

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 8, 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR PROSPECTIVE SPEECHWRITERS

FROM: MICHAEL WALDMAN 
Assistant to the President and Director of Speechwriting

SUBJECT: WRITING TEST

Thank you for cooperating with this exercise. To give it a real feel, we want you to draft what could be an actual speech for the President, under circumstances similar to what you would face on the job.

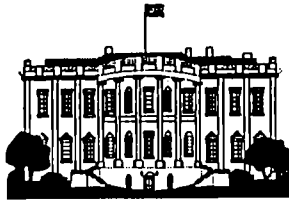
Please prepare remarks for the President to deliver at the dedication of a hypothetical Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial on the National Mall. This memorial, recently approved by Congress (this is true!), will be a block of granite near the Lincoln Memorial, on which will be chiseled a passage from the "I Have a Dream Speech." A dedication ceremony provides a valuable opportunity not only to reflect on a person and on his or her place in history but also on contemporary challenges. The contemporary challenge you should address, naturally enough, is that of race. In what ways are black and white Americans living up to Dr. King's dream? In what ways are we failing? Your speech can and should touch on the President's Initiative on Race. But please do not make your speech a one-year wrap-up of the Initiative's activities.

We have attached for reference several of the President's previous speeches of dedication, and also some dealing with race. You will notice that the President usually starts with some acknowledgments, jokes, and personal reminiscences. Do not try this at home.

Feel free to lift some discrete pieces of rhetoric; there is no need to reinvent every wheel. But don't rely too heavily on what the President has already said. Your speech should have much value-added material, including illuminating anecdotes or quotations and new lines of logic. We will also be looking – or, more accurately, listening – for rhythm. Your speech should rise off the page with the lofty cadences of a ceremonial speech.

Finally, remember that this is not a speech about race alone, but about what we do in each generation to renew American values.

Your draft should be between 1,000 and 1,500 words. Please spend no more than two days on this assignment, including the time you spend performing whatever research you deem necessary. Since this is supposed to be like the real world, please feel free to call Lowell Weiss or Josh Gottheimer at 456-2777 with any questions. Please fax your completed speech to Josh Gottheimer at 456-2505. Thank you.



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Comments _____

Date: _____

Number of Pages (including cover): 2

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE CONGREGATION OF ST. PAUL'S AME CHURCH
TAMPA, FLORIDA
NOVEMBER 3, 1996

Thank you. Thank you very much. I feel good today, do you? (Applause.) Thank you. Reverend Washington; Presiding Elder Reverend Andrews; Governor Chiles; Congressman and Mrs. Gibbons. Our fine congressional candidate, Jim Davis, welcome, sir. We're proud of you. (Applause.) To my other friends who have joined us in this church today, and to all of you, thank you for making us feel so welcome here in the house of the Lord.

I was sort of tired when I came in and I got into the music, and then we started singing about the little shack by the railroad track -- (laughter) -- and I said a lot of us in this house of God have lived in a little shack by the railroad track. And we did have a good time. My grandfather used to joke with me that if we didn't have any better sense than to know we were poor we could have a good time. (Laughter.) And we're having a good time today.

I'm honored to be in this historic pulpit which has been graced by Martin Luther King, Thurgood Marshall, Adam Clayton Powell, Jackie Robinson. I am humbled to be here. And I would like to say, first and foremost, I thank you, all of you, for giving me the chance to serve as the President of the greatest country in human history for the last four years. Thank you. Thank you. (Applause.)

In just two days all of us together will go to the polls to select the last President of this unbelievable 20th century -- the century of the civil rights movement, the century of two great world wars and the Great Depression, the century of the Cold War, a century of more bloodshed than any in history, but a century of remarkable progress, as more and more people move toward the realization that all of us are created equal in the eyes of God are entitled to live as equals in the eyes of God. The masters of our fate, save only in subjugation to our God.

And with a vast new century stretching before us we know that the world is changing in ways we cannot fully understand. Just think about all the changes you have seen here in your community in the last four or five years. Think about the changes technology is bringing in the way we work and live and relate to one another and the rest of the world. Think about how much more involved in the rest of the world we are today than ever before.

We have a decision to make that goes way beyond the vote on Tuesday. And, frankly, it goes way beyond Democrats and Republicans, way beyond even the choice for President. It goes far out into the future and deep into the human heart. We have to decide as a people how we're going to keep walking into that 21st century and whether we will say to each other, you're on your own or we're going to build a bridge together so that everyone has the tools to make the most of his or her own life.

(Applause.) And we have to decide whether we're going to build that bridge on the shifting

sands of division or on the strong walk of common ground. I believe I know what your decision should be.

I was so glad to hear that wonderful passage from John about the Pool of Bethesda. When I went to the Holy Land for the first time about 15 years ago, I was looking for the Pool of Bethesda because it's a great remembrance that when the angel whirled the waters and made it possible for people to go there and find healing power, Jesus thought the healing power ought to be given even to the one who could not even get to the pool. No one was left out. Even the one who could not even get to the pool was given the healing power of the Spirit. That is a lesson for us.

When people tell me, well, some people just aren't going to make it. I say that's true, but it ought to be their fault, not ours. (Applause.) It ought to be their fault, not ours. We can't give anybody a guarantee in life. Even the man crawling to the pool had to believe. His body wouldn't move, but his mind would. So I don't seek to give anybody a guarantee, but I think everybody ought to have a chance. (Applause.)

