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One America

Remarks to the NABJ

The President's Initiative on Race

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT TO THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK JOURNALISTS

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THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. I must say, when Arthur was speaking, I thought to myself that he sounded like a president. (Laughter.) And I said to myself, if I had a voice like that, I could run for a third term, even though -- (laughter).

I enjoyed meeting with your board members and JoAnne Lyons Wooten, your Executive Director backstage. I met Vanessa Williams, who said, you know, I'm the president-elect; have you got any advice for me on being president? True story. I said, I do. Always act like you know what you're doing. (Laughter.)

I want to say to you, I'm delighted to be joined here tonight by a distinguished group of people from our White House and from the administration, including the Secretary of Labor, Alexis Herman; and the Secretary of Education, Dick Riley; and a number of others from the White House. Where is my White House crew? Would you all stand up -- everybody here from the administration, the Department of Education, Department of Labor. (Applause.)

I don't know whether he is here or not, but I understand Congressman Bobby Rush was here earlier today, and I know there are some other local officials from Chicago who are here. And this is a great place to come. Chicago is such a wonderful city that there was an article this morning in the New York Times bragging on Chicago. (Laughter.) And I saw the Mayor today. He said, I know we have finally arrived. If they're bragging on us in New York, we have made it.

And I congratulate all the people here on the remarkable improvements they've made in this magnificent city in the last few years. I'd also like to say a special word of thanks to Reverend Jesse Jackson. I see him here in the audience and I know he's here. Thank you. (Applause.)

I always kind of hate to speak when Jesse is in the audience. (Laughter.) You know, I mean, every paragraph gets a grade. (Laughter.) Most of them aren't very good. I can just hear it now -- all the wheels turning.

I want to thank Reverend Jackson for agreeing to co-chair, along with the Secretary of Transportation, Rodney Slater, an American delegation to an economic conference in Zimbabwe, where he'll be going next week. And I know you all wish him well on that. We are doing our best to have a major initiative reaching out to Africa, recognizing that more and more countries in Africa are becoming functioning, successful democracies; that half a dozen countries in Africa have had growth rates of 7 percent or more last year and will equal that again this year; and that this is an enormous opportunity for us not only to promote better lives for the millions and millions of people who live on that continent, but also better opportunities for Americans and better partnerships with Africa in the years ahead.

Well, you heard your President say that I promised to come here in 1992 if I got elected. And I'm trying to keep every promise I made. And I'm sure glad I got a second term so I didn't get embarrassed on this one. (Laughter.)

In the years since I assumed office, I have worked very hard to create an America of opportunity for all, responsibility from all, with a community of all Americans, a country committed to continuing to lead the world toward greater peace and freedom and prosperity. And that begins with giving every person in this country the chance to live up to his or her God-given abilities.

Many of you chose to become journalists because you thought it was the best way to use your God-given talent -- your gift with words, your knack for asking tough questions, which some of us find maddening -- (laughter) -- and for getting the answers, your instincts with a camera or a microphone, your ability to connect with people and get them to understand what it is you're trying to get across. And you did not just to make a living, but to make a difference. I thank you for that. And I think that all of us want that opportunity for everyone in this country.

Last month in San Diego, I called upon Americans to begin a dialogue, a discussion over the next year and perhaps beyond, to deal with what I think is the greatest challenge we'll face in the 21st century, which is whether we really can become one America as we become more diverse; whether as we move into a truly global society, we can be the world's first truly great multiracial, multiethnic, multireligious democracy. I asked the American people to undertake a serious discussion of the lingering problems and the limitless possibilities that attend our diversity.

I came here tonight to talk a little more about this initiative, to ask each of you to examine what role you can play in it and the vital contributions as journalists and as African Americans you might make in leading your news rooms, your communities, and our nation in the right kind of dialogue.

Five years ago, I talked about how we could prepare our people to go into the 21st century, and we've made a lot of strides since then. Our economy is the healthiest in a generation and once again the strongest in the world. Our social problems are finally bending to our efforts. But at this time of great prosperity, we know we still have a lot of great challenges in order to live up to our ideals, in order to live up to what we say America should mean.

And it seems to me that at this time when there is more cause for hope than fear, when we are not driven by some emergency or some imminent cataclysm in our society, we really have not only an opportunity, but an obligation to address and to better resolve the vexing, perplexing, often painful issues surrounding our racial history and our future.

We really will, whether we're prepared for it or not, become a multiracial democracy in

the next century. Today, of our 50 states, only the state of Hawaii has no majority race. But within three to five years, our largest state, California, where 13 percent of us live, will have no majority race. Five of our school districts already draw students from over 100 different racial and ethnic groups, including the school district in the city of Chicago. But within a matter of a couple of years, over 12 school districts will have students from over 100 different racial and ethnic groups.

When I was a boy, I knew that a lot of people went from my native state in Arkansas to Detroit to make a living because they couldn't make a living on the farm anymore. Many of them were African Americans, and they joined the white ethnics, many of whom were from Central and Eastern Europe and from Ireland in the Detroit area, working in the car plants, getting the good middle class jobs, being able to educate their children, looking forward to a retirement. Some of them actually are coming back home now and buying land. And Nicholas Lehman (phonetic) traced that movement in a great book he wrote not so long ago.

But now Detroit is not just a place of white ethnics and African Americans. In Wayne County, there are over 145 different racial and ethnic groups represented today. So the paradigm is shifting. And so, as part of our engagement in this national dialogue, we have to both deal with our old, unfinished business, and then imagine what we are going to be like in 30 years and whether we can actually become one America when we're more different. Is there a way not only to respect our diversity, but even to celebrate it and still be one America? Is there a way to use this to help us economically and to spread opportunity here?

Why are there so many people in the Congress in both parties excited about this Africa initiative? Because we have so many African Americans -- even people who were never concerned about it before understand this is a great economic opportunity for America. Why do we have a unique opportunity to build a partnership with Brazil and Argentina and Chile and all the countries in Latin America? Because we have people from all those countries here in our country. Why do we have the opportunity to avoid having Asia grow, but grow in a more closed and isolated way, running the risk of great new problems 30, 40, 50 years from now? Because we have so many Asian Americans who are making a home here in America with ties back home to their native lands and cultures. We are blessed if we can make this work.

We also may have a chance to make peace in other parts of the world if we can make peace within our borders with ourselves. But let's not kid ourselves -- the differences between people are so deep and so ingrained, it's so easy to scratch the surface and have something bad go wrong, and we see that in countries less privileged than ourselves when things go terribly wrong -- whether it's between the Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi; or the Catholics and the Protestants in the home of my ancestors, Ireland; or the Croats, the Serbs, and the Muslims who are, interestingly enough, biologically indistinguishable, in Bosnia; or the continuing travails of the Jews and the Arabs in the Middle East.

If you look through all of human history, societies have very often been defined by their ability to pit themselves as coherent units against those who were different from themselves. Long ago in prehistory, it probably made a lot of sense for people that were in one tribe to look at people in another tribe as enemies, because there was a limited amount of food to eat or opportunities for shelter, because people did not know how to communicate with each other so they had to say, people that look like me are my friends, people that don't look like me are my enemies.

But why, on the verge of the 21st century, are we still seeing people behave like that all

over the world? And why here even in America do we find ourselves, all of us at some time, gripped by stereotypes about people who don't look like we do?

So we shouldn't kid ourselves. This is not going to be an easy task. But there is hardly anything more important because we know we have a great economy; we know we have a strong military; we know we have a unique position in the world today with the fall of communism virtually everywhere and the rise of market economies and the success that we've offered. But we know we also have these lingering inequalities and problems in America. And if we can overcome them and learn to really live together and celebrate, not just tolerate but celebrate our differences and still say, in spite of all those differences, the most important thing about me is that I am an American, that there is no stopping what we can do and what our children can become.

This week in Washington, John Hope Franklin convened the first meeting of the advisory board I appointed on racial reconciliation. The executive director of that board, Judy Winston, who has been our Acting Under Secretary of Education, is also here with me tonight. I am very proud that she has agreed to do that and very excited about what has happened. The first meeting was full of lively debate and honest disagreement. I like that. We should discover quickly that people who are honestly committed to advancing this dialogue will have honest differences and they ought to be aired.

Earlier today, as your President said, at the NAACP Convention in Pittsburgh, I reiterated my long-held belief that we will never get to our one America in the 21st century unless we have both equality and excellence in educational opportunity. We have to give every American access to the world's best schools, best teachers, best education. And that means we have to have high standards, high expectations and high levels of accountability from all of us who were involved in it.

But I want to say to you, we know our children can learn. For years and years, ever since 1984, when the Nation at Risk -- 1983 -- when the Nation At Risk report was issued, people said, well, you can't expect American education to compete favorably with education in other countries because we have a more diverse student body and because we have so many more poor children and so many immigrants and because, because, because.

This year, on the International Math and Science Tests given to 4th and 8th graders, for the first time since we began a national effort to improve our schools over a decade ago, our 4th graders -- not all of them, but a representative sample, representative of race, region, income -- scored way above the national average in math and science -- disproving the notion that we cannot achieve international excellence in education even for our poorest children. It is simply not true.

This year, again, our 8th graders scored below the international average, emphasizing the dimensions of the challenge, because when the kids who carry all these other burdens to school every day -- the burden of poverty, the burden of crime and drugs in their neighborhoods, the burden of unmet medical needs, often the burden of problems at home -- when they hit adolescence and when they are pressured and tempted to get involved in other things, it gets to be a lot tougher. So we haven't done everything we need to do. But the evidence is here now; it is no longer subject to debate that we can't compete. And that's good, because we need to. And because our children, however poor they are, are entitled to just as much educational opportunity as anybody else.

Now, I believe that we made a big mistake in the United States not adopting national standards long before this. And I believe our poorest children and our minority children would be doing even better in school had we adopted national standards a long time ago

and held their schools to some measure of accountability. It is not their fault, it is the rest of our faults that we are not doing it. (Applause.)

So when I say by 1999 we ought to test all our 4th graders and all our 8th graders -- the 4th graders in reading, the 8th graders in math -- it's not because I want the individual kids to get a grade, it's because everybody ought to make that grade. If you have a standard, everyone ought to clear the bar. And if they're not, there is something wrong with the educational system that ought to be fixed. And you can't know it unless you understand what the standard is and hold people to some accountability. But don't let anybody tell you that these kids can't do it. That is just flat wrong. They can do it. (Applause.)

Today I did announce one new initiative that I think is very important, and that is a \$350 million multiyear scholarship program modeled on the National Medical Service Corps. You know, a lot of us come from places that have a lot of poor rural areas that are medically under-served. We got doctors into those areas, into the Mississippi Delta, because we said, hey, if you'll go to medical, we'll help you go to medical school, but you've got to go out to a poor under-served area and be a doctor to people who need you. Then later you can go make all the money you want somewhere else. But if we help you go to medical school, will you go out here and help people where they don't have doctors? And the National Health Service Corps has done a world of good.

So what I propose today, and what we're going to send up to Capitol Hill with the Reauthorization of Higher Education Act is a series of scholarships that will go to people who say, I will teach in a poor area for three years if you will help me get an education. (Applause.)

This is the first specific policy to come out in connection with our year-long racial reconciliation initiative. There will be more policies. But it's not just a matter of public policy. There will also be local actions, private actions which will have to be taken. And we also need the dialogue, the discussion. It is about the mind and the heart. And, therefore, I say again, your voices and your observations are going to be very valuable.

In the communities where we have a constructive, ongoing dialogue, where people not only talk together but work together across racial lines, there are already stunning stories that stir the heart and give us hope for the future. There is nothing people can't do. Most people are basically good. Their leaders have to give them a framework in which the best can come out and the worst can be repressed. And that's what we have to do here. We've got to learn how to deal with a fundamentally new and different situation as well as deal with a lot of old, unresolved problems in our past that dog us in the present.

As journalists, you have experienced firsthand both the progress and the continuing challenge of race in our country. Some of you in this audience are pioneers in your field, perhaps the first people of color ever to claim a desk, a phone, a typewriter in the news rooms of our big-city papers and stations. Some of you, when you were beginning your careers, knew that it was hard enough to find just one editor who would consider your work, let alone the hundreds of newspaper and broadcasting executives who this week have descended on this job fair that you sponsored to recruit the young people who are here today.

They've come here not just because they recognize the value of a diverse and racially representative staff, but also because they know from experience that they'll find some of the best talent in American journalism here at this convention. (Applause.)

But our news rooms are like all of our other working environments -- they've come a

long way, they've still got a ways to go. (Applause.) Just as in other work places in America, minority representation on many staffs and mast heads is not what it ought to be. Wide gaps continue to exist in the way whites and minorities perceive their workplaces and in the way they perceive each other. We have to bridge this gap everywhere in America.

But it is especially important in the press because you are the voice and, in some ways, the mirror of America through which we see ourselves and one another. I encourage you to continue to reach out to your colleagues; to listen to each other; to understand where we're all coming from; to lead your organizations in the writing, the editing, the broadcasting fare and the thought-provoking stories about the world we live in and the one we can live in. We have a lot to do to build that one America for the 21st century, but I believe we're up to the challenge, and I know that you are up to the challenge.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. FENNELL: Thank you very much, Mr. President. As is customary in these forums here at our national convention, at this time, we bring forth our questioners. We are journalists, after all, and you knew this was coming. (Laughter.)

We have selected four journalists who will ask the questions of the day. Eric Thomas, reporter and anchor at KGO-TV in San Francisco; Chinta Strausberg, reporter of the Chicago Defender; Cheryl Smith, a reporter at KKDA-Radio, Grand Prairie, Texas --

THE PRESIDENT: I know where that is.

MR. FENNELL: Yes. And Brent Jones, our student representative, a junior at the University of Florida in Gainesville. (Applause.)

To the questioners.

Q Chinta Strausberg, the Chicago Defender newspaper. Mr. President, do you support an \$8 billion superhighway, NAFTA superhighway at a time when Congress has reduced funding for mass transit in Chicago as well? And if that superhighway is built, sir, will black contractors be a major part of it as a down payment on reparations?

THE PRESIDENT: What superhighway? Say it again? Did I -- what's this project?

Q It's a proposed congressional plan -- \$8 billion NAFTA superhighway that would connect the United States with Canada and Mexico, and it is being discussed in Congress.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't know that I'm familiar enough with the project. I do believe we need to continue to improve our infrastructure. Secretary Slater and I have argued that we should not under-fund mass transit and urban transportation. And indeed, in the transportation bill I sent to Congress, we asked for several hundred million dollars more directly targeted to help people on welfare who are required to go to work, get to where the jobs are if their jobs aren't within walking distance. Only about 10 percent of the people on public assistance own their own cars. And we believe we need more investment in mass transit in the cities. So -- and I don't think it should be an either-or situation.

And in terms of contracting, I support affirmative action programs generally in employment, in education, and in economic development. And I've done everything I could to fix what were the generally recognized shortcomings of some of the programs that graduate out the firms that may not need it any more, but to continue it where I

think it is appropriate. So I continue to support that.

And I think it is a mistake for us not to have initiatives to help create minority-owned businesses. I think we should -- as a matter of fact, let me just back up and say, when I was in San Francisco at the Mayors Conference not very long ago, I said to them that I thought we ought to develop a private-sector, job-related model for high unemployment areas in our cities and -- because there was no way the government social services could ever create enough economic opportunity for people. And I thought, if we couldn't do it when the national unemployment rate was the lowest in 23 years, when could we do it?

So I think we need to do more to help people organize and start their own businesses, to help build economic clusters of activity, to help give people models as well as opportunities to work, to see that we can do this. I don't think we're doing nearly enough in this area, and I think we have a new opportunity to do it because the unemployment rate is low in the nation.

As I've heard Reverend Jackson say for 20 years, the biggest undeveloped market in America are the poor unemployed and under-employed people in our inner cities and our rural areas. Now is the time we should be creating more businesses there, not having fewer businesses. That's what I believe. (Applause.)

Q Mr. President, your scholarship proposal notwithstanding, there is still an assault on affirmative action in this country. In my home state of California in the wake of Proposition 209 and last year's vote by the University of California Board of Regents, minority applications and enrollment in the UC system this year are down. There will be not one new black student enrolled at the prestigious Bolt Hall School of Law at the University of California this fall. What specific programs, scholarship program notwithstanding, do you propose to stem this tide and make sure that there is diversity in higher education in this country? (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: First of all, I think we need to make sure that we continue to use federal law to the maximum extent we can to promote an integrated educational environment -- (applause) -- so that we have to review, whether in the Education Department, in the Justice Department, whether there are any further actions we can take legally to promote an integrated educational environment in higher education in the states where these actions have been taken.

