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To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc:

Subject: 1999-2-19 remarks of President at Lt. Flipper ceremony

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 19, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AT CEREMONY IN HONOR OF LT. HENRY O. FLIPPER

The Roosevelt Room

6:33 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: First of all, I'd like to welcome this distinguished assemblage here -- Dr. King and the members of the Flipper family, and your friends; Secretary West, Congressman Clyburn, General Powell, Deputy Secretary Hamry, Under Secretary de Leon, General Ross and General Reimer, Secretary Caldera. I understand we're joined by Clarence Davenport, the 6th African American graduate of West Point; other distinguished West Point graduates who are here. Welcome to all of you.

There's one person who could not be here today -- Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder, I'm glad to see you -- the one person who could not be here today I want to acknowledge, and that is Senator Max Cleland from Georgia, who has done a lot to make this day possible. We thank him in his absence.

I welcome you all to an event that is 117 years overdue. Here in America's House of liberty, we celebrate ideas like freedom, equality, our indivisibility as one people. Great leaders lived here -- people like Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Lincoln, the Roosevelts, after whom this room is named. All of them deepened the meaning of those words while they lived here. But we must be candid and say that the

special quality of American freedom is not always extended to all Americans.

A word like "freedom," to be more than a slogan, requires us to acknowledge that our "more perfect union" was created by imperfect human beings, people who did not always define freedom in the ways that we would, and in ways that they knew they should. For this word to live for ourselves and our children, we must recognize it represents a difficult goal that must be struggled with every day in order to be realized.

Today's ceremony is about a moment in 1882, when our government did not do all it could do to protect an individual American's freedom. It is about a moment in 1999 when we correct the error and resolve to do even better in the future.

The man we honor today was an extraordinary American. Henry Flipper did all his country asked him to do. Though born a slave in Georgia, he was proud to serve America: the first African American graduate of West Point; the first African American commissioned officer in the regular United States Army. He showed brilliant promise and joined the 10th Cavalry. While stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, he perfected a drainage system that eliminated the stagnant water, and malaria, plaguing the fort. Still known as "Flipper's Ditch," it became a national landmark in 1977.

He distinguished himself in combat on the frontier, and then was transferred to run a commissary at Fort Davis in Texas. In 1881, Lt. Flipper was accused by his commanding officer of improperly accounting for the funds entrusted to him. A later Army review suggested he had been singled out for his race, but at the time there wasn't much justice available for a young African American soldier.

In December, a court-martial acquitted him of embezzlement, but convicted him of conduct unbecoming an officer. President Chester A. Arthur declined to overturn the sentence, and in June of 1882, Lt. Flipper was dishonorably discharged. His life continued. He became a civil and mining engineer out West. He worked in many capacities for the government, as special agent for the Department of Justice; as an expert on Mexico for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; as a special assistant to the Secretary of the Interior. He died in 1940, at the age of 84.

But even after his death, this stain of dishonor remained. One hundred and seventeen years have now elapsed since his discharge. That's a long time, even more than the span of his long life. More than half the history of the White House, indeed, of the United States itself. And too long to let an injustice lie uncorrected.

The army exonerated him in 1976, changed his discharge to honorable and reburied him with full honors. But one thing remained to be done, and now it will be. With great pleasure and humility, I now offer a full pardon to Lt. Henry Ossian Flipper of

the United States Army. This good man now has completely recovered his good name.

It has been a trying thing for the family to fight this long battle, to confront delays and bureaucratic indifference, but this is a day of affirmation. It teaches us that, although the wheels of justice turn slowly at times, still they turn. It teaches that time can heal old wounds and redemption comes to those who persist in a righteous cause. Most of all, it teaches us -- Lt. Flipper's family teaches us -- that we must never give up the fight to make our country live up to its highest ideals.

Outside of this room Henry Flipper is not known to most Americans. All the more reason to remember him today. His remarkable life story is important to us, terribly important, as we continue to work -- on the edge of a new century and a new millennium -- on deepening the meaning of freedom at home, and working to expand democracy and freedom around the world, to give new life to the great experiment begun in 1776. This is work Henry Flipper would have been proud of.

Each of you who worked so hard for this day is a living chapter in the story of Lt. Flipper. I thank you for your devotion, your courage, your persistence, your unshakable commitment. I thank you for believing, and proving, that challenges never disappear, but in the long run, freedom comes to those who persevere.

Thank you very, very much. (Applause.)

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6:44 P.M. EST

Message Sent To: _____

Brenda M. Anders

01/16/99 09:58:30

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Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

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Subject: Fact Sheet: President Clinton Announces Publication of Promising Practices Report

**PRESIDENT CLINTON ANNOUNCES PUBLICATION OF
PROMISING PRACTICES REPORT
January 16, 1999**

In his live weekly radio address, President Clinton today announced the publication of *Pathways to One America in the 21st Century - Promising Practices for Racial Reconciliation*. The document is a listing of 123 programs working to improve race relations in communities around the country. It is an important contribution to the President's Initiative on Race (PIR) and demonstrates the commitment of many Americans to fulfilling President Clinton's vision of One America in the 21st century.

The programs selected for the publication range from those that assist with mentoring and tutoring for people of color to those where people are joining together across all racial lines to enhance the economic standing for everyone in communities all over America. They illustrate what people at all levels, a private citizen to a large corporation, can and are doing to find common ground and bridge racial divides.

Throughout the past year, the Advisory Board to the President's Initiative on Race visited many of the Promising Practices programs. This publication can only highlight a fraction of those identified during the year for their proven effectiveness and the lessons we can learn from these local and national efforts to advance better race relations. Some of the programs are large, others are small and informal, but they all represent the determined, often volunteer, efforts of people who believe that through dialogue and working toward a common goal, Americans can reduce racial tension, promote racial healing and accept our nation's growing diversity as a strength.

The Promising Practices document is also a good reference tool providing a worksheet that can be used as a guide for assessing programs and organizations working toward racial reconciliation. Contact, website and e-mail information for these programs listed is also provided. *Promising Practices For Racial Reconciliation* is available, along with other Initiative publications, on the PIR website at www.whitehouse.gov/Initiatives/OneAmerica.

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Jason H. Schechter
01/15/99 07:44:43 PM

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To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

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Subject: 1999-1-15 Remarks by the President to the Wall St. Project Conference

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 - -

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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.

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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.

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS AT 40th REUNION OF WOMEN'S EMERGENCY
COMMITTEE
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS
October 8, 1998

Acknowledgments: Mayor Jim Dailey; Alma Williams; Sander Vanocur; Irene Samuel; former Sen. Pryor; former Gov. McMath; the family of Adolphine Fletcher Terry; the student body presidents from the 5 Little Rock public high schools

It is a tremendous honor to stand in the company of so many brave women, and to join you here at the site of their historic first meeting -- the home of Adolphine Fletcher Terry, “the First Lady of Little Rock.” This is the place where it all began, where Mrs. Terry, Vivion Brewer, and Velma Powell convened that meeting of the Women’s Emergency Committee four decades ago. I am thrilled to see that so many of you have made the journey back here, and that you’ve brought your families and friends.

Since March, when the membership roster of the WEC was made public, I’ve been reading and re-reading the names. I’ve been amazed at how many of them are familiar to me, from my 20 years here in Little Rock, and how many of those names have faces and memories attached. I have worked with many of you, over the years, on a multitude of issues. One thing is clear: when the WEC disbanded in 1963, these women didn’t give up the fight. They didn’t stop fighting for public education. They didn’t stop fighting for justice. They didn’t stop fighting for dignity and civil rights for all Americans. And as we have seen today in the fighting spirit of Irene Samuel, they haven’t stopped yet.

This list of 1,281 is more than a membership roster; it is an honor roll. And for the first time, we're learning far more than these women's names; we're hearing their stories -- stories of bravery in the face of bigotry, vigilance in the face of violence, triumph in the face of terror. In the struggle for open schools, the women of the WEC faced hate mail, harassment, police surveillance, bomb threats and death threats. At best, WEC members were treated as a "curiosity," like postwar, Southern Suffragettes in white gloves and hats. At worst, they were called "race-mixers," "Communists," and epithets too awful to repeat.

And yet the members of the WEC endured it all -- proudly and willingly -- not just to open the schools, but to open them to everyone, white and black. And so, with a quiet and solemn dignity, they put on those white gloves and hats and made their way to the Committee's office, located in a member's home. Some members had babies in their arms; others, small children tugging at their skirts. And in this unlikely setting, they built a powerful grassroots movement -- a moderate coalition that dealt defeat to the segregationists on the Little Rock school board and helped save the jobs of teachers who favored integration.

Even when the WEC didn't win a battle, as Velma Powell said, "we got attention." I particularly enjoy the story of a popular radio call-in show that residents of Little Rock used to tune into after dinner. During the schools crisis, the airwaves were dominated by segregationists, who ranted and raved and just took over the program. One evening, though, the women of the WEC decided they had heard enough. They called the program themselves -- 65 of them, all at once, tying up the phone lines for the entire two-hour show. And since they couldn't talk about integration without getting cut off by the station, they talked about anything and everything else -- how to can peaches, how to plant gardenias, how to keep empty beer bottles off the highways -- anything to keep the segregationists off the air.

Even small triumphs like this one made a powerful statement. The WEC proved that a group of "Embattled Ladies" with grit and determination could come together, despite their differences, and stand up for what was right -- even during the most difficult of times. White and black, women were instrumental to the struggle for civil rights. Their leadership may not have captured many headlines, but it was leadership in the truest sense -- from Septima Clark and her citizenship classes; to Diane Nash and her voting rights campaign; to Rosa Parks and the Women's Political Council and the Montgomery bus boycott they successfully waged. And no list of leaders would be complete without the name of Daisy Bates, who was, of course, pivotal in integrating Central High School, among many, many other accomplishments. Unfortunately, she could not join us here today, but I know you will all want to join me in sending Mrs. Bates our gratitude and warmest wishes.

Pioneering women like these built a lasting model of direct, grassroots political action. Their example energized women across the South, drawing record numbers into politics and into new organizations that emulated the techniques of the WEC. When one Arkansas state representative called these new women's groups "the worst ever to come before the legislature," that was a high compliment indeed. It meant that women had become dogged and determined lobbyists, a force to be reckoned with.

In a sense, these women came together as women have always done -- around kitchen tables, at the market, in gatherings like this one. Wives. Mothers. Sisters. Daughters. Few are household names. But voices in harmony make a powerful sound, powerful enough to be heard, and to be heeded.

I have heard these women's voices in Ireland, where women have woven together communities through 30 years of Troubles. Though they may have worshiped separately on Sundays, seven days a week, they all said the same private prayer that would bring their husbands and fathers home safely. These women overcame their differences to work side by side to end the violence, and begin the process of healing and peace.

I have heard them in a South African shanty near Cape Town, where homeless squatters -- mostly women -- have pooled their resources, secured small loans, and built a vibrant community. When I first visited that housing project -- I could see the shacks where these women had recently lived. A year later -- one hundred new homes were built; roads once made of dirt were paved; a concrete slab had become a community and child care center.

I have heard them in Argentina -- fighting for democracy -- where a grandmother refused to bend under the brutality of the generals and kept her eyes on the plight of her nation's grandchildren. These women and others like them are raising their voices and -- just as important -- are inspiring others to raise theirs as well.

At heart, opportunity is what the WEC was all about: opportunity through education. In the manuscript collection at the Arkansas History Commission, there is a WEC flyer from the height of the schools crisis. It says: "To get the best job, your child needs the best schools. Let's have the best schools for the most children -- free public schools." That simple message was at the center of everything the WEC accomplished. It is one of their most important legacies, and a vision that my husband and I have worked to fulfill since he became President six years ago.

Public schools, after all, are the best investment we can make in our children, our nation, our future. As the WEC flyer made clear 40 years ago, nothing expands economic opportunity more than strengthening our public schools. Nothing better helps us bridge our divisions and bind together our nation than strengthening our public schools. Nothing better affirms our bedrock belief that every child -- regardless of race, ethnicity, or income -- deserves the chance to share in America's promise by gaining a quality education. That is why this Administration is working to strengthen America's public schools. We are working for smaller classes and 100,000 new teachers to fill them. We are working for modernized, 21st Century schools, with every classroom connected to the Internet. We are working for after-school and summer school programs to help students rise to higher academic standards.

