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"To Heal the Divisions: ...RFK" 5/22/93

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Keynote Speech of Eli Segal May 22, 1993

"To Heal the Divisions: Los Angeles and the Legacy of Robert F. Kennedy"

I am especially honored to ~~be~~ ^{be on the same program}
Mayor Bradley, ~~Delores Huerta~~ ^{Delores Huerta}
Paul Shrade: 3 extraordinary human beings who ^{are the}

Thank you Kerry. I am deeply honored and ^{close exp.}
pleased to be here with you today. Wherever Robert ^{of Robt Kennedy}
Kennedy is honored, I know I will find friends of ^{service}
National Service. Of course, ^{Robert} Kennedy had a way of ^{whereas}
making every crowd into a group of his friends.
Campaigning in Indiana ^{in 1968} he was greeted with an
enormous sign that said "Bobby Go Home." Kennedy
took the microphone and said "First I want to say that
there's a little boy named Bobby whose mother wants
him to come home right away."

And I'd like to tell you just one more story about Indiana 25 years ago. A young law school graduate [~~passionately committed to ending the war which brought Robert Kennedy to run for President~~] went to South Bend and organized what he thought was a great event for another Senator engaged in ^{the same effort to win his party's Presidential nomination.} ~~the same~~ ^{turnout} 350 students at Notre Dame. ^{that night to hear Senator Eugene McCarthy.} There was only one problem: 2 nights later on the exact same spot 1700 students were cheering for Robert Kennedy. There's really no moral here: just that ~~it~~ it ended my budding career as an advance man.

What was special about Kennedy that night in South Bend, what was special about his brother who stood before 10,000 students in Ann Arbor 8 years earlier when ~~when~~ he invited them to join a Peace Corps was a recognition that our imperfect yet good spirited people would take up the challenge of change if bold leaders called for it.

5:30 pm-
5:45 pm

MEETING
OVAL OFFICE
Staff Contact: Carol Rasco

5:45 pm
7:30 pm

MEETING
ROOSEVELT ROOM
Staff Contact: Maggie Williams

7:30 pm-
7:45 pm

MEETING
OVAL OFFICE
Staff Contact: Mack McLarty

BC AND HRC/RON

WHITE HOUSE

I would like to speak today about national service and Robert Kennedy. I will resist the temptation to use Robert Kennedy's words to argue for our legislative program. Instead, I wish to use our program to argue that Robert Kennedy's ideals of compassion, community, and commitment remain a vital part of our national spirit ^{today.} And just as Robert Kennedy challenged the country to embrace those ideals, President Clinton's National Service program challenges the next generation to carry this legacy forward.

I should begin by noting that it is no accident that our program of national service resonates with the words and ideas of Robert Kennedy. Our efforts have been blessed by the counsel of Peter Edelman, one of Robert Kennedy's closest aides, and a voice of wisdom and inspiration in shaping our legislation. And everything our Office accomplishes bears the imprint of my tireless chief of staff, Richard Allen. ~~Richard~~ Rick literally brings the message of Robert Kennedy into our office, as he has just finished -- with Ed Guthman -- editing Robert Kennedy's Collected Speeches. I urge you to buy the book, both for its own sake and because I know we're not paying Rick half of what he's worth. And because Rick assured me he'd no longer be my tireless chief of staff if ~~he~~ didn't say it.

To read Kennedy's speeches is to find not only the conscience of one historical era, but a guiding light for our own. It was easy to know where Robert Kennedy stood in 1968. But because he was guided by great ideals, I think we can be sure of where he would have stood today -- even on issues not dreamed of in his time.

Is there any doubt that he would have hugged those who suffer with AIDs? Is there any doubt that he would have railed against our failure to provide drug treatment to women, ^{whose} ~~which means that~~ babies are born addicted to crack? And is there any doubt that he would have laughed at today's conventional wisdom -- that a President who tries to do great things lacks focus? I can imagine his scorn for those who ^{would} say that ^{immunizing 2 year olds from childhood diseases} ~~health care or jobs or civil rights for gays and lesbians~~ should languish until the time is right.