Secondly, I think we need to look at whether there is some way by indirection to achieve the same result. I know that the legislature in Texas, in an attempt to overcome the impact of the Hopwood decision in Texas, just passed what they call the "Ten Percent Solution," which would be to guarantee admissions to any Texas public institution of higher education to the top 10 percent of the graduating class of any high school in Texas. And because of the way the African Americans and Hispanics living patterns are in Texas, that may solve the problem. Whether that would work in California, I don't know. I haven't studied the way the school districts are organized enough. But I think we have to come up with some new and fairly innovative ways to do that.

Thirdly, I think, on the professional schools, my own view -- I'm a little stumped here. We have to really -- we're going to have to reexamine what we can do. I don't know why the people who promoted this in California think it's a good thing to have a segregated set of professional schools. It would seem to me that, since these professionals are going to be operating in the most ethnically-diverse state in the country, they would want them to be educated in an environment like they're going to operate. I don't understand that. (Applause.) But there may be some ways to get around

it, and we're looking at it and working on it. But I think it's going to be easier to stop it from happening at the undergraduate level than at the professional school level. And we're going to have to really think about whether there is some way around it, whether it would be some sort of economic designation or something else. But we're working on that.

And finally, let me say, I think we need to continue to provide more resources, because one of the real problems we have is, even in the last five years, when we've had economic recovery, the college enrollment rates of minorities in America have not gone up in an appropriate way. And in this budget that I'm trying to get passed through Congress, we've got the biggest increase in education funding in 32 years, the biggest increase in Pell Grant scholarships in 20 years, another huge increase in work-study funds, and the tax proposal, as we structured them, would, in effect, guarantee two years of college to virtually everyone in America and help people with two more years of college.

We've got a huge dropout problem in higher education among minorities that I think is having an impact on then what happens in the graduate schools and in the professional schools. I don't think there is a simple answer. And I think, frankly, the way 209 is worded, it's a bigger problem even than the Hopwood case in Texas. But I can tell you we're working on it: first, is there anything the Justice Department or the Civil Rights Office of the Education Department can do? We're examining that. Second, is there a specific solution like the Texas "Ten Percent Solution" that would overcome it at least in a specific state. Third, come up with some more funds and some more specific scholarship programs to try to overcome it.

It's a great concern to me, and I think it is moving the country in exactly the wrong direction. And I might say, if you look at the performance of affirmative action students, it doesn't justify the action that was taken. That's another point that ought to be made.

So the one thing that I believe is, I believe that the rather shocking consequences in the professional schools in both Texas and California will have a deterrent impact on other actions like that in other states. And I believe you will see more efforts now to avoid this. I think a lot of people who even voted for 209 have been pretty shocked at what happened and I don't believe the people of California wanted that to occur. And I think the rhetoric sounded better than the reality to a lot of voters.

So I can tell you that, while I'm very concerned about it, I think if we all work on it, we can reverse it in a matter of a couple of years. And we just have to hope we don't lose too many people who would otherwise have had good opportunities because of it. But it is an urgent matter of concern to me. (Applause.)

Q Good afternoon, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon.

Q My question also has to do with education for more at a high school and middle school level. The dropout rate, crime, and drugs are more prevalent in inner city schools than in suburban schools, consequently leading to a lower quality education in many inner city schools. What will your administration do through government-aided programs or initiatives to combat these problems and ensure everyone in America is receiving a comparable education? (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: I want to answer your question, but first I'd like to start with a compliment to the African American community. Last year, the high school graduation

rate nationally among African Americans was well above 80 percent and almost at the level -- almost equal to the level for white Americans. And it's a little known and appreciated fact. And it's a great tribute, since, as you pointed out, people who are in inner city schools, particularly where there's a lot of violence, a lot of drugs, a lot of problems, have to struggle harder to stay and get through and come out -- it's a stunning achievement that the differential in graduation rate is now only about 4 percent. That's a stunning thing. That's very, very good. (Applause.)

Now, I'll tell you what we're trying to do. We're trying to do several things. We're trying, first of all, to help these schools work better with helping the teachers and the principals to operate drug-free and weapon-free schools; with supporting juvenile justice systems like the one in Boston where, I might add, not a single child has been killed by a handgun in nearly two years in Boston, Massachusetts. (Applause.)

So we've got to create a safe and drug-free environment. Then we're trying to support more parents groups in establishing their own schools. For example, I met with a number of Hispanic leaders recently -- a lot of you are familiar with the group, La Raza. They are operating, La Raza is operating 15 charter schools, where the parents have been permitted to work with teachers to establish their own schools within the public school system, and set up the rules which govern them and make sure that they're good for the kids.

There are a number -- there's no magic bullet here, but what we're trying to do is to take the lessons from every public school that is working in a difficult environment where there's a low dropout rate and a high performance rate, and say, they all have five or six common elements; and then we're trying to provide the funds and the support to people all over America to replicate that.

I want to take my hat off to the people of Chicago here who have had a very difficult situation in their schools, and they have been turning it around and raising student performance quite markedly in the last couple of years with the involvement -- aggressive involvement of parents and students. There's a student who sits on the local board governing the schools here now. And I think that's -- I guess the last thing I'd say is, I would favor having communities have someone like you on their governing boards because I think if they'd listen more to the young people about what it would take to clean up and fix up the schools, I think we'd be ahead. (Applause.)

Let me just make two other comments. I think there are some places where money will make a difference. I mentioned one in trying to get good teachers there. We're going to have to replace 2 million teachers within the next decade -- 2 million with retirements and more kids coming to school.

Another is old school buildings. I was in Philadelphia the other day. The average age of a school building in Philadelphia is 65 years of age. The school buildings in Philadelphia should be drawing Social Security. That's how old they are. (Laughter.) Now, a lot of those old buildings are very well-built and can last for another 100 years, but they have to be maintained. We have school buildings in Washington where they're open -- where there are three stories in the school building, and one whole floor has to be shut down because it's not safe for the kids to be there. So we've got to be careful about that. We need an initiative to help repair the school buildings.

And finally, let me say that I think technology offers young, lower-income kids an enormous opportunity. If we can hook up every classroom in America to the Internet by the year 2000 -- (applause) -- get the computers in there -- a lot of you do things with computers that people who are in your line of work couldn't even imagine five years

ago. When I go on a trip now on Air Force, I go back and watch the photographers send their pictures over the computer back to news room.

If we can hook up every classroom to the Internet, have adequate computers, adequate educational software, properly-trained teachers, and then involve the parents in the use of this to keep up with the school work and all that and get to the point where the personal computer is almost as likely to be in a home -- even a below-income person has a telephone -- we can keep working in that direction.

I think technology will give young Americans the chance, for the first time in history, whether they come from a poor, a middle class or a wealthy school district, the first time ever to all have access to the same information, at the same level of quality, at the same time. That has never happened in the history of the country.

So if we do it right and the teachers are trained to help the young people use it, it will revolutionize equality of educational opportunity at the same time it raises excellence in education. So those are basically some of my thoughts about this.

And thank you for asking and for caring about the people that are coming along behind you. (Applause.)

Q Mr. President, Cheryl Smith, KKDA-Radio, Dallas, Texas. Every four years, African Americans cast their votes for a presidential candidate who will hopefully address some of the issues affecting black Americans. Do you feel African Americans should be pleased with your efforts thus far? And what can we expect from you in the future, especially in the area of judiciary appointments? (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the short answer is, yes. (Laughter.) I do. I mean, if you look at what's happened to African American unemployment, African American homeownership; if you look at the fight that I've waged on affirmative action and what I've tried to do for access to education, as well as quality of education; if you look at my record on appointments in the administration, in the judiciary, which far outstrips any of my predecessors of either party -- (applause) -- if you look at the larger effort that I've made to try to get Americans to come together and bridge the racial divide and to make people understand that we are each other's best assets, I would say that the answer to your first question is, yes.

Now, what else do we still have to do? First thing that I think is terribly important is, we have to, in addition to what I've talked about -- I've already talked about education and the racial initiative, so we'll put those to the side, I've already talked about them -- I think we have got to recognize that there is a legacy here which has not been fully overcome, and that the United States is consigning itself to substandard performance as a nation if we continue to allow huge pockets of people to be under-employed or unemployed in our inner city neighborhoods and in our poor rural areas, who are disproportionately minority.

At a time when we have a 5 percent unemployment rate, we ought to be able to seriously address what it would take to put people to work and to give people education and to create business opportunities.

But let me just give you two examples. We've had a Community Reinvestment Act requiring banks to make loans in traditionally under-served areas for 20 years. We decided to enforce it. Seventy percent of all the loans made under the Community Reinvestment Act have been made in the four and a half years since this administration has been in office. (Applause.) In the 20 years -- 70 percent of all the loans. That's the good news. The bad news is, not enough money has been loaned.

We set up these community development banks modeled on the South Shore Bank here in Chicago. A lot of you are familiar with it if you've been around here. In our new budget agreement, we have enough funds to more than double that. We set up the empowerment zones and the enterprise communities. In our new budget act, we have enough funds to more than double that. We have a housing strategy that we believe can attract middle class people as well as low income people to have housing together in the inner cities so that we can also attract a business base here.

We know a lot more than we used to do about what it would take to have a thriving and working private sector in our urban areas. I have not done that yet. And that's what you ought to expect me to be working on.

And then there are a lot of unmet social problems that we need to deal with. It's still -- you know, I got my head handed to me, I guess, in the '94 elections because I had this crazy idea that America ought not to be the only country in the world where working families and their children didn't have health care. It seemed to be a heretical idea, but I still believe that and I'm not sorry I tried. (Applause.) So now we're trying to give our children health coverage. And I think you ought to expect all the children in the African American community to be able to go to a doctor when they need it.

I think you ought to expect us to continue our assault on HIV and AIDS. And until we find the cure, I think you ought to expect us to stay at the task. (Applause.) I think you ought to expect us to continue to make headway on other medical problems which have a disproportionate impact in your community.

These are some of the things that I think that you should expect of us -- more opportunity, tackling more of the problems, bringing us together.

I have tried to be faithful to the support I have received, not only because it was the support I have received, but because I believed it was the right thing to do. And I believe that when our eight years is over, you'll be able to look back on it and see not only a lot of efforts made, but a lot of results obtained.

Thank you very much.

Back to One America



White House Press Release

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AT UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT SAN DIEGO COMMENCEMENT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(San Diego, California)

For Immediate Release

June 14, 1997

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT **SAN DIEGO** COMMENCEMENT

Rimac Field
University of California at **San Diego**
San Diego, California

10:47 A.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Thank you. Well, ladies and gentlemen, the first thing I would like to say is that Coleen spoke so well -- (laughter) -- and she said everything I meant to say -- (laughter) that I could do us all a great favor by simply associating myself with her remarks and sitting down. (Applause.)

I would also like to thank Dr. Anagnostopoulos for reminding us of the infamous capacity of faculty members to be contrary with one another. (Laughter.) Until he said it, I hadn't realized that probably 90 percent of the Congress once were on university faculties. (Laughter.)

Let me say to Chancellor Dynes and President Atkinson, to the distinguished regents and faculty members, to the students and their families and friends who are here today, I'm honored to be joined by a number of people who reflect the kind of America that Coleen Sabatini called for: Senator Barbara Boxer and Senator Dan Akaka from Hawaii; your Congressman, Bob Filner; Congresswoman Maxine Waters, the Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus; Congresswoman Patsy Mink; Congressman Jim Clyburn; Congressman John Lewis, a great hero of the civil rights movement; Congresswoman Juanita Millender-

McDonald; Congressman Carlos Romero-Barcelo from Puerto Rico; your Lieutenant Governor Gray Davis; the Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater; of Labor, Alexis Herman; of Veterans Affairs, Jesse Brown; of Education, Dick Riley; our distinguished Ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson; our distinguished Administrator of the Small Business Administration, Aida Alvarez, the first American of Puerto Rican descent ever to be in a Presidential Cabinet.

I would like to ask them all to stand along with the members of the White House staff who are here, including Thurgood Marshall Jr. whose father has a college named for him at this great university. Would you please stand? (Applause.)

And I can't help but noting that there's another person here that deserves some special recognition -- the University of California at **San Diego** Class of 1977 -- a Filipino-American woman that became the youngest Captain of the Navy and my personal physician, Dr. Connie Mariano. Where is she? (Applause.)

I want to thank you for offering our nation a shining example of excellence rooted in the many backgrounds that make up this great land. You have blazed new paths in science and technology, explored the new horizons of the Pacific Rim and Latin America. This is a great university for the 21st century.

Today we celebrate your achievements at a truly golden moment for America. The Cold War is over and freedom is now ascendant around the globe, with more than half of the people in this old world living under governments of their own choosing for the very first time.

Our economy is the healthiest in a generation and the strongest in the world. Our culture, our science, our technology promise unimagined advances and exciting new careers. Our social problems, from crime to poverty, are finally bending to our efforts.

Of course, there are still challenges for you out there. Beyond our borders, we must battle terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the prospect of new diseases and environmental disaster.

Here at home, we must ensure that every child has the chance you have had to develop your God-given capacities. We cannot wait for them to get in trouble to notice them.

We must continue to fight the scourge of gangs and crime and drugs. We must prepare for the retirement of the baby boom generation so that we can reduce that child poverty rate that Coleen talked about. We must harness the forces of science and technology for the public good, the entire American public.

But I believe the greatest challenge we face, among all those that Coleen talked about, is also our greatest opportunity. Of all the questions of discrimination and prejudice that still exist in our society, the most perplexing one is the oldest, and in some ways today, the newest: the problem of **race**. Can we fulfill the promise of America by embracing all our citizens of all **races**, not just at a university where people have the benefit of enlightened teachers and

the time to think and grow and get to know each other within the daily life of every American community. In short, can we become one America in the 21st century?

I know, and I've said before, that money cannot buy this goal, power cannot compel it, technology cannot create it. This is something that can come only from the human spirit -- the spirit we saw when the choir of many **rac**es sang as a gospel choir.

Today, the state of Hawaii, which has a Senator and a Congresswoman present here, has no majority racial or ethnic group. It is a wonderful place of exuberance and friendship and patriotism. Within the next three years, here in California no single **race** or ethnic group will make up a majority of the state's population. Already, five of our largest school districts draw students from over 100 different racial and ethnic groups. At this campus, 12 Nobel prize winners have taught or studied from nine different countries. A half-century from now, when your own grandchildren are in college, there will be no majority **race** in America.

Now, we know what we will look like, but what will we be like? Can we be one America respecting, even celebrating, our differences, but embracing even more what we have in common? Can we define what it means to be an American, not just in terms of the hyphen showing our ethnic origins but in terms of our primary allegiance to the values America stands for and values we really live by. Our hearts long to answer yes, but our history reminds us that it will be hard. The ideals that bind us together are as old as our nation, but so are the forces that pull us apart. Our founders sought to form a more perfect union; the humility and hope of that phrase is the story of America and it is our mission today.

Consider this: We were born with a Declaration of Independence which asserted that we were all created equal and a Constitution that enshrined slavery. We fought a bloody civil war to abolish slavery and preserve the union, but we remained a house divided and unequal by law for another century. We advanced across the continent in the name of freedom, yet in so doing we pushed Native Americans off their land, often crushing their culture and their livelihood. Our Statue of Liberty welcomes poor, tired, huddled masses of immigrants to our borders, but each new wave has felt the sting of discrimination.

In World War II, Japanese Americans fought valiantly for freedom in Europe, taking great casualties, while at home their families were herded into internment camps. The famed Tuskegee Airmen lost none of the bombers they guarded during the war, but their African American heritage cost them a lot of rights when they came back home in peace.

Though minorities have more opportunities than ever today, we still see evidence of bigotry -- from the desecration of houses of worship, whether they be churches, synagogues or mosques, to demeaning talk in corporate suites. There is still much work to be done by you, members of the class of 1997. But those who say we cannot transform the problem of prejudice into the promise of unity forget how far we have come, and I cannot believe they have ever seen a crowd like you. (Applause.)

