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O.J. Simpson Verdict

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
S	22	2	11	2

draft 10/3/95 -- GUILTY

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS ON SIMPSON VERDICT
October 3, 1995**

This is an example of 12 Americans doing their civic duty, throughout a long and difficult process. It shows that we can deal with difficult decisions, in spite of everything. This nation is based on the rule of law, and now we have to let the criminal justice system run its course. At this moment, our thoughts and prayers should be with the families of the victims of this terrible crime.

Thank you
12 Americans have done their civic duty through
a long & difficult process. For that, they deserve
America's respect.

October 12, 1995

Outline

1. The issue is not O.J., but what our different perceptions tell us about ourselves as Americans facing a crucial moment of change in our history.

2. This tells us that we do not know each other -- across lines of race, gender, ethnicity -- as well as we must if we are to succeed as one nation moving into a new century full of vast potential but deep problems.

3. We have learned that we must work harder to understand one another -- the rages, the fears and the concerns, no matter whether we are black or white, men or women. This moment in time is not a mere snapshot on which to base judgments of one another; we are all part of a great moving picture of influences and forces that make up our perceptions.

4. A large part of that picture is one of progress given where we were when a quarter of a million people heard MLK, Jr. 32 years ago. (Describe that progress.)

5. But we must remember that we all bring our pasts into this present, and that what black or white Americans perceive in our American experience is influenced by the remnants of the past in our own times.

6. Especially given our concerns of recent weeks, we must remember:

A. The concerns of black Americans that our system of justice is not just are not baseless.

i. A litany of abuses, such as Scottsboro case, Emmett Till case (wouldn't hurt to remind all Americans about the sad truths in that case).

ii. Police forces across the country -- especially in major urban areas -- with histories of racism and, despite great progress, persistent vestiges of bad old days.

B. The concerns of white Americans are not all baseless either.

i. Fear of crime

ii. Fear of some black leaders -- despite many great examples to the contrary -- who want to play on fear and venom, not unity and inspiration.

iii. Distrust that perhaps justly aggrieved blacks will ever

be able to see all whites as anything more than an enemy with whom peace and shared future is remotely possible.

7. Crucial pivot of speech: We must understand all this. But understanding is not enough if we are not willing to act on what we understand. The question is not just how differently we perceive the American experience. The question is what are we going to do about it. All of these outrages matter. But in the end, we all face a choice, right now:

A. One way lies separation, anger and disaster

B. The other way, the way I want us to take, lies maintaining our pride, dignity and our ethnic identity, drawing unique American strength from our diversity (L.A. county), but remembering that we are all in this together and we are all going up or down together.

C. The choice is not to be a white person in America or a black person in America. The choice is to be an American. It is to confront our problems together. And to come out of this experience stronger for our willingness to understand the truth about ourselves and to live as better, more responsible neighbors because of the truth.

8. Given the concerns of this day, we must apply that conviction on three fronts.

A. Responsibility of police and community: The only way to deal with crime is to come together as community and to have police who are part of, not estranged from that community.

i. Wipe out racism from forces (much as white and black police together have worked to do in many forces across the country)

ii. But must stand behind our police and not let what are thankfully now rogue influences drive us from the support and solidarity with law enforcement that this administration has demonstrated are crucial to cutting crime.

B. Responsibility for family, especially among men: (This section would be Dick's section about what it means to be a good father and to make the sacrifices necessary. And the pledge to never lift a hand to woman.)

C. Responsibility to reject voices of division: (This would go to Farrakhan and the Million-Man March)

i. Leaders must turn aside the impulse to lead with anger, rage and contempt. Must build up, not tear down. Must bring together, not drive apart.

ii. Citizens, no matter our color, must reject any leader who would take the low road. The past, no matter how venomous it was, is no excuse for poisoning America's future. That is true of whites (examples?). And that is true of blacks (Farrakhan as example).

Even those gathered this very day in Washington in the name of taking up more responsibility for their lives and those they must care for.

A million men are not wrong when it comes to the crying need to take more responsibility for every aspect of our lives. But a million men do not make one man right if that man has led with hate instead of love, with division instead of understanding.

9. Conclusion: Call all Americans to move on from a moment of division and to remember everything we have in common -- these things you have discussed and the greater hopes and dreams of Americans in all ages which are our hopes and dreams today.