You know after the events of the last week, when we are divided we defeat ourselves. How heartbreaking it is on this Lord's day that there is still no peace in the Holy Land. A year ago tomorrow, the Prime Minister of Israel was murdered by one of his own people because he sought to bring peace to the Holy Land, the place where the three great religions of the world that believe we are all created by one God, all of us and all of our differences are created by one God, claim as holy, they're still fighting over religion.

In Bosnia, a place where the ethnic groups are divided into three by accident of political and military history, not because they are biologically distinguishable, they're still fighting over their differences. Science has not gotten in the way of believing that they are inherently different. That's what they believe. In Africa today, where Hutus and the Tutsis share poor lands, with poor children who desperately need the product of earnest, sustained, loving, cooperative labor, somehow find it more profitable to slaughter each other and make the land poorer.

Well, that's why when our federal government employees are singled out for hatred. When a horrible tragedy like Oklahoma City occurs, when a black or a white church is burned or a synagogue or a mosque is defaced in America, we must stand against that, because we know that we are all in this together; that we are going to rise or fall together; that we have a duty to help each other in our work, in our family, in our lives as citizens -- a duty to live in a way that enable us to find common ground and a responsibility to give everyone else the opportunity to go over that bridge with us into tomorrow.
(Applause.)

Now, President Lincoln once paraphrased Jesus's sermon in St. Matthew when he said, "The house divided against itself cannot stand." I didn't have time to go back and read it today, but I believe that the whole verse says, "A city and a house divided against itself cannot stand" -- not Tampa, not St. Petersburg, not Washington, D.C., not the United States of America.

Four years ago, when I asked for this job, I was worried because our people were divided and dispirited and as a result, we were not doing together what we should have been doing to lift our economy or deal with the whole array of problems plaguing our society involving so many of our children, of their futures.

Now, I know I am preaching to a choir today -- (laughter) -- but in the next two days we need the choir to preach. (Laughter and applause.) We will never be what we ought to be if we allow our country to be led by those who believe we are better off on our own and who seek to pursue that path by driving wedges between us and exploiting our fears and convincing us that our brothers and sisters of different races, different faiths, different walks of life are our inherent enemies. That is a prescription for disaster in the Holy Land, in Bosnia, in Africa and in the United States. And we have only become greater at each stage along the way because every time we had to face the music we chose common ground over the shifting sands of division. And that is what we must do again in this season of our decision.

We have seen the results of the politics of division and gridlock, but now we have seen the results of the politics of opportunity and responsibility and the common ground we seek to build in our American community. We have more jobs, a lower deficit, higher growth, the highest rate of homeownership in 15 years, the highest rates of homeownership and small business ownership among African Americans, other minorities and women in the history of America. (Applause.) It turns out giving everybody a chance -- not a guarantee, but a chance -- is good for the rest of us.

While all these big numbers were occurring, we've seen the biggest decline in inequality among working people in 27 years, the biggest drop in child poverty in 20 years, the lowest rates of poverty ever recorded for senior citizens and African Americans since the statistics have been kept. It is the right thing to do for all the rest of us to see that everybody has a chance, just as the man struggling for the pool at Bethesda was given his chance. (Applause.)

We are seeing the benefits of greater responsibility: the welfare rolls are down; the crime rate is at a 10-year low. We see in so many other areas -- four years of declining pregnancy, the first drop in out-of-wedlock pregnancy in 20 years, community efforts building up all over the country, more and more people going in our schools to tell our children that drugs are wrong and illegal and can kill you.

More and more citizen efforts working with the police to try to help keep the streets safer. More and more communities doing things to try to help our young people stay out of trouble like curfew policies or even school uniform policies and other things. These experiments going on in America, people working together to try to find ways to be responsible citizens. And every place it is done we are better off.

We're seeing a deeper sense of community -- trying to preserve our natural environment for

our children and our grandchildren. I thank Governor Chiles for the work he has done on the Everglades. Every person in Florida in the farthest northern corner of Florida has a stake in that. Every person in the farthest northwest corner of America has a stake in saving our common heritage.

We see it in so many other ways. We have been moved by the enormous upswelling of American conviction in the aftermath of Oklahoma City, the reaction to the church burnings being so negative. Our common sense, whenever it prevails to bring us together as a community, makes us stronger. And I really believe we're on the verge of the most exciting period in human history. But we can't forget what brought us here because it will take us home. So the trick for us is to find out with God's wisdom how to seize all these fabulous opportunities that are out there in a way that enables us to move closer to our values.

It is really true that none of us live by bread alone. I don't know any serious person who's lived long enough who believes that with all the bread in the world you can be really happy. (Laughter.) On the other hand, it's important not to be too self-righteous. I always say one of my rules of politics is whenever you hear a person standing on a corner screaming this is not a money problem, sure as the world he's talking about somebody else's problem, not his. (Applause.)

So we need to be a little humble about this. But we have work to do. If you think about what our children can do, if we could put every child in America -- from the poorest inner-cities to the most remote rural areas -- in a classroom with a computer that was hooked up to the entire Information Superhighway, then for the first time ever every child in America would have access to the same learning in the same way at the same time. That would revolutionize what our children could do, all of our children. (Applause.)

If we could put a million citizens with 100,000 more police and walk the blocks together we could have not four years, but eight years of declining crime and all of our children could feel safe on their streets and in their schools and in their neighborhoods. We can reclaim our streets. Four years ago millions of people did not believe we could ever do anything about rising crime. Now we have no excuse. We know we can bring it down for four years, but we know we have to have about four more years before it will be tolerable to live in still a lot of our places. But we can make our streets safe again, we know that. But we'll have to do that together. And we can do that in the future.

