
Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a tabbed divider. Given our digitization capabilities, we are sometimes unable to adequately scan such dividers. The title from the original document is indicated below.

SA/TE: Hate Crimes

Divider Title: _____

LEVEL 1 - 1 OF 14 DOCUMENTS

Public Papers of the President

October 29, 1999

*See page 6 for
hate crime*

C Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 2206

LENGTH: 4206 words

HEADLINE: Remarks to an Anti-Defamation League National Commission Dinner in Atlanta

BODY:

The President. Thank you so much --

Audience member. I came to kiss you, Mr. President!

The President. Well, if you came to kiss me, if you'll wait until I finish, I'll be right down there. [Laughter] Don't you go anywhere. I'll be right there. [Laughter] That sort of cuts the atmosphere, doesn't it? That's great. [Laughter] What was I going to say? [Laughter]

Howard, thank you for your introduction and for your many years of friendship and support and for your leadership. Abe Foxman, thank you for your long leadership of the ADL. Glenn Tobias, thank you for your service.

I know the president of the city council, President Pitts, is here; and De Kalb County Chief Executive Levetan is here -- I thank them for their presence. And I'm especially grateful to be here with my friend and I believe one of the greatest living Americans, Congressman John Lewis. And Lillian, hello. Lillian, it's nice to see you. Thank you.

More than anything else tonight, except to get my kiss -- [laughter] -- more than anything else tonight, I came here to say thank you. Thank you for nearly 7 years of working with me and Hillary and the Vice President and Mrs. Gore, year in and year-out. Thank you for your commitment to genuine peace in the Middle East. Thank you for fighting anti-Semitism and terrorism and for promoting religious freedom throughout the world. Thank you for developing a model hate crimes statute, which is now the law in 40 of our 50 States. Thank you for helping us to organize the first-ever White House Conference on Hate Crimes. Thank you for standing with us to promote excellence and diversity and equal opportunity with the appointments of people like Bill Lann Lee and Jim Hormel. Thank you for your pioneering work to filter out hate on the Internet -- which, lamentably, was a part of the poison that led to the tragedy of Columbine High School. Thank you for making a world of difference, through your World of Difference Institute, to teach tolerance on campuses and to law enforcement officials across our land. I thank you for all that.

The Talmud says, "Should anyone turn aside the right of a stranger, it is as though he were to turn aside the right of the most high God." Well, that passage carries special meaning in the world in which we live, because the great irony of this time is that we stand on the threshold of unbelievable discoveries in science and technology, amidst the greatest revolution in telecommunications the world has ever known.

Public Papers of the Presidents

I was in Silicon Valley the other night with a bunch of people that started this great company, eBay. You ever buy anything on eBay? Nearly everybody has now. What you might find interesting is that over 20,000 Americans, including many welfare recipients, are now making a living on eBay -- not working for a company, but trading on eBay.

I was talking the other night -- just a few months ago -- at one of the millennial lectures that Hillary put together, with the brilliant Cambridge physicist Stephen Hawking, who wrote a book called, "A Brief History of Time" which I pretended to read. [Laughter] And we were talking about how the new century will bring with it the discovery of millions, perhaps even tens of millions of new galaxies, and perhaps the capacity to pierce the black holes in the universe, to see what is there.

We had an evening the other night, about which I'll say more later, a fascinating evening at the White House that Hillary sponsored, with a man named Vint Cerf, who essentially developed the architecture of the Internet and gave the first E-mail, 18 years ago, to his profoundly deaf wife. He thought about the E-mail as a way to communicate with his wife while he was at work, because she was so deaf even hearing aids could not help her. She now hears, by the way, because of deep implanted computer chips in her ear canals -- and Professor Lander from Harvard, one of America's most prominent scholars of the human genome. And they were saying that in a matter of a few years, children will come home from the hospital with a genetic map and with the genuine prospect of a life expectancy of 100 years or more.

Isn't it interesting that in this most modern of all imaginable worlds, with even more breathtaking discoveries just around the corner, that I believe will also include cures for many of the most severe forms of cancer and the ability to give people with severed spinal cords the capacity to walk again -- all these miracles, that the biggest problem the world faces is the oldest problem of human society, the fear of the other. We all still continue to turn aside the right of a stranger -- people we do not know, therefore we do not understand, therefore we easily fear, therefore we easily dismiss and pretty soon dehumanize them -- that -- how easy it is to justify violence.

So, the most urgent task, as we stand on the threshold of the new millennium, is not to plumb the depths of outer space or the inner depths of the human gene, but to follow the oldest admonitions of our Scriptures, and to build what Congressman Lewis, in his marvelous autobiography, and before him, Dr. King, called "the beloved community," one in which we genuinely love those even with whom we disagree because we do not fear those who are different. The ADL has always stood for that. And most of all, I say thank you.

You know, I've spent a lot of time now going around to political events to try to stir the party faithful, and I feel like a beast of burden since I can't run for anything anymore doing that. I kind of hate that. But I do it -- [laughter] -- but I do it happily because I want to say to people, I think we're leading the country in the right direction. And it's nice for me, after these years of work and labor and often bitter disputes, to say to the American people that we have the longest peacetime expansion in history, 19 1/2 million new jobs, and highest homeownership ever, and a 29-year low in unemployment, a 30-year low in welfare rolls, and a 30-year low in the crime rate and a 30-year low in inflation and a 20-year low in the poverty rate and the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years achieved by the smallest Federal

Public Papers of the Presidents

Government in 37 years. That's pretty good, and I like saying that.