National service begins with a recognition of our neighbors' needs and the simple fact that those needs place an urgent claim upon us. This kind of compassion is earned through openness to others, and an honesty with ourselves. It is no one's birthright -- not even a Kennedy's. In 1942, the Assistant headmaster at Robert Kennedy's prep school wrote that Bobby was quite industrious, but "has not yet shown much sense of social responsibility." ~~We know Bobby learned and so we can hope for ourselves and fellow citizens.~~

~~During the 1968 campaign, Robert Kennedy~~
~~spent long hours touring the poorest of neighborhoods.~~
26 years later, Robert Kennedy was campaigning once brutally
After a hot afternoon in Spanish Harlem, ~~Kennedy~~ At the
conclusion of the grueling day, Kennedy's guide
guide -- a former prize fighter by the name of Jose

Torres -- finally asked this son of privilege why he was
traipsing through New York's poorest neighborhoods.

Kennedy responded "because I found out something I
never knew. I found out that my world was not the
real world."

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There is still a very real world that too many Americans have failed to recognize. It is a world in which half of our country's infants are not immunized from deadly diseases. It is a world where children must turn to street gangs or drugs to find a way of belonging. It is a world in which the elderly are no longer safe on the streets where they have lived their entire lives. It is a world in which, on average, the quality of your education, your job, your housing, and your health care varies with your skin color.

Here in Los Angeles, the stark differences between rich and poor, and white and black, were

brilliantly illuminated by the flames of the Rodney King

riots. ~~Although a year has past, many of the long standing~~
~~But these differences have always been there.~~
~~conditions remain unchanged. LA County ranks at or near the~~
~~This conference is all about the need to open our eyes~~
~~bottom in 8th Grade Achievement Scores, High School Dropout Rate,~~
~~to these differences, and then to act to end them.~~
~~Violent Crime, Juvenile Incarceration & Births to Teens. For~~
~~the gang capital of the world, over 100 people were killed~~
~~in the streets of this city since the riots.~~

① BA let's be humble about what we can do

But against this backdrop -- and the backdrop of countless ~~the~~ urban landscapes -- all is not bleak. And just as 25 years ago ^{where} Robert Kennedy reached out to young people because he believed in ^{redemptive power,} ~~that~~ a Bill Clinton is reaching out to them for the same reason today.

When most people characterize the 80's, they talk about the decade of greed and ^{& with good reason.} ~~equilibrium~~. But the 80's were remarkable for another reason as well -- the generation scorned as the embodiment of greed ~~has~~ began turning to another form of sustenance. Today over 60% of people between the ages of 12 & 17 are volunteering over 3 hours per week; and even more astonishing, more than 2/3 of college freshmen are doing likewise.

Our national service program is designed to take our country's greatest national resource -- the energy and idealism of our young people -- and direct it ^{to our hardest domestic problems.} ~~to our greatest needs.~~ Young people can help staff health clinics, and help channel teenagers away from gangs and drugs. They can help patrol our streets, and help build and run places for child care and elderly services. [Indeed, they are already doing so in some communities. We need to encourage and reward and thereby multiply those efforts. ~~Under the~~ National ~~service legislation~~ ^{is deceptively simple: young} service ~~legislation~~, we will recruit volunteers for a year or two of service, pay them a small stipend while they work, and then provide them with educational benefits when their service has been completed.

And This summer here in Los Angeles and in 10 other communities around America, the Clinton Administration will launch its Summer of Service even before its landmark legislation clears the Congress.

