defined to work in situations where you've got -- where the lines aren't so clear anymore as to a group that's in a group that's out; where you have mobility of identity and of economic status, and where racism takes a variety of forms.

You know, it's interesting -- we talked a little bit about history and when you talk about race, you often talk about your childhood memories of the South and how it has formed your views of it. My question is how we take that history and adapt it, move it, evolve it, into a very different demographic situation now than the one in which it was past -- and how you use it, how you take your memories of the black-white situation in the South and apply it to a much more complicated nation now.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the short answer is that I try to

do now what I tried to do when I was a kid, when I realized what was going on, because I had an unusual background for a lower middle-class white guy in the South because I had grandparents who believed in integration, and my grandfather ran a little store and most of his customers were black. So I had an atypical background. But I was sort of hungering for contact with people who were different from me. And my theory, going back to what Kay said, is that basically if you would ask me, what's the most important thing we could do, I think it is the more people work, and learn, and worship if they have faith, and serve together, the more likely you are to strike the right balance between celebrating our differences instead of being afraid of them and still identifying common values.

Now, you still have -- you have a separate problem for Native Americans, who literally, many of whom still live on reservations. But there has to be a way -- you cannot overcome what you do not know. And if I could just say one other thing. One of the complicating -- believe me, there are lots of hard questions. I don't think -- one of the hard questions is the education question, whether it's affirmative action in college admissions or what Elaine said, for the simple reason that I believe there is an independent value to having young people learn in an environment where they're with people of many different racial and ethnic backgrounds. And the question is, how can you balance that with our devotion to merit and then not discriminating against people because of their race, in effect, when they would otherwise, on grounds of academic merit, get a certain situation. That's one of the hardest questions we face.

But I still think the more we are together -- I was quite impressed, for example, when our daughter was trying to select a college. And one of the things that she did, she went around and actually got the composition and make-up of every school to which she applied, because she wanted -- and then she actually went there to see whether those people were actually -- (laughter) -- not just admitted but actually really getting -- relating to each other.

But a lot of the young people in her generation that I spend time talking to understand that this is something they need to do. I mean, they figured out that their life is going to be real different from ours and they better figure out how to live together.

MR. LEHRER: Clarence, does that make sense to you?

MR. PAGE: It makes a lot of sense, Jim. We went around the table and I've exhibited great patience by withholding my comments because I wanted to hear. Everybody here is expressing this dream of integration, but we all have gotten to different questions about the pain we want to pay, the pay we want to experience to get there. Elaine wants, I'm sure, equal opportunity in a corporate world and educational world. But how much equal opportunity are you willing to sacrifice in pursuit of diversity, the integration dream that Roger is expressing. Let us get back to Richard's question about the language that we speak.

I've heard us go from prejudice to racism, get over to diversity and integration, thinking we're talking about the same

thing, but we're not. You know, racism is institutional. We're talking about history here. And that is why, if you want diversity in San Francisco's schools, you want that virtue of having your kids exposed to other kids of different races and backgrounds, then you've got to be willing to say, we've got to put a ceiling on some people. And I've told the same thing to African Americans back in Chicago, with housing. Because we want desegregated housing, but you've got to tell black folks, as well as white folks, hey, we've got enough of you right now. And that's a hard thing to do.

But integration, desegregation does not come by just good wishes. You've got to work at it. You've got to take some mechanical steps to get from here to there. And until we can do that, we can't have an honest dialogue until we're willing to talk about how much are we willing to pay.

MR. LEHRER: Somebody has to get hurt in order for other people to be helped?

MR. PAGE: That's right. There's got to be some pain involved. And everybody talks about -- this is why affirmative action is so tough. And, Mr. President, I have written this, so it's only proper that I say this to you personally -- I feel like one problem with the race dialogue was that I think you were reluctant to deal with the question of affirmative action. It is the most divisive question that we've got along the lines of race in this country right now, besides crime, which is another question for a dialogue. But we need to talk -- and, of course, I agree with you fully, we need to mend it, not end it. We need affirmative action. But how do we define it and how do we deal with those people who feel like they're sacrificing?

And I think the sacrifices have been over-rated and the polls seem to bear me out. Most white folks don't feel that pained by affirmative action or so-called quotas, et cetera. That is a great political tool, and until we deal with it effectively and have a real dialogue about it, it's going to be exploited politically by various people in a positive or negative kind of way. And I guess I'll have to say, how do you feel about that in terms of the kind of tiptoeing around the --

THE PRESIDENT: See, I believe, I frankly -- I believe that the real reason it's a problem -- it's more a problem in education now than in economics because the unemployment rate is so low and because the jobs are opening up, so most gifted people feel that if they're willing to work hard, they can find a job. We don't have the anxiety about affirmative action we used to have when the police department and the fire departments were being integrated and promotions were being given. Every now and then you hear something about that, but most of the controversy now is about education. Why? Because people know education is really important and if parents and children make a decision about where they want to go to school -- in the case of Elaine, a public school -- that they believe is good, or a college, they're afraid if they don't get in where they want to get in, they'll get a substandard education.

I have a different view. The reason I've supported affirmative action, as long as you don't just let people in who are blatantly unqualified to anything, is that I think, number one, test scores and all these so-called objective measures are somewhat ambiguous and they're not perfect measures of people's capacity to grow. But secondly and even more importantly, I think our society has a vested interest in having people from diverse backgrounds.

When I went to college in the "Dark Ages," one of the reasons I applied to Georgetown was they had foreign students there and they had a policy of having a kid from every state there. Maybe I got in because there weren't so many people from Arkansas who applied, for all I know. I think that there are independent educational virtues to a diverse student body, and young people learn different things in different ways. And I don't think objective measurements are perfect. So I don't have a problem with it.

But I think the most important thing is that we have to understand that this is one of the hard questions. And it is best worked out, in my view, by people sitting around a table trying to work out the specifics, like in San Francisco. And when people feel like they have no voice, then they feel robbed. But there will never be a perfect resolution of this.

MR. LEHRER: Richard, do you agree? No perfect resolutions to this?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: No, I do agree. I think generally no perfect solution. I left the university affirmative action -- I was so appalled by it. I considered myself a Hubert Humphrey liberal. When it came time for me to get a position over you because you were white, and because America perceived me to belong to this new brown race, this complete fiction of the Hispanic race -- it does not exist, there's no Hispanic race left or right of Cuba. We -- my father is very light skinned, my mother looks very Indian. There are white Hispanics, there are black Hispanics. But the university didn't care about any of that. I was this new brown race, this new Hispanic race.

At a point in the American political discussion when the only person who was not a minority was people that you came from -- poor whites -- particularly poor white males in this society, who, in the language of affirmative action, is that they are somehow represented in the public society -- like hell they are. Where are the Appalachian white represented? Because there are white men in front of the airplane? And it came to me at a time when I was middle-class, Mexican American, perfectly capable of dealing with the competition for jobs, and the jobs came looking for me because I was their brown man. And I threw the jobs back at them. I didn't want those jobs. And if that's the way we are going to discuss race in America, with these bureaucratic understandings of who is a Hispanic, without even knowing what a Hispanic means, we are in real trouble in this country.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me ask you -- let me ask everybody -- first of all, I'm glad you said that, because we're in the

business of defining stereotypes tonight, so that's good. I think all of us who have worked hard to get where we are are sort of proud of that. I mean, when I was a young man, I was the only person on my law school faculty that voted against our tenure policy because I never wanted anybody to guarantee me a job. I told them they could tell me to leave tomorrow and I'd go. I mean I really identify with what you -- I'm proud of that.

But suppose you're the president of the university, would you like, other things being equal, to have a faculty that were reasonably racially diverse? And even more importantly, would you like, other things being equal, to have a student body that reflected the America these young people are going to live in once they've graduated? And if you believe that, and you didn't want to infuriate people like you've been infuriated and make them feel like you've felt, how would you go about achieving that?

I think this is tough stuff. I don't pretend that my position is easy or totally defensible. How would you do it?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: I think you would start at the bottom of the social ladder. You would start at first grade rather than in graduate school and trying to decide which ones of us get into law school. You would make sure that America had a system of education that saved children in first grade because we lose it there.

MR. ROSENBLATT: I think that's absolutely right. And I think that even though it sounds like a distinction without a difference, goals are better than quotas. And if you know what you want in a particular situation -- be it a workplace or a college class -- then you're not stuck in the exact situation Elaine mentioned in which you're doing something patently unfair. Also, the nice thing about goals is you don't always have to reach them. The idea is to keep your eyes on them and hope that you get the proper and reasonable mix in a group.

THE PRESIDENT: Let's go back to this. I want to ask you to come in because I want you to go in here. (Laughter). What exactly was it did you resent? Did you resent the fact they were going to guarantee you a job whether you were any good or not? Or did you resent the fact that they were looking for Hispanic faculty members?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: I resented two things. I resented the fact I was being rewarded with the exclusion of other people of my ethnic group. In other words, I was a numerical minority at a point in which I was not a cultural minority. And the absence of those people -- because my people were not there, I as the 10th person became their minority. And I resented it for all the political, liberal reasons that I have and that there was something that didn't play on my soul -- the notion that I was entitled to the shot, and you weren't because I had darker skin, and it didn't play on me.

I was never a primary victim of racial discrimination in this country. I belong to California, but I grew up among Portuguese and Irish kids -- never, never a primary victim. In the name of the

primary victims, I was advanced to graduate school.

MR. SURO: I've had some of the same experience, not quite as explicitly, but there are times when I have consciously not wanted to be regarded as a Hispanic journalist and define that as a central part of my definition or qualification. And even in doing reportage, I hope that I can deal with anybody. When I went overseas looking for -- I very consciously didn't go to Latin America.

It draws this distinction that Richard raised, I think, between primary victims of discrimination and people who have different kinds of history. And we're dealing with, now, how do you determine whether -- affirmative action was started as a historical remedy. Lyndon Johnson's speech here was about the foot race, was a reflection on history. And the question is, what do you do when you have people who don't have the same history, but belong to a minority group. Among Latinos now, you have people who have experienced real discrimination and have a real history of discrimination in places like South Texas, and you have people who arrived yesterday. Yet, our system of looking at them puts them all together in one group.

MR. LEHRER: Cynthia, the differences -- in other words, dealing with people differently.

MS. TUCKER: Well, this may be one of those places where, in fact, the black experience in America is distinct. I did grow up suffering discriminations -- real, in-your-face. I grew up in Southern Alabama under Jim Crow. And now, I am not offended by affirmative action programs at all. I happen to think, a, that that does not mean that the person is unqualified, but I also remember only too well when people that I knew were denied jobs because they were black. And so that is one of those places where the black experience is different, perhaps, from any other experience in this country with the possible exception of Native Americans.

MS. CHAO: Clearly, the history of this nation, as it went through the racial stages, has been very tragic; no one would dispute that. And it's clear, also, that we don't live in a perfect world in which there is equal treatment for everyone. But I think it's absolutely incumbent upon all of us to remember that this is the ideal, that equal opportunity must exist for everyone in this country, regardless of color or race or creed or whatever.

And when we talk about diversity, what a wonderful notion it is. Of course, most of us support it. I, for one, definitely support it. But the issue is, how does one create this diversity and who gets to sacrifice, as Clarence mentioned, and who gets to suffer?

As far as diversity is implemented right now, it's basically implemented through a numerical quota, goals, whatever they're called. Basically, the touchstone word is we want it to be representative of America, which means that it's 13 percent African American, 8 percent Latino Americans, 3 percent Asian Americans, and perhaps -- a certain percentage of Native Americans, and the rest white. When we don't evaluate things, and when we don't offer

opportunity based on merit, how do we decide otherwise, and who becomes over-represented minorities? Who becomes under-represented minorities? And that just snowballs -- differential treatment, preferential treatment for one group versus another. I think we should hew to the overall core value of this country, the equal opportunity of rights for all. And there should be same standards for everyone.

Q Well, how do you define merit? Does there seem to be an equal opportunity to get into Berkeley and UCLA? But how do you define merit -- is it SATs or ACTs or other criteria?

MS. CHAO: No, I think clearly, merit.

MR. LEHRER: Let me ask Sherman, where do Native Americans fit into the affirmative action debate?

MR. ALEXIE: You know, I get this question asked a lot. I always say, if we were taking the jobs, and we were taking the spots in college, then why aren't we having jobs and why aren't we in college. (Laughter.) I mean, people worrying about medical school -- people worrying about blacks getting into medical school or law school, and I walk through the hospital and the brown people are mopping. So I think all this debate about affirmative action and about quotas is delusional and anecdotal. There's never been a black person who's been denied a job who's won a lawsuit against a company for not hiring him because they were black, and yet were determining national policy based on anecdotal lawsuits.

Q It's not anecdotal.

MR. ALEXIE: On one example, Texas, we changed the whole entire admissions system at universities in Texas based on one person losing a spot because of their job and it was one lawsuit that decided that, that turned the tide. And so if you want to talk about affirmative action, that's sort of a legal affirmative action, where a white person has more power in the courts, bringing a lawsuit against the university, than a black person would have bringing a suit against the university for not getting in.

Q Jim, I have to answer that, if I could, because it's not anecdotal evidence. There is a great database of differential standards that do exist for different racial groups. That is common practice in the admissions of university today all across America. That is common practice for many of our educational facilities, institutions, at the lower levels as well. There is definitely no question that it's just not anecdotal. At the Center for Equal Opportunity and many other think tanks have compiled a substantial database that do show this is part of the racial policies of America today.

I do want to say one thing about --

THE PRESIDENT: Do you want to answer Clarence?