This week I was able to say we had gone from a \$ 290 billion deficit to a \$ 17 billion surplus. In the last 2 years, we paid \$ 140 billion down on our debt. That's the most we've ever done on that. I like saying that.

But what I want to say to you tonight is that the real issue is not the marvelous way America has come in the 7 years that I've had the privilege to be President. The real issue before the American people is, what are we going to do with this moment of great good fortune? And again, you can plumb the depths of our Scriptures to find ample evidence that sometimes a good time can be a great hazard to people.

A nation is no different from a family or an individual or a business -- sometimes you're most prone to mess up when things are going well. And I often think that some of the bitter partisanship and sort of short-sightedness we've seen in the last 2 years have occurred because people think they have the luxury to do that, because things are going so well, they can't imagine there could be any adverse consequences to not paying the U.N. dues, or contributing our fair share to the alleviation of the debt of the poorest countries in the world, or adopting the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, or moving to clean up the environment, or any of the number of other issues.

And what I have tried to say to the American people is, I think this is an enormous responsibility that we have -- not just me as President, or the Democrats and Republicans in Congress, but as a people. I'm 53 years old. And in my lifetime, not once, not even once, have we had the combination of prosperity, social progress, and the absence of emergency necessary to allow a people to literally imagine the future of their dreams and build it for their children.

We had an economy maybe almost this good in the sixties, but we had to deal with the awful realities of the civil rights revolution and then with the burden of the Vietnam war. Before that, it was the cold war; and before that, World War II; and before that, the Depression. We have never had a time like this in my lifetime.

I have asked the American people to meet the challenge of the aging of America, save Social Security, save Medicare, add a prescription drug benefit to it; meet the challenge of the largest and most diverse group of schoolchildren in our history, give them all a world-class education, turn the failing schools around or shut them down, but give the kids the after-school programs, the summer school programs, the modern schools, the Internet, the small classes they deserve; to meet the challenge of -- now that we have a 30-year low in the crime rate, no one thinks it's as safe as it ought to be in America -- make our country the safest big country in the world.

And do the things we know will help us to do that -- do more to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children; do more to put police on our streets in the most violent neighborhoods; do more to make our communities more livable and meet our international environmental responsibilities and still grow the economy; do more to bring economic opportunity to people in places left behind.

The other day, I was in South Dakota, where the unemployment rate is 2.8 percent, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, where the unemployment rate is

Public Papers of the Presidents

73 percent. I think we ought to give all of you the same incentives to invest in poor areas in America we give you to invest in poor areas in Latin America, or Africa, or Asia, because if we don't -- we can't bring enterprise and opportunity to our poorest Americans now, we'll never get around to dealing with it.

That's why I've asked America to guarantee our long-term prosperity by adopting a long-term plan for the budget that by the year 2015 will have us completely out of debt for the first time since Andrew Jackson was President in 1835, because I believe it'll bring long prosperity to us.

But I would say to you, all -- as important as those things are, there are two things that relate to the irony I mentioned at the beginning: the fact that we enter a new millennium with all these modern possibilities bedeviled by the oldest failing of human society. But there are two other issues without which we cannot proceed successfully.

One is to meet our responsibilities around the world as the world's leading force for peace and freedom and reconciliation, against terror and the other forces of destruction, including proliferation of nuclear and chemical and biological weapons. That's why we ought to pay our debt to the U.N. That's why we ought to make our contribution to alleviate the debt of the poorest countries in the world. That's why we ought to continue to fund the program begun by former Senator Sam Nunn from Georgia, to take down these nuclear weapons in Russia, that they want us to help them destroy. And that's why we ought to pay our commitment, made at the Wye peace talks -- pursuant to 25 years of bipartisan -- bipartisan -- efforts for peace in the Middle East -- to contribute to the success of the Wye talks, and the modified efforts under Barak and Arafat.

On Sunday night I will leave for Oslo to honor the memory of my friend Yitzhak Rabin and to continue his mission. We're now at a critical moment in the peace process. Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat have made some real movement forward. They've made some hard decisions. They're working hard on preserving security and fighting terrorism, and they're making progress in implementing the provisions of the Oslo agreement.

Actually have a chance within the reasonably near future for peace for Israel and its neighbors, for security so necessary for progress and prosperity, and freedom and justice all across that region.

But like all chances in life, it is fleeting. It will require hard choices and hard work within a short time frame. And it cannot be done without the support of the most determined friends of peace, like those of you in this room.

I still believe that we're either going to go forward or drift backward. We can't just freeze this moment. The region could reverse course. There's still plenty of extremists and terrorists out there. There's still people all over the world who represent the forces of destruction and the enemies of the nation-state -- not simply Israel, but everywhere, working to develop weapons of massive destruction that can be miniaturized and carried around and used at a moment's notice. And the same technology that gives you a tiny, tiny cell phone that guys with big fingers like me can hardly dial these days will lead to the miniaturization of weapons in the 21st century.

Public Papers of the Presidents

Make no mistake about it. Our problems with the enemies of peace, with the terrorists, are far from over. And I'll make you a prediction. Within 10 years, it will be normal to see a very sophisticated alliance all around the world between terrorists, drug runners, and organized crime, maximizing the same technologies that we all seek to access to do good.