Top-rate public schools are a top priority of the American people, and I hope they will be a top priority of this Congress in its final days and weeks before the election. Eight months ago, this administration sent Congress an education agenda to transform public schools in America. It is not too late to act on it. School is almost out of session on Capitol Hill, but there is still time for Congress to step up to its responsibility, leave politics at the schoolhouse door, and strengthen America's public schools.

Again, I urge all of you to follow the example set by the Women's Emergency Committee, and let your elected representatives know how important this issue is to you and your families. The best way to register that opinion is to vote this November. Your vote is as important to your children's quality of life as any other investment you make in their future. In a few weeks, you will have the opportunity to register your vote, and I know you will make the most of it. And -- like the women of the WEC -- bring a friend to the polls. Bring all your friends.

Like the battles waged and won by the Women's Emergency Committee, the struggle for public education in our times is not an easy one. But it is essential. And if we follow the courageous and generous example of the WEC, we can create a world in which all children can live up to their God-given potential. If we display the determination of Adolphine Fletcher Terry . . . the vision of Vivion Brewer. . . and the courage of Velma Powell . . . then I know that we will create that better world.

Thank you very much.

As Prepared

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
WINTER CONVOCATION REMARKS FOR GOUCHER COLLEGE
TOWSON, MARYLAND
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 1998**

President Judy Mohraz (More-as), Dr. Rhoda Dorsey, President Emerita of Goucher; Thomas Nuttle, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and Dean Robert Welch; Senator Barbara Mikulski, Congressman Benjamin Cardin; my friend Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke and his wife Patricia; Dr. Earl Richardson, President of Morgan State University; Professor Taylor Branch; faculty, alumni, friends, and students. It's a pleasure to be at Goucher College, and to participate in this special Winter Convocation Ceremony. Thank you all for welcoming me so warmly to your city and your campus.

It is a particular pleasure to be at such a pioneering institution of higher learning. When Goucher opened its doors in 1888, it became one of the first women's colleges in the nation. And 70 years ago, when few colleges were encouraging their students to venture beyond the safety of their academic walls, Goucher began to require its students to learn through experience in the larger world, and to embrace the community around them. That commitment to community service, and that penchant to take risks, have become hallmarks of this institution.

President Mohraz has strengthened this honored tradition, by promoting discussions here on campus on the difficult issues facing students today. And I know that recently, student forums have addressed the challenges of race and diversity, both here at Goucher and around the country. And that's the subject that I want to address with you today.

About six months ago, my husband called on the American people to join him in an unprecedented national dialogue on race. The President's Initiative on Race seeks to educate all of us about the facts about race in America today, to encourage constructive dialogue to work through these issues, and to develop solutions in critical areas such as education, economic opportunity, housing and crime, that will help bridge racial division in our country.

In announcing the Race Initiative, the President asked all of us, from those at the top levels of government to community leaders to individual citizens, to help "perfect the promise of America for this new time, as we seek to build our more perfect union." He knew how difficult, and even controversial this initiative would be. But to him, this effort to confront the burden of race and redeem the promise of America remains "the unfinished work of our time."

The urgency of this call is all around us. Today, we're a more diverse nation than ever before in our history. In my own home town of Chicago, the kids in that city's school system already represent over 100 different racial and ethnic groups. And think about it. Within the next half century, there will be no real majority race in the United States of America. The pace of change takes your breath away.

Today, we live in a time of great abundance. The economy is booming. The country is at peace. The explosion of new technology and communications brings people and nations closer together. Yet racial bigotry and intolerance continue to weaken the bonds of our communities, and to divide us as a nation. We are a more integrated nation than ever before, but we are still not free from the language of hate and distrust, or the acts of racial and religious intolerance.

From the burning of black churches to the painting of swastikas on Jewish synagogues to the defacement of an Islamic star on Washington's Ellipse to racial tensions in our urban centers to the growth of white supremacy groups, we know how far we have yet to go.

President Clinton recognizes that every citizen has a stake -- and a role -- in bridging these gaps that still separate us. But he believes, as I do, that it's America's young people -- our leaders of tomorrow -- who have more at stake and the largest role to play in bringing this nation together. The President has sent out letters to 25,000 student leaders across the country, urging young people to join him in supporting efforts "to talk, listen, teach, and act." And they have responded.

Like so many of you, I'm drawn to this call for action from my own life experiences. I grew up in an all white suburb of Chicago, comfortable and safe, but isolated from people who weren't like me.

Through my church, I was involved in worship and service projects with black and Hispanic teenagers. And after a while, we would talk; and open each others' eyes, and test our own assumptions about each other. And when I was a 14-year-old teenager, I had the privilege of going to Orchestra Hall in Chicago, and hearing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speak on racial justice and equality. His words, and the experience of meeting him, simply changed my life.

As difficult as our problems seem today, we were facing far more difficult times thirty years ago, when the signs of "whites only," and photographs of police dogs attacking civil rights protesters, were the symbols of a divided and explosive America. Even Dr. King and his advisors were baffled as to what would break through this centuries-old wall of racial animosity and discrimination. And like today, most people didn't think our young people could contribute to solving such an overwhelming problem.

Yet it was, in fact, the children, who marched and went to jail and took risks that even their parents shied away from. It was they who turned the corner, and forced a breakthrough. As Taylor Branch said in the preface to his second volume on America's civil rights history, "Pillar of Fire," there was no precedent for Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, "when the power balance of a great nation turned not on clashing armies or global commerce, but on the youngest student demonstrators of African descent."

Those children in Birmingham and young civil rights workers from across the country gave all of us an extraordinary gift through their courageous actions so many years ago. Their sheer belief that things could change for the better carried them through. And today, we again look to our young people to help us begin again to meet the challenges of our time. We owe it to you, and to ourselves, to succeed.

So much has to be done. But talking to each other, and believing we can find common purpose, is the first step. And over the past few months, I've watched that process begin, in some of the open forums on race that are at the heart of the President's race initiative. And I've learned how valuable these gatherings can be for those with the courage and support to reach out and begin. Attitudes can change. Behaviors can change.

Last month in Boston, I joined about 11,000 junior and high school students, of all races and backgrounds, who came together through a program called Team Harmony.

Team Harmony was founded by Jon Jennings, a white man from Indiana who became the youngest assistant coach with the Boston Celtics, and his best friend, Reggie Lewis, a young black Celtics player from Baltimore. After the explosive LA riots, the two of them decided they needed to bring young people of different backgrounds together, to give them an opportunity to learn from each other.

The purpose of the Team Harmony event I attended was to celebrate diversity and tolerance. But of course, a lot of what we heard were stories of pain, and rejection, and anger.

One young black student, Claude Paul, talked about how he was standing at a bus stop when another white student dismissed him, saying, "You listen, nigger, this ain't no Dorchester." That's an all black Boston neighborhood. Claude told the group, "I felt so stunned, I started (to break down) in tears. From that moment, I felt like my dreams were all shattered." A Jewish high school student, Amy Coran, recalled the pain of hearing anti-Semitic jokes yelled at her at sporting event. "What's the difference between Jews and pizza?" the boys asked. Answer: "Pizzas don't scream in the oven."

I've been to events like Team Harmony, and another group in Chicago, called Facing History. And I've seen the breakthroughs that are possible when people are brave enough or inspired enough to speak openly about these painful incidents. Then they can see how those shared experiences are a bond that can build trust, and even respect. These gatherings remind young people that they're not alone in their pain or anger. And they strengthen the resolve of those young leaders who are already trying to make a difference in their communities. We must continue to show them that we stand by them.

We're all in this together, as we try to open up our hearts a bit, and try to get past our own stereotypes and preconceptions.

We need America's young people to be central players in this race initiative for many reasons beyond their future leadership roles. They keep us on track, and they keep us grounded. I want to read just a few words from the many letters I've received from young people around the country on how they would bring us together as one country. An eighth grader from a small town in Ohio writes that if she were elected Ruler of the Earth, she would tell all prejudiced people "that god made us all the same; just different colors on the outside. We are all the same on the inside." Another student suggested that "every student should be a foreign exchange student and stay with a family of a different culture."

But we need young people to be involved in this initiative for another reason. To provide those rare moments of humor. The other day, I heard a young Hispanic student talk about how segregated our society can be -- even while watching TV. He said the black kids watch the black TV shows. The Hispanics watch the few Hispanic programs that exist. The one cross over TV program, he declared, is "The Simpson." "Everyone watches them," the student laughed. "They're yellow."

These conversations across the country are just the beginning of a broader call for action. But they shouldn't be dismissed as just feel good sessions. This national call for dialogue on race is not just another moral campaign. There are huge and devastating consequences, for our children, our communities, and for us as nations, if we can't find better ways to talk about our differences and celebrate our shared humanity.

Traveling around the world, I've seen first hand the terrible consequences of ethnic and racial hatred and distrust that go unchecked and unhealed. I've been to countries in the Middle East, in Africa, and in Bosnia, where ethnic and religious rivalries are killing children, and tearing apart their families and neighborhoods.

In Uganda, I met with a group of Rwandan women who had been victims of the tribal genocide there. One young woman, a nurse, was a member of the wrong tribe. Her arm had been hacked off because of her tribal affiliation. There, in a single moment of brutality, went her practice, her future, and her ability to contribute to a better world.

But I've also seen, first hand, the extraordinary transformations that come when people make the effort to reach out to people different from themselves; to break with preconceptions; to open up their hearts; and to begin working together for the common good.

Around kitchen tables in Belfast, I've listened to Catholic and Protestant women having heartfelt conversations about their fathers and husbands and sons who have killed each other in sectarian violence. They've found that gathering around a simple teapot, and sharing that hot tea together, was the first tentative step in rejecting the habits of hate, and working together to heal their families and their land.

And in South Africa, a country once polarized by racial division, whose leader, Nelson Mandela, led his divided nation toward peaceful reconciliation with the simple principle; "We're all warmed by the same sun."

And I've watched citizens here across America who, in small and large ways, are cutting through the barriers of distrust and ignorance.

Just recently here in Baltimore's Canton community, another sign of hope. A racially motivated beating of a young African American Safeway employee a few weeks ago sparked not a riot -- but an interracial community meeting to defuse tensions and heighten understanding.

And there are countless other examples of people, particularly young people, who are organizing multi-cultural and interfaith efforts to combat discrimination and bigotry in their schools and communities.

One project that I've heard about here in the Baltimore area is called Interfaith Action for Racial Justice. It's called on the entire community, those in the city and the surrounding counties, to hold an honest conversation about race, and reconciliation and responsibility. And to talk about those ideas in the broader context of how to improve inequities in our schools, and housing, and transportation. Over 100 organizations are participating, from businesses to civil rights, education and cultural institutions. And I believe many of the area colleges and universities, including Goucher, are involved.

So I want to take this opportunity to urge the students here to join in and participate in some of these activities. There are no guidebooks on how to do any of this. You just have to begin to take some risks.

I've heard about a group of college students who took such risks almost 25 years ago. They participated in a class at the University of North Florida called "Human Conflict: Black and White." They screamed at each other. They cursed at each other. And they cried. Each student was also required to go live with a student of another race for a week. But looking back on that intense and painful experience, those former students acknowledge how it opened their minds, and had a profound impact on their racial attitudes over their lifetimes. One former student - now director of a retirement home, said: "I'm a better boss, better qualified to be an employer, better able to serve this community," because of those confrontational and difficult exchanges and experiences.

The fact that so many young people are taking those first steps, whether it's participating in interracial dialogues, student forums on race, or community service programs, is a sign of hope, and cause for optimism. But as we all well know, we must turn those conversations into action. As the world's leading multi-racial democracy, we have not only the opportunity, but the obligation, to open up economic and educational opportunities for those who are still shut out. And we have a special obligation to our children, to ensure that they grow up safe and healthy, in nurturing communities.

For those who believe we still have nothing more to do, we must at the very least enforce the civil rights laws that already exist, as Vice President Al Gore called for in his speech at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta on Monday. There is no such thing as being "color blind" in America today.

Never has our nation been as diverse as it is now. And never has any previous generation of young people been confronted so urgently with the task of learning to talk to each other, respect each other, and work toward the common good.