Q I was going to say -- I think education -- Richard

has a good point -- education is important. We ought not to talk about equal opportunity at this late stage, but how do we get back to K and 12? Our schools are falling apart. How do we fix our schools? How do we slash crime in our neighborhoods? How do we create economic opportunity for everyone? I mean, that's a real goal for our country.

THE PRESIDENT: What are you going to say about this?

MS. JAMES: I was just going to say, Mr. President, I think the operative phrase was, in your question, "all things being equal," wouldn't we like a diverse community, particularly in the academic arena. And I was looking around the table and thinking, gee whiz, I bet I'm the only one here at the table that has to make admissions decisions.

THE PRESIDENT: You've got to make these decisions.
(Laughter.)

MS. JAMES: And you're right, all things being equal, wouldn't we like to have a diverse community. And I think that's where most people in America are. Most people in America, of course, acknowledge and have high esteem for diversity and recognize that their lives are much more enriched in that environment. But what they have a problem with is feeling like there are set-asides or preferential treatment for some class of people that exist for them only because of their race.

As an example, I guess I run across so many middle class African American students who don't deserve to have preferential treatment based solely on their race. They've had every opportunity, they've been given every chance in America, and so it makes no sense to give them preference for purely race-based -- that maybe we should look more at some of the programs that exist in America that give treatment and preference to people out of poverty, that give preference and treatment for a variety of reasons. But to purely have race-based solutions in America today doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me go back to something Clarence said at the beginning. You pointed out we've talked about prejudice, discrimination, then we started talking about diversity and all that. I think you need -- if I could go back to the very first thing that all of you started talking about -- we need a vocabulary that embraces America's future, and we need a vocabulary that embraces America's present and past on this race issue. And we need to know when we're making distinctions. And then we need to fess up to the fact at least when it comes to Native Americans that if we don't do something fairly dramatic, the future is going to be like the past for too many people.

For example, I think most Americans, whether they're conservatives or liberals or Republicans or Democrats, would support, for example, my budget proposal to give more resources to the EEOC to get rid of the backlog. Because all of the surveys show that 85 percent of the American people, or 90 percent or something, believe

that actual discrimination against an individual person in the workplace is wrong based on race.

Now, the real problem is that affirmative action, I think now, since there are a lot of middle-class blacks, middle-class Hispanics, that it's almost -- people are not so sure in the workplace and the school place whether it is furthering the goal of getting rid of the lingering effects of discrimination, which is Cynthia's experience, and mine as a Southerner -- ours -- you know, or whether it is now being used to create a more diverse environment which people feel is a good thing, but not a good thing if it is sticking it to this hard-working Chinese mother in San Francisco and her children, who is raising her kids under adverse circumstances.

And I guess one of the things that bothers me is that a lot -- we need to make these kinds of discussions practical and institution or community-based, because, I'll say again, I think that we want our children to grow up to learn to live in a world that they will in fact live in. Therefore, if you forget about discrimination for a minute -- you can't ever do that, but let's just assume there is no discrimination -- America has a wonderful system of higher education. There are hundreds of schools I think you can get a world-class undergraduate education in. And I believe that, therefore, it's worth having some policy to try to diversify the student body.

It's interesting to see what Texas did when the Hopwood decision came down. They said, well, we don't want to have a totally segregated set of colleges and universities in Texas, so we'll just say the top 10 percent of every high school can automatically go to any Texas institution of higher education. That looks like a merit-based decision, but, of course, it's not any more merit-based than the other decision because there are segregated high schools and there are differences in test scores and all that.

So we need to kind of -- we need 10 hours to discuss this and I'd like to listen to you. But the only thing I want to point out is, the American people have got to decide, do they want a housing project in Chicago -- in this case, only the people from Chicago have to decide -- that's integrated. If so, the people who don't get in there, do they have reasonable alternatives? That's one realistic thing. If a child doesn't get into a good school that he or she wants to get in to, do they have an equivalent alternative? If they don't, you maybe have hurt them for life. Is it worth it to get rid of discrimination?

Or in the case -- look at Kay's problem. She runs a government department that makes these admission decisions in a school that has a certain religious and value-based approach to life. So if a child gets deprived of going into there, even if the kid goes to Harvard, it may not be cultural environment --

MS. JAMES: They couldn't get near the education they get at Regent. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: But let's assume it's equivalent. The

child may lose something non-educational. So all these things are -- I just want the American people to start talking about this in a way that's real here.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Mr. President, one interesting -- I think we need to do as Americans is also wonder whether these terms we're using mean anything anymore. The fact is, we have been falling in love with each other for over 200 years in this country -- from Pocahontas to Thomas Jefferson's children. The fact is we care -- in America. The fact is that increasingly now I'm meeting young people who don't want to define themselves as belonging to a race.

And the two largest Hispanic groups in this country -- mulatto Puerto Ricans, mestizo Mexicans -- are entering in this country and injecting a kind of complexity into the whole way we understand race as a singular thing, and beginning to teach us that, in fact, we will belong in some future to many races.

When I said that there is not a vocabulary for this -- I also in San Francisco, I know this young woman who is -- I asked her what her racial identity was, and she said her father is African American and her mother is Mexican. And I said well, what are you? And she said I'm a "Blaxican." (Laughter). She said she's a "Blaxican" because there wasn't a word for it yet.

You asked that question of why young people -- I think American young people are going to be redefining the very stolid, old Crayolas that we have been calling Americans.

THE PRESIDENT: That's good.

MR. LEHRER: Cynthia and then to Roger -- on this question that the President raised, the new dialogue. And to Richard, what are the new words we use? What do we talk about in this new world?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I think one of the things we had to do is to simply acknowledge how much the world has changed. Richard is right. I have a Mexican brother-in-law, and my sister and he are about to have a baby. And she, too, I suppose will be "Blaxican" or whatever. (Laughter).

And so I think, first of all, more Americans need a stronger sense of history. I think there has to be an acknowledgment that African Americans and Native Americans especially have suffered burdens others have not. But I also think that all of us, including African Americans, need to acknowledge how much the world has changed. I think one of the reasons we hear so many interesting things from California, Elaine, is because California is cutting edge. Some days I look at California, and I think that's the wave of the future, and I think, oh goodness, no. But some days -- Chelsea chose to go to school there -- maybe California's doing okay. But I do think that the struggle among the various ethnic groups in California are a cautionary tale, quite frankly.

MR. ROSENBLATT: Now, when you think about how much the

world has changed -- I don't want to flip to a Pollyanna-ish mode for the moment, but one way it's changed is that a lot of things have gotten better. Not only have they gotten more interesting, not only have they gotten more complicated -- all of which is true -- but you grew up in a world in which hatred was a useable instrument; where people couldn't go to same schools, you couldn't vote, you couldn't do this and you couldn't do that. And not only that, it was an instrument that was in some dark and deeply stupid way approved of by the silence of the majority. Now, as you say, that majority does not approve anymore.

We talk about racism in a country -- I'm not sure if we're talking about anything like the same racism with which you two grew up in and of which we were apprised. It isn't that I'll say that everything is getting better or good as fast as we could want it, but I sometimes wonder how important affirmative action as an issue for debate really is because I think, eventually, it's going to be phased out anyway. It's going to get there, and that, to go back to Richard's irrefutable point, to get down to the youngest people and the best education for them and all social programs into that would seem to be part of the new vocabulary you called for.

Q Roberto, how would you define the new vocabulary?

MR. SURO: We've talked a lot about how trying to describe the population and how it's changed. Roger touches on an important point. We have to have a new vocabulary to describe our attitudes. Discrimination is a different thing in this country than it was 20 years ago.

THE PRESIDENT: In what way?

MR. SURO: Well, I would say if you take the African American example, I'd say a young black male who lives in an inner city experiences being black differently than a middle-aged, middle-class female who lives in the suburb. It's a different experience of what it means to be a black in this country. And when you're talking about remedies of discrimination, when discrimination isn't simply based that all black people be excluded from certain institutions, as was the case earlier in our lifetime, you need more subtle remedies, more complicated remedies, and more complicated vocabularies to describe attitudes. More people are classified according to multiple markers, not just skin color but a variety of different things establish status in this country, and so the remedies have to address each of those different things, I believe.

Q I could beg to differ. I'm a middle-class black who lives in the suburbs, and in my suburb right now there are numerous complaints about black youths being stopped by the cops unfairly, just as they're stopped by the cops in the inner-city. And, Jim, you know, after the L.A. riots in '92, we had this discussion on this program, and I talked then about my three year old son that everybody thought was quite cute -- he looks just like me, naturally -- how else could they --

MR. LEHRER: I don't remember that coming up. (Laughter.)

Q But I was saying then, where will he be 10 years from now? Well, my son is now nine, and now I have to say four years from now, because he's going to be a teenager. And when -- and today the most feared creature on urban streets today is a young black male. And that is the future I am looking toward with my son. I want a better life for my son like everybody else does, and the new vocabulary of race to me is very much like the old vocabulary, except it's got some new terms, like the gilded ghetto. The gilded ghetto is what middle-class blacks find themselves in out in the suburbs now because the white folks who used to be their neighbors have moved further out --

MR. LEHRER: What do you tell your son? What do you tell your son about why this is happening?

Q We treat race talk like sex talk around our house, Jim. We don't bring it up unless our son brings up a question, and then we answer the question he brings up. But we live, fortunately, in a desegregated, integrated neighborhood. Our son is very well aware of racial difference, has been since he was four years old, as all children are. But he doesn't see racial value; he doesn't see one race being better than another -- I hope. I mean, certainly, by associations he has, he doesn't reflect that. I hope that is our future.

But I have to say -- and Richard and I always have this discussion and the vision he paints of the future is so beautiful, I hate to throw cold water on it. But I've got to say, in 1998, we are still a segregated society. Blacks and whites still live mostly separate lives. We're better off than we were 30 years ago, thank God, but we are still -- outside of the workplace, outside of the workplace we still live largely separate lives. Why in the workplace have we got this association? Because of affirmative action. That's a big reason.

Q In 1998, we are still unable to say that, in effect, we are part of each other's bloodstream. This is the heritage of racism, where we were never allowed to marry each other. And now we deny it to ourselves. We say that that doesn't make any difference. Well, I get stopped by police in San Francisco when I go jogging early before dawn. The last time I got stopped was by two black policemen, and I think to myself, this is a very complicated society we live in. (Laughter.)

Q Who said blacks couldn't be prejudiced?

THE PRESIDENT: I agree with that. You know, I'm very sympathetic with what you say. And I want it to be as you say. And I agreed that we have all kinds of overlapping stereotypes that we haven't even talked about. One of the things that came up after Los Angeles riots, you know, the attitudes of the African Americans to the Korean grocers and the Arab grocers and the Hispanic customers and all of that -- it's a lot more complicated than it used to be.

But as a factual matter, if you just look at the prison

population -- you wanted to bring that up -- if you look at all the unemployment rate among young, single African American males without an education, if you look at the physical isolation of people in these inner-city neighborhoods -- we have the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years; there are still New York City neighborhoods where the unemployment rate is 15 percent -- if you look at these things, if I could just come back to sort of what I think is practical here, I think it is imperative that we somehow develop a bipartisan consensus in this country that we will do those things which we know will stop another generation of these kids from getting in that kind of trouble.

My best model now, I guess, is what they're trying to do in Chicago in the school system and what they've done in Boston with the juvenile justice system. In Boston, they went for two years without one kid under 18 being killed with a gun. Unheard of in a city that size. And if you look at what they did in Houston, we need to at least adopt those strategies that will invest money in keeping these kids out of trouble in the first place and try to keep them out of jail and give them the chance to have a good life. And if there's disproportionate manifestation of race, then so be it. Then we ought to have an affirmative action program, if you will, that invests in those kids' futures and gives them a chance to stay out of trouble.

To me, it's the kids that are being lost altogether and the disproportionate presence of racial minorities among those kids that is still the most disturbing thing in the world. Because if you get these kids up there, 18 or 19, heck, they'll figure out things. Our kids will figure out things we weren't smart enough to figure out. That's how society goes on. That's what progress is all about. But I think we have to recognize that's still a big race problem in this country, especially for African Americans.

MR. LEHRER: Clarence raised the point, Sherman, about race talk in his family and the President -- Mr. President, you have said you had trouble getting people to talk bluntly and honestly about race.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. We're all too polite about it.

MR. LEHRER: How do you get people to talk about race?

MR. ALEXIE: Just walk into a room, I think. People are always talking about race. It's always coded language. They call it "class," or they use coded language. Nobody actually says, well, that's a black person, let's talk about being black, but it always ends up coming up. Usually what they'll do to me is come up and tell me they're Cherokee. (Laughter.) So that's usually what it amounts to.

Nobody talks about Indians, so I don't have to worry about that. We grew up not being talked about at all, and we're still not talked about. You know, I walked by the locker room out there, and there is a Washington Redskins bumper sticker on a locker. And I said, nobody cares about Indians.

MR. LEHRER: But do Indians talk about race?

MR. ALEXIE: Oh, yeah, we're actually probably a lot more conservative and racist than any other single group of people. We're much more reactionary. It's funny, politically, we give our money to Democrats, but we vote for Republicans. (Laughter.)

MR. LEHRER: I'm going to leave that one alone. (Laughter.)

How do you get honest talk? Do you think there is honest talk about race?

MS. JAMES: All you have to do is get people to start talking out on their own personal experiences and it gets there pretty quickly. And everyone has a story to tell. I've noticed around the table even today that as we talk about race in America and the distinctions of being African American and that it's really a black-white issue, I guarantee if we were bringing an Irish American in here, they would tell you they've experienced discrimination in this country. And if you get a -- you know, you talk to people in the Jewish community, and they'll say, well, our experience in America has been this. And so when you get people to talk out of their own experience, it gets there fairly quickly.