This is the moment that we must seize. It is so important for America to support the peace process and to provide the resources to make peace work. I don't know how many times I have heard one of my leaders at the Pentagon say, "Mr. President, the most expensive peace is far, far cheaper than the cheapest war." It is inexcusable that we would not fund a national security budget for peace, necessary to meet our responsibilities in the Middle East.

Congress sent me a foreign aid bill without the \$ 800 million I requested this year, or the \$ 500 million for next year to fund our part of the Wye River agreement. The bill sent a terrible signal to our friends in the Middle East, the strongest possible encouragement to the enemies of peace that there will be no immediate rewards for peace. That's why I vetoed it, and I'll veto it again if it doesn't provide for the funding of our obligations around the world.

I ask you to support the other provisions of the bill, the funds necessary to reduce the nuclear threat from Russia, to provide debt relief to the poorest countries as the Pope and so many others have asked us to do in the millennial year, to meet our obligations to the United Nations, to do the other things that promote democracy and opportunities for trade and investment.

We must sustain America's leadership. I want you to know, on a subject I know you care a lot about, I have urged the Russian leadership not to allow the current challenges they face to undermine respect for human rights and individual liberty and opposition to anti-Semitism in Russia. If we want -- I will say again, if we want to have influence with other countries, none of them are asking us to buy our way into their favor. But as the wealthiest, most powerful country in the world at the moment of our greatest success, for us not to even pay our fair share when already we spend a smaller percentage of our income on nonmilitary national security measures than any major country in the world is inexcusable.

For all of those other challenges I mentioned, we must be a force for good around the world. And we cannot do that for free. We get a lot out of our interdependence with others. We contribute to the United Nations so that when something happens like Kosovo -- yes, our planes flew the bulk of the mission and, yes, we bore the bulk of the financial burdens to save those 800,000 people from ethnic cleansing, and I'm glad we did it.

But today, as they work to rebuild, the bulk of the burdens in manpower and in money is being borne by our Allies in Europe. Yes, it was necessary for the United States to take a strong position on the problem in East Timor to stop the terrible slaughter there as a result of their vote for independence. But now the bulk of the load is being carried by our friends, like Australia and Malaysia and others there, because we live in an interdependent world where we share responsibility.

Yes, we spend some money in Africa to train troops, but that means the next time a horrible slaughter like Rwanda comes along, it can be handled by the Africans and we can give them support, and they won't have to look at us and

Public Papers of the Presidents

say, "Why didn't you send 100,000 Americans to stop this before it started?" We get a lot out of being good neighbors and responsible parties, and we need to continue to do it.

First point I want to make is one the ADL well knows. We can't be a force for good abroad unless we are a force for good at home. And while, thank God, we have been spared the ravages in the modern age of mass conflict based on religion as in Northern Ireland, or religion and ethnic differences as in the Middle East or the Balkans, or tribal bloodshed as in Rwanda, Burundi, and other places in Africa.

We see in these hate crimes -- the murder of young Matthew Shepard in Wyoming, the horrible dragging death of James Byrd in Texas, the killing of the postman, the Filipino postman; and the shooting of the children at the Jewish community center in Los Angeles, the murder spree in the Midwest that took the lives of the African-American basketball coach outside Chicago and a young Korean Christian as he walked outside his church, those perpetrated by a man who claimed he belonged to a church that did not believe in God, but did believe in white supremacy -- we see that we are not immune from this. And why is that? Because it is a part of human nature. Why was it in the Torah in that provision I read earlier? Because of the knowledge from God that in us, there is all the tendency, in all of us, to turn away from the right of a stranger.

Every one of us, I believe -- maybe you don't; maybe you guys are perfect -- I wake up every day, and I know -- I sort of think of my life and my attitude toward the world and of its people as being governed by an internal scale, and on one side of the scale there is light and on the other side there is darkness. And you always want it tilting toward the light, but not so much as to be naive, but enough to have a genuine charitable view toward others -- a genuine respect, a genuine humility -- and understand that you may not always be right, but you have an obligation to recognize the integrity and the common humanity of others.

But it's easy to get that scale out of balance. Even all of us have our good days and our bad days. When it gets badly out of balance, then the fear and the dehumanization of the other drives people to these terrible, tormented acts of slaughter. Sometimes there's a political patina on it, so people can actually say it's justified. Sometimes it's just some poor, demented, twisted person acting out of pain and fear and anger and blindness. Nothing is more important to our future than flushing that not only from the killers but flushing that feeling in its less violent manifestations from all of our hearts.

If I could leave America after my Presidency with one wish, it would be to be one America -- to revel in our diversity, to respect it, to celebrate it, to enjoy it, to make it interesting.

It can only happen -- you can only have fun -- in a diverse country. You can only find it interesting to examine whether someone else's religious perspective or cultural heritage has some validity for you, something you can learn -- you can only really revel in it if you believe that our common humanity is more important than the things which make us different.

Now, that means, it seems to me, we need to stand against manifestations of our inhumanity, and we need to do more to reaffirm our common humanity. That's why I was so disturbed when the Republican majority on the relevant committees of Congress took out the hate crimes legislation in the form of the bill that

Public Papers of the Presidents

had already passed the Senate. I vetoed the bill that came to me, in part because it didn't contain those hate crimes provisions.

think it's very important that we say, "Look, it's not that the victims hate crimes" -- you know, the people that say we don't need these are saying, "You're saying those victims are more important than other victims." That's not true. What we are saying is that hate crimes victimize not only the victim but they victimize society as a whole in a special way, because they contradict the very idea of America we are trying to build. We're not letting somebody else off the hook. We're saying we want a clear and unambiguous stand against things that contradict the very idea of the America we want to build.