When I look at you, it is almost impossible for me even to remember my own life. I grew up in the high drama of the Cold War, in the patriotic South. Black and white southerners alike wore our nation's uniform in defense of freedom against communism. They fought and died together, from Korea to Vietnam. But back home, I went to segregated schools, swam in segregated public pools, sat in

all-white sections at the movies, and traveled through small towns in my state that still marked restrooms and water fountains "white" and "colored."

By the grace of God I had a grandfather with just a grade school education but the heart of a true American, who taught me that it was wrong. And by the grace of God, there were brave African Americans like Congressman John Lewis, who risked their lives time and time again to make it right. And there were white Americans like Congressman Bob Filner, a freedom rider on the bus with John Lewis, in the long, noble struggle for civil rights, who knew that it was a struggle to free white people, too.

To be sure, there is old, unfinished business between black and white Americans, but the classic American dilemma has now become many dilemmas of **race** and ethnicity. We see it in the tension between black and Hispanic customers and their Korean or Arab grocers; in a resurgent anti-Semitism even on some college campuses; in a hostility toward new immigrants from Asia to the Middle East to the former communist countries to Latin America and the Caribbean --even those whose hard work and strong families have brought them success in the American Way.

We see a disturbing tendency to wrongly attribute to entire groups, including the white majority, the objectionable conduct of a few members. If a black American commits a crime, condemn the act -- but remember that most African Americans are hard-working, law-abiding citizens. If a Latino gang member deals drugs, condemn the act -- but remember the vast majority of Hispanics are responsible citizens who also deplore the scourge of drugs in our life. If white teenagers beat a young African American boy almost to death just because of his **race**, for God's sakes condemn the act -- but remember the overwhelming majority of white people will find it just as hateful. If an Asian merchant discriminates against her customers of another minority group, call her on it -- but remember, too, that many, many Asians have borne the burden or prejudice and do not want anyone else to feel it.

Remember too, in spite of the persistence of prejudice, we are more integrated than ever. More of us share neighborhoods and work and school and social activities, religious life, even love and marriage across racial lines than ever before. More of us enjoy each other's company and distinctive cultures than ever before. And more than ever, we understand the benefits of our racial, linguistic, and cultural diversity in a global society, where networks of commerce and communications draw us closer and bring rich rewards to those who truly understand life beyond their nation's borders.

With just a twentieth of the world's population, but a fifth of the world's income, we in America simply have to sell to the other 95 percent of the world's consumers just to maintain our standard of living. Because we are drawn from every culture on earth, we are uniquely positioned to do it. Beyond commerce, the diverse backgrounds and talents of our citizens can help America to light the globe, showing nations deeply divided by **race**, religion and tribe that there is a better way.

Finally, as you have shown us today, our diversity will enrich our lives in non-material ways -- deepening our understanding of human nature and human differences, making our communities more exciting, more enjoyable, more meaningful. That is why I have come here today to ask the American people to join me in a great national

effort to perfect the promise of America for this new time as we seek to build our more perfect union.

Now, when there is more cause for hope than fear, when we are not driven to it by some emergency or social cataclysm, now is the time we should learn together, talk together and act together to build one America. (Applause.)

Let me say that I know that for many white Americans, this conversation may seem to exclude them or threaten them. That must not be so. I believe white Americans have just as much to gain as anybody else from being a part of this endeavor -- much to gain from an America where we finally take responsibility for all our children so that they, at last, can be judged as Martin Luther King hoped, "Not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." (Applause.)

What is it that we must do? For four and a half years now, I have worked to prepare America for the 21st century with a strategy of opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and an American community of all our citizens. To succeed in each of these areas, we must deal with the realities and the perceptions affecting all racial groups in America.

First, we must continue to expand opportunity. Full participation in our strong and growing economy is the best antidote to envy, despair and racism. We must press forward to move millions more from poverty and welfare to work; to bring the spark of enterprise to inner cities; to redouble our efforts to reach those rural communities prosperity has passed by. And most important of all, we simply must give our young people the finest education in the world.

There are no children who, because of their ethnic or racial background, who cannot meet the highest academic standards if we set them and measure our students against them, if we give them well-trained teachers and well-equipped classrooms, and if we continue to support reasoned reforms to achieve excellence, like the charter school movement. (Applause.)

At a time when college education means stability, a good job, a passport to the middle class, we must open the doors of college to all Americans and we must make at least two years of college as universal at the dawn of the next century as a high school diploma is today.

In our efforts to extend economic and educational opportunity to all our citizens, we must consider the role of affirmative action. I know affirmative action has not been perfect in America -- that's why two years ago we began an effort to fix the things that are wrong with it -- but when used in the right way, it has worked. (Applause.)

It has given us a whole generation of professionals in fields that used to be exclusive clubs -- where people like me got the benefit of 100 percent affirmative action. There are now more women-owned businesses than ever before. There are more African American, Latino and Asian American lawyers and judges, scientists and engineers, accountants and executives than ever before.

But the best example of successful affirmative action is our military. Our armed forces are diverse from top to bottom -- perhaps the most integrated institution in our society and certainly the most integrated military in the world. And, more important, no one questions that they are the best in the world. So much for the

argument that excellence and diversity do not go hand in hand.
(Applause.)

There are those who argue that scores on standardized tests should be the sole measure of qualification for admissions to colleges and universities. But many would not apply the same standard to the children of alumni or those with athletic ability.
(Applause.)

I believe a student body that reflects the excellence and the diversity of the people we will live and work with has independent educational value. Look around this crowd today. Don't you think you have learned a lot more than you would have if everybody sitting around you looked just like you? I think you have.
(Applause.)

And beyond the educational value to you, it has a public interest because you will learn to live and work in the world you will live in better. When young people sit side by side with people of many different backgrounds, they do learn something that they can take out into the world. And they will be more effective citizens.

Many affirmative action students excel. They work hard, they achieve, they go out and serve the communities that need them for their expertise and role model. If you close the door on them, we will weaken our greatest universities and it will be more difficult to build the society we need in the 21st century.
(Applause.)

Let me say, I know that the people of California voted to repeal affirmative action without any ill motive. The vast majority of them simply did it with a conviction that discrimination and isolation are no longer barriers to achievement. But consider the results. Minority enrollments in law school and other graduate programs are plummeting for the first time in decades. Assuming the same will likely happen in undergraduate education. We must not re-segregate higher education or leave it to the private universities to do the public's work. (Applause.)

At the very time when we need to do a better job of living and learning together, we should not stop trying to equalize economic opportunity. To those who oppose affirmative action, I ask you to come up with an alternative. I would embrace it if I could find a better way. And to those of us who still support it, I say we should continue to stand for it, we should reach out to those who disagree or are uncertain and talk about the practical impact of these issues, and we should never be thought unwilling to work with those who disagree with us to find new ways to lift people up and bring people together. (Applause.)

Beyond opportunity, we must demand responsibility from every American. Our strength as a society depends upon both -- upon people taking responsibility for themselves and their families, teaching their children good values, working hard and obeying the law, and giving back to those around us. The new economy offers fewer guarantees, more risks, and more rewards. It calls upon all of us to take even greater responsibility for our education than ever before.

In the current economic boom, only one racial or ethnic group in America has actually experienced a decline in income -- Hispanic Americans. One big reason is that Hispanic high school drop-out rates are well above -- indeed, far above -- those of whites and blacks. Some of the drop-outs actually reflect a strong commitment to work. We admire the legendary willingness to take the

hard job at long hours for low pay. In the old economy, that was a responsible thing to do. But in the new economy, where education is the key, responsibility means staying in school. (Applause.)

No responsibility is more fundamental than obeying the law. It is not racist to insist that every American do so. The fight against crime and drugs is a fight for the freedom of all our people, including those -- perhaps especially those -- minorities living in our poorest neighborhoods. But respect for the law must run both ways. The shocking difference in perceptions of the fairness of our criminal justice system grows out of the real experiences that too many minorities have had with law enforcement officers. Part of the answer is to have all our citizens respect the law, but the basic rule must be that the law must respect all our citizens. (Applause.)

And that applies, too, to the enforcement of our civil rights laws. For example, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has a huge backlog of cases with discrimination claims --though we have reduced it by 25 percent over the last four years. We can do not much better without more resources. It is imperative that Congress -- especially those members who say they're for civil rights but against affirmative action -- at least give us the money necessary to enforce the law of the land and do it soon. (Applause.)

Our third imperative is perhaps the most difficult of all. We must build one American community based on respect for one another and our shared values. We must begin with a candid conversation on the state of **race** relations today and the implications of Americans of so many different **races** living and working together as we approach a new century. We must be honest with each other. We have talked at each other and about each other for a long time. It's high time we all began talking with each other.

Over the coming year I want to lead the American people in a great and unprecedented conversation about **race**. In community efforts from Lima, Ohio; to Billings, Montana, in remarkable experiments in cross-racial communications like the uniquely named ERACISM, I have seen what Americans can do if they let down their guards and reach out their hands.

I have asked one of America's greatest scholars, Dr. John Hope Franklin, to chair an advisory panel of seven distinguished Americans to help me in this endeavor. He will be joined by former Governors Thomas Kean of New Jersey and William Winter of Mississippi, both great champions of civil rights; by Linda Chavez-Thompson, the Executive Vice President of the AFL-CIO; by Reverend Suzan Johnson Cook, a minister from the Bronx and former White House Fellow; by Angela Oh, an attorney and Los Angeles community leader; and Robert Thompson, the CEO of Nissan U.S.A. -- distinguished leaders, leaders in their community.

I want this panel to help educate Americans about the facts surrounding issues of **race**, to promote a dialogue in every community of the land to confront and work through these issues, to recruit and encourage leadership at all levels to help breach racial divides, and to find, develop and recommend how to implement concrete solutions to our problems -- solutions that will involve all of us in government, business, communities, and as individual citizens.

I will make periodic reports to the American people about our findings and what actions we all have to take to move America forward. This board will seek out and listen to Americans from all **races** and all walks of life. They are performing a great

citizen service, but in the cause of building one America all citizens must serve.

As I said at the President's Summit on Service in Philadelphia, in our new era such acts of service are basic acts of citizenship. Government must play its role, but much of the work must be done by the American people as citizen service. The very effort will strengthen us and bring us closer together.

In short, I want America to capture the feel and the spirit that you have given to all of us today. I'd like to ask the board to stand and be recognized. I want you to look at them, and I want you to feel free to talk to them over the next year or so. Dr. Franklin and members of the board. (Applause.)

Honest dialogue will not be easy at first. We'll all have to get past defensiveness and fear and political correctness and other barriers to honesty. Emotions may be rubbed raw, but we must begin.

What do I really hope we will achieve as a country? If we do nothing more than talk, it will be interesting but it won't be enough. If we do nothing more than propose disconnected acts of policy, it would be helpful, but it won't be enough.

But if ten years from now people can look back and see that this year of honest dialogue and concerted action helped to lift the heavy burden of **race** from our children's future, we will have given a precious gift to America.

I ask you all to remember just for a moment, as we have come through the difficult trial on the Oklahoma City bombing, remember that terrible day when we saw and wept for Americans and forgot for a moment that there were a lot of them from different **races** than we are.

Remember the many faces and **races** of the Americans who did not sleep and put their lives at risk to engage in the rescue, the helping and the healing. Remember how you have seen things like that in the natural disasters here in California. That is the face of the real America. That is the face I have seen over and over again. That is the America, somehow, some way we have to make real in daily American life. (Applause.)

Members of the graduating class, you will have a greater opportunity to live your dreams than any generation in our history, if we can make of our many different strands, one America -- a nation at peace with itself bound together by shared values and aspirations and opportunities and real respect for our differences.

I am a Scotch-Irish Southern Baptist, and I'm proud of it. But my life has been immeasurably enriched by the power of the Torah, the beauty of the Koran, the piercing wisdom of the religions of East and South Asia -- all embraced by my fellow Americans. I have felt indescribable joy and peace in black and Pentecostal churches. I have come to love the intensity and selflessness of my Hispanic fellow Americans toward la familia. As a Southerner, I grew up on country music and county fairs and I still like them. (Laughter.) But I have also reveled in the festivals and the food, the music and the art and the culture of Native Americans and Americans from every region in the world.

In each land I have visited as your President, I have felt more at home because some of their people have found a home in

America. For two centuries, wave upon wave of immigrants have come to our shores to build a new life drawn by the promise of freedom and a fair chance. Whatever else they found, even bigotry and violence, most of them never gave up on America. Even African American, the first of whom we brought here in chains, never gave up on America.

It is up to you to prove that their abiding faith was well-placed. Living in islands of isolation -- some splendid and some sordid -- is not the American way. Basing our self-esteem on the ability to look down on others is not the American way. Being satisfied if we have what we want and heedless of others who don't even have what they need and deserve is not the American way. We have torn down the barriers in our laws. Now we must break down the barriers in our lives, our minds and our hearts.

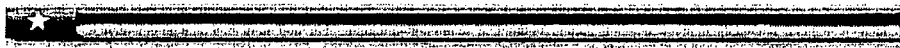
More than 30 years ago, at the high tide of the civil rights movement, the Kerner Commission said we were becoming two Americas, one white, one black, separate and unequal. Today, we face a different choice: will we become not two, but many Americas, separate, unequal and isolated? Or will we draw strength from all our people and our ancient faith in the quality of human dignity, to become the world's first truly multi-racial democracy. That is the unfinished work of our time, to lift the burden of **race** and redeem the promise of America.

Class of 1997, I grew up in the shadows of a divided America, but I have seen glimpses of one America. You have shown me one today. That is the America you must make. It begins with your dreams, so dream large, live your dreams, challenge your parents and teach your children well.

God bless you and good luck.

END

11:23 A.M. (L)



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White House Press Release

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT IN ADDRESS TO HOWARD UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND GUESTS

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 17, 1994

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN ADDRESS TO **HOWARD UNIVERSITY** STUDENTS AND GUESTS

Cramton Auditorium
Howard University

2:20 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Thank you, Charles DeBose, for that fine introduction and for -- even more important -- for the example that you have set by your service. I can think of no more significant tribute to the life and memory of Dr. King than what you are doing and what all the other young people who are involved in community and national service are doing throughout this country. I know a number of them are behind me here on the stage, and I want to thank them all.

Dr. Jenifer and Mrs. Jenifer, to Joyce Ladner and all the distinguished people here at **Howard**, I'm delighted to be back here again. I thank and honor the presence of all the civil rights leaders who are in the audience; three members of the Little Rock Nine, who helped to integrate Little Central High School and my home state so many years ago. (Applause.) My good friend and the distinguished journalist, Charlayne Hunter Gault. (Applause.) And members of my Cabinet here, presidents of other **universities** here, and other distinguished American citizens, all of whom have labored in the vineyard that produced Martin Luther King.

I want to say a special word, too, if I might at the outset, of appreciation for the fact that **Howard** provided the moment for me to remember again that in all great debates there should be

some discord -- when the president of the student body got up here, I thought to myself, well, we do have a responsibility to seek justice as we see it; and I was glad she was here doing that. (Applause.)

It was a year ago on this day that I last spoke at **Howard**. And I'm glad to be back on this day. Only three American citizens, one from each century of our history, are honored with a holiday of national scope. Two were presidents, but the other never occupied any office, except the most important in our democracy. He was a citizen. George Washington helped to create our union, Abraham Lincoln gave his life to preserve it, and Martin Luther King redeemed the moral purpose of our United States. (Applause.)

Each in his own way, each in his own time, each three of these great Americans defined what it means to be an American, what citizenship requires and what our nation must become. Dr. King, his family, and those who join in his cause set in motion changes that will forever reverberate across America, across the lines of geography, class and race. The people who are here today, those whom I've mentioned and those whom I did not, all of them reflect that stunning fact.

They endured beatings, they risked death, they put their lives on the line, they marched when they were tired, they went to bed often without a place to sleep. They made the word "American" mean something unique because they, all of them, in a way were trying to get us to live by what we said we believed.

For all of you who are very young here today, many of you who were not even born when Martin Luther King died, it may seem to you that the struggle was a very long time ago. But if you look around you, you can see that the history of that struggle is still alive today, still being written and still being made, still waiting to be fully redeemed.

I'm glad to be here at **Howard** today, and I'm glad that **Howard** and other historically black institutions of higher education are represented here by satellite, and that all of them are working, still, to do what Martin Luther King knew must first be done -- to give an education to all of our citizens without regard to their race. (Applause.)

Howard's alumni alone include: a Justice of the United States Supreme Court, a United States Senator, a Nobel Laureate, the Mayor of our Nation's Capital, and at least, by my last count, at least 17 people who occupy important positions in my administration. (Applause.) Including the Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Espy, who is here. (Applause.) For that, I say thank you.