Robert F. Kennedy, in a speech he gave during his first visit to South Africa over 30 years ago, speaks to all of us today. He said then, "This world demands the qualities of youth; not a time of life but a state of mind; a temper of the will; a quality of imagination; a predominance of courage over timidity; of the appetite for adventure over the love of ease."

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I hope that the progress toward racial justice that we have made in our world and in our communities since Kennedy spoke those words doesn't mask the urgency of what we still have to accomplish. As Dr. King has warned, "We must come to see that human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability ... we must use time creatively, and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right."

When the President launched his call for a national dialogue on race, he was really asking us to redefine -- once again -- what it means to be an American in the 21st century. Can we learn to reach out to strangers as well as friends? Can we find that we have more in common that unites us than differences that divide us? Can every citizen find a role to play in solving our community's problems? And can we fulfill our role as a global leader, and convince other nations that this struggle for human dignity and equal justice remains the highest pursuit of humankind?

I believe deeply that we can meet this challenge. As a country, we've always struggled, however imperfectly, to meet the demands of democracy. But it will be our young people -- like the students in this audience -- who will truly define that direction for the future. You must not only be at the center of this national dialogue on race. You must lead it.

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I want to conclude my remarks with a simple message to Goucher's students here today. You've been given the most critical tools of citizenship in the 21st century, and the educational encouragement to use them by searching for ways to serve the American community. I urge you to use your gifts and talents to help build a country in this new millennium that is truly worthy of our founding ideals: out of many, one.

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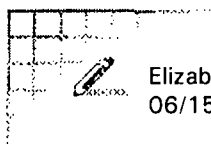
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Elizabeth R. Newman
06/15/98 10:11:13 AM

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Portland, Oregon)

For Immediate Release
13, 1998

June

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT

Rose Garden Arena
Portland, Oregon

11:25 A.M. PDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen,, thank you for the wonderful, warm welcome. President Bernstine, Provost Reardon, Senator Wyden, Representatives Blumenauer and Hooley, Treasurer Hill, General Myers, Superintendent Paulus. My good friend, your former Senator, Mark Hatfield, I'm delighted to see you here today, sir. Thank you. (Applause.)

To the faculty, especially the faculty honorees today; State Board of Higher Education, the alumni; to the speakers, Theo Hall and Jane Rongerude -- I thought they did a marvelous job on behalf of the students. (Applause.)

Congratulations, Mr. Miller, and thank you for your contributions to Portland State. And let me say to all the members of the class of 1998, I thank you for allowing me to come here today. I congratulate you on your tremendous achievement.

I know the roads that you have traveled here have not all been easy. Some of you have worked full-time and cared for your families, even while you carried a full course load, and I congratulate you on what you've done. (Applause.)

What I want to say to you in the beginning is that you will see that it was worth it. In the world in which we live, there is a higher premium on education than ever before, not only because of what you know, but because of what you will be able to learn for the rest of your life. The education and skills you take away from

this campus will open doors for you forever. And I congratulate you on having the foresight, as well as the determination to see this through.

Portland State is a very interesting institution to me. First of all, we're the same age. (Laughter.) Portland State was born in 1946, out of the demand generated by the G.I. Bill at the end of World War II, one of the most far-sighted things that was ever done to explode opportunity across America. The G.I. Bill helped to create the modern American middle class and the prosperity we enjoyed. It also helped to create a number of community-based institutions of higher education, which more and more now are beginning to look in their student bodies the way they did over 50 years ago.

More than half the students here are over 25. More than a few of you are considerably over 25. (Laughter and applause.) Still, you all look quite young to me. (Laughter.) As was said earlier, I have worked hard, and our administration has, to open the doors of college to everyone who would work for it, with the HOPE Scholarship and permanent tax credits for all higher education, and more Pell Grants and better student loans and the AmeriCorps program and work-study programs. We have to create a country in which everyone at any age believes that they have access to continue their education for a lifetime. (Applause.)

I want to focus on this institution again as an institution of the future. You know, a couple of years ago I came out here and we had a conference on the Pacific Rim and our relationship to the Asia Pacific region that Portland State hosted. And I have to say that one of your most distinguished alumni was a particular friend of mine -- the late Congressman Walter Capps from California, one of the finest people I ever knew went to this school. (Applause.) And he was a person of the future in the Congress; his wife succeeded him. And we were talking just last evening before I came here about how grateful Congressman Capps always was to Portland State for giving him the ability to go out into the world and make a difference.

What I want to talk to all of you about, particularly the graduates, is the America of your future. We all know that at the edge of a new century and a new millennium, America is changing at breathtaking speed. We know that most of these changes have been good. We're grateful as a nation to have the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 29 years -- (applause) -- the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years, the highest home ownership in history. (Applause.) We feel gratitude. We know that none of us alone is responsible for these things, but all of us together have come to terms with the challenges of the modern world and its opportunities and we're moving America in a good direction.

But this spring I have attempted to go out across the country and address graduates about the challenges this new era poses -- not only because, even when there is a lot of good news out there we should never forget that there are challenges, but perhaps even more importantly, because when times are good it imposes upon Americans a special responsibility to take our confidence and our prosperity and look to the long-term challenges of the country, to address them in a forthright, constructive way so that our country will continue to grow and prosper.

This spring I have talked about three things. At the Naval Academy I talked about defending our nation against the new security threats of the 21st century, including terrorism, biological and chemical weapons, and global environmental degradation. At MIT, not very long ago, I talked about the challenges of the information age and the importance of bringing those opportunities to all Americans, bringing the Internet into every classroom, ensuring that every young student is computer-literate. (Applause.) Maybe I should have given that speech here. (Laughter.)

Today, I want to talk to you about what may be the most important subject of all -- how we can strengthen the bonds of our national community as we grow more racially and ethnically diverse. (Applause.)

It was just a year ago tomorrow that I launched a national initiative on race, asking Americans to address the persistent problems and the limitless possibilities of our diversity. This effort is especially important right now because, as we grow more diverse, our ability to deal with the challenges will determine whether we can really bind ourselves together as one America. And even more importantly in the near-term, and over the next

few years, perhaps, as well, our ability to exercise world leadership for peace, for freedom, for prosperity in a world that is both smaller and more closely connected, and yet increasingly gripped with tense, often bloody conflicts rooted in racial, ethnic and religious divisions -- our ability to lead that kind of world to a better place rests in no small measure on our ability to be a better place here in the United States that can be a model for the world. (Applause.)

The driving force behind our increasing diversity is a new, large wave of immigration. It is changing the face of America. And while most of the changes are good, they do present challenges which demand more both from new immigrants and from our citizens. Citizens share a responsibility to welcome new immigrants, to ensure that they strengthen our nation, to give them their chance at the brass ring. (Applause.)

In turn, new immigrants have a responsibility to learn, to work, to contribute to America. If both citizens and immigrants do their part, we will grow ever stronger in the new global information economy.

More than any other nation on Earth, America has constantly drawn strength and spirit from wave after wave of immigrants. In each generation, they have proved to be the most restless, the most adventurous, the most innovative, the most industrious of people. Bearing different memories, honoring different heritages, they have strengthened our economy, enriched our culture, renewed our promise of freedom and opportunity for all.

Of course, the path has not always run smooth. Some Americans have met each group of newcomers with suspicion and violence and discrimination. So great was the hatred of Irish immigrants 150 years ago that they were greeted with signs that read, "No Dogs Or Irish." So profound was the fear of Chinese in the 1880s that they were barred from entering the country. So deep was the distrust of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe at the beginning of this century that they were forced to take literacy tests specifically designed to keep them out of America.

Eventually, the guarantees of our Constitution and the better angels of our nature prevailed over ignorance and insecurity, over prejudice and fear.

But now we are being tested again -- by a new wave of immigration larger than any in a century, far more diverse than any in our history. Each year, nearly a million people come legally to America. Today, nearly one in ten people in America was born in another country; one in five schoolchildren are from immigrant families. Today, largely because of immigration, there is no majority race in Hawaii or Houston or New York City. Within five years there will be no majority race in our largest state, California. In a little more than 50 years there will be no majority race in the United States. (Applause.) No other nation in history has gone through demographic change of this magnitude in so short a time.

What do the changes mean? They can either strengthen and unite us, or they can weaken and divide us. We must decide.

Let me state my view unequivocally. I believe new immigrants are good for America. They are revitalizing our cities. They are building our new economy. They are strengthening our ties to the global economy, just as earlier waves of immigrants settled the new frontier and powered the Industrial Revolution. They are energizing our culture and broadening our vision of the world. They are renewing our most basic values and reminding us all of what it truly means to be an American.

It means working hard, like a teenager from Vietnam who does his homework as he watches the cash register at his family's grocery store. It means making a better life for your children, like a father from Russia who works two jobs and still finds time to take his daughter to the public library to practice her reading. It means dreaming big dreams, passing them on to your children.

You have a lot of stories like that here at Portland State. Just this morning I met one of your graduates -- or two, to be specific. Mago Gilson, an immigrant from Mexico who made here without a high school education. Twelve years later she is receiving her Masters Degree in education, on her way to realizing her dream of becoming a teacher. (Applause.)

She is joined in this graduating class by her son Eddi, who had dreams of his own and worked full-time for seven years to put himself through school. Today he receives a Bachelor's Degree in business administration. (Applause.) And soon -- there's more. Soon her son, Oscar, whom I also met, will receive his own Master's Degree in education. I'd like to ask the Gilsons and their family members who are here to rise and be recognized. There she is. Give them a hand. (Applause.)

In the Gilson family and countless like them, we see the spirit that built America -- the drive to succeed, the commitment to family, to education, to work, the hope for a better life. In their stories we see a reflection of our own parents' and grandparents' journey -- a powerful reminder that our America is now so much a place as a promise; not a guarantee but a chance; not a particular race, but an embrace of our common humanity.

Now, some Americans don't see it that way. When they hear new accents or see new faces, they feel unsettled. They worry that new immigrants come not to work hard, but to live off our largesse. They're afraid the America they know and love is becoming a foreign land. This reaction may be understandable, but it's wrong. It's especially wrong when anxiety and fear give rise to policies and ballot propositions to exclude immigrants from our civic life. (Applause.) I believe it's wrong to deny law-abiding immigrants benefits available to everyone else; wrong to ignore them as people not worthy of being counted in the census. It's not only wrong, it's un-American. (Applause.)

Let me be clear: I also think it's wrong to condone illegal immigration that flouts our laws, strains our tolerance, taxes our resources. Even a nation of immigrants must have rules and conditions and limits, and when they are disregarded, public support for immigration erodes in ways that are destructive to those who are newly arrived and those who are still waiting patiently to come. (Applause.)

We must remember, however, that the vast majority of immigrants are here legally. In every measurable way, they give more to our society than they take. Consider this: On average, immigrants pay \$1,800 more in taxes every year than they cost our system in benefits. Immigrants are paying into Social Security at record rates. Most of them are young, and they will help to balance the budget when we baby boomers retire and put strains on it.

New immigrants also benefit the nation in ways not so easily measured, but very important. We should be honored that America, whether it's called the City on a Hill, or the Old Gold Mountain, or El Norte, is still seen around the world as the land of new beginnings. We should all be proud that people living in isolated villages in far corners of the world actually recognize the Statue of Liberty. We should rejoice that children the world over study our Declaration of Independence and embrace its creed.

My fellow Americans, we descendants of those who passed through the portals of Ellis Island must not lock the door behind us. Americans whose parents were denied the rights of citizenship simply because of the color of their skin must not deny those rights to others because of the country of their birth or the nature of their faith.

We should treat new immigrants as we would have wanted our own grandparents to be treated. We should share our country with them, not shun them or shut them out. But mark my words, unless we handle this well, immigration of this sweep and scope could threaten the bonds of our union.

Around the world we see what can happen when people who live on the same land put race and ethnicity before country and humanity. If America is to remain the world's most diverse democracy, if immigration is to strengthen America as it has throughout our history, then we must say to one another: whether your ancestors came here in slave ships or on the Mayflower, whether they landed on Ellis Island or at Los Angeles International Airport, or have been here for thousands of years, if you believe in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, if you accept the responsibilities as well as the rights embedded in them, then you are an American. (Applause.)