The other point I'd like to make is, it's not enough just to be against things. We need to be for things that will enable us to live up to our full potential. That's why I'm also for strengthening the equal pay law, for the "Employment Non-Discrimination Act," or the so-called Kennedy-Jeffords bill to let people with disabilities go into the workplace and keep their Government health care through Medicaid, so that they can work and be a part of our society. We need to be for things that bring us together.

I want to close with these two stories. I told you earlier we had this millennial evening at the White House, with the genome scholar from Harvard and Vint Cerf, who was one of the architects of the Internet. And we were talking about -- they were talking about how the mysteries of the human gene could not have been solved without the advances in computer science. And then they put them all up on the screens, the formula for what our genes look like. And I pretended to understand that. [Laughter]

But I did understand the point they were making. So I said to them, I said, "Look, with these 100,000 sequences and all the possibilities and permutations, how much are we alike or different?" And Professor Lander said, "The truth is that all people, genetically, are 99.9 percent the same." That confirms your philosophy, right?

the next point he made, which is more interesting to me. He said if you get groups of people together by ethnicity or race -- let's suppose you got 100 European Jews together, and you've got 100 Arabs, and you've got 100 Iranians, and then you've got 100 people from the Yoruba Tribe in Nigeria, and you've got 100 Irish people together, and you put them all in a room with their groups, here's what they said. They said the genetic differences among the individual groups -- that is, among the Yorubas, among the Irish, among the Jews, among the Arabs -- the genetic differences within the groups would be greater than the genetic differences between any one group and any other group. Now, think about that.

When you look at a profile of any sizeable ethnic group -- Hispanic, African, you name it -- the genetic differences of the individuals within the group are greater than the group genetic profile of one group as compared with another. In other words, the most advanced scientific knowledge confirms the wisdom of the Torah and tells us not to turn aside a stranger. Because it turns out a stranger is not so strange after all.

In the summer of 1994, as I remember, it was just before we went to the Wadi Araba to sign the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan. The late Prime

Public Papers of the Presidents

Minister Rabin and the late King Hussein addressed the United States Congress. Near the end of his speech, Rabin turned to Hussein and said, and I quote, "We have both seen a lot in our lifetime. We have seen too much suffering. What will I leave to your children? What will I leave to my grandchildren? I have dreams," he said, "to build a better world -- a world of understanding and harmony; a world in which it is a joy to live. That is not asking for too much."

That dream has united those of you in this organization for 85 years now. That dream in our time requires us to build one America and requires America to be a force for peace and harmony in the world. Think of it -- Rabin gave his life so that we might build a world in which it is a joy to live. It is not asking for too much, but it will require all we can give.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 p.m. at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Howard P. Berkowitz, national chairman, Abraham H. Foxman, national director, and Glenn Tobias, national executive committee chairman, Anti-Defamation League; Atlanta City Council President Robb Pitts; De Kalb County Chief Executive Liane Levetan; Representative John Lewis' wife, Lillian; Vinton G. Cerf, senior vice president of Internet architecture and technology, MCI WorldCom, and his wife, Sigrid; Eric Lander, director, Whitehead/MIT Center for Genome Research; Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 8, 1999

LEVEL 1 - 4 OF 8 DOCUMENTS

Public Papers of the Presidents

April 6, 1999

Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 587

LENGTH: 1935 words

HEADLINE: Remarks on the Proposed "Hate Crimes Prevention Act"

BODY:

Thank you very much. Senator Leahy, Senator Specter, Congressmen Cardin and Delahunt, Secretary Riley, Acting Assistant Attorney General Bill Lann Lee; to our DC Police Chief, Charles Ramsey, and the other distinguished guests in the audience who are in support, broadened support of the "Hate Crimes Prevention Act." Let me begin by thanking Attorney General Ketterer and Bishop Jane Holmes Dixon for being here.

I want you to know that the attorney general got up at 3 o'clock this morning to drive down here from Maine. And of course, he got up that early so he could stay lawfully within the speed limit -- [laughter] -- coming down here. And he set a good example, and he was wide awake and very persuasive on the law.

Bishop, we thank you for your very moving remarks. Remind me never to speak behind you again. [Laughter] It was -- so much of what the bishop said about the setting of this is many things that I have thought. I think you know she and I and those of us who grew up in the segregated South are perhaps more sensitive to all these various hate crimes issues, because we grew up in a culture that was dominated for too long by people who thought they only counted if they had somebody to look down on, that they could only lift themselves up if they were pushing someone else down, that their whole definition of a positive life required a negative definition of another group of people. That's really what this is all about.

And if you -- as she said, if you look at the whole history of this violence we've seen in Kosovo, what we went through in Bosnia, this, the fifth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, that I regret so much the world was not organized to move quickly enough to deal with it before hundreds of thousands of lives were lost -- with the oppression of women in Afghanistan, with the lingering bitterness in the Middle East -- you see all these things. When you strip it all away, down deep inside there is this idea that you cannot organize personal life or social life unless some group feels better about itself only when they are oppressing someone else. Or people at least believe that they ought to have the right to do violence against someone else solely because of who they are, not because of what they do. Now at the bottom, that's what this is all about.