Q I think the bottom line is, I think there has to be not allocation of programs based on preferential treatment -- but that there is equal opportunity. And going back to Clarence's issue about merit --

MR. LEHRER: We're talking about talking bluntly about race.

Q Right. I think this is part of it. And I think the President wanted me to answer Clarence's comments, Clarence's question about merit.

MR. LEHRER: Okay, but we have to -- I have to interrupt you all now to say, thank you, Mr. President, and thanks to all the rest of --

THE PRESIDENT: We're just getting warmed up.

MR. LEHRER: I know, I know, I know.

Q It's got to be the same standards for everybody, however merit is defined.

MR. LEHRER: Okay. But from Washington this has been a conversation with President Clinton about race. I'm Jim Lehrer. Thank you and good night. And as you see, may the conversation continue.

END

3:00 P.M. EDT

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE
BUILDING ECONOMIC SELF-DETERMINATION IN INDIAN COMMUNITIES

Grand Hyatt Hotel
Washington, D.C.

1:55 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you for the wonderful welcome. Thank you for the song. Thank you, Dominic, for giving us a picture of opportunity and hope for the future. I'm very glad that you're not only a good student but a good entrepreneur and a good promoter. Dominic was kind enough to give me one of his bracelets before I came out. (Laughter and applause.) So I'm his latest walking advertisement, and I'm glad to shill for him. (Laughter.)

I would like to thank the members of the administration, the 15 agencies that have come together with the White House to sponsor this conference. I thank Secretary Daley, Secretary Riley, Secretary Glickman, Small Business Administrator Aida Alvarez, who are here. I'd like to thank Deputy Assistant Secretary Michael Anderson; Kevin Gover, Mark Van Norman; Angela Hammond, and two young people on our staff, Julie Fernandes and Mary Smith, who work with Mickey Ibarra and Lynn Cutler; all of them worked very hard on this conference. I thank them. Thank you. (Applause.)

I'm proud to be here with Chief Marge Anderson; Governor Walter Dasheno; Chief Joyce Dugan; Chairman Frank Ettewagechik; Chairman Roland Harris; Chairwoman Kathryn Harrison; President Ivan Makil; Governor Mary Thomas; Chairman Brian Wallace; President John Yellow Bird Steele. I thank all of you.

I have looked forward to this day for quite a long time. The Iroquois teach us that every decision we make, every action we take, must be judged not only on the impact it makes today but on the impact it makes on the next seven generations. It is, therefore, fitting on the eve of a new century and a new millennium, that we come together today to determine what we must do to build a stronger future for our children, for our grandchildren, for future generations of Native Americans, and indeed for all Americans.

For too many Americans, our understanding of Native Americans is frozen in time -- in sepia-toned photography of legendary chieftains; in the ancient names of rivers, lakes, and mountain ranges; in the chapters of old history books. But as we have all seen at this conference, the more than 2 million members of tribal nations in the United States -- from energetic, young entrepreneurs like Dominic to innovative leaders like the ones sitting here with me today -- are a vital part of today's America and must be an even more vital part of tomorrow's America. (Applause.)

We are living in a time of great opportunity and hope, with our

economy the strongest in a generation. Soon we will have the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years; the lowest unemployment in 28 years; the highest home ownership in history. Social problems are finally beginning to bend to our efforts as a nation -- the crime rate, the lowest in 25 years; the welfare rolls, the smallest percentage of our people in 29 years. We are taking strong steps toward the America I dreamed of when I first ran for this office beginning in late 1991 -- an America where there is opportunity for all, responsibility from all, a community of all our people.

It is a time of unprecedented prosperity for some of our tribes as well. Gaming and a variety of innovative enterprises have enabled tribes to free their people from lives of poverty and dependence. The new wealth is sparking a cultural renaissance in parts of Indian country, as tribes build new community centers, museums, language schools, elder-care centers.

But we also know the hard truth -- that on far too many reservations across America such glowing statistics and reports mean very little indeed. While some tribes have found new success in our new economy, too many more remain caught in a cycle of poverty, unemployment, and disease. The facts are all too familiar. More than a third of all Native Americans still live in poverty. With unemployment at a 28-year low, still on some reservations more than 70 percent of all adults do not have regular work. Diabetes in Indian country has reached epidemic proportions. Other preventable diseases and alcoholism continue to diminish the quality of life for hundreds of thousands.

At a time of such great prosperity, when we know we don't have a person to waste, this is an unacceptable condition. That's why we're here today -- to find new ways to empower our people, especially our children, with the tools and the opportunity to build brighter futures for themselves and their families. Our government alone cannot solve the problems of Indian country, nor can tribal governments be left to fend alone for themselves.

Everyone must do his or her part -- tribal and federal governments, along with the private sector. We all have to work together to empower our people with the tools they need to succeed. Most of all, every individual must take responsibility to seize the opportunities of this new time and to break the cycle of poverty.

As President, I have worked very hard to honor tribal sovereignty and to strengthen our government-to-government relationships. Long ago, many of your ancestors gave up land, water, and mineral rights in exchange for peace, security, health care, education from the federal government. It is a solemn pact. And while the United States government did not live up to its side of the bargain in the past, we can and we must honor it today and into that new millennium. (Applause.)

Four years ago, when I became the first President since James Monroe in the 1820s to invite the leaders of every tribe to the White House, I issued a memorandum directing all federal agencies to consult with the Indian tribes before making decisions on matters affecting your people. This spring I strengthened that directive so that decisions

made by the federal government regarding Indian country are always made in cooperation with the tribes.

In the last six months, Jackie Johnson has joined the staff at HUD, Carrie Billy at Education, Rhonda Whiting at the Small Business Administration, to help coordinate and promote Native American initiatives at these agencies. Raynell Morris will join the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs to help Mickey Ibarra and Lynn Cutler with Native American initiatives and outreach. I welcome all to my administration. (Applause.)

We also, as all of you know, have been working very hard for more than a year now on a race initiative designed to address the opportunity gaps for all Americans, and I thank those of you who have had a role in that. The most recent public event we did with the race initiative was an hour-long conversation on Jim Lehrer's Public Broadcasting System show. The Native American community was represented by a delightful, energetic young man named Sherman Alexie, whose new movie, *Smoke Signals*, is receiving very good reviews around the country, and I had it brought to me at the White House and watched it. He's got a great talent, and I wish him well. (Applause.)

Today I want to talk about opportunity and about three tools of opportunity every American needs to thrive in the 21st century; how we can bring these tools to every person in every corner of Indian country, from Pine Ridge, South Dakota, to Window Rock, Arizona, to Cherokee, North Carolina.

(Yells from the audience.)

THE PRESIDENT: That's okay. (Laughter.)

The first and most important tool of opportunity, of course, is education. Throughout history, in the United States education has been the key to a better life for generations of Americans. This will clearly be even more true in a global, knowledge-based economy that will reward children, but only children who have the skills to succeed and to keep learning for a lifetime.

Today fewer than two-thirds of our Native Americans over the age of 25 hold high school degrees. Fewer than 10 percent go on to college. If the trend continues, then the future for Native American children will become even bleaker. The opportunity gap between them and their peers will widen to a dangerous chasm. In a few moments, therefore, I will sign an executive order directing our administration to work together with tribal and state governments to improve Native American achievement in math and reading, to raise high school and post-secondary graduation rates, to reduce the influence of poverty and substance abuse on student performance, to create safe, drug-free schools, to expand the use of science and technology. I believe in this. I have done what I could to support Native American higher education and will continue to do so.

We have also tried to open the doors of college to all, with more Pell grants, tax credits which make the first two years of college now virtually free to all Americans, increased work-study slots, and

Americorps community service slots -- other things we have tried to do to make college education more affordable. But we have to have more people who are able to take advantage of it.

The second tool is high-quality health care. Native American communities will never reach their full potential if people continue to be hobbled by disease -- diseases often preventable, easily treatable. Native Americans are three times as likely to suffer from diabetes as white people. Therefore, they should get three times the benefit of the remarkable advances that we made in the last year in the diabetes prevention effort. (Applause.)

The American Diabetes Association said that what we did for diabetes not too long ago was the most important step forward since the discovery of insulin -- in treatment, in prevention, in research. Every tribe should know what is in the law, what the benefits are; it should be in a position to take maximum advantage of it.

Last summer, as I said when I signed this legislation, I wanted to make sure that it helped all Americans with diabetes but especially those in our Native American communities. Earlier this year I launched an initiative to help eliminate health disparities between racial and ethnic minority groups by the year 2010. I want you to make sure Congress fully funds this initiative as well.

Today, I am pleased to announce that we're going to make an adjustment in our new children's health insurance program to ensure that Native American children get the health care they need. (Applause.) In the balanced budget bill which passed Congress last year, we had \$24 billion over a five-year period to extend health insurance to 5 million more children. The action I'm taking today makes sure that the money is fairly allocated so that Native American children who are disproportionately without health insurance will now have their fair chance to be covered. (Applause.)

I also want you to know that I am committed to working with Congress and Secretary Shalala to elevate the Director of the Indian Health Service, Dr. Michael Trujillo, who is here today, to the rank of Assistant Secretary for Health and Human Services. (Applause.) By elevating the head of the Indian Health Service, we can ensure that the health needs of our Native Americans get the full consideration they deserve when it comes to setting health policy in our country.

The third tool is economic opportunity, in the form of jobs, credit, small business. Very few grocery stores, gas stations, restaurants, and banks are doing business on reservations. As a result, money that could be used to build tribal economies and create jobs is spent too often off reservation.

I've issued a new directive to boost economic development in Indian country. The directive will do three things. It will ask the Department of Commerce to work with the Interior Department and with the tribal governments to study and develop a plan to meet the technology infrastructure needs of Indian country. No tribe will be able to attract new business if it doesn't have the phone, fax, Internet, and other technology capabilities essential to the 21st century.

(Applause.)

The directive calls on several agencies to coordinate and strengthen existing Native America economic development initiatives. And I might say in particular, I think micro-credit institutions have a terrific potential to do even more than some of you have already done for the last several years in Indian country. The community development financial institutions that we have established in this country in the last few years have played an important role in providing credit to people who otherwise could not get it to start small businesses or to expand small businesses. I have asked the Congress for a significant expansion in the Community Development Financial Institutions Act. I believe in micro-lending.

The United States last year through our aid programs financed 2 million small loans in developing nations around the world. Think how much good we could do if we could finance 2 million small loans in developing communities in the United States of America. (Applause.) We're also directing the Department of Treasury and HUD to work with tribal governments to create and improve one-stop mortgage shopping centers to help more Native Americans obtain loans more easily. And our first pilot will be in the Navajo nation. (Applause.)

Last, I am proud to announce the plan by the United States Department of Agriculture to help seven tribes get a foothold in our high-tech economy. The Department will help these tribes establish small technology companies to obtain government contracts for software development and other services.

I have asked HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo to visit several reservations to determine what more his department and our administration can do to boost economic development there. A few weeks ago he met with leaders of 60 Alaskan native villages; today he's visiting Pine Ridge and Lower Brule Indian reservations in South Dakota.

The next millennium must be a time of great progress and prosperity for our Native American communities, and we can make it so. Today American Indian population is still very young. In the last census 39 percent of all Native Americans were under the age of 20. I kind of wish I were one of them. (Laughter.)

But this statistic is one that should bring us great hope, even as it poses your and my greatest challenge. We have a new large generation of young people who, if given the tools, the encouragement, and the opportunity, can work together to lead their families out of the stifling poverty and despair of the past.

So let us work to bring this generation and the next seven generations a world of abundant hope and opportunity, where all tribes have vanquished poverty and disease and all people have the tools to achieve their greatest potential.

I leave you with the words of the Lakota song we heard a few moments ago. "Beneath the President's flag, the people stand, that they may grow for generations to come." Let us stand together under America's flag to build that kind of future for generations to come.

AT HUBERT HUMPHREY CIVIL RIGHTS AWARD DINNER

The Washington Hilton Hotel
Washington, D.C.

8:15 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you so very much. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the warm welcome. Thank you, Dorothy, for your wonderful words. She has been involved in this work for many years, but every time I hear her speak I always marvel at how young and vigorous and alive and energetic she always sounds. (Applause.)

I'm honored to be here with Wade Henderson, Julian Bond, Rabbi Saperstein, Monsignor East; my good friend, Justin Dart, Frances Humphrey Howard -- it's nice to see you tonight, ma'am. I also want to -- I have been told that Judy Shepard is here, the mother of Matthew Shepard, and she testified for the hate crimes legislation today. I don't know where she is, but I'd like to ask her to stand up -- and I thank you. Where is she? Thank you very much and God bless you. Thank you. (Applause.)

I would like to thank the members of the administration who are here: Secretary Herman; our EEOC Chair, Ida Castro; our Civil Rights Assistant Attorney General, Bill Lann Lee -- (applause); Ben Johnson, who is continuing the work of our initiative on race at the White House -- (applause); and Mary Beth Cahill and others on the White House staff. I thank them. (Applause.)

I would also like to say a special word of appreciation to the many members of the Congress who are here, well over a dozen House members and Senator Wellstone, Senator Sarbanes and Senator Robb. I thank all of them for being here and for what they do. If it weren't for them, many of the things we have tried to do in the area of civil rights and human rights would not have been sustained in these last few years.