Only that belief can keep us one America in the 21st century. So I say, as President, to all our

immigrants, you are welcome here. But you must honor laws, embrace our culture, learn our language, know our history; and when the time comes, you should become citizens. And I say to all Americans, we have responsibilities as well to welcome our newest immigrants, to vigorously enforce laws against discrimination. And I'm very proud that our nation's top civil rights enforcer is Bill Lam Lee, the son of Chinese immigrants who grew up in Harlem.

We must protect immigrants' rights and ensure their access to education, health care, and housing and help them to become successful, productive citizens. When immigrants take responsibility to become citizens and have met all the requirements to do so, they should be promptly evaluated and accepted.

The present delays in the citizenship process are unacceptable and indefensible. (Applause.) And together, immigrants and citizens alike, let me say we must recommit ourselves to the general duties of citizenship. Not just immigrants, but every American should know what's in our Constitution and understand our shared history. Not just immigrants, but every American should participate in our democracy by voting, by volunteering and by running for office. Not just immigrants, but every American, on our campuses and in our communities, should serve -- community service reads good citizenship. (Applause.) And not just immigrants, but every American should reject identity politics that seeks to separate us, not bring us together.

Ethnic pride is a very good thing. America is one of the places which most reveres the distinctive ethnic, racial, religious heritage of our various peoples. The days when immigrants felt compelled to Anglicize their last name or deny their heritage are, thankfully, gone. But pride in one's ethnic and racial heritage must never become an excuse to withdraw from the larger American community. That does not honor diversity; it breeds divisiveness. And that could weaken America. (Applause.)

Not just immigrants, but every American should recognize that our public schools must be more than places where our children learn to read, they must also learn to be good citizens. They must all be able to make America's heroes, from Washington to Lincoln to Eleanor Roosevelt and Rosa Parks and Cesar Chavez, their own.

Today, too many Americans, and far too many immigrant children attended crowded, often crumbling inner city schools. Too many drop out of school altogether. And with more children from immigrant families entering our country and our schools than at any time since the turn of the century, we must renew our efforts to rebuild our schools and make them the best in the world. They must have better facilities; they must have smaller classes; they must have properly trained teachers; they must have access to technology; they must be the best in the world. (Applause.)

All of us, immigrants and citizens alike, must ensure that our new group of children learn our language, and we should find a way to do this together instead of launching another round of divisive political fights. (Applause.)

In the schools within the White House -- in the schools within just a few miles of the White House, across the Potomac River, we have the most diverse school district in America, where there are children from 180 different racial and ethnic groups, speaking as native tongues about 100 languages.

Now, it's all very well for someone to say, everyone of them should learn English immediately. But we don't at this time necessarily have people who are trained to teach them English in all those languages. So I say to you, it is important for children to retain their native language (Applause.) But unless they also learn English, they will never reach their full potential in the United States. (Applause.)

Of course, English learn at different rates, and, of course, children have individual needs. But that cannot be an excuse for making sure that when children come into our school system, we do whatever it takes with whatever resources are at hand to make sure they learn as quickly as they can the language that will be dominant language of this country's commerce and citizenship in the future.

We owe it to these children to do that. And we should not either delay behind excuses or look for ways to turn what is essentially a human issue of basic decency and citizenship and opportunity into a divisive political debate. We have a stake together in getting together and moving forward on this. (Applause.)

Let me say, I applaud the students here at Portland State who are tutoring immigrant children to speak and read English. You are setting the kind of example I want our country to follow.

One hundred and forty years ago, in the First Lady's hometown of Chicago, immigrants outnumbered native Americans. Addressing a crowd there in 1858, Abraham Lincoln asked what connection those immigrants could possibly feel to people like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, who founded our nation. Here was his answer: If they, the immigrants, look back through this history to trace their connection to those days by blood, they will find they have none. But our founders proclaimed that we are all created equal in the eyes of God. And that, Lincoln said, is the electric cord in that declaration that links the hearts of patriotic and liberty-loving people everywhere.

Well, that electric cord, the conviction that we are all created equal in the eyes of God, still links every graduate here with every new immigrant coming to our shores and every American who ever came before us. If you carry it with conscience and courage into the new century, it will light our way to America's greatest days -- your days.

So, members of the class of 1998, go out and build the future of your dreams. Do it together, for your children, for your grandchildren, for your country.

Good luck, and God bless you. (Applause.)

END 11:55 A.M. PDT

Message Sent To: _____

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 18, 1997

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Hughes Field
Morgan State University
Baltimore, Maryland

10:30 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Dr. Richardson, Judge Cole, Governor Glendenning, Lieutenant Governor Kennedy-Townsend, Mr. Mayor, City Council President, other elected officials, Mr. Speaker, Senator Miller, Senator Sarbanes, Congressman Cardin and Congressman Cummings, my great partners, to the Board of Regents, to faculty, staff, to distinguished alumni, to the magnificent band and choir. I thought it was a great day when I got here, but I know it is now. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

To the members of the class of 1997, your family and your friends -- (applause) -- congratulations on this important day in your lives, the lives of your nation, and the life of this great institution.

Your diploma reflects a level of knowledge that will give you the chance to make the most of the rapidly unfolding new reality of the 21st century. It gives your country a better chance to lead the world toward a better place, and it reaffirms the historic mission of Morgan State and the other historically black colleges and universities of our great land.

When the doors of college were closed to all but white students, Morgan State and the nation's other historically black institutions of higher education gave young African Americans the education they deserved and the pride they needed to rise above cruelty and bigotry.

Today, these institutions still produce the lion's share of our black doctors and judges

and business people, and Morgan State graduates most of the black engineers and scientists in the great state of Maryland. (Applause.)

I am here today not because Morgan State is just a great historically black university, it is a great American university. (Applause.) You have produced some of our nation's finest leaders. Your grads like Parren Mitchell, Kweisi Mfume and Earl Graves. (Applause.) Judicial leaders like Judge Bell and Judge Cole; public servants like State Treasurer Dixon and on a very personal note, my fine assistant, Terry Edmonds, Class of 1972, the first African American ever to serve as a speechwriter for the President of the United States. (Applause.) There he is.

Now, you're getting too much applause now, Terry. (Laughter.)

You graduate today into a world brimming with promise, enriched with opportunity. Our economy is the strongest in a generation, our unemployment the lowest in 24 years, with the largest decline in income inequality since the 1960s.

On Friday we finalized the details of an historic agreement with the leaders of Congress to balance the federal budget for the first time in nearly three decades, in a way that will keep our economy going and in balance with our values, caring for those in need, extending health care to 5 million more children, cleaning and preserving and restoring our environment, helping people to move from welfare to work, and, most important, funding the largest investment in education in a generation and the largest increase in higher education since the G.I. bill in 1945, more than 50 years ago. (Applause.)

It will open the doors of college to all, with the largest increase in Pell Grant scholarships in three decades, \$35 billion in tax relief to help families pay for higher education, including tax deductions for the cost of all education after high school, and our HOPE Scholarship tuition tax credits to make the first two years of college as universal by the year 2000 as a high school diploma is today. (Applause.)

And this agreement contains a major investment in science and technology, inspired in our administration by the leadership of Vice President Gore, to keep America on the cutting edge of positive change, to create the best jobs of tomorrow, to advance the quality of life of all Americans.

But today here, I ask you simply to imagine that new century, full of its promise, molded by science, shaped by technology, powered by knowledge. These potent transforming forces can give us lives fuller and richer than we have ever known. They can be used for good or ill.

If we are to make the most of this new century, we -- all of us, each and every one of us, regardless of our background -- must work to master these forces with vision and wisdom and determination. The past half-century has seen mankind split the atom, splice genes, create the microchip, explore the heavens. We enter the next century propelled by new and stunning developments.

Just in the past year we saw the cloning of Dolly the sheep, the Hubble telescope bringing into focus dark corners of the cosmos never seen before, innovations in computer technology and communications, creating what Bill Gates calls "the world's new digital nervous system," and now cures for our most dreaded diseases -- diabetes, cystic fibrosis, repair for spinal cord injuries. These miracles actually seem within reach.

The sweep of it is truly humbling. Why, just last week we saw a computer named Deep Blue defeat the world's reigning chess champion. I really think there ought to be a limit to this. No computer should be allowed to learn to play golf. (Laughter.) But, seriously, my friends, in science, if the last 50 years were the age of physics, the next 50 years will be the age of biology. (Applause.)

We are now embarking on our most daring explorations, unraveling the mysteries of our inner world and charting new routes to the conquest of disease. We have not and we must not shrink from exploring the frontiers of science. But as we consider how to use the fruits of discovery, we must also never retreat from our commitment to human values, the good of society, our basic sense of right and wrong.

Science must continue to serve humanity, never the other way around. The stakes are very high. America's future -- indeed, the world's future -- will be more powerfully influenced by science and technology than ever before. Where once nations measured their strength by the size of their armies and arsenals, in the world of the future knowledge will matter most. Fully half the growth in economic productivity over the last half-century can be traced to research and technology.

But science is about more than material wealth or the acquisition of knowledge. Fundamentally, it is about our dreams. America is a nation always becoming, always defined by the great goals we set, the great dreams we dream. We are restless, questing people. We have always believed, with President Thomas Jefferson, that "freedom is the first born daughter of science." With that belief and with willpower, resources and great national effort, we have always reached our far horizons and set out for new ones.

Thirty-six years ago, President Kennedy looked to the heavens and proclaimed that the

flag of peace and democracy, not war and tyranny, must be the first to be planted on the moon. He gave us a goal of reaching the moon, and we achieved it -- ahead of time.

Today, let us look within and step up to the challenge of our time, a challenge with consequences far more immediate for the life and death of millions around the world. AIDS will soon overtake tuberculosis and malaria as the leading infectious killer in the world. More than 29 million people have been infected, 3 million in the last year alone, 95 percent of them in the poorest parts of our globe.

Here at home, we are grateful that new and effective anti-HIV strategies are available and bringing longer and better lives to those who are infected, but we dare not be complacent. HIV is capable of mutating and becoming resistant to therapies, and could well become even more dangerous. Only a truly effective, preventive HIV vaccine can limit and eventually eliminate the threat of AIDS.

This year's budget contains increased funding of a third over two years ago to search for this vaccine. In the first four years, we have increased funding for AIDS research, prevention and care by 50 percent, but it is not enough. So let us today set a new national goal for science in the age of biology. Today, let us commit ourselves to developing an AIDS vaccine within the next decade. (Applause.) There are no guarantees. It will take energy and focus and demand great effort from our greatest minds. But with the strides of recent years it is not longer a question of whether we can develop an AIDS vaccine, it is simply a question of when. And it cannot come a day too soon.

If America commits to find an AIDS vaccine and we enlist others in our cause, we will do it. I am prepared to do all I can to make it happen. Our scientists at the National Institutes of Health and our research universities have been at the forefront of this battle.

Today, I'm pleased to announce the National Institutes of Health will establish a new AIDS vaccine research center dedicated to this crusade. And next month at the Summit of the Industrialized Nations in Denver, I will enlist other nations to join us in a worldwide effort to find a vaccine to stop one of the world's greatest killers. We will challenge America's pharmaceutical industry, which leads the world in innovative research and development to work with us and to make the successful development of an AIDS vaccine part of its basic mission.

My fellow Americans, if the 21st century is to be the century of biology, let us make an AIDS vaccine its first great triumph. (Applause.)

Let us resolve further to work with other nations to deal with great problems like global climate change, to break our reliance on energy use destructive of our environment, to make giant strides to free ourselves and future generations from the tyranny of disease and hunger and ignorance that today still enslaves too many millions around the world. And let us also pledge to redouble our vigilance to make sure that the knowledge of the 21st century serves our most

enduring human values.

Science often moves faster than our ability to understand its implications, leaving a maze of moral and ethical questions in its wake. The Internet can be a new town square or a new Tower of Babel. The same computer that can put the Library of Congress at our fingertips can also be used by purveyors of hate to spread blueprints for bombs. The same knowledge that is developing new life-saving drugs can be used to create poisons of mass destruction. Science can enable us to feed billions more people in comfort, in safety, and in harmony with our earth; or it can spark a war with weapons of mass destruction rooted in primitive hatreds.