We know that we're breaking down the frontiers of ignorance in so many ways that will help us to cure cancer, that will help us to find ways to grow our economy while we improve our environment, that will help us to find ways to create jobs for people who have never been able to get them before. But we have work to do. I signed a law that says that everybody on welfare who's able-bodied will keep getting health care and food and child care if they go to work; but if they're able-bodied, they've got to trade the welfare check for a paycheck in two years. That's the

law. (Applause.)

But now we have figured out something we haven't really been able to figure out for a long time, which is how to give jobs to people. You can't tell people they have to go to work unless there's work for them to find. So we've got work to do. (Applause.)

We know we've got work to do in building our American family. We know there's still too many kids who don't think drugs will kill them. We know that 3,000 children start smoking every day and a thousand will die sooner as a result, even though it's illegal. We know that even though we have removed a lot of assault weapons from our streets and made it harder for criminals to get guns there's still too many completely innocent children being killed. We know that even though we have demonstrated in our administration that you can have diversity and excellence -- in my appointments to the Cabinet, to the federal branch and throughout the country -- there are still too many people who are literally afraid to deal as equals with people who are different from them. We know that. (Applause.)

We know that there are still too many white people who wouldn't feel as comfortable as I do sitting in this church today. And that's wrong. (Applause.) They read the same Bible you do. They claim the same savior you do. They ought to feel at home here. We've got work to do. And you ought to feel at home in their churches. (Applause.)

So I say to you, we have work to do. Our best days are still ahead. But we must always marry our progress to the realization of our values. We have to take advantage of progress to move closer to living as we say we believe. We have work to do.

And as we get closer and closer and closer to the election, the work passes from my hands to yours again. It's a very humbling thing for me, you know. (Laughter.) If you ever doubt whether the people are the boss in the end in a democracy, run for office. (Laughter and applause.) Run for office.

(Applause.) Even the President is a hired hand-- (laughter) --trying to get a contract renewed. (Laughter.) It's a humbling thing. There is a power in freedom that you cannot underestimate. We take it for granted.

You know, now, in the last few years, for the first time in all of human history, more people are living in democracies on the face of the earth than dictatorships. It's the first time in all of human history, just in the last few years.

Think how far your ancestor walked, think how many bled and died to give you the right to vote. (Applause.) And think what a blessing it is that you are anchored in what you believe and that you are not subject to the wild winds that often blow through the airwaves at election time.

I ask you to let me share this story as I close. In 1992, when I was seeking this office, I was in a church much like this in Cleveland one night. It was a warm night, and the church was

without air conditioner -- at least the air conditioner was unequal to the hot air all the public officials were spewing out. (Laughter.) And we were packed in that church. And it was one of those meetings, you know, where everybody there talked but three people and they went home mad. (Laughter.) Everybody talked. We all got to talk.

And the temperature rose. And people started wanting to get out. And the great pastor in that church stood up -- who is a friend of mine, Reverend Otis Moss, one of America's great preachers; some of you may know him. And he started talking to the people about the simple act of voting. And he said, you know, my father could not vote, the law did not allow him to vote. And, finally, one day the law was changed and he could vote. And he walked seven miles to the polling place. But the people did not want my father to vote, and they said, Mr. Moss, you're at the wrong place.

So they sent him to another place, and he walked a couple more miles. And they said, Mr. Moss, you're still at the wrong place. And they sent him to another place and he had to walk a couple more miles. And when they got there they said, Mr. Moss, the polls have closed. And he said, when my daughter was old enough to vote I took her to the polling place and we went together, to two voting machines side-by-side. And I know you're not supposed to linger in the ballot booth. But I couldn't vote. I put my ear right next to that booth until I heard my daughter vote. We don't miss votes at our house, he said. (Applause.)

This is a day that the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. And let us remember that here on Earth God's work must truly be our own. We have work to do. But if we do it and if we remember, like Jesus, that even the man who could not reach the pool at Bethesda, we will all go forward on that bridge to the 21st century together.

Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)

END

9:07 A.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE

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

For Immediate Release

January 15, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE WALL STREET PROJECT CONFERENCE

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

2:15 P.M. EST

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

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

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

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

Congresswoman Meeks and Congressman Jackson and others have done to help us. I'm proud that you have people like Jack Kemp and some Republican business leaders who are here. I'm proud of the fact that you have John Sweeney and Percy Sutton and my friend, Ron Burkle and others here. I'm proud of the fact that you have tried to reach across all the lines that divide.

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

of rural America.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now, some of them are just down the street. Treasurer McCall over there, he manages New York's money. He'd have more to manage if the unemployment rate in New York weren't twice the national average. He'd have more money to rebuild these old schools; more money to give all

these kids in troubled neighborhoods after-school programs and summer school programs and opportunities they need to develop their full abilities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the past five years -- I'd like to say one thing about the banking community that I think is important -- we've worked very hard to both streamline and strengthen the Community Reinvestment Act. It was also

under fire, has been under fire, still is under fire by some. That Community Reinvestment Act has been on the books for more than 20 years, but 95 percent of all the financial commitments made under the law in the last 20 years have been made in the last five years. That's more than \$1 trillion in long-term commitment to invest in people. (Applause.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Next, our SBA -- Aida's SBA -- (laughter) -- has helped to transform companies such as America On Line from small start ups to household

names. That's right, AOL started with an SBA loan. Last summer the Vice President challenged the SBA to do the same for businesses in underserved areas. In response, the SBA will strengthen its outreach efforts; offer new financing terms, such as delayed payment of interest on loans; and waive regulatory requirements to promote investments in targeted communities. (Applause.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