When I saw Senator Robb's name here it reminded me before I give out this Hubert Humphrey Award -- or acknowledge the award winners, you're going to give it out -- I admired Hubert Humphrey very much and I grew up just being almost crazy about him because I grew up in the south during the civil rights revolution. And I got to meet him when I was a young man and when he was making his last campaign and during his latter service in the Senate, after he had been Vice President.

But I would like to say something I have rarely had the chance to say as President -- but I don't think I would be here doing this, or we would be where we are as a country if it had not been for the President Hubert Humphrey served, Lyndon Johnson, and I think that we should never forget that. (Applause.) I just got back from Texas a few days ago, and I was thinking about it quite a lot down there.

I want to congratulate the Hubert Humphrey award winners tonight, Gary Locke, Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, Jeannie Van Velkinburgh, who I know is back in the hospital tonight and couldn't be with us.

We honor these people because of something Dr. King once said, "No social advance rolls in on the wheels of inevitability." You all know they are pushed forward by courageous men and women who give themselves and inspire others to follow. People like my good friend, Governor Gary Locke, who has used the power of his office to expand and defend opportunity for all the people of his state. Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, who together for 50 years have advanced the cause of civil rights through their art and through their efforts to open the theater and movies to people of all backgrounds.

And Jeannie Van Velkinburgh, who stood with the white martyrs of the civil rights movement in the south; when she was paralyzed in 1997, trying to help a black man under attack by skinheads. All true American heroes. I know we are honored to be in your presence tonight. I congratulate them on their awards and I congratulate you for your choices.

For nearly half century, the Leadership Conference has helped hundreds of diverse groups keep their eyes on the prize and speak with one booming voice. Today, your voice is louder, larger and more diverse than ever. And that is good, because it is still sorely needed. While our economy has never been stronger and minority unemployment is the lowest it has been since separate measurements have been kept, there are still striking disparities in income, wealth, jobs, education and criminal justice that breakdown along what DuBois called "the color line"; and other disparities that affect people who are disabled or people who are gay.

In other words, we still have quite a little hill to climb before we can claim to be the one America of our founders' dreams.

I was thinking today how I could best honor the spirit of Hubert Humphrey. I could give a long speech. (Laughter.) I should tell you, if he were here at this podium tonight and I was out there, I would want him to give a long speech. I loved his long speeches. But I think what I will do instead is to try to make briefer comments in the spirit of his service about just three things we still need to do before we cross that bridge into a new century.

First, we must continue to work together for a fair and accurate census. (Applause.) I agree with Wade when he says the 2000 census is a civil rights issue. It is a fundamental building block of democracy. We have to make sure the Census Bureau can do its job with the most up-to-date and scientific methods. We all say we live for the day when every American counts as much as every other American. Surely, that day must begin with counting every American.

The second thing we have to do is to close the economic opportunity gaps that still exist among our people -- in our inner-cities, our smaller and medium-sized towns, our rural areas and on our Native American reservations. There will never be a better time for us to shine the light of economic opportunity on communities and neighborhoods that have been too long in the shadows. We do have the strongest economy in a generation, perhaps in this century. But we know -- we know -- that there are still large numbers of communities that have been

left out and left behind.

Just an hour ago I returned from Atlanta -- I think Congressman Lewis is here -- but I toured the Sweet Auburn Market in Martin Luther King's home neighborhood, in Atlanta's empowerment zone with the Mayor of Atlanta, Bill Campbell, and two of his predecessors, who are friends of many of yours, Maynard Jackson and Andy Young.

I was there to highlight the fact that our greatest untapped markets today for America are not overseas, they are right here at home. There's an \$85 billion consumer market out there that is grossly underdeveloped. Ever since we took office, Vice President Gore and I have worked hard to try to get more people to invest in that part of America, with the empowerment zone program, the community development financial institution effort, special initiatives from HUD, from SBA, from the Department of Labor. And we have had some good success.

But as I look back on it, even now, with unemployment at 4.3 percent, with over 18 million new jobs, there are still inner-city neighborhoods, there are still medium-sized and smaller communities, there are still rural towns, there are still Native American reservations where there has been almost no new investment in job creation.

And what I am attempting to do this year is to convince the Congress to pass legislation and the American business community to mobilize to invest in those communities to create jobs there. I took some of the biggest business leaders in America today to that market in Atlanta. And I let them sit there with me and we listened to people talk about how they started their coffee shop and their bakery and their restaurant; and how one man had bought an empty old mill and was converting it to 500 apartments; and how a young man who was a supplier to other businesses had taken his business from \$150,000 a year to \$12 million a year in three years, starting with a modest loan.

And in July, in early July, I'm going to take three days and do what I did today in Atlanta. I'm going to go across the country, to the poorest communities, and to some places where a lot of good things are happening, to demonstrate why we need to have a national framework to give every community a chance to get the money it needs to start the businesses, to expand the businesses, to create the jobs, to stabilize the future. (Applause.)

Our proposal is very straightforward: we want to double the number of empowerment zones where people get tax credits, loan guarantees, direct investment and technical assistance. We want to dramatically increase the number of community development banks; but we want to pass a national new markets initiative that simply says we want to give business people and investors the same incentives to invest in poor American neighborhoods we give them to invest in our neighbors. We don't want to take those other incentives away -- we want to grow the Caribbean economies, we want to grow the Central American economies, we want to encourage Americans to be involved in Africa and we want a new partnership there. But we also believe that Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, south Texas and the Indian Reservations of the high plains should get new American money now. (Applause.)

So I would ask you to help me pass this legislation.

The third thing I ask you to do is to help us pass the hate crimes prevention act this year. (Applause.) In 1997, the year Jeannie Van Velkinburgh and Omar Deah (phonetic) were brutally attacked by skinheads, more than 8,000 hate crimes were reported in the United States -- that's nearly one an hour. The hearings today that Mrs. Shepard testified at were held in the United States Senate by the Judiciary Committee, under the leadership of Senator Hatch. First, I commend Senator Hatch for holding those hearings, they are a welcome sign -- surely the goodness we can make fighting hate crimes a bipartisan, even a nonpartisan mission of the United States of America. (Applause.)

I think we need to be clear about what our legislation is designed to do. It is not an effort to federalize crimes traditionally handled by the states. It is an effort to partner with local authorities. And it is not only about cracking down on hate crimes committed because of sexual orientation, gender or disability. It's also about expanding civil rights protection for all Americans. Let's never forget what happened to James Bird, Jr. in Texas. I met with his daughter in Austin, just a few days ago. She's down there trying to get the Texas legislature to pass state hate crimes legislation. We ought to be pulling for her and for the Texas legislators who are trying to get the job done -- and we ought to remember that we also need it here in Washington. (Applause.)

So I say to you, we need to do this for all Americans. We need to make a hate crimes prevention act and the employment nondiscrimination act the law of the land, because it will help us to move toward one America and it will help us to make a statement about what we are not, as well as what we are.

I was honored to appear at a testimonial banquet for Rabbi Saperstein the other night. We've been friends for many years, I love and admire him very much. And I especially appreciate how hard he's worked for peace in the Middle East, and how hard he's worked to protect the heritage and the historical rights of the Israeli people and still be fair and humane toward the Arabs, with whom they share that land.

And I make this point for the following reason. It seems to me that the central irony of our time is that most of us have a vision of America in the 21st century and the world in the 21st century in which we'll all be mixed up in wonderful ways. We'll have all this fabulous technology and we'll be e-mailing people on the South Pole or wherever. (Laughter.) Our kids will have pen-pals in Africa and Mongolia. We'll jet around on airplanes and do business with people at the tip of Tierra del Fuego. (Laughter.) Our kids will speak Japanese and Russian; one of them will solve the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh. This is what it's going to be like, it's going to be great.

We just has this NATO summit here. We had the leaders of 42 countries here, all the way to Central Asia; speaking all these different languages because we see that the world is drawing us closer together. Technology and commerce and culture all bringing us together.

And most of us think it will really be neat if America can thrive in that kind of world because we're rapidly becoming the most diverse democracy ever known. And won't it be grand? That's the image we all have. That's the dream we have.

And, yet, our whole world is bedeviled by the oldest problem of human society, which is fear and hatred of the other. We have known it in America primarily as the curse of race. Although we see discrimination and cruelty against people who are gay, discrimination against people who are disabled, we see it in other manifestations. We occasionally see religious discrimination in America. But primarily we have known it as race.

And, yet, we see it everywhere. Hillary wanted to come here tonight to pay her respects to the honorees, but she got on a plane today to continue years of work she has done in Ireland, to try to use women and children to bring together people across the lines of Catholic and Protestant Irish. And then she's going on to the refugee camps of Albania and Macedonia, to clarify our compassion and concern for the predominantly Muslim Kosovar Albanians who have been driven from their homes, and female loved ones murdered.

The bane of the Balkans is primarily a religious ethnic bane. First, the Bosnian Muslims, but now the Kosovar Muslims driven from their homes, systematically killed, raped, pillaged; their cultural and religious institutions and records destroyed. Why? Because they have been turned into something sub-human and so they somehow taint the land they share with the Serbs or the Croats or others.

We saw with breathtaking speed what happened in Rwanda a few years ago, the world totally caught flat-footed with no mechanism to deal with the slaughter of Rwanda, where somewhere between 700,000 and 900,000 people were killed in 100 days with no modern weapons, mostly hacked to death -- because two African tribes who, in this case, had shared the same land for 500 years, all of a sudden decided that they couldn't bear it anymore.

I hope you support what we are doing in Kosovo -- (applause) -- and what we did in Bosnia. I want you to know that we also have worked to redeem the failure of the world to stop the slaughter in Rwanda by developing an Africa Crisis Response Team, working with the militaries of the countries in the region that are committed to democracy and human rights, so that, God forbid, if anything like this ever happens again we, in the United States, and other freedom-loving people around the world, will have Africans with whom we can work to move more quickly to stop genocide, to stop ethnic cleansing, to not let it happen again. (Applause.)

But what I want to say to you is this: There will be fights around the world based on ethnic differences that we won't be able to stop. Sometimes people just fall out with one another. But if we want to at least be able to stand firm against ethnic cleansing, against genocide and for the principle that it is possible to honor our differences, to enjoy our differences, to recognize our differences and still keep them contained within the framework of our common humanity, so that life is more interesting, but not unbearable. If that's what we want, and we

expect people to take the United States seriously at a time when we are easy to resent because of our economic and military power, then people have to see us not only trying to do good around the world, but trying to be good at home. (Applause.)

You know, many of these people are struggling. Macedonia and Albania, the two poorest countries in Europe -- think how easy it is for all of them to resent us, to say, well, we're just waiting for our turn in history's clock to bring us to the top and take them down, to resent our power, to resent our wealth, to resent what they may think of as our preaching. I am telling you, it's imperative that we do this at this moment in history. But if we want to be a force for good, we have got to be good.

So when we stand up for the hate crimes legislation, when we stand up for the employment nondiscrimination legislation -- (applause) -- when we stand up as a people and say that it's okay for us to have differences, and we're not even asking everybody to like everybody else in America. But we have got to find a way to get along by recognizing the fundamental human dignity of every person. We have got to find a way to do that so that we take advantages that are rife with all of our diversity by joining together in affirming our common humanity.

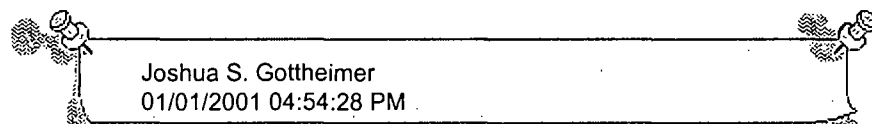
Keep in mind, unless we can do that here at home, in the end, we will not be able to do that around the world. And our whole vision of the 21st century -- our whole vision -- what we want our children to see in the world of their dreams depends upon our being able to do both: to stand for what is good abroad and to keep struggling to be good home at home. That's what our honorees have led us in doing. It is certainly what you have led us in doing. Don't get tired, we've still got a ways to go.

Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)

END

8:40 P.M. EDT

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

August 6, 1998

cc:
Subject: more new markets

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(New York, New York)

For Immediate Release

January 15, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE WALL STREET PROJECT CONFERENCE

Windows on the World Restaurant
World Trade Center
New York, New York

2:15 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. I'm not sure I know what to say. (Laughter.) First I was thinking, here I have to go follow Jesse again. (Laughter.) You know the story about the guy that went to heaven, and St. Peter said, well, we've got a lot of new entrants today and we want everybody to stand up and tell them about what the best thing they ever did in their life was. How would you like to participate? The guy said, I'd like to do that, I did a great thing once. He said, well, what did you do? He said, I saved a bunch of people in a flood. He said, fine, you go on, right after Noah. (Laughter.)

I will say one thing, Reverend. This marriage of Jesse Jackson and Wall Street, so full of promise, has already produced one incredibly vivid, concrete result. It has done wonders for your wardrobe. (Laughter and applause.) I see your sons out there thinking, no, we did that. (Laughter.)

I want to say, first of all, to all of you who are here, I'm grateful for the wonderful reception. To the previous speakers -- I had actually no idea that they were going to say what they did and I was very moved and I thank you for that. (Applause.) That's the sort of thing you normally hear -- or you normally don't hear because it's said -- (laughter) -- it's the sort of thing people say for your funeral -- (laughter) -- and I don't think we're there yet. (Laughter and applause.)

What you're here to do and what you said about what I tried to do is what I'd like to ask you to think about just for a few minutes. Just about everybody in our administration who's here has been introduced, they do come from all over, from all walks of life and all backgrounds. I'm proud of them. I'm proud of the work that Congressman Rangel and Congressman Bishop and - -

Congresswoman Meeks and Congressman Jackson and others have done to help us. I'm proud that you have people like Jack Kemp and some

Republican business leaders who are here. I'm proud of the fact that you have John Sweeney and Percy Sutton and my friend, Ron Burkle and others here. I'm proud of the fact that you have tried to reach across all the lines that divide.