It's also fitting that **Howard's** School of International Study is expanding, ready to educate a new generation of students about a rapidly changing and ever more integrated world. Dr. King would have been very pleased by that.

His last speech, delivered the night before he was slain in Memphis, on April the 3rd, 1968 contained a prophetic message of hope about the world he saw evolving. He said he imagined himself standing at the beginning of time with a panoramic view of the whole of human history, with God Almighty saying to him, "Martin Luther King, which age would you like to live in?" He then considered all the momentous history that would beckon someone of his enormous intellect and understanding, from the earliest civilizations to the Renaissance, to the Emancipation Proclamation, but he said he would have said to the Lord, "If you allow me just to live a few years in

the second half of the 20th century, I will be happy." He said, "That's a strange statement to make because the world is all messed up, but something is happening in the world. The masses are rising up, and wherever they are assembled today, the cry is always the same, 'we want to be free.'"

I think Dr. King would be gratified to see freedom's march today, gladdened to see what happened last September 13th when Prime Minister Rabin and Yassir Arafat shook hands and signed the Israel-PLO Accord -- (applause) -- overflowing with joy to see Nelson Mandela walk out of his jail cell after 27 years. (Applause.) Working with a white South African president to set in motion genuine elections, and then in good humor and with good spirit campaigning against him to be the leader of the country. This is an astonishing development. (Applause.)

Freedom is moving in the world. This past week, as all of you know, I traveled to Europe to help support freedom's rebirth there. I want to tell you a little bit about that, because it relates to what I want to say to you about what we must do here at home. My highest duty as our President is to keep our nation secure. And the heart of our security abroad lies in our ties with Europe, in its past turmoils, its future promise.

For decades our security depended upon protecting a divided Europe. Europe was the center of two world wars, which took more lives from the face of the earth in less time than any two events in history. After the second world war, Europe was divided, but war did not come again in part because we protected the people on our side of the dividing line. But then, the Berlin Wall came crashing down. People rose up and demanded their own freedom.

Now, we have seen the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the end of communism in Eastern Europe, the collapse of the Soviet system itself, new elections being held all over what was the Soviet Union. Now, that is an astonishing thing. But these new democracies remain fragile. They offer us the hope of a peaceful future and new trading partners, new prosperity, new opportunities to enrich our own lives by learning from different cultures and ethnic groups. But they are still threatened by the explosive mix of old ethnic tensions and new economic hardships.

Russia has adopted a new democratic constitution and elected a parliament freely for the first time to go with their popularly-elected president. But the reformers are embattled there, as ordinary citizens struggle to understand how they can come out ahead in an economy which is still very hard for them, and as they listen at election times to people who are calling them to an idyllic past that never existed, one based on division instead of unity.

The nuclear weapons of the former Soviet Union, too many of them are still there, remaining a source of instability, of potential for accident, an invitation to terrorist diversion. We're working as hard as we can to dismantle them, and we're making remarkable progress. But they're still there.

We can't ignore these dangers to democracy. The best way to keep Europe from ever falling apart again, from dragging the young people of this country to that continent to fight and die again is to try to build for the first time in all of history a Europe that is integrated -- integrated in a devotion to democracy, to free economies and to the proposition that all these countries should respect one another's borders. That was the goal of my trip. We made great strides. We offered -- we in the NATO alliance that kept

the world safe after World War II -- we offered all these countries, all of them, the chance to be part of a new partnership for peace that does not divide Europe but unites it.

We said let's turn our swords into plowshares by planting together for our common security. Let's have a military exercise in Germany with an American general, with Poles and Czechs and Russians standing side by side and working together. Let's say we're going to write a whole new future for the world different from its past. That is our great hope and we made a good beginning.

We also sought to go country by country to bolster the new democracies. To tell people, look, there are always going to be problems in democracy and always going to be conflict. We just got a little of it today. (Laughter.) I told -- I said we've been at this for 200 years now -- 200 years -- and we didn't even give all of our citizens the right to vote until a generation ago. You've got to work at this. You've got to work at this, and you can not be discouraged, and you can not give up. (Applause.)

And so I pledge to help the people who believe in democracy. And democracy means more than one thing. It means majority rule. It also means respect for minority and individual human rights. (Applause.) And we worked hard to try to build better economic ties because America cannot prosper unless the world economy grows.

We cannot -- we cannot -- meet our obligations to the young people in this audience today unless we say to them if you work hard, you get an education and you do what is right, you will have a job and an opportunity and a better life. We cannot do that. And to do that, we have to live in a world where all of us are working together to grow the economy. (Applause.) No rich country -- and with all of our poverty, we are still a very rich country -- none has succeeded in guaranteeing jobs and incomes to its people unless you

always are finding more people to buy what you produce -- your goods and your services. So I went to Europe because I think the trip will help to create jobs for the young people in this audience. And unless we can do that, our efforts are doomed to failure. (Applause.)

And so we had a remarkable trip -- to build a more secure world, to build a more democratic world, to build a more economically prosperous world, to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons; and, yesterday, with my meeting with the Syrian President in Switzerland to try to keep moving the most historically troubled area of the world -- the Middle East -- toward a comprehensive peace.

But as I come home on this Martin Luther King Day from a trip that fought for democracy and economic progress and security, I have to ask myself: How are we doing on these things here at home? How are we doing on these things at home? (Applause.) If democracy is the involvement of all of our people, and if it is making strength out of our diversity, if we want to say to the people in the troubled areas in Europe -- put your ethnic hatreds behind you, take the differences, the religious differences, the racial differences, the ethnic differences of your people and make them a strength in a global economy, surely we must do the same here.

In the last year, we've worked hard on that. Five of the members of my Cabinet are African Americans. Sixty-one percent of the federal judges I have appointed are either women or members of different racial minority groups, and they have also, I might add, been accounted the most highly qualified group of federal judges ever

nominated by a President of the United States. (Applause.)

In the last year, our economy has created more jobs in the private sector than in the previous four years combined. Unemployment is down, interest rates are down, investment is up. Millions of middle class Americans have refinanced their homes and started new businesses. All this is helping us to move in the right direction.

We are working hard to protect rights fought for and won. American workers should not fear for their jobs because of discrimination. Under the Labor Secretary, Bob Reich, the Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance has collected more than \$34.5 million in back pay and other financial remedies for the victims of racial discrimination. That is a big increase over the previous year. We have filed a record number of housing discrimination cases -- a 35 percent increase over the previous year. We are working to fight against discrimination and lending, because if people can't borrow money they can't start businesses and hire people and create jobs. (Applause.)

Just last week, in a coordinated effort, strongly led by the HUD Secretary, Henry Cisneros who would have been here today, but is on his way to Los Angeles to deal with the aftermath of the earthquake, we ended an ugly chapter in discrimination in Vidor, Texas. Under the protection of federal marshals, FBI agents and the police, and with the support of the decent people who live there, a group of brave and determined African Americans integrated at last Vidor's public housing. (Applause.)

Today, I pledge to you continued and aggressive enforcement of the Fair Housing Act. In a few moments I will sign an Executive Order that for the very first time puts the full weight of the federal government behind efforts to guarantee fair housing for everyone. (Applause.) We will tolerate no violations of every American's right for that housing opportunity. (Applause.)

But, my fellow Americans, the absence of discrimination is not the same thing as the presence of opportunity. (Applause.)

It is not the same thing as having the security you need to build your lives, your families and your communities. So I say to you, it is our duty to continue the struggle that is not yet finished to fight discrimination. We will and we must. But it is not the same thing as the presence of opportunity.

That is the struggle they're dealing with in Russia today, in the other former communist economies. They have the vote. It's exhilarating. But how will it -- how long will it take for the vote to produce the results that democratic citizens everywhere want so that people will be rewarded for their work and can raise their families to live up to the fullest of their God-given abilities? That is our job here.

That's why this national service program is so important and why I was elated that Mr. DeBose was going to introduce me today -- because national service is a part of our effort to create opportunity by building communities from the grass roots up and at the same time to give young people the opportunity to pay some of their costs of college education. And it is a part of the work that the Secretary of Education, who is here, has done to try to revolutionize the whole way we finance college education.

We know right now that 100 percent of the people need not only to graduate from high school, but to have at least two years

of education after high school in the global economy. We know it, but we're not organized for it. And so under the leadership of the Education Secretary and the Labor Secretary, our administration is working to set up a system to move all young people from high school to two years of further training while they're in the workplace, in the service or in school. (Applause.) And we are doing our dead level best -- (applause) -- and we're doing our dead level best to make sure that the cost of a college education is never a deterrent to seizing it, by reorganizing the whole student loan program. (Applause.)

Last year the Congress adopted our plan to reorganize the college loan program, to lower the interest rates, string out the repayments, require people to pay back as a percentage of the income they are earning when they get out, not just based on how much they borrow when they're in school. (Applause.) No one should ever refuse to go to college because of its cost. (Applause.)

And earlier today -- to give one more example of what we mean by the presence of opportunity -- on this Martin Luther King Day I met with a group of business leaders and urged them to become active partners in communities where the need is greatest. We have learned time and again now, ever since Martin Luther King lived and died, that even when we have times of great economic growth there are areas in the inner cities and in rural America that are totally left out of the economic progress that occurs.

We have learned that unless we can rebuild our communities from the grass roots up, unless we can rebuild the institutions of a community in ways that support work and family and children, that millions and millions of Americans will be left out of the American dream.

And so today we announced our creation of 104 empowerment zones and enterprise communities that can make a difference, that will give people at the grass roots level the power to educate and employ people who otherwise will be lost, to themselves and to the rest of us, for a generation. That is the sort of thing that Martin Luther King would want us to do, not just to let discrimination go away but to create opportunity. (Applause.)

And, finally, let me say that we will never do this unless we create the ways and means for people to choose a peaceful

and wholesome life. The most important experience I have had as your President here at home I think in the last several months was having the opportunity to go to Memphis and to stand in the pulpit where Dr. King gave his last address and speak to 5,000 ministers of the Church of God and Christ, many of whom are longtime personal friends of mine, and say that Martin Luther King did not live and die to give young people the right to shoot each other on the street. (Applause.)

I come home I come home thinking to myself: I am so proud of the fact that I had the chance to be President at a time when the United States was leading an agreement with Russia, in Ukraine, in Belarus, in Kazakhstan to dismantle weapons of mass destruction, but we can't get guns out of our own schools. (Applause.)

I'm proud of the fact that we are pursuing an aggressive, high technology policy, under the leadership of the Vice President that will help to turn this whole nation into a giant, high tech neighborhood so we can learn from one another and relate to each

other, but we can't even make it safe for kids to walk the streets of our own neighborhoods.

We would be asked, I think, by Martin Luther King how come this is so. When Mr. DeBose stood up and said everybody can be great because everybody can serve -- Martin Luther King's greatest quote I say to you today -- "we have to ask ourselves what our personal responsibility is to serve in this time." And when we cannot explain these contradictions, then we have to work through them. We may not have all of the answers, none of us do. I cannot expect you to have them; as President, I don't have them. But I know what the problems are and so do you. And we know there are some things that will make a difference. And we have an obligation to try in our time to make that difference. There are too many questions we cannot answer today. (Applause.)

Dr. King said, "Men hate each other because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don't know each other. They don't know each other because they can't communicate with each other. They can't communicate with each other because they are separated from each other." We all need to think about this. We've got a lot of walls still to tear down in this country, a lot of divisions to overcome, and we need to start with honest conversation, honest outreach and a clear understanding that none of us has any place to hide. This is not a problem of race; it is a problem of the American family. And we had better get about solving it as a family. (Applause.)

Laws can help. That's why I wanted to pass the Brady Bill. That's why I want to take these assault weapons off the street. That's why I want to do a lot of other things that will help to regulate how we deal with this craziness of violence on our streets. That's why I want more police officers -- not to catch criminals even as much as to prevent crime. We know that community policing prevents crime if it's done right. Laws can help.

But Martin Luther King reminded us, too, that laws can regulate behavior, but not the heart. And so, I say to you, we must also seek what Abraham Lincoln called "the better angels of our nature." And we all have a responsibility there. When he spoke here at **Howard**, Martin Luther King said the following things -- and I thought about it today when I was looking at Mr. DeBose up here introducing me, expressing the pride in the service he rendered and how it changed the minds and the hearts of the people with whom and for whom he worked.

Dr. King said, "Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless effort and

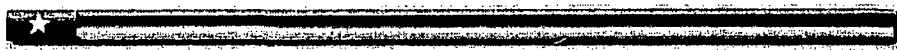
persistent work of dedicated individuals who are willing to be coworkers with God an ally of the primitive forces of stagnation. And so we must help time, and we must realize that the time is always right for one to do right." "Time is neutral", he said. "Time can either be used constructively or destructively." All he asked from each of the rest of us was to put in a tiny little minute.

So, will we make Martin Luther King glad or sad about the way we use our tiny little minutes? In any one minute in America today, two aggravated assaults take place, six burglaries occur, three violent crimes are committed, and three times an hour, that violent act is a murder. But think about it. Within the stand of the same minute, two men from different worlds, like Arafat and Rabin, can shake hands and set off on a new road to peace. A leader can agree that his country must give up the world's third largest nuclear arsenal, and in one minute, people can make an enormous

positive difference. They decide to keep a seat on a bus instead of move to the back. They decide to show up for school instead of be shunted away. They decide to sit at a lunch counter even if they won't get to eat that day. They decide to pursue an education even if they're not sure there's a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. They work to keep their neighborhoods safe just to create a tiny little park where children can play without fear again. They keep their families together when it's so each to let them fall apart. And, they work to give a child the sense that he or she is important and loved and worthy, with a future.

When I think about it I'm often sad that Martin Luther King had so few precious minutes on this earth. Two days ago he would have celebrated his 65th birthday; and the older I get the younger I realize 65 is. (Laughter.) But, you know, he did a lot with the time he had, and I think we should try to do the same. Thank you. (Applause.)

END2:50 P.M. EST



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ONE AMERICA IN THE 21ST CENTURY: THE PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVE ON RACE

"In the end, more than anything else, our world leadership grows out of the power of our example here at home, out of our ability to remain strong as one America...We are the world's most diverse democracy, and the world looks to us to show that it is possible to live and advance together across those kinds of differences...Building one America is our most important mission...money cannot buy it. Power cannot compel it. Technology cannot create it. It can only come from the human spirit."

-- President Clinton, February 4, 1997

WHAT IS THE PRESIDENT'S RACE INITIATIVE?

This initiative is a year-long effort, led by the President, to present to the nation his vision of a stronger, more just and more united American community, offering opportunity and fairness for all Americans. The President's initiative will combine constructive dialogue, study, and action. It will examine the current state of race relations and our common future, look at the laws and policies that can help to ensure that we remain One America, and enlist individuals, communities, businesses and government at all levels in an effort to understand our differences as we appreciate the values that unite us.

WHY A MAJOR INITIATIVE ON RACE, AND WHY NOW?

President Clinton's personal, life-long commitment. Growing up in the South, the President saw for himself the great harm caused by racial discrimination, and the difference that can be achieved by changing both policies and attitudes. That longstanding, deeply personal commitment has led him to make this initiative one of his major second-term priorities. He knows that America can reach its full potential only by enlisting the full energies of all our people, and giving all our citizens, of every background, the chance to make the most of their own God-given talents.

Not a crisis, but an opportunity. This effort builds on the President's record throughout his first term (defending affirmative action, major speeches on race and reconciliation, etc.). But unlike previous Presidential efforts in this area, President Clinton's initiative is the result not of a crisis, but of a unique opportunity:

America is strong enough to look to the future. Having moved aggressively in the first term to get the country back on the right track -- reversing the rising tide of crime, welfare, budget deficits, unemployment and income inequality -- the President believes that it is time for America to address these issues as we prepare for the 21st Century.

Many "wedge" issues have been defused. On many of the issues that had been used to divide the country -- such as crime and welfare -- the President has begun to change the terms of the debate, pointing to solutions instead of pointing fingers, and defusing tensions so that an honest dialogue about race can begin.

Responsibility, community and citizenship. This initiative will encourage Americans to take responsibility -- for ourselves and our families, for our community and at home with one another. It is a call to citizenship, because the President believes that being a good citizen includes recognizing the promise of America -- an America free of destructive bigotry, a nation that welcomes those who play by the rules, serve their community and reach out to make all Americans feel at home. This is a great nation, and the true measure of our greatness is in the human heart.