And I have said repeatedly since I have been President that one of the things I have sought to do in our country is to bridge all these divides, and to get all of our people not to agree with one another, not to even like one another all the time -- goodness knows, we can't like everybody all the time -- but to recognize that our common humanity is more important than these categorical differences. And also to recognize that over the long run, America will not be able to be a force for good abroad unless we are good at home.

Public Papers of the Presidents

If you think about the brave men and women who are working with our NATO allies today in Kosovo and you remember that this basically all started 12 years ago when Mr. Milosevic decided to rally the support of his ethnic Serbian group by expressing their hatred against the Kosovar Albanians and later the Bosnian Muslims and the Croatian Catholics and the others, it is very important that we face these challenges here at home, even as we continue to support the work of our people in uniform in the Balkans.

I want to say again, the United States would never choose force as anything other than a last option. And Mr. Milosevic could end it now by withdrawing his military police and paramilitary forces, by accepting the deployment of an international security force to protect not only the Kosovar Albanians, most but not all of whom are Muslims, but also the Serbian minority in Kosovo -- everybody. We're not for anybody's hate crimes. And by making it possible for all the refugees to return and to move toward a political framework based on the accords reached in France.

Now, as I said, we can't continue to organize ourselves to try to stand against these things around the world -- which I firmly hope we will. I applaud the women in America who have done so much to bring to the world's attention the terrible treatment of women in Afghanistan, for example. And we have worked hard in Africa to work with other African forces to build an Africa Crisis Response Initiative so that something like the Rwanda genocide cannot happen again. We have to keep working on these things.

But first of all, we must always be working on ourselves. That's really what this is about. Because we know this is more the work of the bishop than the President, but we know that inside each of us there are vulnerabilities to dehumanizing other people simply by putting them in a category that permits us to dismiss them or that permits us to put them in a category so that on a bad day, when we're feeling especially bad about something we've done, we can say, "Well, thank God I'm not them." And it is a short step from that -- a short, short step from that -- to licensing or even participating in acts of violence.

As I said, it may be -- I was standing here looking at Secretary Riley and Bjorn Ulvund; I was thinking about all the years that Secretary Riley and I worked together. It may be that the three of us are more sensitive to this because we grew up in the segregated South, but it is very easy to get into a social system where you always get to think a little better of yourself because you've always got someone that you can dehumanize. And that's really what this whole issue with gays is today in America.

We're not talking about everybody agreeing with everybody else on every political issue. We're talking about whether people have a right, if they show up and work hard and obey the law and are good citizens, to pursue their lives and dignity without -- free of fear, without fear of being abused.

And this should not be a partisan issue. I want to thank Senator Specter for showing up here today. This ought not to be anything other than a basic, simple statement of American principle.

But I would like to say one other thing, just as a practical matter. Isn't it interesting to you that we are on the eve of a new century and a new millennium, which will be largely characterized by globalization, the explosion of technology, especially information, and the integration of people, and the

Public Papers of the Presidents

number one security threat to that is the persistence of old, even primitive, hatreds? Don't you think that's interesting?

I worry about all the time is whether terrorists can get on the and figure out how to make chemical and biological weapons to pursue against people of different ethnic or religious groups. And so it's very humbling, I think, for those of us who think we have brought the modern world and prosperity and rationality to all of human affairs, to see what is going on in the Balkans and to see these terrible examples of violence here in our own country. It's very humbling. We should remember that each of us almost wakes up every day with the scales of light and darkness in our own hearts, and we've got to keep them in proper balance. And we have to be, in the United States, absolutely resolute about this.

That's why I think this hate crimes issue is so important. That's why I convened the first White House Conference on Hate Crimes a year and a half ago. Since then, I would like to say, we have substantially increased the number of FBI agents working on these crimes. We have successfully prosecuted a number of serious cases. We have formed local hate crimes working groups in U.S. Attorney's offices around the country.

But this is a significant problem. In 1997, the last year for which we have statistics, over 8,000 hate crime incidents were reported in the United States. That's almost one an hour -- almost one an hour.

So, what are we going to do about it? I would like to mention -- we've already talked about the law and I'll say more about that in a minute, but first of all, let me mention three other things. I've asked the Justice Department and the Education Department to include in their annual report card on school safety crucial information on hate crimes among young people both at and away from schools, not only to warn but to educate.

Secondly, I'm asking the Department of Education to collect important data for the first time on hate crimes and bias on college campuses. Another cruel irony isn't it -- college, the place where we're supposed to have the most freedom, the place where we're supposed to be the most rational, the place where we're supposed to think the highest thoughts with the greatest amount of space. We have significant hate crime problems there, and we need to shine the light on that.

Third -- I'm very pleased about this -- we are going to have a public/private partnership to help reach middle school students to discuss this whole issue with them and talk about tolerance, why it is a moral, as well as a practical imperative. And the partnership includes AT&T, Court TV -- good for them -- [laughter] -- the National Middle School Association, the Anti-Defamation League, Cable in the Classrooms, as well as the Departments of Education and Justice. I would like to thank them all, because we have to not only punish bad things when they happen, the larger mission is to change the mind, the heart, and the habits of our people when they're young to keep bad things from happening.