Yes, its a demonstration project, yes it only permits 200 youngsters to serve here in L.A. & ~~only 1500 nationwide~~ only 1500 nationwide. But do you think ~~this~~ this matter to the ~~the~~ ^{10,000} ~~people~~ ^{people} ~~at risk~~ ^{at risk} here in L.A. who will be the ^{beneficiaries} ~~the~~ of this undertaking? Or to the ⁵⁰ ~~the~~ African American and Hispanic volunteers from all over L.A. County who will be recruited and trained to participate in the delivery of primary health care in a profession where ~~African Americans~~ ^{they} ~~Hispanics~~ are dramatically underrepresented? Or to the 150 youngsters from a wide variety of social ^{and Korean} ~~backgrounds~~ ^{backgrounds} who will tutor, mentor, to manage day camps, ^{to} plant gardens ~~in the schools~~, to make presentations in CPR, First Aid, ~~to~~ HIV/Aids awareness ~~to~~ ^{to} substance abuse throughout the elementary schools ~~the~~?

■ The Philadelphia Tribune
 ■ Tuesday, May 18, 1993
 ■ Page 2-A

Bipartisan support gives Clinton boost

By Bob Ellison
 American Urban Radio Network

Something is afoot. After all the analyses of President Clinton's lack of focus, his declining public approval ratings, and the defeat of his economic stimulus program by filibustering Senate Republicans, Clinton and company should be cowering. Yet, Clinton special assistant Gloria Johnson asserts, "We are extremely optimistic that the legislation will in fact be passed and that the program will be up and running by fiscal year 1994." Johnson was referring to Clinton's National Service Initiative, which he spotlighted last month in New Orleans. Johnson reports that the National Service legislation was submitted to Congress during the week of May 3.

Why this burst of administration optimism? "Strong bipartisan support," says Johnson, with Republican co-sponsors in the House and Senate, and a long list of Democratic supporters as well. Johnson said the measure is on "a fast track," and that the administration is hoping for a vote in Congress before the summer recess, "because everyone recognizes that those two goals of being able to increase your education and serve your community will be real goals that can be met in a timely fashion." Johnson added that education and community service are "two goals which are increasingly elusive to minority and low income communities."

As proposed, high school graduates and holders of general equivalency diplomas who perform community service in a government certified program will be awarded up to \$10,000 in school grants (\$5,000 per year) for two years of service. The grant could be used to repay college loans, or to pay for

other education or training. Johnson said the program is for anyone who wants to go beyond high school, two-year and four-year schools, job training, or graduate school — youngsters, middle-agers, and senior citizens. Participants who perform community service will also receive a stipend at about the minimum wage and can receive health care and child care assistance if needed.

Community service will be available in four general areas: education; the environment, human services (for example child care), and public safety. This service can be performed before, during or after an individual pursues post-secondary education.

The administration envisions 25,000 participants in the first year and 150,000 at the end of the program's fourth year. Johnson says these estimates are "conservative. We're trying to be prudent. We want to make sure that we're funding programs that work."

Johnson, an African-American, says one of her responsibilities "is to make sure we solicit comments from communities to be impacted." Though African-American communities and their service organizations are not her only responsibility, Johnson stresses that efforts have been made to inform such groups about the National Service Initiative, so that they can submit applications for certification — after Congressional approval — to get the program up and moving.

To some, a \$5,000-a-year grant plus a minimum wage stipend may not seem like much; it would barely dent the annual tuition at some of the nation's more expensive schools. Yet the grants, service and stipend will give thousands, perhaps millions of Americans, one more crucial educational option.

The young are precisely the citizens most able to attack the long-ignored needs of the other America. As Robert Kennedy explained, the fight for change "demands the qualities of youth; not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the love of ease."

Furthermore, I believe that if we nurture the idealism of youth, we might just reap the kind of adults who continue the fight for social justice into our courthouses and state houses and White House.

But tapping the enthusiasm of the young
by itself will not be enough. When I
was asked by President Clinton to help
bring to America "a season of service"
I promised him that our initiative
would not be rooted in Washington.