WHAT ARE THE INITIATIVE'S GOALS AND METHODS?

The initiative will have five central goals:

- 1) To articulate the President's vision of racial reconciliation and a just, unified America;
- 2) To help educate the nation about the facts surrounding the issue of race;
- 3) To promote a constructive dialogue, to confront and work through the difficult and controversial issues surrounding race;
- 4) To recruit and encourage leadership at all levels to help bridge racial divides;
- 5) To find, develop and implement solutions in critical areas such as education, economic opportunity, housing, health care, crime and the administration of justice -- for individuals, communities, corporations and government at all levels.

The President hopes to achieve these goals through the following methods:

Presidential leadership. The President will begin a national examination of race and reconciliation -- explaining why the goal of One America is so important to preparing for the 21st Century, addressing the facts about race, encouraging others to discuss difficult racial issues that we too often avoid and reaching out to Americans of every race to get them engaged in the process. Unlike previous national efforts, this initiative will be led directly and personally by the President throughout.

Dialogue, study and action. Through dialogue, study and action, we will increase our understanding of race, and propose and promote policies and solutions that can make a difference.

Dialogue. Dialogue can help to inform, and to build support for constructive solutions to the issues of race. For an entire generation growing up after the civil rights movement, there has been little or no public articulation of the values and ideals of racial reconciliation. (And too often the rhetoric has been negative, helping to confirm derogatory stereotypes.) This initiative will employ the power of the Presidency to encourage open, candid debate about difficult issues and to highlight actions by individuals, communities, businesses and government that are working in this area now.

Study. The issues to be addressed will include: different perceptions and experiences of Americans of different races, confronting harmful stereotypes and examining serious problems. While the initiative will be largely forward-looking, it is also important to help educate Americans about the past -- so that the nation has a clear sense of what has come before, recognizing the unique experience of African Americans throughout our history.

Action. Throughout this effort, attention will go to policies that can make a difference and solutions that can be implemented by individuals, community groups, state and local governments and the federal government. Examples of issues to be addressed include the lack of economic progress among Hispanic Americans and the greatly reduced number of black and Hispanic students in California. This nation has made real progress, but we know that there is more that must be done.

- An example of dialogue, study and action is the President's 5/16/97 apology to the survivors of the Tuskegee Study, which was combined with concrete actions and further study (establishing a bioethics center at Tuskegee; studying ways to involve minority communities in research and health care; new training materials for medical researchers on ethics and how to apply them to diverse populations; and new postgraduate fellowships in bioethicists for minorities).

ELEMENTS OF THE PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVE

Advisory Board. This small, diverse group will advise the President and assist him in outreach efforts and consultations with experts. They were chosen based on their outstanding leadership on this issue and their contributions to America's ongoing dialogue about race and reconciliation.

Significant Presidential events/actions throughout the year. Events held throughout the year will include town hall meetings in different regions of the country, meetings with the advisory board and other events which will enable the President to carry out his goals for the initiative.

Outreach, consultation and leadership recruitment. The effort will include outreach to community leaders, religious leaders, state and local elected officials, members of Congress, business leaders and individuals, encouraging them to become involved in reconciliation and community-building projects.

The President's Report to the American People. The President will issue a report next summer, in which he will:

- Present his vision of One America, including an illustration and assessment of the growing diversity of our nation and of his consultations with his advisory board;
- Reflect the work that has occurred during the year, including the conversations and suggestions made at town hall meetings and other venues;
- Report on how the nation has evolved on the issue of race over the past 30 years, including the studies commissioned for the initiative;
- Provide recommendations and solutions that enable individuals, communities, businesses, organizations and government to address difficult issues and build on our best possibilities.

ONE AMERICA IN THE 21ST CENTURY: The President's Initiative On Race

JANUARY RACE INITIATIVE EVENTS AND RACE-RELATED EVENTS AS OF JANUARY 13, 1998
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| January 12 | President Clinton Conducts Race Initiative Outreach Meeting. |
| January 13-14 | Advisory Board Meets in Phoenix to Discuss Employment. Secretary Herman will announce Youth Opportunity Grants. |
| January 15 | President Clinton Attends the Wall Street Project Conference in New York, New York. Rev. Jesse Jackson has organized the Wall Street Project Conference, a three-day conference in New York that is designed to bring together minority-owned businesses and leaders on Wall Street. |
| January 15 | President Clinton Presents Medals of Freedom.
Medal awardees include civil rights activists: Arnold Aronson, James Farmer, Wilma Mankiller, Fred Korematsu, Mario G. Obledo, as well as Brooke Astor, Robert Coles, Justin Dart, Jr., Frances Hesselbein, Sol Linowitz, Margaret (Mardy) Murie, Elliot L. Richardson, David Rockefeller, Albert Shanker, Elmo Russell (Bud) Zumwalt, Jr. |
| January 19 | President Clinton Participates in Community Service on Martin Luther King "Day On." The President, Vice President and Administration officials will join community leaders throughout the country in a day of service. President Clinton will help renovate Cardozo High School in Washington, D.C. |
| January 21 | Tentative Date for Benchmarking Announcement |
| January 21 | White House Fellows Commission and Current White House Fellows Meet on Race Initiative. At the White House Fellows Commission's bi-annual meeting, Judy Winston and Sylvia Mathews will brief the Commissioners on the Race Initiative and seek their involvement in recruiting leaders, identifying promising practices and holding dialogues. |
| January 27 | President Clinton Addresses the Nation on the State of the Union. |



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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 12, 1998

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN RACE INITIATIVE OUTREACH MEETING

The Cabinet
Room

5:45 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Well, welcome. I'm glad to see all of you, and I thank you for coming in, some of you from a very great distance. I will be very brief. We're about six months into this effort and I think we've gotten quite a bit done and we've certainly generated a fair amount of controversy. And we're hoping for a good next six months. We've got a very ambitious schedule laid out. But we thought it would be quite helpful to bring a group in and just listen to you talk about where you think we are with the issue, what you think still needs to be done, what this Advisory Board and our project can and cannot reasonably expect to do within this year. And maybe we can talk about some of the things that we expect to be in the budget and some other issues.

But I'll say more as we go along through the meeting, but I'd rather take the maximum amount of time to be listening to you. And maybe we could just start with Wade.

MR. HENDERSON: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Nice tie.

MR. HENDERSON: Appreciate it. Thank you. (Laughter.) Thank you very much. First of all, thank you not only on my own behalf, but on behalf of everyone here, for the invitation to be with

you this afternoon. Suffice it to say we're honored to have a few moments of your time to talk about the Advisory Board and what we consider one of the most important initiatives of your administration.

I think all of us are fully aware of the depth of your commitment to these issues and your work on these issues is reflected in the policies of your administration. We're pleased by that. And this is an opportunity for us, obviously, to contribute in what we hope will be a positive way to the success of this most important endeavor.

I think as we look around the room, the diversity of the attendants -- the attendees, those who are here, and the communities from whence they come, reflect the diversity in America as a whole. And the fact that you've sought to bring these voices to the table is something that should be commended. We want to use this time productively, and obviously, many of us, we think, are of like mind on some of the important policy issues and civil rights issues facing the country.

We certainly think that on the issue of affirmative action, which has been the most burning and controversial issue in the debate on civil rights, we have a generally shared vision of where we want the country to go and we know you share that vision. And therefore, we don't think it's necessary to spend a great deal of time reaffirming our mission and message on that important question. I will note with one exception that we will face in the coming year a new challenge to that effect in the state of Washington where an initiative may be on the ballot in November of this year, and we think that's an important issue that requires national attention. And we know that you will be there leading the effort to ensure that the

citizens of that state reaffirm their commitment to equal opportunity.

Therefore, if we spend our time productively, I'd like to at least highlight three issues that I think could reflect well on the work of the Advisory Board. And I'm especially pleased to see Dr. Franklin here, my old mentor and colleague. He's doing such a fine job in that regard.

The first issue, I think, is one that brings Americans together. It unites across party lines Democrat and Republican alike, and that is a commitment to enforce existing civil rights laws in a vigorous way. We know that throughout the debate over affirmative action one thing is clear, and that is the American people share a commitment to the vigorous enforcement of existing law. And if those laws can be made to work effectively, discrimination, which we know exists and is real, can be diminished.

We know that discrimination is a problem, and one need only look at the reports from the federal agencies in the Executive

Branch to confirm that. The FBI's statistics on hate crimes issued last week helps to confirm that. The statistics from agencies like the EEOC and others help to confirm that.

So from our standpoint, it would be a productive use of resources if the federal government took a zero tolerance policy on discrimination in the same way that it does in other areas of policy, and that that commitment is reflected in the budgetary submissions that you make to Congress this year and in the remainder of your term in office.

Now, we know you have a commitment to that. You've made every effort to increase civil rights enforcement budget over the last several years, but making a vigorous commitment to that effort we think could make an important contribution overall.

I would mention only two other things. From our standpoint, certainly the economic growth of the economy has been outstanding, and we have seen a more robust, more vigorous economy than we've ever seen in our country. And yet, at the same time, there is a growing gap in terms of the benefits of the economy between those who have the resources that the economy generates and those who don't. So the gap between the haves and the have-nots and their ability to participate in the fruits of the economy seems to us, at least to me, has not been fully appreciated.

What we're hoping is that you can use the bully pulpit of the Presidency to help focus the attention of the American people on that gap, and to use your good office to influence, in the private sector, policy initiatives that might contribute to a lessening of the problem.

One of the things that perhaps you might consider is convening a meeting of CEOs and chairs of boards of FORTUNE 500 companies here at the White House for a private conversation with you to talk about how these companies can use their resources to help reverse the trend toward disinvestment, both in urban communities, but also in poor world communities. It's a policy effort that unites across racial lines. It speaks to the economic needs of the American people, regardless of where they live. And certainly it involves using the resources that these companies have to help stimulate economic growth. It's the greening of America in ways that we've seen already.

I know that others have spoken about the problems of discrimination on Wall Street -- Reverend Jackson, in particular. There's going to be an effort to address that; but making sure that economic benefits are extended to more people. And that includes, hopefully, the development of jobs and opportunity for people who don't have them is very important.

Now, I know of your welfare-to-work initiative. That makes a significant contribution to the debate, but there are many people who are currently not receiving welfare, who are still missing

out on the economic wherewithal that we're talking about. Addressing their needs, helping to encourage job development and investment in these communities can make a difference.

Lastly, I think that many of the problems that we've talked about with respect to the race initiative and the need for this Advisory Board, trace their roots back to the inequality that's inherent in the American educational system. And unless we spend some time focusing on the needs of children of the next generation, trying to reduce that disparity, we're going to have a continuing problem.

The single most important contribution perhaps that you could make under these circumstances is to try to ensure that more high-quality instruction is made available in both inner-city and in rural school system that don't have that high-quality instruction that is brought about largely through the creation of incentives that attract bright, committed, dedicated professionals to the profession of teaching.

Right now the profession lacks status. It lacks recognition. And certainly it lacks the kind of economic incentive that attracts the best and the brightest. So incentives for loan reduction for students or individuals who commit themselves to five years or more working in these urban school systems, providing them with the training that allows them to be successful, helping to hold young people to high standards -- all of that could make, we think, a significant difference.

And so my suggestion is to focus on those areas that tend to unite the American people, and that these are I think three examples of perhaps what could be done.

THE PRESIDENT: I agree with that. Let me say on the first, on the discrimination, just very, very briefly, we're working on that. We have a good budget and a good plan. And I think we ought to go hard toward the people who say they are against discrimination but they oppose affirmative action in the Republican majority, and say, well, if you are, why won't you fund the EEOC? Give us the tools to do the job.

On the economy, we'll have a very aggressive set of proposals that go right at you're suggesting and also education. Of course, we've already suggested that we -- and have offered a program of loan forgiveness for people who will go into educationally underperforming school districts to teach. But we have some other things to offer in that regard.

I think all these are important because we have to find ways to unify the American people around this agenda in ways that actually change the future outcomes for people. And so I appreciate that. I think that's very good.

Who wants to go next? Go ahead.

MR. ROTUNDARO: Mr. President, I would pick up on a number of things that Wade said. In particular, two points that I think are of some substantial importance. Number one, and I would agree with I think most people around the table that the racial commission that is doing a very fine job under very difficult circumstances. But I think it would be a tragedy if the work the racial commission stops this June, stops in September, or stops sometime this year. One of the things that I would propose is that one of the aspects of the racial commission should be an attempt to enlist as many forces as possible in American government, the opinion leaders, the universities, the corporations, to enlist as many of the opinion leaders as possible in an effort to continue the fight against social injustice or racism.

I think it's important that -- I think it's very, very important that racism, that discrimination simply be held as an unacceptable approach to life by most Americans. And I think that that is something that can only be done through enlisting the opinion leaders in this country.

And by the opinion leaders I mean the brokers in Congress, I mean the educators, I mean the journalists, I mean people in public life. But I also mean organizations such as mine -- white, ethnic organizations; i.e., we're with the National Italian American Foundation. I represent that organization, but we've also been working with some 30 or 40 different other ethnic groups -- Polish groups, Croatian, German. Most of these groups can have, and I think do have, an influence on their membership, and I think that an attempt should be made so that we also can be educated to the needs of what has to be done.

As an example, -- Isadaria (phonetic) and I go back a long way. It's only been within the last couple of years that I've begun to understand in even some small amount the impact of police reaction to minorities -- blacks, to Hispanics. I simply did not know it. Hugh Price -- I think your organization did a paper on this and mentioned this as a very important element. This is something that I simply was not aware of to any substantial degree. So I think we -- that is white ethnic groups -- do have to be educated along these lines so we can help educate our own membership.

Finally, there's one other element that I think is important and that is that not only must there be an attempt made to combat at the highest levels and on down through the society the impact of social injustice and racism, but I think we're also dealing to a degree with not just racism but also the elements of class. Once again I turn to the National Urban League -- I think you've just undertaken what I read is supposed to be a major project on the question of elevating the importance of academics for black kids in the urban community.

Virtually everything I've been reading in this field recently leads me to believe that academic excellence is maybe not

prized as much as it should be. And if education isn't there, jobs -- the better jobs will not be there. And although you may make a very substantial impact on the question of racism in America, we still might be left with a substantial amount of minority kids who don't have the right attitude to an education, who don't have the right skills to have jobs and who are never going to get out of that economic, educational ghetto.

MS. RICH: I guess there are two areas that I would like to emphasize, and both of them, I think both approaches would include public-private, nonprofit partnerships, because I think that collaboration is very important in all of these efforts.

I guess Wade kind of touched on it with the economic. I'd like to say that I think the workplace is probably one of the most important areas where we need to focus. There is, obviously, still a lack of opportunity, of full opportunity for people of color and for women. And I think the workplace is key because people with diverse backgrounds are more likely to meet each other in the workplace than, say, in possibly their neighborhoods or places of worship.

And so I think that I would want to suggest that there be -- you mentioned about bringing CEOs together -- I think that a lot of emphasis of trying to bring corporate people together into this process and deal with training for cultural diversity and increase cultural diversity awareness, which would help reduce bias.

The other thing is that I think that very often we start too late. I think that it needs to be started at pre-school, in child care, if you will. I mean, very early -- children aren't born prejudiced; they learn it from someplace. I would suggest that even in programs -- I know a program which you're familiar with, which I think you know I'm familiar with -- a program like HIPPIE (phonetic), which is an early childhood program. It has culturally diverse materials, dealing with all types of populations. There are many programs that are in our schools today that are very focused on cultural diversity.

But I think that we can't wait until high school. We have to really start earlier, and focus on increasing this awareness training even at very early ages.

MAYOR SERNA: Mr. President, I think Wade does speak for a lot of us. And I think all of those issues -- the urban issues, job issues, economic development, schooling, education -- are important.

In California, we are confronted with a particularly difficult dilemma, and that is the scapegoating of immigrants, which is incredibly divisive in the state. As you know, there's a current issue that will be on the '98 ballot regarding bilingual education. It's going to be very difficult for all of us. I don't know what to

advise you on that issue. Obviously, the courageous position would be for all of us to oppose it, and I personally will as the Mayor of the City of Sacramento. But what concerns me the most is over time, especially with Prop 187 that was passed by the voters, led by the Republicans, and then 209, that those are all wedge issues that tend to divide us along racial lines.