Finally, let me join the others -- the attorney general and the bishop -- in saying, Congress should pass this law this year. The Federal laws already punish some crimes committed against people on the basis of race or religion or national origin, but as the attorney general made so clear, not all crimes

Public Papers of the Presidents

committed for that purpose. This would strengthen and expand the ability of the Justice Department by removing needless jurisdictional requirements for existing crimes and giving Federal prosecutors the ability to prosecute hate crimes committed because of sexual orientation, gender, or disability, along with race and religion.

Now, again I say, when we get exercised about these things, in particular, when someone dies in a horrible incident in America or when we see slaughter or ethnic cleansing abroad, we should remember that we defeat these things by teaching and by practicing a different way of life and by reacting vigorously when they occur within our own midst. That is what this is about. And we should remember, whenever we, ourselves, commit even a small slip, where we dehumanize or demonize someone else who is different from us, that every society must teach, practice, and react, if you want to make the most of the world toward which we are moving.

Our diversity is a godsend for us and the world of the 21st century. But it is also the potential for the old, haunting demons that are hard to root out of the human spirit. The "Hate Crimes Prevention Act" would be important, substantively and symbolically, to send a message to ourselves and to the world that we are going into the 21st century determined to preach and to practice what is right.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:51 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Andrew Ketterer, Maine attorney general; Rt. Rev. Jane Holmes Dixon, Suffragan Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, DC, who introduced the President; and President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: May 12, 1999

LEVEL 1 - 7 OF 8 DOCUMENTS

Public Papers of the Presidents

November 10, 1997

(Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 1776

LENGTH: 1600 words

HEADLINE: Opening Remarks at the White House Conference on Hate Crimes

BODY:

The President. Thank you. I don't see that I need to say much, do you?
 [Laughter] Thank you, Cheunee.

Audience member. You murdered Vince Foster and it's not a hate crime.

The President. We have the first amendment even here. But I think the hate is coming from your way, not mine.

President Trachtenberg, and members of the administration, Senator Kennedy, Members of the House. And let me also say that in addition to all of you who are here, there are thousands of people at satellite-link conferences all over the country.

We have heard today two moving personal testimonies, from a person who gave his life in law enforcement and from a young person just beginning her adult life but having already lived a lifetime of experiences that we wish she had never endured. They both teach us in different ways that our families and our country can only thrive if they're free from the fear of crime and violence. And we have to do everything we can to give them that security. That's the main reason we decided to hold this White House Conference on Hate Crimes.

As I said this morning to those of you who were at the breakfast, all over the world we see what happens when racial or ethnic or religious animosity joins with lawlessness. We've seen countries and people and families torn apart. We've seen countries go from peace to wholesale internecine slaughter in a matter of months. We've seen people rise up and fight each other over issues that they thought had been dormant for centuries.

But even in America we hear too many stories like the ones Cheunee told us, too many stories like the 13-year-old African-American boy nearly beaten to death when he rode his bicycle through the wrong neighborhood, the gay American murdered as he walked home from work, the Asian-American who lost her store to a firebomb hurled by a racist, the Jewish-American whose house of worship was desecrated by swastikas.

We hear too many of these stories -- stories of violent acts which are not just despicable acts of bias and bigotry, they are crimes. They strike at the heart of what it means to be an American. They are the antithesis of the values that define us as a nation. They have nothing to do with freedom or equality or respect for the law, and most importantly, they prevent us from respecting one another.

Last year I asked the American people to begin a great national conversation on race, to come together, across all the lines that divide us, into one

Public Papers of the Presidents

America. We know we can only fight prejudice by fighting the misunderstanding and the ignorance and the fear that produce it. One of the things that I hope will come out of this year is a national affirmation that violence motivated by pride and hatred, as Cheunee said, hurts us all. Anybody who thinks that in the future of today and tomorrow, that he or she can hide from the kind of poison that we see in various places in our country, is living in a dream world. Whether we like it or not, our futures are bound together, and it is time we acted like it.

The first thing we have to do is to make sure our Nation's laws fully protect all of its citizens. Our laws already punish some crimes committed against people on the basis of race or religion or national origin, but we should do more. We should make our current laws tougher to include all hate crimes that cause physical harm. We must prohibit crimes committed because of a victim's sexual orientation, gender, or disability. All Americans deserve protection from hate.

I want to thank Senator Kennedy and Senator Specter, who will soon introduce legislation to achieve these goals, and I want to tell you that I will do my best to help them see this legislation become the law of our land. Thank you, Senators.

The second thing we have to do is to make sure our civil rights laws are consistently and vigorously enforced. Under Attorney General Reno's leadership, the Justice Department has taken aim at hate crimes with more prosecutions and tougher punishments. Starting today, every United States Attorney in our country will establish or expand working groups to develop enforcement strategies, share best practices, and educate the public about hate crimes. This national hate crimes network will marshal the resources of Federal, State, and local enforcement, community groups, educators, antiviolenace advocates, to give us another powerful tool in the struggle against hate crimes.

I'm also pleased to announce that we will assign over 50 more FBI agents and prosecutors to work on hate crimes enforcement. And the Justice Department will make its own hate crimes training curriculum available to State and local law enforcement training centers all around America.

Finally, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Justice Department are launching an important new initiative that will help victims of housing-related hate crimes bring action against their attackers and get money damages for the harm they suffer.