I'm very, very proud especially, Reverend, that you have made this initiative to Appalachia. You know, 20 years ago this year I became the youngest governor in America. And when I became governor of my home state, five of the 25 poorest counties in America were in Arkansas. Two were in the Mississippi Delta. Three were in the Arkansas Ozarks, our Appalachia. Twenty years ago that was a very sobering thing to me. It's all the more sobering that it hasn't changed all that much in a lot of rural America.

Fifteen years ago this year, I worked with other governors to establish the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission. It went from the mouth of the Mississippi up through the Mississippi Delta, all the way up into all-white areas of East Tennessee and Southern Illinois, who had -- by the time I ran for President in 1992, in Southern Illinois there were still counties with 20 percent unemployment.

Twenty-five years ago, when I came home wet behind the ears from law school, among my first clients were old coal miners whose lungs were rotted out with black lung disease and whose families barely had enough to live on. I have never understood, from the time I was a child in my grandfather's store -- he had a 6th grade education and an African American clientele -- why in the wide world people with common needs, common dreams and common capacities would spend their time fighting over a shrinking pie instead of building a bigger one. And this is a good thing for America. (Applause.)

Previous speakers have talked about the economy. I am proud of this visionary effort to build a bridge between Wall Street and our greatest untapped markets. And because the economy is so good, now is the time to build that bridge. If we can't do it now, when in the wide world will we ever get around to it? If there was ever a time when none of us have an excuse, this is that time. But the world changes very fast and we have to seize the moment.

You know, Tuesday night when I give the State of the Union address, I want to talk about the great, long-term, still unmet challenges of the 21st century, the aging of America, the fact that we have the largest and most diverse population of children in our schools in history. And a big part of it is the need to build strong, economically successful communities in the places where prosperity has not reached -- in the inner-cities, in rural America and, don't forget, on our Native American reservations, as well. (Applause.)

Jesse Jackson came to Wall Street the same reason Willie Sutton robbed banks -- that's where the money is. (Laughter.) And I don't mean that in a pejorative way. How could any American of any station in life not be proud of the financial markets we have built and, as Mr. Grasso said, of the fact that now 200 million of our 260 million people actually benefit from it? We are beginning to share the wealth. We need to do more of that and I'll have some more to say about that later. But that's why Jack Kemp is here and why I always liked him. (Laughter.)

MR. KEMP: I like you, too, Mr. President. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: Although, when Reverend Jackson said he was the ultimate Republican, I thought, would that it were so. (Applause.) I probably just destroyed his future prospects. (Laughter.) I'll be glad to announce that anytime you want. (Laughter.)

But I ask you to think about this. Wall Street has done a great thing in spreading the wealth across America because now 200 million people directly or indirectly benefit from the Stock Market, because a lot of the Stock Market are pension funds, retirement funds. Now, mutual funds -- things that get all kinds of people into the Stock Market. It is only natural that only is this where the money is, but they have found ways to involve large numbers of people. And yet we know there are still pockets that are relatively untouched.

Now, some of them are just down the street. Treasurer McCall over there, he manages New York's money. He'd have more to manage if the unemployment rate in New York weren't twice the national average. He'd have more money to rebuild these old schools; more money to give all these kids in troubled neighborhoods after-school programs and summer school programs and opportunities they need to develop their full abilities.

You know, I always say, one of Clinton's 10 rules of politics is, whenever somebody tells you, looks you straight in the eye and says, this is not a money problem, you can bet everything you've got they're talking about somebody else's problem, not theirs. (Laughter.) It is partly a money problem.

Now, before we -- so we have to find ways for you to do this. I think the government has a role to play here, I think we have to do our part. And I thank the members of Congress who are here. The first thing we have to do is to stay with the strategy that's gotten us this far. You know, there are a lot of things that I wish I could be announcing more investment in in the State of the Union. But we've got to keep the budget balanced to keep the interest rates low and the confidence high. We've got to keep investing in our people and target the money we do have to education, to training, to technology, to things that will develop their abilities. And we've got to show leadership and continue to expand trade and deal with this financial crisis around the world because the global economy is either going to work for us or against us. Thirty percent of our growth has come from our relationships with other countries.

The second thing we have to do is to keep working to do what we can to revitalize communities, not by ignoring them or by trying to impose kind of one-size-fits-all programs, but by doing what we've been trying to do -- being a partner with people who live in each community and being a catalyst to bring the spark of private enterprise. These partnerships work in interesting ways. We put 100,000 police out there in the crime bill, and we've got the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the lowest murder rate in 30 years. And we don't tell people who they must hire or how to train them or where to deploy them. But it makes a difference.

In 1993, when I took office, the crime rate, the violent crime rate had tripled in 30 years and the number of police had only gone up 10 percent. It wasn't rocket science -- people needed help. Local governments, the economy was down, they didn't have the money to hire the police and train them and deploy them properly.

When we offered tax cuts to clean up brownfields, all kinds of inner-city neighborhoods were able to be revitalized. We've got cities now that hadn't had a new factory in a month of Sundays getting actually new manufacturing facilities in their backyard, and providing good jobs. That's what we try to do with the empowerment zones and the community development banks -- just to give people tools to do what they want to do.

And I appreciated what Weldon said about affirmative action. I hope we can end it some day. But if you see what's happened in the examples where people have cut it out altogether, it seems to me the rest of us are disadvantaged. My daughter is in college -- I want her to go to college with a bunch of students that look like Americans, because that's the America she's going to live in. (Applause.) So I ask you to think about that.

I want to thank Secretary Slater, who's here. The Department of Transportation will issue its new rules on disadvantaged business enterprises in the next few days and extend more opportunity to more people.

In the past five years -- I'd like to say one thing about the banking community that I think is important -- we've worked very hard to both streamline and strengthen the Community Reinvestment Act. It was also under fire, has been under fire, still is under fire by some. That Community Reinvestment Act has been on the books for more than 20 years, but 95 percent of all the financial commitments made under the law in the last 20 years have been made in the last five years. That's more than \$1 trillion in long-term commitment to invest in people. (Applause.)

And I might say, our banks are more profitable than they were 10 years ago. This is not bad for business, this is good for business. I guess the presence of the business leaders and the Wall Street people here among the previous speakers ought to make that general point. This is not a welfare program, it is not a charity program. We are not asking anybody to do anything we do not think they will make money out of; and if they can't make money out of it we can't ask them to do it. What we're trying to do is to create an environment and create the conditions in which it is more likely that more people will take a chance. We believe they will be rewarded by the chances they take. (Applause.)

Now, again I say, we know that we've got this booming economy; but we also know the overwhelming majority of the capital is bypassing our underserved areas. We know that in boardrooms all across America today people are laying plans for new investments in emerging markets, and not all of them are in trouble today. We know that venture capitalists are planning new ventures, from Silicon Valley to the suburbs of Washington, D.C.

But especially with -- especially with -- the problems in Asia and the uncertainties abroad, we need to ask ourselves, how are we going to keep growing the economy, keep the unemployment rate low, with inflation down? How are we going to do that? The answer is, we've got to find more places to invest and more customers. And the largest pool of untapped investment opportunities and new customers are not beyond our shores, they're in our backyard. (Applause.)

They're up the street in Harlem or the Bronx or across the River in Brooklyn, or in any other countless number of cities around the country where, every morning, huge numbers of working mothers and fathers have to get up and find some way to get transportation -- sometimes in cities that don't have public transportation -- get all the way out to the suburbs to get a job, and then come home at night, dead-tired, leave your kids an hour, sometimes an hour and a half earlier, and lower their income dramatically by the cost of transportation. Why? Because no one is investing. And there's a lot of other people that are still looking for work. I told you -- you think about the fact that we have a 4.3 percent unemployment rate. It's the lowest peacetime rate in 41 years, and still within this city, there are several neighborhoods where the unemployment rate is in double digits.

Now, anybody who has ever spent any time on the streets, who has ever had to struggle to get by, knows that most people there are not stupid -- it takes some amount of skill to survive in the environment a lot of American have to survive in. (Applause.) So to me this is a self-evident case.

The question is, how are we going to do it? Listen to this. Recently, a Harvard Business School professor found that families living in our most distressed communities still control more than \$85 billion a year in purchasing power, more than the entire retail market in Mexico. One of the most distressed communities. Still, more than 25 percent of that market is going unmet. In Harlem, the number is more like 60 percent.

How many places are there in America where a kid has to walk for blocks and blocks past abandoned storefronts just to buy a book for school or milk for the family? Now, that is what we're talking about.

And businesses that have recognized this potential have been rewarded. Two of Pathmark's most productive grocery stores are in Bed-Stuy and Newark Central ward. These two stores do double the business of a typical grocery store. Of Rite-Aid's 148 stores in New York City, the Harlem branch ranks second in the number of prescriptions filled. People appreciate it if you make it easy for them to spend their money when they need it. (Applause.)

In a meeting with the Vice President this summer, by the way, both these companies announced that they would expand their investment in these areas. And that is good. But we've got a lot more to do. And we need help from the people who are here -- from Congressman Rangel and the other members of Congress here; from Maxine Waters and others who are trying to bring together stakeholders for capital formation for new growth in their areas. For all the people from the rural communities, from the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. We need help from everybody. We need help from Republicans and

Democrats. This ought to be an American issue. We all have an interest in this.

I want to thank again Reverend Jackson and Sandy Weill, who couldn't be here this afternoon, and all of you who have been part of the Wall Street Project. And what I'd like to do today -- and I worked hard on this so I'm not going to do what Jim Harman said I did before -- I'm actually going to read some of this talk. Because I have been working with development experts, with business people, with the members of Congress I mentioned and others, to try to say, okay, if our role is to be a catalyst, if our role is to be a partner, what else can the federal government do to help get this jump-started, to provide a vehicle through which we can channel and attract more money? And here are the things that I want to announce.

First, in the balanced budget this year, we'll support a new market venture capital program to bring capital and technical assistance to small businesses in distressed areas. (Applause.) Thousands of entrepreneurs who only need a little capital and expert guidance to expand their businesses and create new jobs -- these funds will give it to them.

Second, we'll expand our investment in the community development banks that provide inner-city and rural residents small amounts of credit to transform good business ideas into reality. And Emma has been great on this and I thank you for your support of this. (Applause.)

When I was governor I heard about this guy named Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh -- one of the poorest countries in the world -- who had set up these banks to make very small loans to rural village women to start small businesses. At the time I met him in the mid-'80s, they made 400,000 loans at market interest rates to groups of people. You had to get a group together -- everybody got a loan, but the second person couldn't get the loan until the first person started to pay back and so forth. They had a higher repayment rate than the commercial banks did at commercial interest rates.

Now the Grameen Bank has made about 2 million loans and the same thing is true. Last year your United States government, under our administration, funded 2 million of those loans in poor countries, from Africa to Asia to Latin America. Our community development banks are designed to do the same thing at an America scale with American financial cost for people who need it. And I thank the members of Congress who are supporting it. We are now establishing them all over America and we have to expand them.

Next, our SBA -- Aida's SBA -- (laughter) -- has helped to transform companies such as America On Line from small start ups to household names. That's right, AOL started with an SBA loan. Last summer the Vice President challenged the SBA to do the same for businesses in underserved areas. In response, the SBA will strengthen its outreach efforts; offer new financing terms, such as delayed payment of interest on loans; and waive regulatory requirements to promote investments in targeted communities. (Applause.)

We're also going to expand the tax incentives for the SBA license,

specialized small business investment companies. Their job is to channel capital to small businesses owned by economically disadvantaged citizens. So we're going to give people more tax incentives to invest in them. I want to say a special word of thanks to Congressman Bill Jefferson from Louisiana, who first brought this to my attention. This wouldn't have happened without him because I wouldn't have known about it, and I thank him. (Applause.)

Fourth, in the next balanced budget I will ask Congress to support the creation of new -- this is when you can get some of these big guys to give you some money, so listen to this -- (laughter) -- American private investment companies to encourage even bigger businesses to enter these underserved markets. For years we've supported in America the Overseas Private Investment Corporations, OPIC. What it does is provide financing to promote growth abroad. We ought to have an APIC, an American Private Investment Company, to support private investment at home. (Applause.)

Now, here's how it will work. APIC will be administered jointly by HUD and the Small Business Administration. It will offer loan guarantees to investors who help businesses expand or relocate in inner-cities and rural areas. If one group of private investors puts up at least \$100 million, then the government will guarantee another \$200 million in loans. (Applause.) Now, if five groups of investors do the same thing, that's \$1.5 billion in equity for investment in underserved America. (Applause.)

Finally, to encourage as many individuals and companies to put together more funds to invest in underserved areas, we will propose new tax credits worth 25 percent of the amount of equity placed in investment funds, community development banks and a host of other investment vehicles targeted for these untapped markets. (Applause.)

Now, this is a good beginning. This will provide incentives and a vehicle. But we can't do this alone. And Congressman Rangel, and the other members of Congress here, the CBC, the CHC, the groups in Congress who will care about this, they need your help. We cannot pass this without bipartisan support and people who see that this is bringing free enterprise to places that haven't felt it in ways that will help the whole American economy.

Now, you think about it. If our exports drop this year because of continuing low growth in Latin America, in Asia, in other places, how are we going to keep the American economy growing? How is everybody else going to get a pay raise? How are we going to do this? We should do this not just for those folks, but because they can help us build a better America and better lives for everybody.