The immigrant community is being scapegoated in California, as you know, and making them to be the ogres. What to do about that problem confronts me. I think a lot of the issues that Wade talked about touches, I think, what we all have to do as people of color, with the President's support to advance the cause of justice and equity.

This issue of immigration is a particularly difficult one because I don't think any of us know what to do. The one thing to do, however, I think, is encourage the INS to process those folks that are applying for citizenship to either make that process work more efficiently, to get people through that process. It can be very, very difficult, and it can even be very costly to some folks. And once that has happened, to then, I think, devise a program. I don't know where it would come from. Maybe it comes from business. Maybe it comes from labor leaders. Maybe it comes from the White House. And that is an effort of encouraging citizenship and processing citizenship as thoroughly and as quickly as possible to incorporate those new citizens into the American fabric.

I think a statement or your leadership in leading to citizenship and all the responsibilities that go with it need incredible support. This is a very difficult issue for us in California, and California is kind of a unique place, as you know. You've made history there by winning two elections in California. A lot of people don't know the basics about our state. They perceive that, because surf is up, that we're all kind of liberals out there. It's not true. And you know better than I.

The last real contested race before yours, Mr. President, as you know, of a Democrat who won the state, was in 1948. I don't count '64 because that was a lopsided victory for us. But you've made history there.

And I think the Latino, the Mexican American community has been absolutely revolutionized. The Republicans are losing ground, and I think all the press reports are correct, because Prop 187 and the Wilson administration have so polarized our community that it has scared them into participation. They're now participating politically out of fear. That fear is -- my mother is an example, who's now 76 years old. She finally took out her citizenship papers at the age of 73. Before then, we couldn't get her to take out her citizenship papers because she felt, well, if I take out my American citizenship papers, I cease to be Mexican. Not true.

I couldn't convince her as her son, as the mayor of a

major city in California. (Laughter.) Neither could my sister, who's also an elected official in Stockton, California. But when she was told that 187 threatened her Social Security, it got her to take the classes. She passed her classes and is now a citizen, and is a registered Democrat. We have to -- I'm not suggesting this is a campaign strategy. (Laughter.)

What I am suggesting, though, is that it opens up an issue that's very important. How do we get that new immigrant population to participate? And the way you do that, I think, is encourage citizenship and directing the INS to help us in that process.

These folks really are a part of our economy, and they want to be, I think, good Americans. I think you'll find that those new immigrants are probably more nationalistic than most of us here. They believe in this country, and they believe in this system; and they're afraid to participate. We need to make that easier.

So I think, Mr. President, from that perspective, there's a whole new set out there -- a whole new set of Americans that are just waiting for some encouragement that says, you're good people; you're here to work like most of us, how we got here -- to build a better life for all of us, to build on the American dream; and to be considered with this race board that American democracy and the American fabric has to include them.

Then when we talk about race, we include them in that discussion. In our community, by the way, it's not just the Latinos. It's also Asian Americans. We have a growing Southeast Asian community in our city that is very productive, very honored to be here, working hard. And I think a lot of folks that come from Mexico or that come from other parts of Latin America are waiting to be told, we appreciate you being here and we'll do everything to assist you in becoming Americans. So I would encourage you, Mr. President, to do what you can to encourage the INS to process folks thoroughly, quickly, and then sponsor a citizenship program.

THE PRESIDENT: You know, when I came here, it was taking an unconscionably long time for people to get through the system, and we tried to accelerate it. And the Congress had such a negative reaction to it, the Republican majority did, they tried to investigate the whole INS because we took the position that you shouldn't have to wait years and years and years after you had already been here five years, to have the government decide whether you could become a citizen or not. I still think that's the right thing to do. I think it's entirely too bureaucratic, and I think we should do better.

MS. NARASAKI: Mr. President, I'm very glad to hear you say that, because the backlog persists and there are already 2 million individuals, and it's two years long. That's how many would-be citizens we would have --

THE PRESIDENT: But we were taking it down, to be fair -- until we were viciously and unfairly attacked for making the law work the way it's supposed to.

MS. NARASAKI: Exactly it. I also wanted to applaud the administration for including a sizable fix for food stamps in the budget. I think it's going to be very important to save those who are the most vulnerable in our society, who already are facing the loss of food in the last two weeks of every month.

But I really most want to thank you for the stand that you took on Bill Lann Lee, and we look forward to working with you to remove the "acting" from his title, as you so eloquently said when you introduced him.

I think that fight, to me, was very instructive, because it forced a discussion on affirmative action in a way that I think this country had not had the discussion. And I hope that you will continue to pursue those opportunities to put a face on these issues, because all too often the discussion is a lot of rhetoric, a lot of philosophy, and people don't see the faces of discrimination that we're really talking about.

I hope that you will take the opportunity to use Washington state's initiative to again deepen the understanding that the American public has about what we're talking about, why we need affirmative action, what kind of discrimination is out there. The California initiative on bilingual education I think is an important opportunity to talk about discrimination as it impacts particularly Latinos and Asians.

Finally, I wanted to echo some of the earlier comments. I think it's really important to try to now narrow the discussion. You've laid a very good general foundation, but it's hard to get deep into actual, where it hurts discussion until you get specific. And I hope that, by homing in on things like bilingual education and affirmative action, it will make the discussion more real.

I believe that you should challenge religious leaders to come in, challenge the members of the Christian Coalition to come in and talk about what are they going to do to address this issue, as you have with the conservative meeting. I think that one of the best things that the initiative has done is to cause the media to focus on these issues and to start to flesh them out when you raise them.

I think it would be great if you called the entertainment network heads together or the talk show hosts together or some of the television or movie producers together, talk about how the stereotypes that are still replete in our television and our movies continues to drive the perception that Americans have about each other, and challenge them and ask them what they plan to do on this issue.

This year is the 30th anniversary of the Fair Housing

Act. We've already heard that the housing industry plans assault on the Fair Housing Act. It's a great opportunity, again, to talk about discrimination in housing. Call the leaders in the insurance companies, the bankers, the home builders, and talk about discrimination in housing and their role in it and what they intend to do.

I think that your leadership in bringing these real cases to light will help further the discussion beyond where we've been able to go today.

SENATOR LEWIS: Mr. President, I want to thank you also for inviting us to participate in this discussion. I agree with my friends and colleagues here -- you have an opportunity to provide the way out, I think, in America at this time, at this juncture. It's a major crisis, really. We can take the great leap ahead, or we can stand still.

I really believe that when you speak in two weeks, the State of the Union address, you should address the whole question of race. You should talk about the dialogue and get the American people to engage in a national dialogue on race. I agree you should bring in the religious leaders, the labor leaders, the business leaders, teacher groups, student groups, young people, and get us all talking about race.

We cannot deny the fact that the scars and sting of racism are still deeply embedded in American society. That cannot be denied. You should say, there's not any room in our society for racism, for bigotry, anti-Semitism, for hate crime and violence against our fellow Americans. Make this issue, this crusade a moral issue.

On affirmative action, don't back off, don't back down; meet it head on. Debate the people the same way you did in Ohio, and let us all put all our cards on the table if we're going to move down that road toward the creation of one America and one American family, and create what Dr. King called a beloved community, and inter-racial democracy. If we believe we can do it, we must do it. AND I don't think we have much time in America to do it. But we're all in this boat together.

I think you just have to speak in a very plain way to the American people, and leave no one out, leave no one behind.

MR. KWOH: Thank you. I want to join in in appreciating your commitment on the race initiative. Coming from Los Angeles, I think your appointment of Bill Lee and the fight for him in his current post really built perhaps the best multi-racial coalition we've seen in decades. So I want to thank you for that.

And one of our staff attorneys, Julie Soo (phonetic), wanted to say hello. She was very honored by your welcome after she won the human rights award.

Coming from Los Angeles and knowing, as my colleagues mentioned, some of the racial dynamics in California, I am very concerned that the race initiative has not had the local impact it can have. There's few, if any, local politicians who have taken advantage of this opportunity. There are only a handful of community groups who have done anything new or additional since the race initiative was launched. And certainly the race relations in California need improvement. Since the '92 riots, since Prop 187 and Prop 209, discussions and dialogues in the OJ Simpson case, we've just seen people more and more racially polarized.

My suggestion is to have you focus on local action. I agree with my colleagues on the national enforcement issues that they've raised -- I fully agree with them. But I do think that the local action will enable you to see a bubbling up of creative solutions to race divisions. It will allow more local support for the national initiatives that you are taking leadership on. It will help to include the diversity of those local areas.

It won't be a broad discussion, but when you talk about who is going to do something in local communities you have to include everyone. And I stress action because I believe that dialogue within the context of taking common action is the best solution and the best dialogue, because then people work out their differences within striving for something of common good.

And let me just close by giving a couple suggestions. one is I think that local leaders need to hear from you that you expect them to take direct action, direct local action. The politicians, community groups -- that if a letter, a call, a word from the President said, I want you to take local community action to improve your communities and improve race relations at the same time, and I'd like a report from you in a year or two, I believe that would help us tremendously.

Secondly, I think there are a lot of federal programs at the local level that can incorporate race relations improvement into them. For example, your AmeriCorps program, which I greatly admire, if you set one of the goals -- not the only goal, but one of the goals is to improve race relations, then the group of people who are working in a housing project are not just improving the physical environment of the housing project. They're bringing the black and white, Latino, Asian neighborhood people together. If that is a goal within the federal program, I think then we could see a lot more action.

And both of these suggestions would not require a federal funding program. But I think people are waiting to hear from you to say, what should individuals, what should communities, what should local areas do themselves to improve race relations. Right now I see it as people are waiting and they're watching, but they

have not heard from you on what they should do. And that's my suggestion.

THE PRESIDENT: I've been just -- sort of in support of what you said. We have -- one of the most clearly successful things we've done, even though it's not -- we don't have it on prime-time television in ads or anything, because we don't have that kind of money, but we put up this Internet home page with promising practices in communities around the country. And substantial numbers of people have tapped into it to see what's being done someplace else and can they apply it in their own community, is there some way to build on it. It's been very, very impressive.

The other thing you said about recruiting leadership I think is -- the one thing that we did is we wrote several thousand young people and asked them to take some initiative, and hundreds of them wrote us back with very specific things saying what they were going to do. So that's some indication that if we identify a given list of people, whether they're mayors, city council people, county officials, you name it -- and ask them to do something specific, that they'll do that.

Hugh.

MR. PRICE: Mr. President, first I'd like to thank you for appointing the distinguished John Franklin to chair the advisory committee and giving him a little bit of a travel budget. He was with the executives of our Urban League movement just last week and it was a wonderful presentation and a great chance for people who revere him to be in touch with him.

The second point I'd make is I do think there are some things going on that have been tripped off by the initiative that perhaps aren't on the national media radar screen. But I spoke, as did your good friend, Joe Martin, to a gathering of 400 people in Charlotte, North Carolina, which has embarked on a major effort to look at race relations in that community. And it was triggered by this initiative, although it hasn't been formally associated with the initiative. And it might be interesting to track how much of that is going on. There may be more with some legs on it that perhaps we don't even realize.

There are three areas I'd like to touch on briefly. One is -- a couple of them basically have been spoken to, but I wanted to underscore them. I think the whole issue of closing the gap between young people who are achieving in school and those who aren't is something that's got to be dealt with on a mobilization footing. I don't think we're quite at the fever pitch that we need in that area, and yet it's at the root of the initiative.

I mean, you're announcing you want to do something to help close the gap in skilled workers, and I read the other day in

the Wall Street Journal that head hunters are prowling Brazil looking for skilled workers, and yet they're right in our school systems, our urban and rural school systems. And we still aren't at a point where that has got the level of commitment and energy that I think we need in the nation.

There was a submit, that you remember only too well, on the Palisades just a couple years ago, of governors and business leaders, and the whole focus was on standards, tests, and sanctions. And I remember several of us bringing up the subject of, are we going to focus on the deliver systems, what happens in the school buildings and the communities to lift the kids to these standards. And the subject was literally ruled out of order. I remember because I was ruled out of order when I raised that question.

And I think there has got to be a whole other mobilization around that issue, and that's derivative of the knowledge base that exists. In an earlier meeting, we talked about the Equity 2000 program of the college board and Don Stewart, and they've just issued a whole other report indicating dramatic gains in the number of kids who are taking and passing algebra and geometry. And there is just a lot of knowledge that now exists and some initiatives of scale that a whole agenda could be built around that involves a combination of federal responsibility, local responsibility, state, and community. And I just think we've got to almost move to a -- it's naive of me to say this -- I think we need to move to an almost warlike mobilization on that issue, because if we don't, we're not going to deal with many of the other issues that bedevil us.

A second area that I think is derivative of the first is, many cities are beginning to show some signs of life. There is an article, again, I read today about Grand Rapids coming back and other cities are coming back. But the kids who are in the inner-cities and in those neighborhoods with still very high unemployment aren't as connected to what's happening in downtown revitalization as perhaps the ought to be, and I think that's an area for considerable attention.

The third one is a hobby horse you're familiar with. On the taxi over from the airport today, I clipped out another article from my alternative reading source, the Washington Times -- Police Profiling Goes on Trial. A police officer in Miami, Florida, was stopped for changing lanes and for a partially obscured tail light. And it's off to the races. There is another ugly situation down there, and it's because a trivial thing has been escalated into something serious.

After the Abna Luima (phonetic) incident in New York City, the New York Times began poking around into this issue of police interaction with civilians, and they have uncovered enormous problems in police practices, but even more so in the attitudes that are developing among minority citizens toward police, toward authority, therefore toward whites, even though many of the officers

may be black.

And I just think somehow we've got to dive into this issue -- you've heard me on this before -- it does not go away and it just tears at the fabric of our society.

THE PRESIDENT: The profiling, I think, is a serious problem. We've talked a lot about it. I think I've seen the three most glaring examples that I've seen since I've been President are the repeated example black Americans have given of being stopped by police for no apparent reason. We had a black journalists group in here not very long ago, and every African American male in the room had been stopped within the last few years for no apparent reason.

The stopping of Hispanics for no apparent reason near the border. And the immediate assumption after the Oklahoma City bombing that some Arab American had been involved. You know that I was able to sort of put a puncher in that within 24 hours. But it was -- when I cautioned the American people not to do that. But we just -- it's still a part of how we relate to each other that we have to deal with.

Eleanor, go ahead. I'm sorry.

REPRESENTATIVE HOLMES NORTON: Mr. President, I'd just like to say a word about your initiative, from where I sit in the Congress. When you first announced it -- John will recall, perhaps -- that we had an immediate meeting because we thought that particularly black people were looking for leadership on how they're supposed to think about this race initiative.

It didn't take us long to decide that we should endorse and embrace it; that if you get the attention of the President of the United States on race, you ought to take it and run with it. And if I may say so, Mr. President, so far as I can tell, this is the first time in the history of the Republic that a President of the United States has confronted race without it confronting him; that is to say, without and in-your-face crisis. A war, a riot, then we're ready somehow to take it on.

I hope that there is something instructive in your legacy about ongoing American problems that have to be redefined and dealt with again in each generation on its own terms. So notice what the conservatives are saying -- oh, well, why are they talking about race; who's doing something about it. In Congress it's really interesting to hear these folks who don't want to do anything about it now criticize you for only wanting to talk about it. I mean, our answer has to be, you can't possibly do anything about race if you don't talk about it. YOU surely are not prepared to do something about something you don't even want to mention or come to grips with orally or verbally.

I endorse your notion that it is time to give some definition to where you want to commission to go. I believe that you

are struggling with it in the right way, because in our country there is almost no important problem that cannot be defined in racial terms. And thus is the history of our country. Every social issue has a large racial dimension, and a large multi-racial dimension. So in a real sense, it could set your initiative up for failure if, in fact, it is left as wide open as it is, so anybody's problem you can throw in here and say, okay, that's race; you all deal with that before this is all over.

You have taken on -- it is very brave to take on something called race at this time, since you don't have a crisis that gives definition, and therefore the burden is on you.

I would also like to see -- I think if we really want to get the attention of everybody except the usual suspects that talking about race only in terms that we have talked about for the last 50 years is not likely to get the average American engaged. One of the things that most concerns me is one of those problems that doesn't quite seem a problem, and that is the absence of any sense of racial reconciliation.