END 2:43 P.M. EST

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 races 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 of 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 resegregate 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 no 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)

The White House
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

July 19, 1995

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The Rotunda
National Archives

11:40 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. To the members of Congress who are here; members of the Cabinet and the administration, my fellow Americans: In recent weeks I have begun a conversation with the American people about our fate and our duty to prepare our nation not only to meet the new century, but to live and lead in a world transformed to a degree seldom seen in all of our history. Much of this change is good, but it is not all good, and all of us are affected by it. Therefore, we must reach beyond our fears and our divisions to a new time of great and common purpose.

Our challenge is twofold: first, to restore the American dream of opportunity and the American value of responsibility; and second, to bring our country together amid all our diversity into a stronger community, so that we can find common ground and move forward as one.

More than ever these two endeavors are inseparable. I am absolutely convinced we cannot restore economic opportunity or solve our social problems unless we find a way to bring the American people together. To bring our people together we must openly and honestly deal with the issues that divide us. Today I want to discuss one of those issues: affirmative action.

It is, in a way, ironic that this issue should be divisive today, because affirmative action began 25 years ago by a Republican president with bipartisan support. It began simply as a means to an end of enduring national purpose -- equal opportunity for all Americans.

So let us today trace the roots of affirmative action in our never-ending search for equal opportunity. Let us determine what it is and what it isn't. Let us see where it's worked and where it hasn't, and ask ourselves what we need to do now. Along the way, let us remember always that finding common ground as we move toward the 21st century depends fundamentally on our shared commitment to equal opportunity for all Americans. It is a moral imperative, a constitutional mandate, and a legal necessity.

There could be no better place for this discussion than the National Archives, for within these walls are America's bedrocks of our common ground -- the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights. No paper is as lasting as the words these documents contain. So we put them in these special cases to protect the parchment from the elements. No building is as solid as the principles these documents embody, but we sure tried to build one with these metal doors 11 inches thick to keep them safe, for these documents are America's only crown jewels. But the best place of all to hold these words and these principles is the one place in which they can never fade and never grow old -- in the stronger chambers of our hearts.

Beyond all else, our country is a set of convictions: We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Our whole history can be seen first as an effort to preserve these rights, and then as an effort to make them real in the lives of all our citizens. We know that from the beginning, there was a great gap between the plain meaning of our creed and the meaner reality of our daily lives. Back then, only white male property owners could vote. Black slaves were not even counted as whole people, and Native Americans were regarded as little more than an obstacle to our great national progress. No wonder Thomas Jefferson, reflecting on slavery, said he trembled to think God is just.

On the 200th anniversary of our great Constitution, Justice Thurgood Marshall, the grandson of a slave, said, "The government our founders devised was defective from the start, requiring several amendments, a civil war, and momentous social transformation to attain the system of constitutional government and its respect for the individual freedoms and human rights we hold as fundamental today."

Emancipation, women's suffrage, civil rights, voting rights, equal rights, the struggle for the rights of the disabled --all these and other struggles are milestones on America's often rocky, but fundamentally righteous journey to close the gap between the ideals enshrined in these treasures here in the National Archives and the reality of our daily lives.

I first came to this very spot where I'm standing today 32 years ago this month. I was a

16-year-old delegate to the American Legion Boys Nation. Now, that summer was a high-water mark for our national journey. That was the summer that President Kennedy ordered Alabama National Guardsmen to enforce a court order to allow two young blacks to enter the University of Alabama. As he told our nation, "Every American ought to have the right to be treated as he would wish to be treated; as one would wish his children to be treated."

Later that same summer, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Martin Luther King told Americans of his dream that one day the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners would sit down together at the table of brotherhood; that one day his four little children would be judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. His words captured the hearts and steeled the wills of millions of Americans. Some of them sang with him in the hot sun that day. Millions more like me listened and wept in the privacy of their homes.

It's hard to believe where we were just three decades ago. When I came up here to Boys Nation and we had this mock congressional session I was one of only three or four southerners who would even vote for the civil rights plank. That's largely because of my family. My grandfather had a grade school education and ran a grocery store across the street from the cemetery in Hope, Arkansas, where my parents and my grandparents are buried. Most of his customers were black, were poor, and were working people. As a child in that store I saw that people of different races could treat each other with respect and dignity.

But I also saw that the black neighborhood across the street was the only one in town where the streets weren't paved. And when I returned to that neighborhood in the late '60s to see a woman who had cared for me as a toddler, the streets still weren't paved. A lot of you know that I am an ardent movie-goer. As a child I never went to a movie where I could sit next to a black American. They were always sitting upstairs.

In the 1960s, believe it or not, there were still a few courthouse squares in my state where the rest rooms were marked "white" and "colored." I graduated from a segregated high school seven years after President Eisenhower integrated Little Rock Central High School. And when President Kennedy barely carried my home state in 1960, the poll tax system was still alive and well there.

Even though my grandparents were in a minority, being poor, Southern whites who were pro-civil rights, I think most other people knew better than to think the way they did. And those who were smart enough to act differently, discovered a lesson that we ought to remember today: Discrimination is not just morally wrong, it hurts everybody.