And so I say to you, we have got to pass these laws. And we have to make it an American issue. It can't be a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. It shouldn't be the Black Caucus, the Hispanic Caucus, or Bill Clinton's idea. I don't care -- I would gladly put any label on this you want. If I thought it would pass it, I would be glad to call it the Herbert Hoover-Warren Harding-Calvin Coolidge Economic Development Act. I will do anything to pass it. (Laughter and applause.) There is plenty of credit to go around. And I ask you to do

everything you can to make this an American issue.

And I ask all my friends in the business community to go down to Washington, call your members of Congress -- without regard to party -- and say, hey, you know, the President made a pretty good point there. If our markets are going to keep dropping next year, we've got problems. We need some new markets. We need someplace to put the money that has been made so it can make some more money. So I implore you to do that.

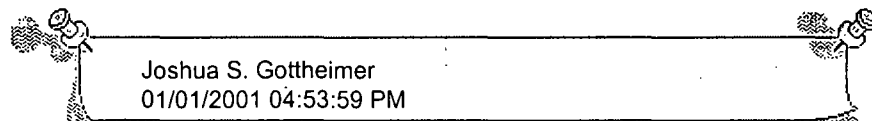
Let me just say one final thing. I don't want to make another point and make a whole other speech, but don't ever forget that we're not going to be able to get business to go into, or to stay in areas where people don't have the education and skills to do the jobs that are needed. (Applause.) And we need the business community to keep supporting our schools, to help people who need help with adult literacy or to go back and finish high school, to mentor those kids in middle school so they will go on to college. We can't forget that because, if we do, there will be a limit to how successful we can be.

Now, a lot of things have been said about Dr. King today. Nearly everybody has committed some portion of his "I Have a Dream" speech to memory. But I found a sentence in there that applies uniquely to us here, that I don't ever hear anybody quote. But it's very important. He said in 1963, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial that he challenged America "to refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity in this nation." Now today, those vaults of opportunity are richer and fuller than they ever have been. Wall Street has helped to make that so. Now what we need to do is to open those vaults up so they'll fill up even more for all of you.

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

END 2:43 P.M. EST

----- Forwarded by Joshua S. Gottheimer/WHO/EOP on 01/02/2001 09:42 AM -----



Record Type: Record

To: aedmonds1@home.com @ inet

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 11, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

To: aedmonds1@home.com @ inet

cc:

Subject: hisp leadership

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Chicago, Illinois)

For Immediate Release

October 9, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE U.S. HISPANIC LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

McCormick Place
Chicago, Illinois

9:36 A.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Good morning. You know, I was a little sleepy before I came in here and saw you. (Laughter.) And I'm ready to go now. I thank you very much. Let me begin by saying a simple thank you -- thank you for your friendship; thank you for your support; thank you for bringing all of the children who are here in this audience today to remind us of what our deliberations are all about. Thank you, Juan Andrade, for your long leadership and your friendship to me. And thank you, Rey Gonzalez.

Thank you for bringing the Juan Andrade Scholarship award winners outside for me to have my picture taken with them. I enjoyed that. That was great. (Applause.) People who are worried about America should take a look at those young people -- they would worry a lot less and feel a lot more hope. (Applause.)

I want to express my appreciation to everyone at the U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute for working since 1982 on your noble mission of empowerment through education and voter participation. Your work has paid off. You see it in greater Hispanic participation in elections and in the growing number of Latino elected officials, like Congressman Luis Guitierrez. I think he is here today, and I thank him for his work. (Applause.)

I also want to thank the many dedicated Hispanic members of our administration, including my Deputy Chief of Staff Maria Echaveste, who is here; our Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Mickey Ibarra; the EEOC Chair Aida Castro -- I know she has been or will be on your program. (Applause.) Along with George Munoz, Aida Alvarez, Henry Solanas, Saul Ramirez, and Secretary Bill Richardson -- and a number of other young people in our administration who I've seen wandering around here at your meeting, and some of whom have worked on my trip here.

Let me say that there is another mission that you have followed over the years. You have helped to forge unity among the diverse elements of Hispanic America. You remind us that there are actually

differences of ethnicity, national origin and even, occasionally, of opinion among Hispanic Americans; but that you are united by common values of faith and family, hard work and a common vision of a better America.

That is America at its best -- a diverse nation, now the most diverse in our history, and growing increasingly so. In a global economy, in a global society, our diversity can be a God-send if we make the most of it, if we enjoy it, if we respect it, if we honor it, and if we believe that the common humanity that unites us is more important than all the differences among us.

That thought was uppermost in my mind six and a half years ago when I became President. Vice President Gore and I came into office determined to move away from the divide-and-conquer politics which had dominated our country for the previous 12 years. It had weakened and divided America and it was wrong. (Applause.)

We wanted to find a way to unify our country, to unify our thinking, to unify our action, and to move our country forward, based on values all Americans share -- opportunity for all, responsibility from all, a community of all our people. With that in mind, we put in place a new economic plan, new crime and welfare policies, new education, environment and health policies, new policies to empower the poor and elevate citizen service.

I think the results speak for themselves. We have the longest peacetime economic expansion in history; the highest home ownership in history; the lowest unemployment rate in 29 years; the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years; the lowest poverty rates in 20 years; the lowest crime rates in 26 years; the smallest federal government in 37 years; the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years. (Applause.)

Along the way we managed to pass the Family and Medical Leave law, which has given millions and millions of Americans the right to take some time off when a baby is born or a parent is sick without losing their jobs. Ninety percent of our children are immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time in our history. Our air and water are cleaner, our food is safer. We have opened the doors of college with the HOPE Scholarship and other increases in financial aid. We have opened the doors of health care to 5 million children, a 100,000 young Americans have served in AmeriCorps. (Applause.)

Just last week we learned that median household income rose 3.5 percent last year, but for Hispanics it rose at an even faster rate of 4.8 percent in one year. (Applause.) Even though this community has serious challenges, including, I might say uppermost, a high school drop-out rate that is too high, we now have the lowest Hispanic unemployment rate in history, the lowest Hispanic poverty rate in a generation, and a million new Hispanic home owners since 1994. (Applause.)

In 1993 we doubled the earned income tax credit for lower income working people. It now lifts over a million Hispanics out of poverty. We raised the minimum wage that directly benefits 1.6 million Hispanic workers, and I think it's time we raised the minimum wage again.

(Applause.)

We increased the number of Small Business Administration loans to Hispanic entrepreneurs by 250 percent. (Applause.) We thank Aida Alvarez for her leadership there. And as the Vice President recently announced, the SBA has planned to expand lending to the Hispanic community even more. (Applause.)

We revolutionized welfare in a way that allowed the rolls to be cut nearly in half -- millions of people to move from dependence to the dignity of work, what with more child care, more transportation aid, guaranteed food and medicine to children, and we have succeeded in reversing the unfair cuts in the welfare reform law, restoring benefits to over 600,000 legal immigrants. (Applause.)

Under the Vice President's leadership, we've reduced the naturalization backlog at INS, streamlining the process to make it easier for immigrants who play by the rules to become full partners in America. We have more to do, and I ask you to help us with that.

I'd also like to ask your help with one other thing. In the 1997 bipartisan balanced budget bill, we created the \$24-billion Children's Health Insurance Program. It was the largest expansion of children's health coverage since the enactment of Medicaid. It required all the states to file plans to use this money to enroll children without health insurance in the program.

This year, we finally got all the states enrolled. But the alarming thing is that we estimate there are at least -- at least -- four million children who could be covered by the money that is there waiting for them to provide health insurance who have not signed up yet.

So I ask you: When you go back home, make sure that in your community there is a systematic effort underway to get health care to every Hispanic child who doesn't have it, who is eligible for this program. (Applause.)

Like you, I believe in the concept of empowerment, so I will mention this one last issue. I asked the Vice President to lead our efforts to create over 100 enterprise zones and empowerment communities across our country, to generate billions of dollars in new private sector investment and public investment in these low-income areas. You can see them operating from Chicago to Philadelphia, to Cleveland, to Detroit, to South Texas, to the Mississippi Delta to Appalachia. And you can see them working.

I have asked for an increase in the number of empowerment zones and community development banks, and we're fighting for them now in the budget. (Applause.)

I want to talk to you about what we're going to do next. I thank you for your support. I am pleased by the progress we have made. But in America we must always be determined to change, to improve, to move forward. And we must honestly face the fact that there are still a lot of challenges out there that have not been met.

When I came up on this stage -- I'll just give you one example -- when I came up on this stage, one of the people back here said, Mr. President, there are some people in our community with disabilities who are out there, be sure and say hello to them on the way out. One of the important things I'm trying to get passed in this Congress is a bill sponsored by Senator Kennedy and Senator Jeffords which would allow people with disabilities to move into the workplace and still keep their Medicaid insurance because they can't get health insurance in the work place. That's the sort of thing we need to be doing. (Applause.)

I ask you to take just a few minutes and focus on the outstanding challenges -- places where we haven't made enough progress, and places where we haven't received enough cooperation from this Congress. Let me begin with judicial nominations. I am proud that we have succeeded in appointing more Hispanics to the federal bench than any administration in history. (Applause.)

I am proud that, on the whole, the judges I've appointed are the most diverse group in our history. Nearly half are women or minorities. More than half my current judicial nominees are women or minorities -- and they are good judges. My appointees have garnered the highest ratings from the American Bar Association of any President in 40 years. (Applause.)

Now, I would also say that, unlike previous administrations, there has been article after article after article saying that I have avoided putting ideological extremists on the court, unlike what happened in the previous decade or so. So these people are well-qualified, they're diverse -- you would think the United States Senate would be falling all over themselves to confirm them.

Now, let's look at the facts. Earlier this week I said it was a disgrace that the Senate defeated on a straight party-line vote my nomination of Ronnie White, a highly talented African American jurist from the state of Missouri that was the first African American to serve on the Missouri State Supreme Court, who was endorsed by one of his state's Republican senators, supported by Republican senators on the Judiciary Committee -- but when he came to the floor, for political reasons back in Missouri, 100 percent of the Republicans in the majority voted to deny his confirmation and distorted his record in capital punishment appeals cases. It was wrong. That's the kind of thing that's going on up there that ought to stop. (Applause.)

But, unfortunately, it's not an isolated event. Listen to this: Richard Paez, the first Mexican American ever to serve as a judge in the Federal District Court in Los Angeles I nominated more than three and a half years ago for a seat on the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. For more than three and a half years he has been waiting for the Senate to confirm his nomination. Is it because he's not qualified? No. The American Bar Association said not that he was qualified, but that he was well qualified. He received the highest rating from the ABA. He has broad, bipartisan support back in California and in the legal community.

Yet, he still has not been given a Senate floor vote. Why? Well, they don't want to vote him down because they hope that you will vote with them in the next election, but they don't want to vote for him. So

this man has been hanging there for three and a half years.

Now, I don't know about you, but if I took three and a half years to make a decision, you wouldn't think I was a very good President. And most of you couldn't hold your jobs if you took three and a half years to do your assigned tasks. Can you imagine that? How many times has somebody been on you because you took three and a half hours? (Laughter and applause.)

Another fine candidate for the 9th Circuit, a renowned appellate lawyer, Marsha Berzon, has been waiting for more than 18 months to receive a floor vote. That is, they put these people out of committee and they just never bring them up. They just disappear somewhere in the dark recesses of the calendar of the Senate. Now, I think the treatment of Richard Paez and Marsha Berzon is shameless.

We have also been working to get three other exceptional Hispanic nominees confirmed: Judge Julio Fuentes for the 3rd Circuit, civil lawyer Enrique Moreno for the 5th Circuit, and Judge Ronald Guzman for the northern district of Illinois, here. (Applause.)

I am pleased to announce that Judge Guzman finally received his judiciary committee hearing last week for a vacancy here. But the Senate's treatment of Judge White and its failure to vote on the outstanding Hispanic nominees that are pending creates a real doubt about their ability and their willingness to perform their constitutional duties to advise and consent.

So I urge you to help me. Get a Senate vote on Judge Paez, Judge Fuentes, Judge Guzman, Marsha Berzon, Enrique Moreno. They should be confirmed. They should be confirmed. But they ought to be voted on one way or the other. (Applause.)

Now, let me say, in spite of the difficulties we have had with this Congress, they're capable of putting partisanship aside and putting the country first. We did it on the third try with the welfare bill in '96. We did it with the Balanced Budget Act in '97. We did it last year when they voted right before the election for my program to put 100,000 teachers in the schools. (Applause.) And just last week, at the end of this session that just concluded, finally, after two years of work, a substantial bipartisan majority in the House of Representatives passed a strong, enforceable patients' bill of rights. (Applause.)

Now, that bill is a long way from becoming law, but a lot of people never thought we could get this far. It gives you the right if you're in an HMO to see a specialist if your doctors says you should; to go to the nearest emergency room if you're in an accident; to keep your doctor through a course of treatment, whether for chemotherapy or a pregnancy; and to hold your health care plan accountable if you're injured.

So we're capable of doing this. I have asked the Congress to do more. I have asked them to keep our prosperity going by paying down our debt and getting America out of debt in 15 years for the first time since 1835. We can do that. (Applause.)

I have asked them to keep working until the prosperity of this

moment reaches every community and every person willing to work for it. I have asked them double the number of empowerment zones and enterprise communities. And I have asked them to adopt my New Markets Initiative, which would simply say we want the same incentives for people with money to invest in poor communities in America we give them to invest in poor communities around the world, because people in America deserve the chance to be a part of America's prosperity. (Applause.)

I've asked them to work with me to meet the challenge of the aging of America by saving Social Security and modernizing Medicare and adding a prescription drug benefit. (Applause.)