Science has no soul of its own. It is up to us to determine whether it will be used as a force for good or evil. We must do nothing to stifle our basic quest for knowledge. After all, it has propelled from field to factory to cyberspace. But how we use the fruits of science and how we apply it to human endeavors is not properly the domain of science alone or of scientists alone. The answers to these questions require the application of ethical and moral principles that have guided our great democracy toward a more perfect union for more than 200 years now. As such, they are the province of every American citizen.

We must decide together how to apply these principles to the dazzling new discoveries of science. Here are four guideposts. First, science and its benefits must be directed toward making life better for all Americans -- never just a privileged few. Their opportunities and benefits should be available to all. Science must not create a new line of separation between the haves and the have-nots, those with and those without the tools and understanding to learn and use technology.

In the 21st century a child in a school that does not have a link to the Internet or the student who does not have access to a computer will be like the 19th century child without school books. That is why we are ensuring that every child in every school, not matter how rich or poor, will have access to the same technology by connecting every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000. (Applause.)

Science must always respect the dignity of every American. Here at one of America's great black universities let me underscore something I said just a few days ago at the White House. We must never allow our citizens to be unwitting guinea pigs in scientific experiments that put them at risk without their consent and full knowledge. (Applause.)

Whether it is withholding a syphilis treatment from the black men of Tuskegee or the Cold War experiments that subjected some of our citizens to dangerous doses of radiation, we must never go back to those awful days in modern disguise. We have now apologized for the mistakes of the past; we must not repeat them -- never again. (Applause.)

Second, none of our discoveries should be used to label or discriminate against any group or individual. Increasing knowledge about the great diversity within the human species

must not change the basic belief upon which our ethics, our government, our society are founded. All of us are created equal, entitled to equal treatment under the law. (Applause.)

With stunning speed, scientists are now moving to unlock the secrets of our genetic code. Genetic testing has the potential to identify hidden inherited tendencies toward disease and spur early treatment. But that information could also be used, for example, by insurance companies and others to discriminate against and stigmatize people.

We know that in the 1970s, some African Americans were denied health care coverage by insurers and jobs by employers because they were identified as sickle cell anemia carriers. We also know that one of the main reasons women refuse genetic testing for susceptibility to breast cancer is their fear that the insurance companies may either deny them coverage or raise their rates to unaffordable levels. No insurer should be able to use genetic data to underwrite or discriminate against any American seeking health insurance. This should not simply be a matter of principle, but a matter of law, period. (Applause.)

To that end, I urge the Congress to pass bipartisan legislation to prohibit insurance companies from using genetic screening information to determine the premium rates or eligibility of Americans for health insurance.

Third, technology should not be used to break down the wall of privacy and autonomy free citizens are guaranteed in a free society. The right to privacy is one of our most cherished freedoms. As society has grown more complex and people have become more interconnected in every way, we have had to work even harder to respect the privacy, the dignity, the autonomy of each individual.

Today, when marketers can follow every aspect of our lives, from the first phone call we make in the morning to the time our security system says we have left the house, to the video camera at the toll booth and the charge slip we have for lunch, we cannot afford to forget this most basic lesson.

As the Internet reaches to touch every business and every household and we face the frightening prospect that private information -- even medical records -- could be made instantly available to the world, we must develop new protections for privacy in the face of new technological reality. (Applause.)

Fourth, we must always remember that science is not God. (Applause.) Our deepest truths remain outside the realm of science. We must temper our euphoria over the recent breakthrough in animal cloning with sobering attention to our most cherished concepts of humanity and faith.

My own view is that each human life is unique, born of a miracle that reaches beyond laboratory science. I believe we should respect this profound gift. I believe we should resist the

temptation to replicate ourselves. But this is a decision no President should make alone. No President is qualified to understand all of the implications.

That is why I have asked our distinguished National Bioethics Advisory Commission, headed by President Harold Shapiro of Princeton, to conduct a thorough review of the legal and ethical issues raised by this new cloning discovery. They will give me their first recommendations within the next few weeks, and I can hardly wait.

These, then, are four guideposts, rooted in our traditional principles of ethics and morals, that must guide us if we are to master the powerful forces of change in the new century. One, science that produces a better life for all and not the few. Two, science that honors our tradition of equal treatment under the law. Three, science that respects the privacy and autonomy of the individual. Four, science that never confuses faith in technology with faith in God.

If we hold fast to these principles, we can make this time of change a moment of dazzling opportunity for all Americans.

Finally, let me say again: Science can serve the values and interests of all Americans, but only if all Americans are given a chance to participate in science. We cannot move forward without the voices and talents of everyone in this stadium, and especially those of you who are going on to pursue a career in science and technology.

African Americans have always been at the forefront of American science. This is nothing new. Nothing -- not slavery, not discrimination, not poverty -- nothing has ever been able to hold back their scientific urge or creative genius. (Applause.)

Benjamin Banneker was a self-taught mathematician, surveyor, astronomer, who published an annual almanac and helped to design the city of Washington. George Washington Carver was born a slave, but went on to become one of our nation's greatest agricultural scientists. Ernest Everett Just of Charleston, South Carolina, is recognized as one of our greatest biologists. Charles Drew lived through the darkest days of segregation to become a pioneer in blood preservation. And today you honor an African American doctor at Johns Hopkins University who is truly one of the outstanding physicians of our time. (Applause.)

All these people show us that we don't have a person to waste and our diversity is our greatest strength in the world of today and tomorrow. Now, members of the class of 1997, it is your time. It is up to you to honor their legacy, to live their dreams, to be the investigators, the doctors, and the scholars who will make and apply the discoveries of tomorrow, who will keep our science rooted in our values, who will fashion America's greatest days.

You can do it. Dream large. Work hard. And listen to your soul. Thank you and God bless you all. (Applause.)

END

10:57 A.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

June 13, 1997

REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
AT BANNEKER HIGH SCHOOL

THE FIRST LADY: Thank you. Thank you very much, Nicole. I asked her as she was leaving the podium where she was going to college next year, and she said Georgetown, which will make the President very happy since he's a graduate. (Applause.)

I want to thank you for inviting me to be part of this ceremony of graduation and celebration. I want to thank Principal Adams and Vice Principal Reed (phonetic), Assistant Superintendent Neal (phonetic), Mayor Barry, Councilwoman Mason, Representatives of the Trustee Board and the Board of Education. I want to commend Derek McGinty (phonetic) for his excellent address. I enjoy listening to Derek on the radio and in person was even better. (Applause.)

I also want to greet the parents and other relatives and friends of the graduates. And I want to say a special word of appreciation to the teachers of Banneker and ask them please to stand so we can thank every one of you. (Applause.)

But particularly am I pleased that I can be here to be part of this recognition for the graduates themselves. This is an auspicious occasion for you as it is for this school and this city. I have many reasons for wanting to speak here at Banneker and most of them are sitting right in front of you -- the graduates of this class. I come to salute each and every one of them. (Applause.)

Together, they have won thousands of dollars in scholarships and academic awards. Over the past four years, these young men and women have learned the language of Ancient Rome and visited the streets of Renaissance Verona with Romeo and Juliet. They've traveled to Walden Pond and scaled the Eiffel Tower. They've studied the laws of gravity as well as the laws of our 200-year-old democracy. And they've made this community a better place to live through many hours of volunteer service in child care centers, schools and hospitals.

So I am truly honored to be addressing a group of graduates who have not only met, but exceeded, the high expectations set by your teachers and your families. You have traveled far, both literally and figuratively, and you are the pride of this city.

But you know what? As Derek has told you, your job is not by any means done yet. There is much further you need to go. There are countless more challenges and obstacles that you will have to overcome.

I understand that many of you in the course of your high school academic career have studied the Ancient Greek epic "The Odyssey." Well, just imagine today that you are Odysseus. With your smarts, you've just helped your country win the Trojan War. But now you have a long journey ahead of you before you can return home. You will face many more tests -- physical, emotional, and mental. You may be tempted to stray from your cherished goals. You may be tempted to stray from that path of personal integrity. And there will be days, months, and even years when you'll feel as though the Fates are conspiring against you.

But every single teacher, administrator, mentor, parent, grandparent, and friend in this room knows that you can make it. We

MORE

have complete faith in your abilities because we know of the daily sacrifices and tough choices you have made to succeed at this demanding school. Whether it's waking up at the crack of dawn to travel across town to arrive at school on time, giving up Friday nights to get a jump start on a paper, finding the energy to finish a very tough problem while babysitting a younger sibling, forcing yourself to study harder the minute any doubt about your abilities crept into your mind -- these choices demonstrate your discipline, your wisdom, and your maturity.

As the mother of another newly minted high school graduate, I know that you've probably been getting more advice than you ever thought you needed. And, if like some graduates I know, it might be going in one ear and out the other -- (laughter) -- you will have to indulge us because part of the reason we hold graduations is so that we can hold forth with all this advice.

And so I have to join that time-honored and, I think, important kind of responsibility. And so there are a few things that I want to share with you. First, I hope you will always be proud of having attended Banneker. And I hope you will help more of your fellow citizens in Washington and across America understand what it takes to raise the quality of public education, about what it takes to create and maintain great and successful public schools such as Banneker.

We all know what Washington's public school system is not and what it could be. We know that many things about our school system are broken and that we have a lot of hard work ahead of us if we are to rectify the shortcomings. I have been in and out of schools throughout this district, and I can tell when I walk in the door whether there is learning going on, whether teachers and administrators believe that every child can succeed if set with high expectations. I have seen teachers working miracles and I have seen teachers just marking time. I have seen administrators who get up at the crack of dawn and don't rest until midnight because there's so much to be done to pull together teachers and work on behalf of students, and I've seen administrators just waiting for retirement. I have been in schools that are as clean and sparkling as anyplace you can find in the world, and I've been in schools where the ceilings and the walls are literally falling down -- and children shouldn't be subjected to that kind of atmosphere. (Applause.)

So I have seen with my own eyes the best and the worst of our public school system. And what bothers and frustrates me is that when we know what works, when we know what it takes to motivate young people, to give teachers the respect they need to continue to stretch themselves to do the best job they're capable of, then why don't we do that in every single school in this city? (Applause.)

We've heard a lot this evening about how special and wonderful Banneker is, and it is. But I have to be honest with you. I wish that in five or 10 years at the outside, we could say about every high school in Washington, D.C., what we can say about Banneker today. (Applause.)

Banneker can be a model. Sure it's successful because it is academically selective --

(End of side one.)

MRS. CLINTON: -- and to become frustrated because you can't keep up to do the work at the level you would like to see yourself doing. The other is to seek as much help as you need and to be unashamed in asking for it.

I want to tell you about some research that I think is very significant. The University of California at Berkeley, some

years ago, the engineering department became puzzled because they had these young people admitted from schools like Banneker and others around the country, and they had all the credentials -- they had done well and they had the motivation -- but young African American students were not succeeding at the same level as Caucasian and Asian American students.

Well, instead of saying, well, you know, that's a problem, we're sorry about it, they had some faculty members who decided to study the problem. And here is what they found: They found that very often young African American students who arrived at competitive colleges had always done well and had done it by so much work and effort that when they began experiencing difficulty, as every one of you will, as I certainly did, they couldn't believe it. And so they kept working harder and harder and harder, but they were embarrassed to ask for help.

Whereas white students and Asian American students not only asked for help, they demanded help. And the Asian American students formed study groups where they helped each other, where they quizzed each other, where they had to lose any embarrassment they felt about showing their ignorance in front of each other. They understood that in a new, difficult academic environment, you couldn't be cool, you just had to really work hard and be willing to make the greatest effort you possibly could.

But so many of the African American students faced with some difficulties went into their rooms, shut the door, and studied even harder on their own because they just couldn't bear the idea that maybe they needed help since they had done so well in high school.

So let me just ask you, please, when you get to these colleges where you're going, just think hard about what your ultimate goal is. Seek whatever help you need. Come together to help each other. Look for people who will be good, positive role models and mentors for you. Do not be embarrassed because college may be harder.

I cried for two months when I got to college. I thought I was the dumbest person they'd ever let in because I couldn't understand half of what was going on. And when I called home collect, my father, who didn't want me that far away anyway, said, well, come home, honey. And my mother said, don't you dare, you go back there and keep working. (Applause.)

Finally, I hope that you will carry with you to college and beyond your commitment to service because you have so much to give. The lives you have already led are examples not only to those of us who are older and extolling them today, but to many young people -- brothers and sisters and cousins who are in this audience.