When it comes to enforcing civil rights laws, let me also remind you that we need strong leadership. I have nominated Bill Lann Lee to head the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice because I'm convinced he'll provide that leadership. [Applause] Thank you. He is a son of Chinese immigrants who has seen the damaging force of discrimination. He has dedicated his career to fighting for equal rights, without regard to ideology or political party. Everyone who heard him in the Senate was impressed with his background, his record, his demeanor, his capacity, and yet we are being told that the Senate will not be allowed to vote on him because he supports his own President's position on affirmative action. Now, with all respect, if we have to wait until we get a head of the Civil Rights Division who is opposed to affirmative action, that job will be vacant for a very long time. We had an election about that.

Public Papers of the Presidents

On the other hand, let's not forget, this is but a tiny slice of what the Civil Rights Division does. We have laws on the books against discrimination that 99 percent of the American people support, and they need to be enforced by somebody who embodies the American ideal. It is wrong to deny this job because he agrees with the policies of his President on that issue. It's wrong.

All I ask the Senate committee to do is just to send his name out. They don't even have to make a recommendation; just let the Senate vote. Let all 100 Senators stand up and be counted in the full view of the American people and let them know their stand.

Let me also say that in addition to enforcement, in addition to pushing for new laws, in addition to training our own people and others better, let's also admit one thing -- we have a lot of law enforcement officials who have worked on this -- a lot of hate crimes still go unreported. I see a lot of you nodding your head up and down. If a crime is unreported, that gives people an excuse to ignore it.

I'm pleased to announce that today for the first time the National Crime Victimization Survey used by the Justice Department will finally include questions about hate crimes, so we can report them on a national basis along with others. It may seem like a small addition, but it will yield large results. It will give us a better measure of the number of hate crimes, and it will increase what we know about how they occur.

Let me say, lastly, all of us have to do more in our communities, through organizations like the one that Cheunee was part of in putting into Brooklyn High School, and in our own homes and places of worship to teach all of our children about the dignity of every person. I'm very pleased that the Education and the Justice Departments will distribute to every school district in the country a hate crimes resource guide. The guide will direct educators to the materials they can use to teach tolerance and mutual respect. And also the Justice Department is launching a Web site where younger students can learn about prejudice and the harm it causes.

Children have to be taught to hate. And as they come more and more of age and get into more and more environments where they can be taught that, we need to make sure that somebody is teaching them not to do so.

I wouldn't be surprised if today some of the skinheads that threw rocks and bottles at Cheunee when she was a little girl have grown out of it and are frankly ashamed of what they did. I wouldn't be surprised if some of them weren't ashamed of it on the day they did it, but they just wanted to go along, to get along, to be part of the group. But some of the people who were subject to that, some of the people who were on the bus with her or on the street with her, are not here today to make the speech she gave. I'll bet you some of the people were scarred in ways that they never got over.

So as important as it is to enforce the law, to punish people, to do all this -- all this is very important -- the most important thing we can do is to reach these kids while they're young enough to learn. Somebody is going to be trying to teach them to hate. We want to teach them a different way. And in the end, if we all do our part for that, we can make America one nation under God.

Public Papers of the Presidents

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:20 p.m. in the Dorothy Betts Marvin Theater at the Washington University. In his remarks, he referred to Stephen J. T. Berg, president, George Washington University, and Cheunee Sampson, Duke University student who introduced the President.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 15, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 8 OF 8 DOCUMENTS

Public Papers of the Presidents

November 10, 1997

Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 1778

LENGTH: 1904 words

HEADLINE: Remarks During the White House Conference on Hate Crimes

BODY:

[The panel discussion is joined in progress.]

The President. Reverend Kyles said, this is a dynamite panel. [Laughter] I think they were very good. Thank you all very much.

Even though we tried to put the Republican on after the kid, he did pretty well, didn't he? [Laughter] That was so funny. [Laughter] You know, as good as Arizona was to me, I would never do anything like that. [Laughter] But you made the best of a difficult situation, because you did a good job, Raymond.

Let me ask you all something. We've heard from people who work in enforcement, whether it's an attorney general or a police chief. We've heard from people who work in writing the laws. We've heard from an educator who's trying to systematically keep these things from happening in the first place and deal with it. We've heard from a minister who has given his whole life dealing with these matters. We've heard from a remarkable citizen here who changed the whole psychology of a community. We've heard from a young man who had an opportunity to have a remarkable experience, and he made, I thought, a very interesting point, which he deftly went by, but I don't think we should miss it. He said that he went to a very diverse school where there was a lot of continuing social segregation. And he had an opportunity to escape that on his project where he went to Israel.

In various aspects, I guess most of us who have lived any length of time have been living with one or another of these issues our whole lives. It's been my experience, when I see some form of bigotry or hatred manifest in a particular place, that there's usually one of three reasons that this person has done something bad. One is just ignorance and the fear it breeds: I don't know this person who is different from me, I'm afraid, and I manifest this fear in bigotry or violence or something. We see that a lot with the gay and lesbian issues now, you know, where people are at least unaware that they have ever had a family member or a friend or someone who was homosexual, and they are literally terrified.

Then there are some people -- and I saw this a lot when Secretary Riley and I were kids growing up in the South -- there are some people who really have an almost pathological need to look down on somebody else because they don't have enough regard for themselves, and so they think somehow they can salvage self-regard by finding somebody that at least they think is lower down than they are.

And then there are people who have been brutalized themselves and who have no way of dealing with it, no way of coming out of it, and they return brutality with brutality. There may be others, but that's been my experience.