In 1960, Atlanta, Georgia, in reaction to all the things that were going on all across the South, adopted the motto, "The city too busy to hate." And however imperfectly over the years, they tried to live by it. I am convinced that Atlanta's success -- it now is home to more foreign corporations than any other American city, and one year from today it will begin to host the

Olympics -- that that success all began when people got too busy to hate.

The lesson we learned was a hard one. When we allow people to pit us against one another or spend energy denying opportunity based on our differences, everyone is held back. But when we give all Americans a chance to develop and use their talents, to be full partners in our common enterprise, then everybody is pushed forward.

My experiences with discrimination are rooted in the South and in the legacy slavery left. I also lived with a working mother and a working grandmother when women's work was far rarer and far more circumscribed than it is today. But we all know there are millions of other stories -- those of Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Americans, people with disabilities, others against whom fingers have been pointed. Many of you have your own stories, and that's why you're here today -- people who were denied the right to develop and use their full human potential. And their progress, too, is a part of our journey to make the reality of America consistent with the principles just behind me here.

Thirty years ago in this city, you didn't see many people of color or women making their way to work in the morning in business clothes, or serving in substantial numbers in powerful positions in Congress or at the White House, or making executive decisions every day in businesses. In fact, even the employment want ads were divided, men on one side and women on the other.

It was extraordinary then to see women or people of color as television news anchors, or, believe it or not, even in college sports. There were far fewer women in minorities as job supervisors, or firefighters, or police officers, or doctors, or lawyers, or college professors, or in many other jobs that offer stability and honor and integrity to family life.

A lot has changed, and it did not happen as some sort of random evolutionary drift. It took hard work and sacrifices and countless acts of courage and conscience by millions of Americans. It took the political courage and statesmanship of Democrats and Republicans alike, the vigilance and compassion of courts and advocates in and out of government committed to the Constitution and to equal protection and to equal opportunity. It took the leadership of people in business who knew that in the end we would all be better. It took the leadership of people in labor unions who knew that working people had to be reconciled.

Some people, like Congressman Lewis there, put their lives on the line. Other people lost their lives. And millions of Americans changed their own lives and put hate behind them. As a result, today all our lives are better. Women have become a major force in business and political life, and far more able to contribute to their families incomes. A true and growing black middle class has emerged. Higher education has literally been revolutionized, with women and racial and ethnic minorities attending once overwhelmingly white and sometimes all male schools.

In communities across our nation police departments now better reflect the make-up of

those whom they protect. A generation of professionals now serve as role models for young women and minority youth. Hispanics and newer immigrant populations are succeeding in making America stronger.

For an example of where the best of our future lies just think about our space program and the stunning hook-up with the Russian space station this month. Let's remember that that program, the world's finest, began with heroes like Alan Shepard and Senator John Glenn, but today it's had American heroes like Sally Ride, Ellen Ochoa, Leroy Child, Guy Bluford and other outstanding, completely qualified women and minorities.

How did this happen? Fundamentally, because we opened our hearts and minds and changed our ways. But not without pressure -- the pressure of court decisions, legislation, executive action, and the power of examples in the public and private sector. Along the way we learned that laws alone do not change society; that old habits and thinking patterns are deeply ingrained and die hard; that more is required to really open the doors of opportunity. Our search to find ways to move more quickly to equal opportunity led to the development of what we now call affirmative action.

The purpose of affirmative action is to give our nation a way to finally address the systemic exclusion of individuals of talent on the basis of their gender or race from opportunities to develop, perform, achieve and contribute. Affirmative action is an effort to develop a systematic approach to open the doors of education, employment and business development opportunities to qualified individuals who happen to be members of groups that have experienced longstanding and persistent discrimination.

It is a policy that grew out of many years of trying to navigate between two unacceptable pasts. One was to say simply that we declared discrimination illegal and that's enough. We saw that that way still relegated blacks with college degrees to jobs as railroad porters, and kept women with degrees under a glass ceiling with a lower paycheck.

The other path was simply to try to impose change by leveling draconian penalties on employers who didn't meet certain imposed, ultimately arbitrary, and sometimes unachievable quotas. That, too, was rejected out of a sense of fairness.

So a middle ground was developed that would change an inequitable status quo gradually, but firmly, by building the pool of qualified applicants for college, for contracts, for jobs, and giving more people the chance to learn, work and earn. When affirmative action is done right, it is flexible, it is fair, and it works.

I know some people are honestly concerned about the times affirmative action doesn't work, when it's done in the wrong way. And I know there are times when some employers don't use it in the right way. They may cut corners and treat a flexible goal as a quota. They may give opportunities to people who are unqualified instead of those who deserve it. They may, in so

doing, allow a different kind of discrimination. When this happens, it is also wrong. But it isn't affirmative action, and it is not legal.

So when our administration finds cases of that sort, we will enforce the law aggressively. The Justice Department files hundreds of cases every year, attacking discrimination in employment, including suits on behalf of white males. Most of these suits, however, affect women and minorities for a simple reason -- because the vast majority of discrimination in America is still discrimination against them. But the law does require fairness for everyone and we are determined to see that that is exactly what the law delivers. (Applause.)

Let me be clear about what affirmative action must not mean and what I won't allow it to be. It does not mean -- and I don't favor -- the unjustified preference of the unqualified over the qualified of any race or gender. It doesn't mean -- and I don't favor -- numerical quotas. It doesn't mean -- and I don't favor -- rejection or selection of any employee or student solely on the basis of race or gender without regard to merit.