Many of you have made it here to this graduation ceremony not only through your own determination, but because you had at least one adult in your lives -- a mom, a dad, a grandparent, a teacher, a counselor, a pastor, a friend, a coach -- who supported and even pushed you along the way. They've given generously of their time and love, and I hope that you will take that as an incentive to give it back to others around you, now and into the future.

Finally, let's remember the example and the words of Benjamin Banneker himself -- a great self-taught mathematician, surveyor, astronomer, and patron spirit, as well as the descendant of slaves. More than 200 years ago, Mr. Banneker wrote in his almanac, "The most sensible one is he who believes himself the furthest from the goal and who, whatever advances he has made in his road, studies as if he yet knew nothing and marches as if he were only beginning to

make his first advance." In other words, never rest on your laurels, never stop learning, and never give up.

You are the proud possessors of a great education -- one that is the product of your own hard work as well as the gift of your family, your school, your city, and your country. It is a tool that you can use to open those doors of opportunity to greater success.

I hope you will use it well. And I hope that you will remember the sacrifice you've already made and understand the joy you feel from having done that today and appreciate the continuing sacrifice for your future because you'll be able to look back and say to yourself, I overcame the odds, I made a contribution, I lived my life in a way that really pays back the faith and trust that so many others put in me.

Thank you and God speed.

END

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
HOWARD UNIVERSITY
MAY 9, 1998**

Good morning. President Swygert; Dr Antoine Garibaldi, Provost; Board of Trustees; faculty, staff, alumni, parents, and most of all, Howard University's class of 1998. It's wonderful to be back here at Howard -- and to receive the Honorary Doctor of Law. It's also a true pleasure to be able to participate in a day that holds so much promise for you as individuals -- and so much hope for our community and our nation. Thank you, President Swygert, for inviting me to come -- not only to celebrate Howard's 130th year of academic excellence and leadership -- but to help send off another outstanding class of Howard graduates into the world.

Even in my short few years in Washington, I feel Howard University holds a special significance for me. I came here early on to participate in services at your beautiful Chapel -- and to walk around this historic campus. Last year, I delivered a graduation address to Banneker's high school students -- here at Howard. I particularly wanted to thank this university for giving me the opportunity last June to provide a retrospective on my first trip to Africa. It meant a great deal to me to be able to come here to share that extraordinary experience with many of you, and to speak with you afterwards about your own reactions.

It's impossible for anyone to come to this campus -- whether visitor or student -- and not feel the richness of Howard's tradition and achievements over the years -- and a reverence for those who have paved the way for tomorrow's leaders.

Many years ago, Zora Neale Hurston wrote about what it was like for her to listen to Howard's alma mater being sung -- on a day much like today. "My soul" -- she said -- "stood on tip toe and stretched up to take in all that it meant. So I was careful to do my class work and be worthy to stand there under the shadow of the hovering spirit of Howard. I felt the ladder beneath my feet."

Today, all of you now stand on that ladder -- thanks to so many people in your own lives, and in the life and tradition of this great institution.

You are here surely thanks to your parents and family members, who have never given up on you -- or stopped loving you -- even when you didn't know you needed that support. So I want to applaud all of the parents here today, many of whom have sacrificed so that you could gain this world class education. I also want to wish every mother here a joyous Happy Mother's Day tomorrow. What a great Mother's Day gift -- to see your child graduate from college.

Today's graduating students also owe this day of celebration to the tall shoulders upon which they stand. Try to imagine our world without the passion for justice of a Thurgood Marshall; the transforming words of a Zora Neale Hurston or a Toni Morrison; the international leadership of an Andrew Young; the scientific breakthroughs of an E. Franklin Frazier; or the contributions of so many African Americans who over the years have found inspiration within these walls.

Whether it's the first African American Senator [Senator Edward Brooke], one of the first African American NASA directors of shuttle operations [Isaac T. Gillan]; or the first African American president of the American College of Surgeons [Dr. Lasalle D. Leffall]; Howard has been the springboard for pioneers in every field of the American experience.

I also want to mention that some of Howard's more recent graduates have played very prominent roles in this Administration -- including the first African American Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Togo West -- and the President and I are truly grateful for their contributions.

But I wanted to come back here today not just because Howard is a great historically black university -- but because it is a great American university -- and a world class institution. Your graduates are not only symbols of pride and accomplishment for the African American community. They are individuals from many communities and nations, who have become leaders in their own communities, but also who have found ways down through the generations to reach out across the barriers that divide us, and enriched our efforts -- however faltering at times -- to become a more perfect union.

And here, I want to mention just one more example of Howard being at the forefront -- and pushing the boundaries. Two years ago, you launched a Women's Ambassador's conference -- the first time ever that women ambassadors from around the world have been brought together to discuss world diplomacy in a university setting. And I applaud you for that initiative. Amplifying the voices of those who have traditionally been shut out has been one of the cornerstones of Howard's legacy -- and one from which we have all benefitted.

I think I know a little about how the members of the class of '98 feel right now. The excitement and sense of accomplishment you must feel. The enormous pride you have for your outstanding women's basketball team winning its third consecutive championship. Go Lady Bisons! And the numbing fear that this commencement speech will never end. I still think that Albert Einstein must have given the best address ever delivered. He said: "I do not have any particular thoughts to express today, so I wish you all success in the future." And then he sat down. Unfortunately, as you probably suspected, I do have a few thoughts that I wish to pass along to you today.

But I'll try to be brief. In the spirit of "downsizing" that we're doing here in the federal government -- I've decided to cut down my list of the top ten best bits of advice to just one. And that's for the Howard Class of '98 to do more than be leaders in your chosen profession. Be good citizens as well. Don't confuse having a career with having a life. They are not the same. And it is your life as a citizen -- making a difference in your communities day in and day out -- that may offer you your greatest rewards, and be your greatest contributions.

We Americans have a long tradition of being engaged in the broader community. As we kept pressing back the frontiers of this new nation, Americans began forming all kinds of informal associations and institutions -- our churches, and civic organizations, and business groups -- filled with people who were working not only to build a better future for themselves, but for others as well. When a barn needed to be raised -- or a school roof needed to be repaired -- everyone pitched in. That's always been the key to our strong and vibrant civil society -- and the bedrock of our democracy.

What has always really mattered -- particularly in times of transition and division -- is that people have pulled together, and tried to learn the "habits of the heart" -- about tolerance, and decency, and respect for people who were different than ourselves.

But what defines a citizen today, in a vastly more complicated, diverse, and fast paced world? What "habits of the heart" does this graduating class need to pass down to your children, who will grow up in the 21st century -- surrounded by technological advances that we can't even imagine today? How do we help our children today to judge their worth not by the logo on their shirts but the goodness in their hearts? How do we redefine the role of the individual in a global society that seems to increasingly homogenize our tastes, and yet leaves us searching even harder for our own identities? How do we continue to celebrate our own cultures -- and respect others -- when the competition for resources and opportunities seems to be pitting us increasingly against each other?

What defines a good citizen today? Voting. Yes. Paying your taxes. Yes. But so much more. Each one of you will have to create your own definitions. Here are a few suggestions I have.

I think you can be a good citizen -- and keep your own sanity -- by leading a balanced life. As Paul Tsongas, the former Senator from Massachusetts said before he died, "Nobody ever says on their death bed, I wish I had spent more time in the office." It may seem impossible to accomplish at certain times in your life, but keeping a balance between family and work, work and friendship; and finding the time for service and your faith. That's the key to a truly successful life. I should know. So should your own parents, who I know have had to keep their lives -- and their bank accounts -- in balance, so that you could attend this institution.

I think you can be a good citizen by defying conventional wisdom -- and helping to break down the stereotypes that keep us locked in our own little worlds. I'm sure that all of you have had moments when your expectations of who some one was -- because of what they looked like, or where they were from -- were shattered -- because you took the time to sit down and talk, or grab a meal together, or share a book. You've had the opportunity to spend the last four years in one of the most diverse settings imaginable -- yet I would bet it still takes courage to take that first step, and to put yourself beyond a place of comfort.

These preconceptions and stereotypes also distort how we look at the world around us. As you know, my husband and I just returned from an extraordinary trip to Africa -- my second, and his first. We were overwhelmed by the warm, resilient and brilliant people we met in every country we visited -- and the spirit of renewal and courage that we saw, as people began to rebuild their communities and their lives. It was also a great source of pride for me as an American, to be accompanied on that trip by many prominent African Americans -- from Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater to Rev. Jesse Jackson to Bob Johnson, president of Black Entertainment Television. Like 30 million other African Americans, their ancestors had been taken from Africa and sentenced to live in bondage. Yet here they were returning as powerful leaders of America, and architects of a new partnership between our two continents.

Yet this trip also underscored for me how so many of America's perceptions of Africa -- including my own -- have been dominated by misperceptions and conventional thinking. Many people just see pictures of brutal dictatorships. And while that is surely part of the truth -- half of the nations in Sub-Saharan Africa now choose their own governments. We see images of famine and poverty. Yet as more countries have embraced economic reforms, income in Africa has more than tripled over the past decade. We see countless pictures of war and conflict. Yet people all over Africa are choosing reconciliation and renewal. So no matter what questions your asking -- don't accept the first easy answer. Look with your own eyes.

And finally, I believe that being a good citizen involves taking risks. It's comfortable to play safe -- and for students in America today to buy into the "Generation X" label that your generation doesn't care about the future. I don't believe that for a moment. Because every generation has taken risks -- whether it was a small band of revolutionaries who decided to fight for independence -- or the courageous army of civil rights workers who defied the laws of segregation, and demanded to be full participants in America's promise -- or the young people of today -- who are working in their communities to build bridges across the racial and economic fault lines that still divide us. We know that the best way to learn about the world -- and all of its complexities -- is not by looking the mirror.

For the past four years, this university has given you more than a world class education. It's given you the tools to defy conventional wisdom; the freedom to take risks; the encouragement to get involved; and the opportunity to exchange ideas and share friendships with an extraordinarily diverse groups of students and faculty. This university has also been a practice field for the responsibilities and opportunities that come with living in a free society. In other words -- the tools you need to be a citizen of this nation -- and the world.

So I challenge you -- you who are blessed with the talent and intelligence and leadership qualities of your generation, and armed with a world class education -- to take those gifts, and transform them into opportunities that benefit yourselves and your families -- but also the well-being of the broader community. As you know, this nation faces some very serious challenges -- the widening gap of the have and have nots; the growing number of children growing up in poverty; the crumbling public schools in our inner cities; the stubborn presence of racism and discrimination in our communities. And we need all of you -- in whatever capacity you choose -- to be engaged in helping to raise up our communities and open up opportunities for all people.

Yet the greatest challenge of all may be to believe -- in our hearts -- that we can make a difference. Nelson Mandela -- on the occasion of his inauguration -- recognized our self doubts. "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are all powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us." Don't be afraid of your talents and gifts. Share them.

But above all -- and this is truly my last bit of advice to the class of '98 -- have fun. One of America's great musicians, Wynton Marsalis, agrees. "Life is like playing the blues" he says. "So always bring your horn. Know the tune. Learn to listen with empathy. Understand your role in the ensemble. And most of all, enjoy playing."

Congratulations to each one of you -- not only for your accomplishments, but also for the promise you hold for your own lives and also for our country. I know you will do much celebrating tonight and over the next few days. But please, don't tell your parents about it.

**First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
Women's Emergency Committee
October 8, 1998
Little Rock, Arkansas**

Thank you very much. I am so pleased to be here on this glorious October afternoon for this important occasion, and to see so many of you in this audience who are my friends and people with whom I have worked on all kinds of issues here in Little Rock and in our state, and to be here to celebrate and acknowledge the accomplishments of so many women who came together at a time of crisis and made such a difference. It is an extraordinary opportunity for all of us to say thank you.

~~Dailey~~ (?) Dailey?
I just realized when I was listening to Jim Dailey that I was born in Chicago and now call Little Rock home, and they both have mayors named Dailey who are doing terrific jobs for their cities. And I am always pleased to be with Irene Samuel, who has been an inspiration to nearly every one of us in this audience and countless more for her conviction and her commitment and her just plain fun personality and good humor when she was nagging you about doing something that you knew you should do and never would give up -- but always with a smile and all the while getting the job done.