I have asked them, now that we have the lowest crime rate in 26 years, to ask them to join me in making America the safest big nation on Earth by closing this gun show loophole in our background check law, and doing more to keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals. (Applause.) I have asked them to help me give all of our children -- all of our children -- a world-class education, demanding more from our schools, but also investing more. (Applause.)

Our agenda is clear: Build or modernize 6,000 schools. There are too many kids in the schools and too many schools are run down or too many kids going to school in trailers. Put 100,000 teachers out there, and focus on the early grades to give our children smaller classes. (Applause.) Have more after-school and summer school programs like Chicago does, so that you can say, okay, we're going to have high standards, we're going to end social promotion, but we will not label children a failure when the systems fail them. We want them to have access to the help they need. (Applause.)

Close the digital divide; hook up every classroom and every library in this country to the Internet at a rate even the poorest schools can afford. That's what we're doing. (Applause.)

I am proud that we won almost \$500 million in the 1999 budget for the Hispanic Education Action Plan, to make sure Latino children get the tutoring, the after-school, the mentoring program they need to help them meet higher academic standards, finish, not drop out, of high school and go on to college. (Applause.)

It will take time for these efforts to have an impact, but you can help at the local level. Hold up these young scholarship winners as an example to the young people in your communities. We cannot make America what it ought to be in the 21st century unless we dramatically reduce the 30 percent drop-out rate among Hispanic American children. (Applause.)

As many of your leaders have told me, notwithstanding our best intentions in this administration, we have a lot more to do to make sure that the states and the school districts who accept federal dollars actually spend those dollars in a way that reaches under-served Hispanic students, and we are working on that, as well. (Applause.)

Let me finally make this one point. I have always wanted an administration that looks like America. You've heard me say that a dozen times, I bet. More and more, America will look like you.

(Applause.) More and more, there will be more people listening and more people performing like Ricky Martin and Jennifer Lopez. (Applause.) There will be more books. There will be more movies. There will be a bigger part of our culture.

What I ask you to do as you rise in dominance and influence not only in our political life, but in our cultural life, is never to forget your roots and never forget the pain of discrimination or being ignored, and make sure that you are always a force for good, for building one America.

If you look around this old world today, the biggest problem I have faced as your President in my responsibilities around the world is dealing with the racial and the ethnic and the religious and the tribal conflicts where people occupy the same land and cannot get along; where they continue to believe what is different about them is more important than their common humanity; where they fear people who are different from them and get to the point where they look down on them and in some places, God forbid, they think it's even okay to kill them.

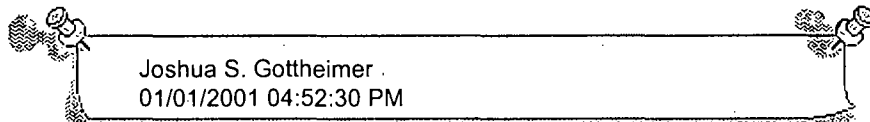
And if you look all over the world today, we celebrate the modern world -- modern music, modern culture, the Internet, the decoding of the human gene -- all these things that are going on. A lot of your young people probably want to go to work for these Internet companies where, there are dozens and dozens of young people in their 20s now worth \$50 million. That's chump change to some of them. It's all great, all this modern world. But don't forget -- the biggest problem is the oldest problem of the human heart -- the fear and hatred of people who are different. (Applause.)

So I ask you to remember this. You are growing in numbers, you are growing in influence. You will grow in ways that are good and will make America richer, more alive, more textured, more exciting. And it's all going to be positive. But don't forget what you've been through. And do everything you can to stop it from happening within America and beyond our borders. We are still, for all of our modern advances, too much in the grip of the oldest fears of the human heart. And your community can make all the difference for 21st century America.

Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)

END 10:02 A.M. CDT

----- Forwarded by Joshua S. Gottheimer/WHO/EOP on 01/02/2001 09:42 AM -----



Record Type: Record

To: aedmonds1@home.com @ inet

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO FLORIDA STATE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

Wyndham Palace Resort
Orlando, Florida

10:10 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Thank you. Now, folks, you all sit down now. Can you sit down? I'm a little hoarse, so I can't shout you down, and you won't be able to hear unless you sit down and relax here.

First of all, I want to thank my good friend, Charlie Whitehead, for inviting me here and for being willing to take the reins of this party again. I came here in 1981, 1983, 1987, 1991 -- only Arkansas have I visited the Democratic Convention more than I have in the state of Florida, and I thank you very much. (Applause.)

I want to thank Representatives Hastings, Brown, Meeks, former Congressman Smith, the wonderful Lt. Governor of Maryland and I think the finest Lt. Governor in the United States, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, who spoke to you earlier today. (Applause.) And I want to say how proud I am that a person who has been a friend of mine a long time is going to be your next United States Senator -- Bill Nelson and Grace Nelson, thank you very much for your interest. (Applause.)

I also asked if Rhea Chiles was still here. It was almost exactly a year ago that Lawton Chiles passed away, and like his family and his friends and his beloved Floridians, I want you to know I still miss him. He was my friend, he was my mentor, he was my ally. (Applause.) His legacy is alive and well in the good things he did in Florida and the good things that we're doing in the United States. And I'm honored to be here.

Now, let me tell you, I know you probably noticed we're about to get into an election season here -- (laughter) -- and you may have noticed that I can't run for anything this year. (Laughter.) So I want to tell you how come I came down here.

First of all, it was almost eight years ago exactly when the Democratic Convention in Florida in December of 1991 put my campaign on the map. And I came to say thank you. (Applause.) With your help, when I was running fifth in the polls nationally, we won a decisive victory over a majority in the straw poll here in 1991. It was the first evidence that Democrats were ready to take America in a new direction. And I got to thinking about that last night and this morning. You were very wonderful to me, but I also want you to know you were a hard sell. (Laughter and applause.)

I don't know how many times I've talked to Jeff Eller and Craig Smith, who were among those who worked this convention for me, and Hillary and I remembered how dog tired we were when we got back to our

hotel room after the speech, and then we had to go and visit all these caucuses. We must have gone to a dozen caucuses. And we were asked the most detailed questions over the most wide array of issues, and I just hope you're putting this crowd this year through this. That's all I want to say. (Laughter and applause.) It was unbelievable.

But I must say, you know, I had been coming here -- I remember when then-governor, now Senator Bob Graham invited me in '81 and '83 and '87 -- I loved this convention and I loved that experience in '91. I love your energy, your intensity, your commitment, your caring about the issues and the future of this state and this nation. And if you can keep this energy -- don't forget, we won in '92, and in '96 we won again, and in '96, we carried Florida for the first time in 20 years -- you can win again here, and you can do it. (Applause.)

Every time I try to take a walk down Memory Lane, some of the political press says, oh, well, he's thinking about his term being over. Well, I'm not, either. I've got 14 months left, and I'm going to give it to them every day until I go. (Applause.) But since this is an election year, I think it's worth taking a little walk down Memory Lane.

In the 12 years before Al Gore and I took office, irresponsible policies in Washington piled up deficit after deficit. We quadrupled the national debt in 12 years. We had high interest rates, high unemployment, stagnant wages, growing inequality. By 1991, when I entered the race for President, we had economic distress, social decline, political division, and government was entirely discredited. And don't let anybody forget it.

Now, what a difference seven years of working for opportunity, responsibility, and community with all Americans make. (Applause.) We are ending the century on a high note. And you can take great pride in it because you had a not insignificant amount to do with it.

Just last week, we crossed a truly remarkable threshold: 20 million new jobs since January of 1993. (Applause.) And more and more, they're good-paying jobs on which you can support a family, buy a home, take a vacation, save for college and retirement.

So I just want to take a minute, here, and I'm going to give you a capsule of the last seven years. I want you to know it. I want you to take pride in it, because you were a part of it, and I want you to share it with your fellow citizens. The Republicans can have all the rhetoric they want. Let people choose between their rhetoric and our record. (Applause.)

Number one, economically, we have the longest peacetime expansion in our history. In February, it will be the longest economic expansion in the history of our country, including that in World War II. We have a 30-year low in unemployment, a 32-year low in welfare, a 20-year low in poverty rates. We have the highest home ownership ever, the largest surplus ever, the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years, with the smallest federal government in 37 years. (Applause.)

There's more. We have the lowest Hispanic and African American unemployment rates ever recorded -- (applause) -- the lowest Hispanic

poverty rates in 25 years; the lowest African American poverty rates ever recorded; the highest rate of small business starts in history; the highest rate of minority business ownership in history; the lowest female poverty -- unemployment rate in 40 years; the lowest single parent household poverty in 46 years. We're going forward together. (Applause.)

Now, I might say -- I was going to save this for later in my speech, but I think we ought to insert it here -- and we've done it with the most diverse administration in history, the most diverse appointments to the judgeships, to the Cabinet, to the administration. (Applause.) And I think that the record -- not me, the record America has established in the last seven years proves that Mr. Connerly is wrong in wanting to end affirmative action. (Applause.)

Look, it's interesting, you know, affirmative action actually began under a Republican administration, back when both parties were really committed to civil rights. And like any system that went on for years unexamined, there were some problems with it and it needed to be fixed. And we worked very, very hard on "amend it, don't end it" policy that I'm proud of. But you cannot look at the record the American people have established in the last seven years -- where we made an effort to include everybody, and we made an effort to make sure our economic policies benefit everybody, our political policies benefitted everybody, our social policies benefitted everybody -- and make a serious case that we'd be better off if we were growing more divided by walking away from one of the tools that has helped to bring us together as a nation. Don't give up on affirmative action, and go out there and defend it. (Applause.)

Wait a minute. We're not done with the record yet. You all just relax. (Laughter.) I want you to remember this -- I'll send a copy of this to Mr. Whitehead and he can send it out. We have -- listen to this -- we have the lowest crime rate in 25 years -- 470,000 felons, fugitives and stalkers have not been able to get a handgun because of the Brady Bill. All the things the NRA -- (applause.) Let me tell you -- but the NRA was wrong. There's not a hunter in Florida that's missed a day of the hunting season because of the Brady Bill, but there are a lot of little kids in the inner city alive because of the Brady Bill today. It was the right thing to do. (Applause.)

Wait a minute. Over 20 million people have taken advantage of the Family and Medical Leave law, a bill which was vetoed by my predecessor. And it hasn't hurt the economy. Over 10 million people benefitted from the minimum wage increase. It hasn't hurt the economy. (Applause.) Over 7 million people, right now have claimed their Hope Scholarship tax cut to pay for community college or the first two years of college so that we can open the doors of college to everyone in the United States of America. (Applause.)

Over 2 million more kids have been insured since the Balanced Budget Act passed in 1997 under the Child Health Insurance Partnership between states and the federal government -- two million more kids. Over 90 percent of our children are immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time in the history of the United States. (Applause.) Over 150,000 young people have served their communities in

Florida and throughout the country in AmeriCorps, our national community service program. It took the Peace Corps 25 years to get the number of volunteers we've achieved in five years in AmeriCorps. (Applause.)

Now, these are just some of the facts. Let's talk about the environment. The air is cleaner. The water's cleaner. The food is safer. We have the lowest production of waste materials in our country in 20 years -- and 20 years ago we had 50 million fewer people. (Applause.) We've cleaned up three times as many toxic waste dumps as the Republicans did in the 12 years before we took office -- three times as many. (Applause.) And we have protected more land -- from the Florida Everglades to the California Redwoods; to the 40 million roadless acres in the national forests -- more land than any administration in the history of this country except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt. (Applause.)

Along the way we made a contribution to peace and humanity and democracy, in Northern Ireland, in the Middle East, in Bosnia, in Kosovo, in Haiti. (Applause.) We expanded trade with Latin America. We're trying to do so with the Caribbean. We're trying to be a good neighbor to our friends in the Caribbean, and to our friends in Africa.

We have reached out to reduce the nuclear threat, from Russia to North Korea; to establish a decent relationship with China, which is important to our future. And the world is a safer, stronger place than it was seven years ago.

Now, I say this to you to say not how great we were, but that we had good ideas, focused on giving the American people the conditions and the tools to make the most of their own lives; focused on creating opportunity for every responsible citizen; focusing on creating a community of all people in this country who are willing to work hard and be good citizens. And the American people did it. And I am very grateful. Hillary is very grateful. We are all very grateful. (Applause.)

But I want to say to you, I could not have done it, not any of it, without the Democrats in the Congress. And we need more of them, not fewer of them. Send Bill Nelson up there. (Applause.)

And I want you to know that it would not have happened without the Vice President. (Applause.) Again, I want you to listen to this -- and you can see, I'm a little hoarse, so I can't -- this is from the heart. Now, these are facts. From his vote to break the tie on the '93 budget -- which is what gave us the ability to balance the budget, got interest rates down, got the economy going -- to his vote to break the tie on the Senate's consideration of common-sense gun legislation, to close the loophole in the Brady Bill so we could also cover the gun shows, something you voted to do in Florida -- (applause) -- from leading our efforts to connect every classroom to the Internet.

Let me tell you what we've done. Five years ago, when Al Gore and I started working on this and I asked him to take it on, only 4 percent of the classrooms in the country were connected, and they were in 14 percent of the schools -- five years ago. Today, over 50 percent of the classrooms are connected to the Internet in over 80 percent of the

schools. I think he's done a good job in helping this to happen.
(Applause.)

From running our empowerment zone program to bring economic opportunity to poor areas, to supporting our policies and developing so many of our policies to strengthen the American family, to leading our reinventing government effort -- which has given us, I will say again, the smallest federal government in 37 years with a higher level of support for the American people -- to supporting every tough decision I have had to make as President, from guns and tobacco, to Bosnia and Kosovo, I can tell you that in the history of the country, he is the most effective and influential Vice President who has ever served.
(Applause.)