Like many business executives and public servants, I owe it to you to say that my views on this subject are, more than anything else, the product of my personal experience. I have had experience with affirmative action, nearly 20 years of it now, and I know it works.

When I was Attorney General of my home state, I hired a record number of women and African American lawyers -- every one clearly qualified and exceptionally hardworking. As Governor, I appointed more women to my Cabinet and state boards than any other governor in the state's history, and more African Americans than all the governors in the state's history combined. And no one ever questioned their qualifications or performance. And our state was better and stronger because of their service.

As President, I am proud to have the most diverse administration in history in my Cabinet, my agencies and my staff. And I must say, I have been surprised at the criticism I have received from some quarters in my determination to achieve this.

In the last two and a half years, the most outstanding example of affirmative action in the United States, the Pentagon, has opened 260,000 positions for women who serve in our Armed Forces. I have appointed more women and minorities to the federal bench than any other president, more than the last two combined. And yet, far more of our judicial appointments have received the highest rating from the American Bar Association than any other administration since those ratings have been given.

In our administration many government agencies are doing more business with qualified firms run by minorities and women. The Small Business Administration has reduced its budget by 40 percent, doubled its loan outputs, dramatically increased the number of loans to women and minority small business people, without reducing the number of loans to white businessowners who happen to be male, and without changing the loan standards for a single,

solitary application. Quality and diversity can go hand in hand, and they must. (Applause.)

Let me say that affirmative action has also done more than just open the doors of opportunity to individual Americans. Most economists who study it agree that affirmative action has also been an important part of closing gaps in economic opportunity in our society, thereby strengthening the entire economy.

A group of distinguished business leaders told me just a couple of days ago that their companies are stronger and their profits are larger because of the diversity and the excellence of their work forces achieved through intelligent and fair affirmative action programs. And they said we have gone far beyond anything the government might require us to do because managing diversity and individual opportunity and being fair to everybody is the key to our future economic success in the global marketplace.

Now, there are those who say, my fellow Americans, that even good affirmative action programs are no longer needed; that it should be enough to resort to the courts or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in cases of actual, provable, individual discrimination because there is no longer any systematic discrimination in our society. In deciding how to answer that let us consider the facts.

The unemployment rate for African Americans remains about twice that of whites. The Hispanic rate is still much higher. Women have narrowed the earnings gap, but still make only 72 percent as much as men do for comparable jobs. The average income for an Hispanic woman with a college degree is still less than the average income of a white man with a high school diploma.

According to the recently completed Glass Ceiling Report, sponsored by Republican members of Congress, in the nation's largest companies only six-tenths of one percent of senior management positions are held by African Americans, four-tenths of a percent by Hispanic Americans, three-tenths of a percent by Asian Americans; women hold between three and five percent of these positions. White males make up 43 percent of our work force, but hold 95 percent of these jobs.

Just last week, the Chicago Federal Reserve Bank reported that black home loan applicants are more than twice as likely to be denied credit as whites with the same qualifications; and that Hispanic applicants are more than one and a half times as likely to be denied loans as whites with the same qualifications.

Last year alone the federal government received more than 90,000 complaints of employment discrimination based on race, ethnicity or gender. Less than three percent were for reverse discrimination.

Evidence abounds in other ways of the persistence of the kind of bigotry that can affect

the way we think even if we're not conscious of it, in hiring and promotion and business and educational decisions.

Crimes and violence based on hate against Asians, Hispanics, African Americans and other minorities are still with us. And, I'm sorry to say, that the worst and most recent evidence of this involves a recent report of federal law enforcement officials in Tennessee attending an event literally overflowing with racism -- a sickening reminder of just how pervasive these kinds of attitudes still are.

By the way, I want to tell you that I am committed to finding the truth about what happened there and to taking appropriate action. And I want to say that if anybody who works in federal law enforcement thinks that that kind of behavior is acceptable, they ought to think about working someplace else. (Applause.)

Now, let's get to the other side of the argument. If affirmative action has worked and if there is evidence that discrimination still exists on a wide scale in ways that are conscious and unconscious, then why should we get rid of it as many people are urging? Some question the effectiveness or the fairness of particular affirmative action programs. I say to all of you, those are fair questions, and they prompted the review of our affirmative action programs, about which I will talk in a few moments.

Some question the fundamental purpose of the effort. There are people who honestly believe that affirmative action always amounts to group preferences over individual merit; that affirmative action always leads to reverse discrimination; that ultimately, therefore, it demeans those who benefit from it and discriminates against those who are not helped by it.

I just have to tell you that all of you have to decide how you feel about that, and all of our fellow countrymen and women have to decide as well. But I believe if there are no quotas, if we give no opportunities to unqualified people, if we have no reverse discrimination, and if, when the problem ends -- the program ends, that criticism is wrong. That's what I believe. But we should have this debate and everyone should ask the question. (Applause.)

Now let's deal with what I really think is behind so much of this debate today. There are a lot of people who oppose affirmative action today who supported it for a very long time. I believe they are responding to the sea change in the experiences that most Americans have in the world in which we live.

If you say now you're against affirmative action because the government is using its power or the private sector is using its power to help minorities at the expense of the majority, that gives you a way of explaining away the economic distress that a majority of Americans honestly feel. It gives you a way of turning their resentment against the minorities or against a particular government program, instead of having an honest debate about how we all got into the fix we're in and what we're all going to do together to get out of it.