I am very pleased that Alma Williams could be here and Sander Vancour who could share his memories with us, and I am very grateful to Jim Shelly and to Southwestern Bell for their understanding of how important this is. I got a lump in my throat when the five presidents from our public high schools came up because I think that any member of the Emergency Women's Committee, today or in the past would have been proud to see those young men and women standing before us leading the Pledge of Allegiance.

So it is a tremendous honor for me to be here and to stand in the company of so many courageous women and to join you here at the site of that important first meeting. Now when one thinks about Mrs. Terry, it is impossible not to be filled with admiration for all that she did, all that she meant, all that she encouraged. And it is this place where she and Vivian Brewer and Velma Powell -- and so many of you and others who are no longer with us -- convened that very first meeting of the Women's Emergency Committee.

Since March when the membership roster of the WEC was made public, I have read and re-read the names -- many of which I recognized, many that I did not. But I was amazed at how many were familiar to me because during my years of living here in Little Rock, so many of the same names were part of important efforts that were ongoing to improve the quality of life in our city and our state. Names that

worked for the arts, names that continue to work for public education, names that were at the forefront of improving health care for people, names that took stands on behalf of our continuing efforts for civil rights and social justice. Names that didn't just end with the work that they did in the 50's and the early 60's but were still there living and vibrant in the recent past and present of Little Rock and Arkansas.

So even though the WEC was disbanded in 1963, the women who made up the WEC did not give up their struggles, their fights and their commitments. They didn't stop fighting for public education and they didn't stop fighting for justice. They didn't stop fighting for dignity and civil rights for all Americans. And as we have just seen as one example in Irene today, their fighting spirit has not stopped.

This list of 1,281 names is more than a membership roster, it is an honor roll. And for the first time, we are not only learning these women's names, we are learning their stories -- stories of their bravery in the face of bigotry, vigilance in the face of violence, and triumph in the face of terror.

In the struggle to open the schools the women of the WEC faced hate mail and harrassment, police surveillance, bomb threats and death threats. At best, WEC members were treated as a curiosity -- like the post Civil War southern suffragettes in the early part of our century -- in their white gloves and hats.

At worst, they were called race mixers and communists and epithets too awful to repeat. And yet, those women endured it all. They endured it because they believed what they were doing was right and important and that opening the schools was not in and of itself a significant act but that it symbolized the kind of society they wanted to be a part of and they contributed to build.

And so, with a quiet and solemn dignity, they put on those white gloves and hats and made their way to the Committee's office, usually here, but sometimes in another member's home. Some members had babies in their arms; others, small children tugging at their skirts. And in this unlikely setting, they built a powerful grassroots movement -- a coalition that helped defeat the segregationists on the Little Rock School Board and helped save the jobs of teachers who favored integration.

Even when the WEC didn't win a battle, as Velma Powell said, "We got attention." I particularly enjoy the story I was told of a popular radio call-in show that residents of Little Rock used to tune into after dinner. During the school crisis, the air waves were dominated by segregationists who ranted and raved and took over the program. But one night, the women of the WEC decided that they had heard enough. They called the program, all 65 of them all at once, tying up every line for the entire two-hour show.

And since they couldn't even mention the worked integration without being cut off from talking on the show, they talked about anything and everything else -- how to can peaches, how to plant gardenias, how to keep empty beer bottles off the highway -- anything to keep the segregationists off the air.

Even small triumphs like this made a powerful statement. The WEC proved that a group of embattled ladies with grit and determination could come together despite their differences and stand up for what was right even in the most difficult of times. White and black, women were instrumental for the struggle of civil rights here, throughout the South and throughout our country.

Their leadership may not have captured all the headlines, but it was leadership in the truest sense. And so many of those leaders are really still influencing us today. Pioneering women like these built a lasting model of direct, grassroots, political action. Their example energized women across the South, drawing record numbers of women into politics and new organizations that emulated the techniques of the WEC.

I read an old article by the distinguished journalist Roy Reed, in which he quoted an Arkansas State Representative who called these new women's groups, including the WEC and the ones the WEC spawned, the "worst ever to come before the legislature." Now that really was a high compliment because what it meant was that the women who showed up in their white gloves and their hats had become dogged and determined advocates and lobbyists -- a force to be reckoned with.

In a sense, these women came together as women have always done -- around kitchen tables, at the market, in gatherings like the ones held here in Mrs. Terry's home. Wives and mothers, sisters and daughters, few were household names but their voices in harmony made a powerful sound -- powerful enough to be heard and be heeded.

I have thought a lot about coming here. I have looked forward to it with great anticipation because in the last several months I have participated in conferences in three different parts of the world called Vital Voices. Vital Voices is an attempt to bring women together in countries, particularly new democracies, where women have not yet found their voice. And I have talked about how women in our country have stood up in very critical times in our past to make sure their voices have been heard.

So whether it was in Vienna, Austria a year ago where women from the former Soviet Union gathered because all of a sudden they wanted to know what did it mean to be a citizen of a democracy -- how did they make a difference -- or the Vital Voices Conference in Belfast, Northern Ireland where for the first time Catholic and Protestant women came together in common cause to learn how they

could influence the peace process and help build a stable, secure peace in their land. And then, last Friday, in Montevideo, Uruguay, women from all over Latin America gathered because they were, for the first time, realizing that the years of oppression and authoritarian governments and terrorism and civil war were finally and thankfully and hopefully over forever. They too needed to think of ways they would make their contributions to building their country.

Well, every one of them could have taken lessons from the ladies of the WEC. If we could spare Irene, we could send her throughout the entire world, encouraging and inspiring women to rise up and make sure their voices are heard. Because that is really what is at the root of what this group did that was so remarkable.

They were able to find common ground in a crisis. They were able to put aside their own personal fears and come together -- often at great costs. They were able, if not to enlist their families, at least to quiet the concerns and to bear the losses such as the loss of business and the loss of patience and all that came with it. And there are women all over the world today who may not know specifically about the WEC, but know enough to realize that there have been other women who came before who took risks for democracy, who stood up for social justice, who laid claim to their children's future to build a better society together.

In part, opportunity and fairness was what the WEC was all about, especially opportunity through education. And if you look at the old documents that the WEC produced, there is a saying at the Arkansas History Commission that goes "to get the best job, your child needs the best schools. Let's have the best schools for the most children -- three public schools." That simple message drove the WEC forward and it is still an important message in our country today.

I learned a lesson when I was recently in Belfast, Ireland, when person after person came up to me and said that one of our biggest problems is that our children have never gone to school with each other. There are two separate systems of education -- one for Catholic children and one for Protestant children. And until there is a free, public school education system which will draw all children together, there is not much hope we will be able to change attitudes and create relationships as quickly as we need to.

And I couldn't help but think how important it has been for our country and in effect, what a singular accomplishment it has been that we have been committed to public schools -- free public schools open to all children. It is the best investment our country has ever made. It remains the best investment that our country should make.

Nothing better helps us bridge our divisions and bind together our nations than strengthening our public schools. That should be a priority for every community in

our nation. It is certainly a priority -- as you know so well -- of my husband, who has fought for better public schools here at home and throughout the nation for as many years as he has been in public service. And his commitment to excellent public education has led him to produce an agenda which deserves to be given serious attention.

In this Congress, even though there are a few days left, it is not too late for them to do something that is good for the children and people of America. School is almost out of session on Capitol Hill -- and like many parents we are glad to see it's nearly over -- but there is still time for Congress to step up to this responsibility and place politics and partisanship at the schoolhouse door and strengthen America's public schools to provide the kind of attention that children need by providing more teachers for lower classroom sizes, to modernize and repair our school buildings, to create higher standards that we can all work to achieve, and to provide after-school and summer programs.

The agenda may have been different when the WEC was working to open the schools but it is the same agenda at heart. How do we make sure that these five young, impressive Americans who represent the young people of not only this city, but this nation, are given a chance to reach the fullest that their God-given potential can give them through the kind of public education to which our children should be entitled.

So that is one of the lessons that is still with us today that the WEC has given us through the years. The second is the importance that they place on the basic duty of citizenship, namely to vote. They understood how important and critical it was that every citizen be enlisted to demonstrate that by that simple act of voting, they were once again committing themselves to a democratic way of life.

They urged people to vote. They had telephone polling. They did everything they could because they knew that the elected leadership, if any community, will make decisions that will affect the people. And that is something we have to remind ourselves of over and over again these days. It really does matter who sits on a school board, or in a mayor's office, or in the Oval Office, or in the halls of Congress. It really does matter.

So now that we are about three-and-a-half weeks from the election, in the spirit of the WEC, I would urge everyone to be sure that you not only vote, but to bring 5 or 10 more to vote to make sure that everyone understands what the WEC understood -- that this is a critical, I would argue, even sacred obligation for the right to live in this country and to enjoy our blessings together.

And finally, all of us should just think about the courageous examples of the women who started and filled the membership rosters of the WEC in times when

their commitment meant that they might be followed by a state police car or receive a death threat by telephone, or have their husband come home and with a shake of his head say he just lost a piece of business.

If we can remember their willingness to stand up and do what was right, if we can summon up their courage and determination, then when we face struggles and difficulties in our own time, in standing up for what is right and in standing up to be counted on the side of those who are willing to make sacrifices to improve the life of our community and our country, then that might be one of the lasting tributes we can give to all of them.

So here on this beautiful afternoon in front of this lovely home which has been turned into a magnificent museum, let us pledge once again not merely to honor the memory of the WEC by reading the names on the window or reading Sarah's book or by talking to the women who are here, but to do that and more.

We must recommit ourselves to public education, to make sure that everyone we can touch, reach and talk to understands how important it is to vote. And finally, to be inspired now and in the future by the example of these brave and courageous women who met here all those years ago and changed history but can continue to influence the present and the future as well.

Thank you all very much.



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Subject: 1999-2-19 NAACP dinner remarks of President

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 19, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT IN HONOR OF THE NAACP'S 90TH ANNIVERSARY

National Museum of Women in the Arts
Washington, D.C.

9:07 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: I have been friends with Chairman Bond a long time. We have had many interesting conversations -- not all of them have been that laudatory. But, Julian, I have that on film now, and I'm going to play it -- (laughter) -- whenever I need a little boost in life, I'm just going to turn that film on. (Laughter.)

Thank you. I want to say publicly something I said to Julian Bond privately when he agreed to become the Chair of the NAACP -- I called him and I thanked him. And I thank him again. And I thank all of you for what you are doing. (Applause.)

When Kweisi Mfume agreed to become President of the NAACP and leave the Congress, I wept. (Laughter.) But he told me -- he said, now, don't worry. He said, I'll have a good replacement in Congress -- and he did -- and I need to do this. It's the right thing for my country and for my people. And he, too, has served well. And I'm very proud of our friendship and of the service. (Applause.)

I thank all of you who are helping. When Suzanne Dubose was up here talking about scientists slowing down the speed of light and the rest of us speeding up the speed of justice, I wish I had

thought of that myself. (Laughter.) That line won't rest, it will be used again and again. (Laughter.)

I want to thank Bell Atlantic and all the other companies who are standing with the NAACP. I am delighted to see Bishop Graves and the other officers here. (Applause.) And, Bishop, thank you for your friendship. (Applause.)

Most of the people with our administration have been introduced, but I want to thank Secretary and Mrs. West, and Secretary Slater, and Bill Lann Lee for being here, and Judy Winston, who did such a good job with our initiative on race. I want to acknowledge, also, the presence in the audience of Mary Beth Cahill, our new Special Assistant to the President for Public Liaison. (Applause.) And I want to recognize Ben Johnson -- many of you know he is the first Director of the White House office on our Initiative for One America, and I thank him for doing that. (Applause.) Since Bell is so well-recognized, there's one other former member of the White House staff here, Eric Eaves (phonetic), who went on for the money and the fame of Bell. I want to thank him. (Applause.)

Ladies and gentlemen, I came here tonight for two purposes. One is to say a simple thank you. Thank you for what you've done for America, and thank you for being my friends. I am grateful. I am very grateful. (Applause.)