Which reminds ~~about the old saw~~ me
of the old saw about

**SCHEDULE OF THE PRESIDENT
FOR
THURSDAY, MAY 20, 1993
FINAL DRAFT**

OPTIONAL DROP BY:	36 members of the Arkansas Army National Guard will be touring the White House at 8:00 am. They are in town to receive an award as 2nd runner-up in the National Army Communities of Excellence competition.
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tba	JOG
9:30 am- 9:45 am	COMBINED BRIEFINGS OVAL OFFICE Staff Contact: Tony Lake
9:45 am- 10:00 am	MEETING OVAL OFFICE Staff Contact: Marcia Hale
10:00 am- 10:30 am	BRIEFING for motor voter event OVAL OFFICE Staff Contact: Doris Matsui
10:40 am- 10:50 am	MAKEUP OVAL OFFICE Staff Contact: Dave Anderson
10:55 am	THE PRESIDENT greets motor voter program participants DIPLOMATIC RECEPTION ROOM Staff Contact: Ann Stock
11:00 am- 11:45 am	MOTOR VOTER EVENT ROSE GARDEN or SOUTH LAWN Staff Contact: Doris Matsui OPEN PRESS
11:50 am- 12:00 pm	INTERVIEW OVAL OFFICE Staff Contact: Dave Anderson
12:00 pm- 1:00 pm	LUNCH with Vice President Gore OVAL OFFICE

When we are really honest with ourselves, we must admit that our lives are all that really belong to us. So it is how we use our lives that determines what kind of men we are. It is my deepest belief that only by giving our lives do we find life. I am convinced that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of manliness, is to sacrifice for others in a totally nonviolent struggle for justice. To be a man is to suffer for others. God, help us be men.

Robert.

On the plane back from California, Kennedy told an aide he would run for ~~the~~ President.

Chavez, Kennedy, and each of us know that
the best part of ourselves is called to serve others.

~~Our young know it, too, even though our society
sometimes seems determined to persuade them
otherwise.~~ National service is a way of seizing that
recognition and making it concrete -- in the lives of our
young, and in the lives of the communities they will
serve.

W k L Compassion and community are essential parts of being a citizen in the full sense of the word, ~~but~~ they are meaningless if they are not matched with personal commitments to real social change.

Being human, we hesitate before we make such a commitment. In his book, Robert Kennedy and his Times, Arthur Schlesinger describes the anguish with which Kennedy evaluated whether he should enter the 1968 presidential campaign. During that time of trial, Kennedy came to California and met with one of the great ^{people} ~~men~~ of our century, Cesar Chavez. Chavez had just finished a hunger strike, and the two men shared a Mass of Thanksgiving. Chavez was too weak to speak at this event, but when his speech was read for him, Kennedy heard these words:

And community needs to be defined in ~~other~~ ^{more} than geographic terms. Shortly after the President unveiled his national service initiative in Rutgers, I asked General Colin Powell if ^{Rick Allen} I could ~~visit him~~ share with him our thoughts about national service. While I didn't tell him then, I don't think he'd be surprised if he knew that it was my first trip to the Pentagon since 1967 -- and then I was on the outside looking in! When I finished briefing General Powell -- and all of the Joint Chiefs who he gathered for the occasion -- I was stunned. Complete, enthusiastic, even passionate support would be forthcoming for as one Chief put it "Who better to train ^{for service to their country} the young than the military". For me, and perhaps for some of you here today, the Vietnam War had finally come to an end! The community of ^{from our ~~the~~ rural hamlets to our booming cities} citizens of good will -- ~~that set the~~ ^{senior military personnel to} civilian, young in spirit if not in age, could you see how one Senator from New York would have ~~the~~ responded ~~to~~ to this vision of national service?

Usually, we proudly say that this emphasis on community shows that we are reinventing government. But for today, I ^{prefer to look back to} ~~will admit that~~ Robert Kennedy ^{and a} ~~had this~~ ^{speech he gave in Minnesota over 25 years ago} ~~idea over twenty-five years ago. Speaking in~~

~~Minnesota, he said~~ "[w]e must attempt . . . to bring ^{.. he said} people back to . . . the warmth of community, to the worth of individual effort and responsibility . . . and of individuals working together as a community, to better their lives and their children's future. [We must learn] the lesson that government can follow the leadership of private citizens; that ^{those} ~~those~~ who are citizens in the full sense of the word need not belong to the government in order to benefit their community."