That explanation, the affirmative action explanation for the fix we're in is just wrong. It is just wrong. Affirmative action did not cause the great economic problems of the American middle class. (Applause.) And because most minorities or women are either members of that middle class or people who are poor who are struggling to get into it, we must also admit that affirmative action alone won't solve the problems of minorities and women who seek to be a part of the American Dream. To do that, we have to have an economic strategy that reverses the decline in wages and the growth of poverty among working people. Without that, women, minorities, and white males will all be in trouble in the future.

But it is wrong to use the anxieties of the middle class to divert the American people from the real causes of their economic distress -- the sweeping historic changes taking all the globe in its path, and the specific policies or lack of them in our own country which have aggravated those challenges. It is simply wrong to play politics with the issue of affirmative action and divide our country at a time when, if we're really going to change things, we have to be united. (Applause.)

I must say, I think it is ironic that some of those -- not all, but some of those who call for an end to affirmative action also advocate policies which will make the real economic problems of the anxious middle class even worse. They talk about opportunity and being for equal opportunity for everyone, and then they reduce investment in equal opportunity on an evenhanded basis. For example, if the real goal is economic opportunity for all Americans, why in the world would we reduce our investment in education from Head Start to affordable college loans? Why don't we make college loans available to every American instead? (Applause.)

If the real goal is empowering all middle class Americans and empowering poor people to work their way into the middle class without regard to race or gender, why in the world would the people who advocate that turn around and raise taxes on our poorest working families, or reduce the money available for education and training when they lose their jobs or they're living on poverty wages, or increase the cost of housing for lower-income, working people with children?

Why would we do that? If we're going to empower America, we have to do more than talk about it, we have to do it. And we surely have learned that we cannot empower all Americans by a simple strategy of taking opportunity away from some Americans. (Applause.)

So to those who use this as a political strategy to divide us, we must say, no. We must say, no. (Applause.) But to those who raise legitimate questions about the way affirmative action works, or who raise the larger question about the genuine problems and anxieties of all the American people and their sense of being left behind and treated unfairly, we must say, yes, you are entitled to answers to your questions. We must say yes to that.

Now, that's why I ordered this review of all of our affirmative action programs; a review to look at the facts, not the politics of affirmative action. This review concluded that affirmative action remains a useful tool for widening economic and educational opportunity. The model used by the military, the Army in particular -- and I'm delighted to have the Commanding General of the Army here today because he set such a fine example -- has been especially successful because it emphasizes education and training, ensuring that it has a wide pool of qualified candidates for every level of promotion. That approach has given us the most racially diverse and best-qualified military in our history. There are more opportunities for women and minorities there than ever before. And now there are over 50 generals and admirals who are Hispanic, Asian or African Americans.

We found that the Education Department targeted on -- had programs targeted on under-represented minorities that do a great deal of good with the tiniest of investments. We found that these programs comprised 40 cents of every \$1,000 in the Education Department's budget.

Now, college presidents will tell you that the education their schools offer actually benefit from diversity; colleges where young people get the education and make the personal and professional contacts that will shape their lives. If their colleges look like the world they're going to live and work in, and they learn from all different kinds of people things that they can't learn in books, our systems of higher education are stronger.

Still, I believe every child needs the chance to go to college. Every child. That means every child has to have a chance to get affordable and repayable college loans, Pell Grants for poor kids and a chance to do things like join AmeriCorps and work their way through school. Every child is entitled to that. That is not an argument against affirmative action, it's an argument for more opportunity for more Americans until everyone is reached. (Applause.)

As I said a moment ago, the review found that the Small Business Administration last year increased loans to minorities by over two-thirds, loans to women by over 80 percent, did not decrease loans to white men, and not a single loan went to a unqualified person. People who never had a chance before to be part of the American system of free enterprise now have it. No one was hurt in the process. That made America stronger.

This review also found that the executive order on employment practices of large federal contractors also has helped to bring more fairness and inclusion into the work force.

Since President Nixon was here in my job, America has used goals and timetables to preserve opportunity and to prevent discrimination, to urge businesses to set higher expectations for themselves and to realize those expectations. But we did not and we will not use rigid quotas to mandate outcomes.

We also looked at the way we award procurement contracts under the programs known as set-asides. There's no question that these programs have helped to build up firms owned by

minorities and women, who historically had been excluded from the old-boy networks in these areas. It has helped a new generation of entrepreneurs to flourish, opening new paths to self-reliance and an economic growth in which all of us ultimately share. Because of the set-asides, businesses ready to compete have had a chance to compete, a chance they would not have otherwise had.

But as with any government program, set-asides can be misapplied, misused, even intentionally abused. There are critics who exploit that fact as an excuse to abolish all these programs, regardless of their effects. I believe they are wrong, but I also believe, based on our factual review, we clearly need some reform. So first, we should crack down on those who take advantage of everyone else through fraud and abuse. We must crack down on fronts and pass-throughs, people who pretend to be eligible for these programs and aren't. That is wrong. (Applause.)

We also, in offering new businesses a leg up, must make sure that the set-asides go to businesses that need them most. We must really look and make sure that our standard for eligibility is fair and defensible. We have to tighten the requirement to move businesses out of programs once they've had a fair opportunity to compete. The graduation requirement must mean something -- it must mean graduation. There should be no permanent set-aside for any company.

Second, we must, and we will, comply with the Supreme Court's Adarand decision of last month. Now, in particular, that means focusing set-aside programs on particular regions and business sectors where the problems of discrimination or exclusion are provable and are clearly requiring affirmative action. I have directed the Attorney General and the agencies to move forward with compliance with Adarand expeditiously.