I don't know, Roger, it seems to me that there was more communication across racial lines when we were in the civil rights movement than there is today. There is enormous racial isolation in this country. I make no real comparisons; I have no basis to do so. But I can tell you that I was in Yugoslavia in the 1960s as a student, going to some conference, and I was very impressed with Yugoslavia. In the middle of -- totalitarian still intact -- and it just seemed just like America to me. And once totalitarianism was gone, those people tore each other apart and were involved in savagery.

So I don't like it, I feel a sense of discomfort when everybody's so comfortable in her own racial and ethnic niche. It all feels great. And you can turn to your channel on the cable, and you can find only yourself there 24 hours a day, and isn't that exactly what we

are, just the same, each in our own little world, and we don't really know each other, and we don't really care.

And that's the problem, isn't it? That's the problem.

fill, it was left vacant for a very long time. I can only hope that you give some priority to filling the chairmanship.

In the Congress, the EEOC was left with all kinds of backlogging. We were able -- I worked with J.C. Watts to get some money for it last year, and we got some extra money for it this year. But I believe it came at level funding this year. And again, one way to express one's concern for race, it seems to me, is to adequately fund these agencies.

Finally, something to be said about the State of the Union speech. I think everybody -- I think the press is going to be looking to see the way in which you in fact -- everybody is going to expect that you refer to the race initiative in some form or fashion in the State of the Union speech. I think that is a very difficult challenge for you.

There ought to be some kind of call for action. I like the notion of activating the whole country, and letting everybody know this is more than the President of the United States and the folks here in the Beltway, and perhaps giving them some vehicle to begin to nationalize what you're trying to do with the race initiative.

Finally, as a member of Congress, may I say that we made some important headway last time on affirmative action because almost surely this Canady bill was straight on its way to tossing affirmative action over the side. And what we were able to do in the Judiciary Committee was to get four Republicans to vote with the Democrats to keep this bill in committee.

Now, I have to tell you, there almost surely was some cooperation with the leadership; I certainly think with Newt. And I think you ought to have a private conversation with him. I don't think he wants to -- but I don't think he speaks for the caucus. But I do think the Chairman, I think Hyde was cooperative. There were some people who we all worked on who were Republicans who were cooperative.

In the State of the Union message, or in some appropriate place, as part of what you're doing with race, it seems to me that it would be important to call upon the Congress to resist the -- especially in an election year -- to resist the temptation to make affirmative action a wedge issue. Let it be to let your mend it, don't give it a chance, let these regulations come out here. Then perhaps you will have some basis to come forward, but that in the midst of your effort to bring about reconciliation, for the Congress to go in the exact opposite way, to draw a line in the sand among the races, would be just what we don't need at this time.

MR. WILKINS: Mr. President, I'm grateful that you invited me to participate in this meeting. And I must say, this is quite an emotional moment for me -- I didn't realize it. I haven't

been in this room in 30 years. And the last time I was in this room, Martin King was sitting there, and my uncle was sitting there, Whitney Young was sitting where Hugh is sitting. John wasn't here because he was in jail. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: That's why he looks so young -- he had all those resting days. (Laughter.)

MR. WILKINS: The Vice President was sitting where Senator Daschle is sitting. And Clarence Mitchell was sitting where Bill is sitting. And it reminds me of a lot of things, but it suggests to me that -- I say this with great trepidation with my hero and mentor sitting here on my left -- but I think that the conversation, as Eleanor said, is really important. And it should go forward, but I agree that it shouldn't end in a year. At least, maybe the conversation part should, but the effort should continue.

I think that conversation is good for getting things into people's minds, and God knows it needs to get into people's minds -- if you read that survey this morning about college kids and the low number of college kids who are interested in doing something about race relations. But in the end, what I remember most about that meeting 30 years ago was that President Johnson was urged to use the presidency as a bully teaching lectern. And although he was a civil rights giant, by that time he was disenchanted and he didn't do it. And in the conversation, what happens is that a lot of views get legitimated, and they're not always views that are very constructive. Sometimes they're views that are a crime against humanity, in the felicitous phrase that some have used. (Laughter.)

And in the end, some truth has to be really pounded into the national psyche. And one of them is that history counts. This country is the most historic country in the world, as far as I can tell. And on this issue, it is truly historic, until you get to the people like the Thernstroms, who take history and turn it upside down and try to make a different point.

But if you take the position that Justice Scalia has taken -- he is against affirmative action because his parents, his grandparents came here in the 20th century. They never owned a slave. They never discriminated against a black person, and why should he be concerned leaves out the whole history of the country up to that point where the opportunity structure was denied to black people and that denial of opportunities to black citizens who were penned up in the South was exactly what gave Scalia's family its handhold into the 20th century industrial opportunities which had been denied to blacks. Americans need to know that. Americans really don't know that.

And so we have utterly ignorant conversations about race in which my feelings are as valid as your feelings are as valid as her feelings, because nobody is dealing with any facts. So I would hope that after the conversation, that you would use the rest of your term to be what you once were, which is a teacher -- a very strong

and powerful teacher.

And that brings me to the second point. I agree with everybody at this table, starting with Wade, who talks about the importance of education. So I won't belabor it except to say that it breaks my heart when I am confronted by my most talented students, year after year after year, with requests for recommendations to law school.

And I say to them, why don't you do something useful with your life? Why don't you go teach? Well, they don't go teach because, as Wade says, the status is lousy, the pay is lousy. You can help change that.

If you think about it, the Kennedy Center Honors gets a lot of play in this country, in part because everybody who gets honored is famous and glamorous, but you could institute some kind of program where instead of a world champion baseball team or the national champion football team -- well, this year you could do that, national champion, Michigan is the national champion, you can let them -- then after that, you could start something. But bring the teachers in. Bring the best teachers in America in. Have a glamorous evening for them and begin, you know, The Presidential Medal of Teaching Honor or something. It would be terrific.

And also make the remuneration of teachers a huge, huge issue. I mean, it is obscene, the disparity between what a running back gets and somebody who is doing a useful thing in the inner city teaching a kid.

Finally, I would say that I agree with the point about education starting at the earliest point. And I think of our mutual friend Bill Wilson's lesson that joblessness is so destructive, more destructive than poverty ever was. And somehow if we're going to do education for poor kids right, because poor kids need parents to help educate them just like your kid and my kid at Sidwell Friends, they need parents even more. Parents who are stressed out by being jobless are not going to be able to give those kids the help they need in the beginning.

I don't know how we do that. And perhaps this is something that the race commission as it draws best practices from around the country, something that we can find places where people are actually helping the jobless parents of little children, A, to become not jobless, and, B, to become more effective parents.

Thanks again for inviting me. I really appreciate it.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me say, one of the -- just a couple of things real quick. Is it -- one of the big entertainment organizations sponsors every year a big event honoring teachers -- is it Disney? Disney. Maybe we should see if we should do something with them.

On this unemployment, one of you mentioned this earlier -- I think it was Hugh that mentioned it -- but we announced today, it was in the paper that we're going to spend a ton of money to try to focus on just training people to take jobs in technology companies. And the reason -- how that happened was I read two things at the same time several weeks ago. I get -- a month after the unemployment rates come out, the people who do the unemployment rates give you the state-by-state for that month, so like every month you're getting this month's national unemployment rate and last month's state-by state. So I don't have the December state-by-states, but I do have it for November.

In November, two states -- North Dakota and one other -- Nebraska, I think -- had 1.9 percent unemployment. Now, that is essentially negative unemployment because any economist will tell you there's somewhere between 2 and 3 percent of the people walking around all the time. I mean, they're moving, they're get married, they change states, they do something -- something is always happening to a couple percent of the people -- in the way we measure unemployment.

And Washington, D.C. had 7.8, or whatever it was. And at the same time -- this was this month. Anyway, the month before when this happened, the same day I pick up this article in The Washington Post which says that in all these suburban counties around Washington, D.C., there's this huge shortage of high-technology workers. Well, if Washington, D.C. had an unemployment rate of 2 percent instead of nearly 8 percent, we'd have about a quarter of the problems we've got here. Maybe a tenth.

And so it occurred to me that a lot of -- but a lot of these jobs in high technology areas do not require four-year college degrees. They do require technology training, they do require advanced skills over which you would get just coming out of high school, but they do not require a four-year college degree. So what this announcement in the paper is about -- it's Alexis Herman and some others who had been working on this -- were trying to figure out whether -- not just in D.C., but anywhere around the country where you've got this suburban ring of job demand and a high unemployment core -- whether we can go in there and do profiles on people and see who is capable of getting these skills. And we're going to try and do it in some of the less urbanized areas, too.

One of the problems -- a lot of our Native Americans without jobs, without good jobs, live in highly dispersed areas where it's not as easy to get there. But, anyway, if this works -- that is, if four months from now we can show you that we did x amount of training and the people that formerly would have gone into minimum wage jobs are now going into jobs that pay above average wages, where they actually get retirement and health insurance and other things because they got this -- it will rather dramatically change the nature of job training and the whole strategy that the federal government has generally followed.

So, anyway -- but I appreciate what you're saying about it.

Bob, you were next, I think.

REPRESENTATIVE MATSUI: Well, thank you very much, Mr. President, for inviting me today. Actually, I really appreciate this. Usually when I come to the White House it's to talk about taxes or trade and this is rather refreshing. I want to thank you very much. And, of course, in 1992, when you were running as a candidate, you said you wanted to make your administration look like America. And I have to say that you really have done that, both in the Cabinet, certainly within the White House and all the agencies of the government. And I think it's been very difficult for you to do that, because there has been some criticism over the years. On the other hand, it's worked out very well. And I think from an historic perspective for now on any President that comes into this office will undoubtedly have to take into consideration what you did over the last five years. And I think it's really commendable and it shows that it works, the fact that you've had so much diversity within your administration. Quite remarkable.

And also, I think, as Stewart and perhaps Karen and others have said, Bill Lann Lee's appointment was just remarkable. It brought together a coalition that we'd never seen before. And I think we can keep together as a result of that. And we really, really appreciate that.

One of the real difficulties I see in talking about the issue of race, Mr. President, is the fact that, I think as Eleanor said, it permeates almost all of America. Almost every major historic issue will have some component of race to it. By the very nature of talking about it, we seem to limit ourselves, and it almost becomes somewhat diminishing. Every one of us raised two or three, maybe four points; but we really, unfortunately, aren't able to really talk about race because, again, it's like saying, let's talk about America. It's so difficult to talk about something so large and so conceptual and that has so much involved in almost everything we do.

But I think as Karen, and I think as Eleanor said, we will have to narrow this issue because certainly if we don't, we're going to be criticized, and obviously, it may just kind of wither away. I think two of the most important issues I see in this -- and I do agree with Eleanor -- that we have to be very careful because certainly in Congress, particularly in the House, there may be an effort to overturn affirmative action. But I think the issue of affirmative action is just so critical to the issue of race in America today. It's not the only thing, because there's a lot of things -- hate crimes, police brutality. But the issue of affirmative action is absolutely critical in American today.

I go to Los Angeles or San Francisco or New York, and you talk to CEOs and they're all white males. When you see our

country and see how diverse it really is, particularly in a state like California, you wonder, how are we going to be able to prevent a revolution in five or 20 or 30 years from now when all of these young people begin to realize they're not part of the social fabric, the economic fabric, the political fabric of America.

To have affirmative action eliminated would be, in my opinion, a major step back in terms of this country and what it stands for and what it really means. The real problem I see is that with this issue up and going through the anti-affirmative action debate in California, unless the proponents of affirmative action are willing to speak out and really discuss this issue and really take a leadership role in it, we're going to lose this debate -- whether it's the state of Washington, whether it's in the Congress, no matter where it is; because the opponents are really looking to beat affirmative action.

This is a very important issue for them. If we stand back, if we show some tentativeness, I'm afraid we really won't be able to win this issue. I think if the courts or if the Congress or through initiative processes in the state it's eliminated, it will have a profound negative impact. I just read press reports that came out today that University of California, all 13 of the campuses now for their graduate schools, African American enrollment has gone down by 25 percent, Latino enrollment's gone down by 50 percent. I think that trend will continue. This is only the beginning of that particular effort.

In addition, the second area, Mr. President, is in the area of poverty -- inner city poverty. I know you've done a lot of work on that issue; but it creates two phenomenons. One is a backlash by people that live in the suburbs. They see the inner cities and say, I don't want anything to do with it; these people are just no good; they don't deserve to be part of our fabric of life. Somehow on the other side of it is the squalor that these people live in, and the generational problem that occur as a result of the poverty is something that this country just cannot sustain. We really have to do something about it.

I think your initiatives in the technology area, obviously, empowerment zones and a number of these other areas are very, very important. On the other hand, I would say it's going to require, I think, the private sector. I think we all know that and I guess it was Wade that said somehow we have to get the CEOs involved in major corporations. I think they will respond if it's through Presidential leadership. Individual members of Congress, the leaders of the House and Senate probably can't do it. But your leadership probably will get them to start thinking, perhaps, a little bit more in the direction of perhaps they have to think more long-term about the future of our country.

And just in concluding, I do want to thank you for what you're doing. I think, as Eleanor said, this is unprecedented. I know that there's been some press criticism -- where is this going

and all this stuff; but I think the mere fact that people criticize it brings up the fact that we're talking about it. From a long-term, historical perspective, Mr. President, I think this is really one of your crowning achievements. I'm just happy and very pleased that you've invited us to share this moment with you.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Thank you. Go ahead.

MS. QURAISHI: I was asked to offer some of my insights in being part of the American Muslim community, and specifically as president of an organization called Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights. I'm very honored to be here, and I hope I can offer some suggestions.

One thing I think might help improve harassment and civil rights violations of Muslim Americans is to try and get the American public to separate in their minds international political events in politics from individual American citizens, especially minority American citizens. Our own past experience with the oppression of Japanese Americans and the communist scares are an example in our history where this has happened, and we look back and we realize how wrong we were at the time.

Right now you mentioned profiling, the Anti-terrorism Act of 1996 has scared a lot of Arab Americans and Muslim Americans in general for their safety, their protection, their American civil rights.

Any time there is an international event in the Middle East, there are numerous examples of individual Muslims, whether or not they are of that particular ethnicity. My husband, who was born in Baghdad and was raised in the United States since he was one year old, used to tell stories of when he was a child in elementary school he would get beaten up and harassed because they thought he was Mexican. And then in the Iranian hostage crisis, they would beat him up because they thought he was Iranian. And then in the Gulf War he would get harassed because they thought he was Iraqi. Well, he said, at least now they got the ethnicity right. (Laughter.) But the point is that the connection made between these international events and American citizens needs to be separated and Americans -- Muslims, as you know, have been part of the American community's fabric for a very, very long time. And in fact it's a very interesting microcosm of America because it is very ethnically diverse.

African American Muslims have been part of America from the very beginning. You have your immigrant population coming from all over Europe, Asia, the Middle East. My own father came here from India and I'm of mixed racial heritage myself. My mother was raised Methodist in Oregon, a caucasian American. So you see a lot of this, especially in the second generation, dealing with all of these racial issues, both with black community, Hispanic, Asian, all of these within the American Muslim community.

And I have high hopes for how the Muslim community in my

generation can deal with all of these various diversities and overcoming some of the problems. But they deal with all the harassment of all the different international events every day. And that's, I think, something if we can make Americans -- and your administration has done a lot. The first Id at the White House happened under your administration. That was wonderful. You said a few words about the vandalism of the Ramadan symbol outside. Those sorts of things, but even more emphasis on American Muslims being American citizens first.

THE PRESIDENT: You know, when I was -- I made a big point to try to make that exact same point when I spoke in the Jordanian parliament when we went to sign the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan, and how the United States had no quarrel with Islam. And it was amazing the impact it had when I went back to the place where I was -- I didn't stay in this hotel, but I went back to this hotel and this public crowd there. It was amazing the impact it had on the young people that were there.

And then I got to Jerusalem and I had an Arab Palestinian employee in one of the hotels where I was came up to me and mentioned it to me. So even abroad it's a big deal. And here at home, there was a very kind of troubling story here in our local press in the last week about a Muslim school that had 50 students and they were trying to expand it and they were looking for a new home. And the people in the various places where they were looking were afraid that this would be funded by people who would be preaching terrorism and all that.

And I think it's exceedingly important that we disassociate religious conviction, and particularly being of Middle East or South Asian heritage, from some iron connection to all the problems we're having there. And we're going to have to work on it more because the Muslim population is growing so substantially in this country.