Now -- he's got a lot of good ideas for the future, too. And now I want to talk about that. I just signed the first budget of the 21st century. Charlie said we had a do-nothing Congress. Well, that's not quite true. They tried to do something -- they tried to pass a tax cut so big that it would have kept us from ever paying down the debt and fixing Social Security and contributing to our children's education. And I vetoed that, and the Democrats stayed with me. That was a major achievement of the last Congress. (Applause.)

And then, when they got ready to go home, that's when the President and the Democrats acquired a little influence in the debate. So when we came out of the budget, even this year, we had a continuing commitment to 100,000 teachers, to 50,000 more police, to 60,000 housing vouchers to help poor people move from welfare to work. We doubled the funds for after-school programs. We got the first money the federal government has ever appropriated for states to turn around or shut down failing schools, so that we can help all our kids get a good education, and still support the public schools and public school reform. (Applause.)

We had major advances on the environment, and we beat back major assaults on the environment. And we've paid our United Nations dues and agreed to help alleviate the debt of the poorest countries in the world. (Applause.) And we fixed some of the too-severe cuts in the Medicare law from the 1997 balanced budget, restoring funding to hospitals, to nursing homes, to other medical providers, needed to help the 39 million elderly and disabled Medicare beneficiaries.

We also passed a landmark bill I am immensely proud of, which allows people with disabilities to keep their Medicaid if they move into the work force so people can go to work, because they can't get private insurance. (Applause.)

Now, there's a lot of things we didn't do, and I'm going to be working to get it done. We didn't pass the patients' bill of rights, and we should. It's wrong, everybody should be guaranteed quality care. (Applause.) We didn't raise the minimum wage again, and we should. We didn't close the gun show loophole and require child trigger locks, and we should. (Applause.) We didn't pass the hate crimes legislation or the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, and I believe we should. (Applause.) We didn't pass my New Markets Initiative, which would give Americans the same tax incentives and loan guarantees to invest in poor areas in America they get to invest in poor areas in Latin America, or

Asia, or Africa. And I think they should. (Applause.)

I hope that they will agree to let China join the WTO, and give them normal trading status. Why? Because you already know we've got a big trade deficit with China. This bill, this agreement I made, gives more options for American farmers, American manufacturers, American investors. All they get out of it -- and it's not insignificant -- they get to be in the World Trade Organization, where we'll all have to live by the same rules. But we get dramatically greater access to their markets. It means big, big jobs and incomes for farmers and workers in America. And I hope it will pass. (Applause.)

Most importantly, I hope we will find a way next year to protect Social Security and Medicare in the face of the baby boomers' retirements. (Applause.) Now, I want to talk a little more about that. And this is what I want to tell you about the election. We've got a great record. We -- you and me, all of us -- we've got good ideas. We ought to be winning every poll by 20 or 25 points in every race. Why aren't we? Well, they always have more money than we do. And they've been talking to a certain sector of our electorate for so long and telling them how terrible we are, some people probably believe it and forget to think before they vote. (Laughter.)

But you can change that. So I just want to leave you with this. This I want to be my gift to you. I will do everything I can for the next 14 months. But you have to be good citizens in this election season. And the future of America now is riding on how the congressional races and the governors' races and the presidential race and these other things come out.

Let me begin with a story. Over Thanksgiving, I got my whole family, my extended family, and gathered them up and took them to Camp David. Then after we stuffed ourselves on Thanksgiving, we had some more of our friends come up, and they had some little kids, too, to play with my two little nephews. And on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, this beautiful little six-year-old girl looked up at me and she said, now, Mr. President, how old are you anyway? (Laughter.) So I said, well, I'm 53. And she said, that's a lot. That's a lot. (Laughter.) So I said, yes, it is a lot.

And let me tell you, from the perspective of those years, in my lifetime -- in my whole lifetime -- there has never been a time when America had this much prosperity, this much social progress, this much national confidence, with the absence of a crisis at home or a threat abroad.

Now, what does that mean? (Applause.) Wait, wait, wait, wait. We're done with the record. (Laughter.) I want you to think about this. What that means is that for the first time in my lifetime, on the edge of this new millennium, we actually have a chance to shape the future of our dreams for our children, in a way no previous group of Americans, in our whole lifetime, has had. And that imposes on us a terrific responsibility. You know, anybody can concentrate when their backs are against the wall. The great British essayist, Samuel Johnson, said, "Nothing so concentrates the mind as the prospect of one's own destruction." Your back's against the wall, you can focus.

When things are rocking along, hunky-dory, it's easy to get distracted. I was so proud of the American people for sticking with me when I vetoed that tax cut. I said, you know, you can understand it if people said, hey, man, we've been working hard out here. The '80s were tough, the '90s were tough. Cut us some slack, here. But they said, uh-uh, no, we don't want to go back to those old, bad days. We'll stay on the path we're on. That was good. (Applause.)

So I ask you, here's what will determine whether we win this election or not, from the White House to the Senate to all the other elections? What will determine whether we win is, what is it about? And if it is about our common responsibility as a people to meet the big challenges of the 21st century, because we ought to and because we can, now, for the first time in our lifetimes, then we will win.

What are they? We've got to deal with the aging of America. The number of people over 65 will double in 30 years. I hope to be one of them. (Laughter.) It is unconscionable that the baby boom generation will walk away again from the opportunity to take Social Security out beyond the life expectancy of the baby boomers, and to push the life of Medicare out there, and to add a prescription drug benefit for the people who cannot afford their medicine today. (Applause.)

Second, you look around Florida -- we've got the largest and most diverse student population in our history. We cannot walk away from our obligation to give all of these children a world-class education. We ought to pass my initiative to help people build or repair thousands of schools. We ought to keep on going until we connect them all to the Internet. We ought to give every child access to an after-school program. We ought to make sure the teachers are certified and well-trained and well-compensated. We owe that to these kids. Nothing is more important. (Applause.)

Third, we ought to do more to help people balance work and family. (Applause.) More child care. Insure all the kids with health insurance. Equal pay for equal work for women. We ought to do that. (Applause.)

Fourth, we ought to make sure that we can grow the economy and still improve the environment. The world is in a grip, still, of a very bad idea that's wrong. All over the world, including in Washington, D.C., people believe you can't get rich unless you put more coal and oil into furnaces or machines and burn them and pollute the atmosphere. It's not true anymore. It's not true anymore.

The farmers in Florida, I predict to you, within 15 years, will be saving all their waste products for biomass fuel. And you'll be able to use a gallon of gasoline to make eight or 10 gallons of biomass fuel with no greenhouse gas emissions. When that happens, the whole future of that will change. You can buy windows right now that let in five times as much light and keep out five times as much heat and cold.

We have undertaken to green the White House, and we have saved the equivalent of almost 700 cars on the highway by energy conservation at the White House. And it's working just fine. We're all warm in the

winter and cool in the summer. It's a big deal. (Applause.) It will be a bigger deal to the future; you mark my words. If you don't want the Everglades to flood because of global warming, we better deal now with this. And we can do it. (Applause.)

So -- let me just mention one or two other things. We've got the crime rate down to a 25-year low; good -- murder rate down to a 31-year low; good. Does anybody think America is as safe as it ought to be? No, of course not. Now, when I took office, most people didn't believe you could drive the crime rate down. We all thought the crime rate just went in one direction -- up. So now we know it can be brought down.

So, I say to you, the reason I fight hard for this, these common-sense gun measures and the 50,000 more police in the high-crime areas, and more programs to keep kids out of trouble in the first place is I don't think it's good enough to say we've had crime go down seven years. I think the Democrats ought to say, okay, now we know we can do it; we have a new goal -- we want America to be the safest big country in the entire world, and we're going to keep working until we do it. (Applause.)

Now, I want to say something about the economy. I think it is terribly important that we keep our party front and center on keeping this economy going. How are we going to keep it going? Number one is, don't forget what brought us to the dance. We need to keep paying down this debt. You know that we can be out of debt in 15 years if we stay on my budget path. For the first time since 1835, America will be debt free. And we ought to do it. (Applause.)

Second, we've got to keep working within our party, within our country -- with labor, environmentalists, and businesspeople -- until we finally get it right on trade because, I am telling you, the world is better off today because there is 50 years of increasing trade. We are only 4 percent of the world's people; we've got 22 percent of the world's income. It just stands to reason that you can't hold that unless you sell something to the other 96 percent.

Furthermore, let me say something about imports. They are unpopular in general, and popular in particular. We don't like imports in general, but we all have them: we wear them, we drive them, you know. (Laughter.) What do they do for you? They keep inflation down with competition. That's why we've got the longest peacetime expansion in our history, because inflation didn't destroy it. So we've got to keep working until we get this right.

The third thing we've got to do -- and this is something I feel so strongly about -- if we can't bring economic opportunity to the poor areas of America that have not participated in this recovery now, we will never get around to doing it -- never. To Appalachia, to the Mississippi Delta, to the poor rural areas of America, to the inner cities, to the Native American reservations. We've got to do it. (Applause.)

And with economic opportunity we also have to keep our focus on doing everything we can at home and around the world to get people together, to get people over these conflicts they have over race and

ethnicity and religion and sexual orientation. It's crazy. (Applause.)

You know -- let me just ask you to think about this. Don't you think it's interesting that whenever you read something about the new millennium, they talk about the wonders of the human computer, the wonders of the human genome. Hillary had some people at the White House the other night -- one of the guys that founded the Internet and one of the principal scientists working on the human gene. And the Internet guy actually sent the first e-mail 18 years ago, because he had a profoundly deaf wife and he wanted to talk to her at work, and she couldn't take hearing aids.

And he said, the intersection of the study of the gene and the study of computers means we can do things that we never could do before. And he had his wife stand up and she started speaking, and because she has a minor little computer chip stuck way down in her ear, she can hear for the first time in 50 years. (Applause.)

Now, last year we transplanted nerves from the legs to the spine of a laboratory animal for the first time and got movement in the lower legs. Some people think we'll be able to take a picture of spinal cord injuries and just design a computer chip to go in and replace the electronic impulses that the spine used to provide. This is the kind of stuff we're talking about. (Applause.)

In a couple of years, young mothers will come home from the hospital with their babies and they'll have a little genetic map. And it will be a little scary. It will say, you know, your daughter has one of these genes that are predictors for breast cancer -- that's the bad news. The good news is you know it now and here are 10 things you can do that will cut her risk by 80 percent. A lot of my friends who are experts in the field really believe that sometime early in the next century American newborns will have a life expectancy of nearly 100 years. (Applause.)

Now, a lot of my other friends in the space program think we'll find out what's in the black holes in the universe. A lot of other people believe we'll continue to fight against war because we'll be more connected to the Internet around the world.

Let me ask you something. Don't you think it's interesting that in this most modern of times, the biggest problem in the world today is the oldest problem of human society: we don't trust people who are different from us. We fear them. It's easy to go from fear to dislike, from dislike to hatred, from hatred to dehumanization, and then to violence.

There was a picture yesterday morning in one of the big newspapers of a young gay soldier that was beaten to death with a baseball bat, and right next to him, the young soldier that beat him to death -- one 21, one 18. I was looking at these two kids thinking, you know, they're young enough that they could be my children. And both these young men put on the uniform of our country, and I could have sent them someplace to die. They both swore to go wherever I told them to go, and do whatever I told them to do. And I was aching for the young man who had died, and for the young man whose life is now destroyed -- who wasn't born hating that way; somebody had to teach him to do that. (Applause.)

And so I say to you, you want to know what makes us different? The best politics in 2000 is doing right by the big challenges of the country. If people believe the election is about who's got the best record and who's got the best vision for the big challenges, lifting us up and pulling us together -- listen, our crowd's going to do fine.

If we talk about the aging of America and Social Security and Medicare; if we talk about the education of our children; if we talk about growing our economy, and helping our agricultural and manufacturing sectors while improving the environment; if we talk about balancing work and family; if we talk about bringing economic opportunity to poor people and getting this country out of debt for the first time since 1835; and if we talk about the most important thing of all, which is manifested in the hate crimes in America, and in the continuing conflicts from the Balkans to the Middle East -- and thank God, in the peace agreement in Northern Ireland, and we hope there will be one between Israel and Syria soon, because they're coming to meet next week -- (applause.)

People have to find a way not just to tolerate, but to celebrate their differences, and to be secure in doing it because they believe, down to the core of their being, that what we have in common is even more important. We've got to let a lot of this stuff go. Our party can take the lead in doing that.

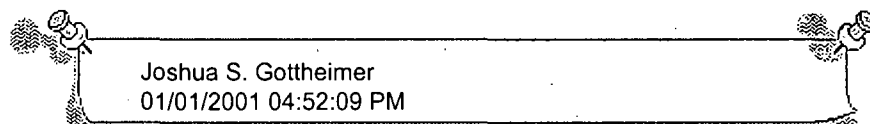
So go out there and talk to people about what's happened in this country in the last seven years. Even more important, go out there and say, do you really believe in our lifetime we've ever been in this kind of shape before? And if you don't, what are we going to do with it? Go up to total strangers on the street and say, you're a citizen; what do you think we ought to do with this time? I think we ought to make the most of it.

And ask them about the aging of America. Ask them about the children of America. Ask them about their parents struggling to balance work and family. Ask them about the economy and the environment. Ask them about bringing economic opportunity to poor places. And ask them about building one America. You make this election season about that, and we'll have another celebration next year.

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

END 10:45 A.M. EST

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