But I also want to emphasize that the Adarand decision did not dismantle affirmative action and did not dismantle set-asides. In fact, while setting stricter standards to mandate reform of affirmative action, it actually reaffirmed the need for affirmative action and reaffirmed the continuing existence of systematic discrimination in the United States. (Applause.)

What the Supreme Court ordered the federal government to do was to meet the same more rigorous standard for affirmative action programs that state and local governments were ordered to meet several years ago. And the best set-aside programs under that standard have been challenged and have survived.

Third, beyond discrimination we need to do more to help disadvantaged people and distressed communities, no matter what their race or gender. There are places in our country where the free enterprise system simply doesn't reach. It simply isn't working to provide jobs and opportunity. Disproportionately, these areas in urban and rural America are highly populated by racial minorities, but not entirely. To make this initiative work, I believe the government must become a better partner for people in places in urban and rural America that are

caught in a cycle of poverty. And I believe we have to find ways to get the private sector to assume their rightful role as a driver of economic growth.

It has always amazed me that we have given incentives to our business people to help to develop poor economies in other parts of the world, our neighbors in the Caribbean, our neighbors in other parts of the world -- I have supported this when not subject to their own abuses -- but we ignore the biggest source of economic growth available to the American economy, the poor economies isolated within the United States of America. (Applause.)

There are those who say, well, even if we made the jobs available people wouldn't work. They haven't tried. Most of the people in disadvantaged communities work today, and most of them who don't work have a very strong desire to do so. In central Harlem, 14 people apply for every single minimum-wage job opening. Think how many more would apply if there were good jobs with a good future. Our job has to connect disadvantaged people and disadvantaged communities to economic opportunity so that everybody who wants to work can do so.

We've been working at this through our empowerment zones and community development banks, through the initiatives of Secretary Cisneros of the Housing and Urban Development Department and many other things that we have tried to do to put capital where it is needed. And now I have asked Vice President Gore to develop a proposal to use our contracting to support businesses that locate themselves in these distressed areas or hire a large percentage of their workers from these areas -- not to supplement what we're doing in affirmative action, not to substitute for it, but to supplement it, to go beyond it, to do something that will help to deal with the economic crisis of America. We want to make our procurement system more responsive to people in these areas who need help.

My fellow Americans, affirmative action has to be made consistent with our highest ideals of personal responsibility and merit, and our urgent need to find common ground, and to prepare all Americans to compete in the global economy of the next century.

Today, I am directing all our agencies to comply with the Supreme Court's Adarand decision, and also to apply the four standards of fairness to all our affirmative action programs that I have already articulated: No quotas in theory or practice; no illegal discrimination of any kind, including reverse discrimination; no preference for people who are not qualified for any job or other opportunity; and as soon as a program has succeeded, it must be retired. Any program that doesn't meet these four principles must be eliminated or reformed to meet them.

But let me be clear: Affirmative action has been good for America. (Applause.)

Affirmative action has not always been perfect, and affirmative action should not go on forever. It should be changed now to take care of those things that are wrong, and it should be retired when its job is done. I am resolved that that day will come. But the evidence suggests, indeed, screams that that day has not come.

The job of ending discrimination in this country is not over. That should not be surprising. We had slavery for centuries before the passage of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments. We waited another hundred years for the civil rights legislation. Women have had the vote less than a hundred years. We have always had difficulty with these things, as most societies do. But we are making more progress than may people.

Based on the evidence, the job is not done. So here is what I think we should do. We should reaffirm the principle of affirmative action and fix the practices. We should have a simple slogan: Mend it, but don't end it. (Applause.)

Let me ask all Americans, whether they agree or disagree with what I have said today, to see this issue in the larger context of our times. President Lincoln said, we cannot escape our history. We cannot escape our future, either. And that future must be one in which every American has the chance to live up to his or her God-given capacities.

The new technology, the instant communications, the explosion of global commerce have created enormous opportunities and enormous anxieties for Americans. In the last two and a half years, we have seen seven million new jobs, more millionaires and new businesses than ever before, high corporate profits, and a booming stock market. Yet, most Americans are working harder for the same or lower pay. And they feel more insecurity about their jobs, their retirement, their health care, and their children's education. Too many of our children are clearly exposed to poverty and welfare, violence and drugs.

These are the great challenges for our whole country on the homefront at the dawn of the 21st century. We've got to find the wisdom and the will to create family-wage jobs for all the people who want to work; to open the door of college to all Americans; to strengthen families and reduce the awful problems to which our children are exposed; to move poor Americans from welfare to work.

This is the work of our administration -- to give the people the tools they need to make the most of their own lives, to give families and communities the tools they need to solve their own problems. But let us not forget affirmative action didn't cause these problems. It won't solve them. And getting rid of affirmative action certainly won't solve them.

If properly done, affirmative action can help us come together, go forward and grow together. It is in our moral, legal and practical interest to see that every person can make the most of his life. In the fight for the future, we need all hands on deck and some of those hands still need a helping hand.

In our national community we're all different, we're all the same. We want liberty and freedom. We want the embrace of family and community. We want to make the most of our own lives and we're determined to give our children a better one. Today there are voices of

division who would say forget all that. Don't you dare. Remember we're still closing the gap between our founders ideals and our reality. But every step along the way has made us richer, stronger and better. And the best is yet to come.

Thank you very. And God bless you.

END

12:28 P.M. EDT