MR. YZAGUIRRE: Mr. President, I join the folks who are around the table who have been congratulating you for taking this initiative. I think I also join others who have indicated that perhaps it's time to bring some focus and narrow the scope of the initiative. There are certainly several areas that would be worthwhile, but let me suggest that the notion of using the commission, using the Advisory Board, using the initiative as a teaching tool is one that I think deserves some consideration.

And I don't mean it just in the short term. I don't mean it just in terms of this particular exercise or this particular time period, but let me offer a concept, a notion that the nature of this country is such that it needs a continued education process, that every generation needs to deal with its own identity and the identity of this nation, and that it is appropriate for government to play a role in continuing to build a national identity based on the respect of all of its constituent groups.

I think that's also a unifying theme, because what we're trying to promote is the idea of unity, and I think what scares -- some of the racism, some of the division comes out of a sense that the country is not what it used to be, and it's certainly true that it's not what it used to be. But that somehow what it used to be is better than what it is now. You've said that in your own ways a number of times.

And if we can get the notion across that, yes, it's not what it used to be, it is what it is now, and that's wonderful and diversity is appropriate and -- but we need a way of taking it from the intellectual and moving it to the visceral.

In the nature of a teaching tool or a teaching mechanism, let me suggest that we also use it to educate the American public in a number of areas pertaining to this theme. This country has painfully learned about the stigma of slavery. We're less acquainted, less knowledgeable -- indeed, if you walk into any library, into any book store, and you try to understand something about the victims of conquest and colonialism, native Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, you'll find very little because this country is, as Roger indicated, historical.

It's even more than that. We simply do not want to view ourselves as a colonial power. It's against the nature of how we define ourselves. Yet, when you look at what has happened, clearly we have been, are perhaps -- have been a colonial power in many ways, and my Puerto Rican friends tell me that we're still a colonial power in Puerto Rico.

I think that this is an important issue, and I can't think of anybody that's more equipped to lead the country in this education than yourself.

I remember very clearly the event that you had in Little Rock between the time that you were elected and the time you were inaugurated. We had a summit on economics and you spent a whole day, from 7:00 in the morning till late at night, teaching the country about the fundamentals of economics.

Let me suggest that if you did something like that around this issue -- and, by the way, I hope we can get beyond the term "Race Initiative," because it has a narrower connotation. But this initiative that has to do with how do we live with each other, how do we promote each individual's own potential to its fullest extent. That merits the kind of attention and the kind of time that you gave to the economy in Little Rock. Those would be my suggestions, Mr. President.

MR. ECHOHAWK: Mr. President, I'd like to thank you for inviting me to participate as a representative of the Native American community. We're impacted by these issues of racial discrimination

just like other minorities. We probably suffer worse from unemployment and low educational attainment levels than anybody. We're involved in the race commission. We're pleased to become involved. There is a panel of tribal leaders participating in the race commission board meeting tomorrow out in Arizona, and they will be talking further with the commission members about these issues.

As you know from your own experience with the tribes and your policy relative to native Americans, the most important issue to native American people, of course, is protection of their legal and political status as sovereigns, as recognized by the laws and the Constitution of this country. That status as tribal governments is very important to us in combatting these problems that we have.

The biggest issue that I think we face is the one that Raul and Roger have referenced, and that's basically the ignorance of the American people about the legal and political status of our people and the fact that we've got three levels of government in this country -- the federal, the state, and the tribal.

Your native American policy recognizes this and you've got all the departments and agencies working on policy statements about how they're going to implement this government-to-government relationship, which is of course the way that historically we did business and we still ought to business that way, because that's the law. But a lot of people just are ignorant of that. They don't understand that. And as part of your initiative, there is this learning process going on in the departments and the agencies about our governmental status, and things are starting to happen there. You've got all kinds of people that we had never seen now talking with us about our governmental status and how to work with us in these departments and agencies, and that's terrific.

What we need to do and what I would suggest is that, as has been mentioned, we need an educational effort that you could help lead that would help educate the American public about our political status as governments in this country as part of the American federal system. I think that would be a tremendous help in terms of dealing with the problems that we face, and it's something that the race commission could really help with, and it goes back to this need of our country to understand its history and to make that history a living part of everybody's consciousness here today.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me just say very briefly on this subject, I think it's also quite important -- and we've been working at this steadily for five years, and I thank Senator Daschle, particularly -- I want to thank him because he knows a lot about these issues. But the Native American tribes have a -- I don't want to tie the analogy too tight, but they have experienced in the last several decades a situation in dealing with the United States that is not unlike that experienced by the District of Columbia.

I always tell people, the problem that D.C.'s had -- one problem that D.C. has is sort of the "not quite" place. It's not

quite independent and it's not quite dependent. It's not quite a state, but it's not quite a city that we treat like a city. It's sort of not quite. And we've had a policy that if it had an honest label -- an honest label -- toward Native American tribes would be something like sovereign dependence, or dependent sovereignty.

And what I have tried to do is not only to recognize the sovereignty of the tribes when it came to national resource and environmental issues and even issues where I maybe didn't always agree because it wasn't my place to decide -- some of the gaming issues and other things, the law gives it to the tribes to decide. I think there is this whole other sort of super structure of the way the federal government dealt with Native Americans relating mostly to their economic needs and their educational needs, which in my view was not focused enough toward economic and educational and health care and other empowerment issues, where I think we could -- we'll never have the right sort of sovereignty relationship until the tools for success are there.

And I really -- we worked at this for five years. We haven't quite got it down yet exactly right, but I think we're making a lot of progress. And I appreciate the help you've given us.

DR. FRANKLIN: Well, I really wanted to say, mr. President, that I very much appreciate this opportunity -- the opportunity not merely to hear all of these distinguished colleagues, but also to give me as the chair of your Advisory Board, to learn a great deal about what our colleagues are thinking and how important it is for us to absorb this kind of information.

I'll take it back -- unfortunately, not any of my colleagues on the board are here -- the Executive Director is here -- we'll be meeting tomorrow in Phoenix, or the next day -- taking back to these colleagues and associates these marvelous and very important suggestions that are made.

Now, I want to make one or two other comments. One is that I don't get quite as excited about affirmative action as some other people because I've lived with it all my life, and my parents have lived with it all their lives. The tables have been turned a bit in recent years, but when I was a graduate -- when I graduated from college and wanted to go to graduate school, affirmative action in Oklahoma said that I could not do it because race-based preferences were in the other direction, you see. And they could all go, all whites could go to the University of Oklahoma, but I could not go. Interesting enough, I could not even be in Norman, Oklahoma after sundown. There was a law there that prevented my being there.

So affirmative action is what it is in our history and we have to understand what it is. It's that now since it's been turned just a bit, there's a great deal of opposition to it. But as long as it was functioning the other way, there was nothing -- no opposition to it at all.

The other thing I wanted to observe, Mr. President, is that if somehow we could get the message out that things are going on now that are important in this area, that from the time you met with the Advisory Board in September, each month we've had very important initiatives that the President and his staff, his Cabinet members, others have taken. They haven't gotten much notice. The big housing initiative in September was very, very important. It was right down the line, right along the line that we wanted to go.

And yet, we haven't -- I talk to people, I say, what about -- do you know about this? No. It might get one line in the paper, but sometimes it gets no lines in the paper, particularly if something much more glamorous takes place that would attract attention.

So I know that you've been given many suggestions today about things that you can do, and I certainly hope that you will. I only hope that the communication of what you do will be sufficiently strong so that the nation will know. I can assure you that the Advisory Board will do what it can in this area, as in other areas. We'll be continuing to give whatever suggestions and advice we can not only to you, but the people in other levels of government.

And as I said, I'm cautiously optimistic that we can achieve something in this time that you've given us. I want everyone to know here that we're doing our best; we'll be in -- this time tomorrow, we'll be in Phoenix, Arizona, working with groups there. And we'll have some very important conversations with labor and with the corporate leaders. That's just the beginning.

We're taking this step by step, and I think in the final analysis, we will have covered many of the basis, if not all of them. Thank you.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Thank you very much. I also want to thank you for the extraordinary amount of time and energy you've put into this. It's been humbling to the rest of us. Tom.

SENATOR DASCHLE: Mr. President, I appreciate very much your giving me a chance to join in this discussion this afternoon. I came to learn, and I've learned a good deal.

We in Congress need to amplify your great leadership. In the time that I've been in Congress, no President has dedicated more effort and resources and credibility to the issue of race and the challenges we face in this diverse society than have you. And I don't think you've always had the support in Congress in the time that you've been President that you need to have to do the kinds of things that you would want to do. So to the extent that it is possible for the Democratic leadership in the Congress -- and I talked to Dick Gephardt about this -- to support your efforts, and to be as bold as you are, I hope we can demonstrate that commitment as effectively as you have.

South Dakota is not a very diverse state. We don't have the luxury of the rich culture that is so evident in our society. We have nine Indian reservations, and I can just say from the experience of reservation life, one doesn't have to visit long to know the extraordinary difficulties that we're facing, which regard to race, in every facet we have -- you mentioned North Dakota's unemployment rate. I wish they would calculate as well the aggregate unemployment rate when reservations are taken into account, because the irony is that while we have 1.9 percent unemployment maybe in North Dakota off reservation, we have 85 percent unemployment on reservation -- within those same borders.

And while we have dedicated resources to deal with it, we still have an unbelievable problem with regard to employment on reservations. I think probably -- it just blows any other statistic I can think of away. We all note the importance of education, but when it comes to community colleges on the reservations, we have a fraction of the resources on reservation for community colleges. I'm just going to use rough figures, but it's about 1,000 for community colleges versus 3,000 for other colleges around the country.

We have the highest infant mortality rates. We have the lowest rates of overall life expectancy. So we have every extreme statistic one can imagine right in our own backyards on reservations throughout the Midwest. And so the need is great, and your willingness to take on each and every one of these challenges with the diverse leadership that we find at this table is very moving to me and I very much appreciate being a part of it.

THE PRESIDENT: Before we go I'd like to just leave you with this thought, just sort of food for thought to keep you churning on this. First, I'll make a request. I would like for anything you can do to help us get more things that work in to the commission staff, so we can put it on the Internet and get it out, let people see that there are -- people always write or they e-mail us and say, what can we do? We'd like to say, here's something that's working somewhere. Why don't you do it? That's important.

Anything you can do to help us recruit any kind of new leadership to enlist in this cause, we'd like to have your help on that. But anyway, let me finish. Here's the thing I'd like to leave you with, just sort of as food for thought, to continue this discussion and try to narrow it further. And I may be unfairly summarizing someone else's work, so I'll try not to -- I hope I'm not being unfair. Bill Raspberry had an interesting column the other day in which he said this race effort is a big deal, and there are three things involved in it, and maybe nobody could ever deal with all three things. He said, first of all, there's the feeling of racial prejudice, how people feel about each other. And secondly, he said, there is the existence of illegal discrimination that our laws prohibit. And thirdly, there is the existence of outcomes which are dramatically different by race; your life chances and education, income, employment and ownership and health care, among other things, are dramatically different based on your race.

He said, I once thought we could fight all three of them in the '60s because we had an enemy, the Southern white people, and everybody else was on the same side. Now, at least when it comes to -- maybe everybody feels some discrimination towards somebody else or -- he says, now the problem is if we're all responsible for all this, it's hard to get enough allies to work on what really counts, which is changing the life experiences of the people, in terms of their outcomes. Most leaders of any group would give anything just to end whatever the disparities are in education and health care and employment, income, and ownership. And I'm sort of amplifying, but I think this is a fair representation of what he said.

So he made these suggestions. He said, what we need to do is get everybody on the same side, to start out, and then see if we can work back to -- so the logical extension -- this was not in there, but the logical extension of the argument was if you could get everybody working on the same side on what to do about job outcomes, maybe you would come back and have a broader consensus on an affirmative action program than you think, or at least the people who are against it would then recognize their moral responsibility to put something credible in its place.

I thought that was an interesting argument, when you deal with -- if you just deal with the three things I mentioned. It doesn't get you out of the primary obligation to enforce the laws against discrimination adequately, but it was an interesting way to think about it. If you ask everybody -- for example, if you ask everybody who is on both sides of this English as a second language issue in California to start with the disparate educational outcomes and work back, you might get to a different place.

One of the things that always bothers me about all these litmus test issues -- and I'm not innocent in this, so I'm not casting a stone -- is that dependent of which side of the litmus test you're on, if once you figure out your crowd's winning, then you go on and worry about something else. Then when you figure out -- when you realize your side's losing, you can't worry about anything else; but you can't have an honest conversation, because you're trying too hard to keep from getting killed in the next referendum or whatever.

In terms of the affirmative action referendum, all I can tell you is, I made a couple of statements in California on 209, and maybe I could have done more, and I think if the thing had gone on three more weeks, it would have come out differently on 209. I'm glad I was asked to be a part of the effort against the repeal in Houston and it succeeded; it's the only one that has. But the real issue is if you left it alone and no one ever debated it again, we've had enough experience to know that it is insufficient to change the disparate outcomes. So what if we started on trying to figure out how we could close the gaps and work back, we might find that we had a lot more agreement than we thought.

Now, in the initial polling -- I think this will change a lot, as the referendum is debated. And I confess, I have not read exactly what -- the initial polling in California, on the English, the bilingual education initiative, is deeply troubling to defenders of bilingual education because the initial polling has 70 percent of Hispanic voters voting for the initiative.

Now, what does that mean? That doesn't necessarily mean that they understand the implications of this initiative and they want to vote for it. But what it does mean is that Hispanic parents are concerned about whether their children stay in the programs for too long, or whether the programs are sufficiently effective to let them learn everything else as well as they need to learn.

So instead of getting into the fight, could we at least start with dealing with what people's perception of the problem is, then work back to the solution; then if you do that, you've got some alternative to put in place if you want to fight the initiative. IN other words, you don't have to play their game; you don't have to let it be a wedge issue if you decide to articulate it in a way that forces everybody else to come talk to you about what the real issue is -- which is, you want all these children whose first language is

not English to be able to learn everything they need to learn on time as much as possible, and to be English-proficient, if they're going to live in this country, as quickly as they can be.

But there are -- depending on what age you come here and what you're situation is and what your native language is, and how difficult it is and what the subject is, it is more or less difficult to learn certain things in English within certain time periods. In other words, it's a complicated issue. But there is a broad perception that the bilingual services have become, if you will, institutionalized in a way that carry kids with them longer than they should be and may make them too dependent on it.

So why don't we analyze the facts and find out what they are, and then try to work back from that, instead of immediately joining the issue; but do it quickly enough so that the people of California have some chance of having an honest debate. It isn't just history that people are deprived of; very often they are deprived of what the facts are on the issues they're debating. So all they can do is go on what they think their basic values are and their basic instincts.

And we get so caught up -- and, believe me, I share the frustration that Dr. Franklin said about what the voters don't know. It's very hard to pierce through the public consciousness and to do a sustained public education campaign in the absence of some great conflict.

I'll never forget, 10 days before our congressional

debacle in 1994, a man I didn't know very well who was a pollster just spontaneously sent me this survey he did -- or at least I wasn't working with him at the time, and I was shocked. He said, here are 10 things that if all the voters knew them would change the outcome of this congressional election, which is about to be terrible for you, if they just -- maybe there were eight things on the list. But anyway, there were more than five things that we had done that absolutely nobody knew about. So this is a generic problem in a society as big and complex as ours being bombarded from all edges.

But I just ask you to think about that. Suppose we did that with health care. Suppose we did that with education. For example, on the education issue, some people say, well, maybe this 10 percent solution that Texas adopted would work on the affirmative action. Well, the answer is it might well work in most states for admission to college, but it wouldn't do anything on the graduate school front. So what's your answer on graduate school?

There are a lot of these things that I'd just like to see -- I'd like to see more, instead of throwing barricades over the wall at one another, if we could start with what the problem is and work back, I really believe we can make an enormous amount of progress in this country, because most Americans who get caught in the middle on these referendums, where their values are pulling them one way and you're trying to -- and the rhetoric is pulling them one way, and you're trying to cram information as quickly as you can before election time comes and all that kind of stuff. Most Americans really don't like the fact that we have disparate outcomes, and most Americans think anybody that's working hard and needs a hand up ought to get it to have a fair chance.

So I think, to go back to what you said about talking to the Speaker on this issue, I think I'm going to try to follow this tack in dealing with our friends who disagree with us on so much. Let's see if we can't start with that and work back and see how much agreement we can make. I think we may do better than people think.

Thank you. This is great.

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7:25 P.M. EST

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