There's a lot of truth in that. I promise you a program of national service that accepts our full responsibility to those in need. But I also promise to avoid the kind of overwhelming federal involvement that can suffocate the spirit of our communities. Our program will fund local groups -- schools and churches and social service agencies -- who have ideas on how their community could use ~~for a year or more~~ the services of idealistic young volunteers.

This attention to our youth will be coupled with an emphasis on rebuilding a sense of community at the local level. President Clinton well appreciates that the real energy and genius of America exists outside of the Beltway, and that the federal government must avoid both providing too little assistance and issuing too many directives.

~~Do you know what they say is~~ the difference between a Democrat and a Republican? Picture a ^{woman} ~~man~~ drowning fifty feet offshore. The Republican would throw ^{her} ~~him~~ twenty-five feet of rope and tell ^{her} ~~him~~ to swim the rest ^{of the way} because it would be good for ^{her} ~~his~~ character. The Democrat would throw ^{her} ~~him~~ a hundred feet of rope and then run off looking for more people to save.

Not all of us are called to the greatness of a Cesar Chavez or Robert Kennedy. But when President Clinton speaks of service, he ^{likes to} quote Martin Luther King's words that "everyone can be great because everyone can serve." These words do not mean simply that the seeds of greatness are within each of us as individuals. They also mean that greatness through service is not a scarce commodity -- that great people, unlike great scientists or great basketball players, are not measured by the distance between themselves and ordinary people. Great people are measured by the lack of distance between themselves and others.

25 years From now, Bill Clinton
will no longer be in Washington and
he, like Robert Kennedy, will be in the
history books our children and grandchildren
will read. My wish for my friend
and for my country and for the men we
honor today is that through national service
we will have translated the ideals of
compassion, community and commitment ~~which~~
~~into reality~~ into reality.

1:00 pm-
1:30 pm

OFFICIAL PHOTOS

1:05 pm **Commander Richard McAfee**
 OVAL OFFICE
 Staff Contact: David Watkins
 CLOSED PRESS

1:10 pm **Lieutenant Theresa Lewis, U.S. Navy**
 OVAL OFFICE
 Staff Contact: David Watkins
 CLOSED PRESS

1:15 pm **Commander Wayne Justice, U.S. Coast Guard**
 OVAL OFFICE
 Staff Contact: David Watkins
 CLOSED PRESS

1:30 pm-
3:30 pm

PHONE AND OFFICE TIME OVAL OFFICE

3:30 pm-
3:40 pm

DROP BY meeting with President Askar Akayev Krgyzstan
VICE PRESIDENT'S WEST WING OFFICE
Staff Contact: Tony Lake
CLOSED PRESS

3:45 pm-
4:00 pm

NATIONAL SERVICE PHOTO
OVAL OFFICE
Staff Contact: Eli Segal
CLOSED PRESS

4:00 pm-
4:15 pm

OFFICIAL PHOTO
Sen. Daschle and Mrs. Ziolkowski
MAP ROOM
Staff Contact: Dawn Friedkin
CLOSED PRESS

4:15 pm-
5:00 pm

AFT RECEPTION
DIPLOMATIC RECEPTION ROOM
Talking Points: Joan Baggett
Staff Contact: Joan Baggett
CLOSED PRESS

5:00 pm-
5:20 pm

CUBAN INDEPENDENCE DAY
ROSE GARDEN
Talking Points: Nancy Soderberg
Staff Contact: Alexis Herman
POOL PRESS during the President's remarks only

I hope that twenty-five years from now, we will honor the origins of our national service program just as we honor Robert Kennedy's presidential campaign - as a monument to the abiding ideals of compassion, community and commitment. ^{And} During the long road between now and then, let us hold close the words that Robert Kennedy shared ^{while in} ~~that~~ South Africa in 1966:

"each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."