The second is to say that -- as Suzanne said so

eloquently -- we're in a lot better shape than we used to be, but nowhere near where we ought to be. And what we have to do as a people, as a whole country -- but especially you, because you know -- you know things about where we are and where we need to go that not every American does, because of the life you've lived and the things you've seen and the work you do. You know that no great nation, and certainly not this one, can afford to say, well, we're a lot better off than we used to be, so let's take a vacation from progress. Let's take a vacation from our struggle for liberty and equality. Let's take a vacation from our attempt to spread the reach of prosperity and freedom to Africa, to the Caribbean, to our friends in the Americas.

You know that this is not a time to take a break, it is a time to thank God for our prosperity and our opportunities and make the best use of them. The sun is shining and we need to make hay. We need to work while the sun is shining. (Applause.)

And to do what I would like to do in these last two years of my presidency, just like the last six, we need the help of every one of your 2,200 branches. We need to forge new coalitions across the lines of race and class and religion. We need to close America's remaining opportunity gaps.

A lot of you have lived in homes when you were younger and not so well off and prosperous as you are now -- (laughter) -- where there were literally gaps in the walls or the windows, and you could feel the wind blowing. Well, there are a lot of people still getting blown by those kinds of winds and the opportunity gaps of America.

Kweisi said, as all of you know, that the NAACP was formed 90 years ago. It was founded, as all of you know I'm sure, in direct response to a riot in Springfield, Illinois. Now, I learned something in getting ready to come here tonight that I did not know -- I had always thought it was simply a cruel irony that this riot occurred in Abraham Lincoln's hometown and where he was buried. I learned that the white mob was actually deliberately conducting the riot there, trying to make Mr. Lincoln turn over in his grave. They yelled, storming through the black neighborhoods, "Lincoln freed you; we'll show you where you belong."

Well, quite to the contrary, it was the NAACP that helped to show you where you belong. (Applause.) On any bus, and any lunch counter and any voting booth; in any school, in the Armed Forces, in the highest echelons of government and business -- you belong everywhere. And so do your friends. And we will never make what Congressman John Lewis so beautifully called the "beloved community" until everybody who belongs can be wherever they belong. (Applause.)

I am very grateful for the work we have done together in these last six years. Previous speakers commented on all these folks from our administration, and how our crowd looks like America. What I would like history to say is, they had the administration that looked the most like America and that did the most for America -- (applause) -- proving that excellence and diversity and community all go hand in hand.

I am grateful that we have stronger communities, with a dropping crime rate; that there are only about half as many people on welfare as there were six years ago; that the doors of college are open to every high school student who will work for it through the HOPE scholarship and the other academic aid that we have provided; that we have the longest peacetime expansion in history, and the lowest peacetime unemployment since 1957. I am grateful that the prosperity is wider, with the lowest African American unemployment rate ever recorded, the highest African American home ownership rate ever recorded, record numbers of new African American businesses every year. (Applause.)

But it takes a long time to get it all fixed. Just before I came over here tonight, 117 years too late, I awarded a pardon, posthumously, to Lt. Henry Flipper -- (applause) -- who, because of racial prejudice, was wrongfully convicted of conduct unbecoming an officer and dismissed from the Army more than a

century ago. He was born a slave; he was the first African American graduate of West Point. He served with great distinction in the 10th Cavalry. In Fort Sill, Oklahoma, he eliminated the cause of malaria as a civil engineer by digging what is still called "Flipper's Ditch," and is now a national monument.

He lived to be 84. He served as an advisor to a Cabinet Secretary; he did all kinds of wonderful work throughout the world. He was cleared of wrongdoing 20 years ago, but he was never, never fully restored in his good name, until about an hour and a half ago, when, in the presence of 16 of his family members, several African American graduates of West Point, General Colin Powell and a number of others who were here, I signed his pardon. (Applause.)

Now, we don't want the rest of America to wait 117 years for justice. And we don't want people to have to wait until they're gone for people to say something halfway nice about them. We don't want to have America outraged, even though we honor the outrage, by another killing like the killing of James Byrd.

We know still, every day there are qualified African Americans who are turned away from home loans or business loans; African American drivers pulled over because they look suspicious. Some of you call it the offense of driving while black. We know every day there are African American children who are stuck in failing schools when they're entitled to good schools.

So we've been working at it for six years, to try to bring a special focus to the need to build one America, and to deal not only with the problems of African Americans, and Hispanic Americans and Native Americans, but the fact that we are now becoming the most diverse democracy in the world -- California, 10 percent Asian American, soon to have no majority race. We started the Initiative on Race in 1997. To institutionalize the work of building one America, I appointed Ben Johnson to continue our work, in an organized, specific and concrete way. And I want you to help us do that. (Applause.)

I would like it very much if, after the next presidential election, the new President is asked repeatedly, now who is going to head your One America office? I don't want this to be a one-shot deal. I want this to be a journey, not a destination. And I want it to be something that makes us think more and more every day, seriously, about how we're going to build unity out of our increasing diversity -- get rid of our old problems and meet our new challenges. And I want you to help me do that.

I want you to help us, also, to pass this new budget, which helps to close some of those large opportunity gaps -- the

disparities in education, in jobs, in economic development, in civil rights enforcement; in home ownership and quality health care.

I came here tonight to celebrate and thank you, not to talk policy, but I want to mention just two areas. First, the economy. We all know that even though we have the lowest peacetime unemployment rate since 1957, there are places that haven't felt much of this vaunted recovery. We all know that even though we have the lowest African American unemployment rate ever recorded -- and the same for Hispanic Americans -- it's still quite a bit higher than the national average. And for young, single men, it is still quite high indeed.

Now, if we can't use this moment of unprecedented prosperity to bring jobs and opportunity and enterprise to the neighborhoods and to the people who have not yet felt it, but are willing to work for it, we will never get around to doing the job. Now is the time to do that. (Applause.)

So the NAACP is a non-partisan organization; you do have Republican supporters out across this country who believe in civil rights. And I want you to go get them. (Laughter.) And haul them up here to Washington, with the Democrats, too, and say, look, we want you to pass this new markets initiative. We can put \$15 billion in private investment into neighborhoods in this country that have not seen new investment and new jobs and new opportunity for people by giving the right kind of incentives, the right kind of tax cuts, the right kind of loan guarantees, the right kind of support to business people. And if we don't get around to doing it now, we will never get around to it. We need to do it now. (Applause.)

I also want to tell you that a lot of far-sighted business people have figured out that it would be very good for the American economy. Why? For the first five year of my presidency, 30 percent of our growth came from expanded exports, selling more to other people around the world. Last year we had a good year, but we didn't get 30 percent growth from our exports. Why? You know why -- because of the financial troubles in Asia and in a lot of Latin American countries. Now, I think we ought to help our friends in Asia, Latin America and in Africa to trade with us more so we can grow and they can grow. But in the meanwhile, we've got the most significant untapped market for the growth of the American economy right here at home, in all *these neighborhoods that still are not growing as they should.* (Applause.)

The second thing I want to ask you to do is to help me give every child in this country a world-class education. (Applause.) I want you to help me finish the job of hiring 100,000 more teachers. I want you to help me finish the job -- again, I want you to bring your Republican and your Democratic friends up here and help me convince the Congress not to say no

this time to our proposal to build or modernize 5,000 schools. I'm tired of going into these inner-city schools and seeing schools so old we can't even hook them up to computers, with broken windows and peeling plaster. It's wrong. (Applause.)

And in many other areas, you go and the kids are all having half their classes in house trailers because the schools are bursting at the seams. We need to do that. I want you to help me continue our work to hook up every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000. (Applause.) I want to ask you to help me change the way we give out federal money, to not become victim to a tyranny of low expectations.

I have said many times that I want to end the practice of social promotion, but not for the purpose of punishing the kids for a system that is failing them. And let me just give you one fact -- I said this in the State of the Union, but I'm going to say it until I'm convinced every American knows it -- last year, in the International test of Math and Science, a representative sample of American children, by race and income, scored near the top of the world in the 4th grade test. By the 8th grade they had fallen to average. By the 12th grade they were near the bottom. Nobody came and took brain cells out of those kids' heads. They did not get dumber. The system was failing them. (Applause.)

So, yes, I believe we should end social promotion, but we also are tripling funds for after-school and summer school and tutoring programs, and sending more college students into the schools to mentor kids when they're in middle school , and tell them they can stay in school and go to college and what they need to do to do that. We need to do that.

We are dramatically increasing our scholarship program to tell young people, if you'll go into inner cities or isolated rural areas and teach school for three or four years, we'll pay off your student loan. (Applause.) We want you to go out there and give something back to your country. (Applause.)

We have got to change the way we spend the money. The teachers and the parents and the kids are telling us what works; we ought to stop funding what doesn't work and start funding what does. We ought to say that school districts should raise standards for teachers, and we put money in there. There are so many of our teachers out there having to teach courses with the schools overcrowded, that they don't have college majors or college minors in.

That's what happens in high school. It's not that these people are not dedicated -- they are. But they have not had the chance to be properly prepared. And the schools can't get enough teachers to put enough people in the classroom with the kind of academic background. We ought to help them change that.

And there are school districts with schools that are doing great and schools that aren't doing so well. The school with the biggest -- the state with the biggest gain in student performance in the last couple of years is North Carolina, because they adopted a strategy that says, we've got to turn around or shut down failing schools. When you do that, you almost never have to shut one down -- they find a way to turn around.

The great English scholar Benjamin -- I mean, Samuel Johnson, once said -- I had Benjamin Johnson on my mind -- (laughter) -- Samuel Johnson said that it is remarkable how the prospect of one's own demise concentrates the mind. (Laughter.) We don't want to punish anybody; we want to turn schools around. And there's things in this budget to do that -- and to help the teachers, and to give the parents more information, and to help more districts set up charter schools, and to do things that will work, so that we don't have one size fits all.

I read a story the other day about a school district out West that organized a school just for high school dropouts. Let them come at different hours. Let them have access to computers and special tutors. And all of a sudden, almost all the dropouts came back to school. There are all kinds of

different things that can be done to raise the performance level of our schools.

But I think all of you know that we'll never really have one America, and we'll never really get by discrimination, unless we create opportunity in the schools, and opportunity in the economy. So I ask you to help me pass these initiatives. (Applause.)

Now, let me just say one last thing. I was delighted to be asked to come tonight, honored to accept. The work that I have been privileged to do as President, and before, in my life to advance the cause of equal opportunity is perhaps the thing I cherish most, of all the things that I and my wife, and our administration have been able to do.

You'd be amazed how many times in my weekly lunch with the Vice President, after we get through with whatever business we have to do, we get back to talking about this subject. I guess it's because I grew up in the segregated South. Maybe it's because I met and was influenced by people like some of you here tonight, so many years ago. But part of it is, I know that it's a pure miracle that, starting out from where I did as a kid, I wound up here tonight. A pure miracle. (Applause.)

I once heard a guy say, every politician wants you to believe he was born in a log cabin he built himself. (Laughter.)

But the truth is, we don't build our log cabins ourselves. And not a person standing here or sitting here tonight got here on your own. And most of us get out of this life better off than we deserve, because God is good and so are the people that we get in touch with. (Applause.)

But it really bothers me that there are children in this country, who are certainly just as smart, full of as many dreams, with whatever abilities God gave me, they have them -- who may not be able to live out their dreams. And if all of us as citizens have one responsibility -- apart from honoring our country and Constitution and laws -- it ought to be to make sure that at the end of our days we have done everything we can to make sure no one we ever touched was denied the chance to live their dreams. We know we'll be better off when that's true. We know we'll all get something out.

I look at these young kids that are here tonight, these young people. I'm kind of jealous, actually. If they'd let me be 20, I think I'd let them be President. (Laughter.) You know? I think about the life that lies before them, and all that they might be. I imagine, 30 years from now, some African American, Hispanic, Asian female standing here as President of the United States, you know? (Applause.)

But I know that as long as there are Native American reservations, where young American citizens live in communities where the diabetes rate is two and three and four and five times the national average; as long as there are neighborhoods where kids really don't have a chance to get a world-class education; as long as there are places where nobody's taking care of the pollution, so the health rates are not what they ought to be; as long as there is anyplace where anybody can't live out their dreams, the NAACP will have work to do. And America will have new ground to break. And together, there is no better cause for our energies and our lives.

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

END

9:40 P.M. EST

Message Sent To: _____