Public Papers of the Presidents

Anyway, I ask you that to make this point -- I announced a series of measures that we would take in my opening remarks, but you're in all these things. What advice do you have for me, for the Attorney General, for the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Secretary of Agriculture -- who deals, interestingly enough, with some important aspects of the environment and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and Transportation -- I think I've mentioned them all -- and the Members of Congress -- what is the most important thing the Nation can do through the National Government? What should we be focusing on? If you could give me advice -- you've been very good to talk about your own experience and what you're trying to do -- if you could give me advice in a sentence about what you think we ought to do to move the ball down the road to help deal with this, what advice would you give us? What advice would you give to Senator Kennedy and the House Members that are here? What should we be doing at the national level?

Sheila, you want to go first? [Laughter] You're good at this, so I think -- everybody else deserves a chance to think. You're good at this; you have to go first. [Laughter]

[Sheila James Kuehl, speaker pro tempore, California State Assembly, emphasized the power of laws to express morality and the strength of a coalition of diverse people. She then identified assembly majority floor leader and conference participant Antonio R. Villaraigosa as a confirmed heterosexual.]

The President. There's a man who wants to be identified. [Laughter]

[Ms. Kuehl praised Mr. Villaraigosa for associating himself with the gay and lesbian community in supporting California's employment nondiscrimination legislation.]

The President. Anybody else want to answer that question?

[Education Secretary Richard Riley asked about preventing hate through character education, the arts, and sports. Peter Berendt, principal, Mamaroneck Avenue Elementary School, Mamaroneck, NY, responded that educators should encourage artistic expression as an opportunity to celebrate diversity.]

The President. Raymond, talk a little more about this whole issue of having an integrated school that's socially segregated. What bothers you about it, and what do you think we can do about it?

[Raymond Delos Reyes, student at Franklin High School, Seattle, WA, described his experience that students, when not in class, tended to associate with people of their own race. He then suggested that this issue should be addressed by group rather than individual efforts.]

The President. Don't you think you almost have to have an organized effort to do it? There would almost have to be some sort of club or organization at the school, because if you think about it, your parents are still pretty well separated. Now, we all work together more than we ever have before, just like you go to school together. But most neighborhoods are still fairly segregated. Most houses of worship are still fairly segregated. We're making more progress on it, but I think you almost have to organize your way out of this.

Public Papers of the Presidents

I guess that's why I asked you the question I did earlier, because every time this issue is confronted, we can point to Billings and the stirring story of a menorah in every window. But somehow we have to find a disciplined, organized way of this, so that we reach every child in an affirmative way before something bad happens and so that at least -- I don't think there is anything bad about people hanging around with members of their own ethnic group in a lot of different ways. I think that's a good thing. I just think that people also really, really need systematic opportunities to relate to people across racial and ethnic and other lines. And my own opinion is that -- just from my own experience is that unless there is an organized effort in your school to do it, it's not going to happen, because if you just wait for people spontaneously to go out at recess, lunch, or after school, it's just not going to happen. It's too much trouble. There's too much psychic risk in it.

And I hope you'll be able to do something about it, because I really respected you for raising it. It's a big problem in every school that I have ever been to in this country.

[Grant Woods, Arizona's Republican attorney general, said that law enforcement provided justice but did not address the underlying cause of hate crimes. He suggested that leaders and schools must educate children to provide a counterbalance to the negativity often presented by popular culture.]

The President. Tammie, you told your story about the brick coming through the window at your child's bed. Were there similar manifestations of bigotry among the children in the schools, or was it mostly older people? And is there anything going on now in the Billings schools to try to offset this?

[Tammie Schnitzer, of the Billings, MT, Coalition for Human Rights Foundation, responded that the attitudes of not only children but of adults, institutions, and the media need to be changed. Police Chief Arturo Venegas of Sacramento, CA, stated that leaders must present a united front and that recent progress should not be taken for granted. Rev. Samuel Billy Kyles, pastor of the Monumental Baptist Church, Memphis, TN, praised efforts of the religious community and the President's visit to a rebuilt Tennessee church for focusing attention on the problem of church burnings. Ms. Kuehl emphasized that legislation concerning hate crimes should not exclude hatred based on sexual orientation or gender.]

The President. Once we cross the great sort of intellectual and emotional hurdle that might be presented to some with Senator Kennedy and Senator Specter's bill, I frankly think the next big problem will be a practical one, Sheila -- you talk about ranking the categories -- I think there is a practical question, which you can help with because you've written the law, which Grant can help with because Arizona has a law. But the Attorney General and I, we will have to answer a lot of questions about this law, about not whether or not rape is motivated by hate or not, but whether or not if we include all these categories in the law, we will in effect be lumping into Federal law enforcement a lot of crimes that are actually being prosecuted now at the State and local level through the existing criminal justice system in a way that will clog the system because we're trying to be politically sensitive, instead of actually going out now and covering offenses where people are getting away with murder by abusing people because they're gay or they're disabled or whatever they're doing.

Public Papers of the Presidents

That, I think -- it's a practical question, but we need your help in getting through that. You have a law like that in Arizona. You wrote a law like that in California. And that's what we're going to be asked when we go up there to defend Senator Kennedy's bill; that's where we're going to be hit -- "Aren't you just creating a whole new category of Federal crimes that are being prosecuted at the State level?" and all that sort of stuff. And if you will help us, I think that will be very good.

General Reno, do you want to say anything before we wrap up?

[Attorney General Janet Reno stressed the need to improve cooperation between Federal and local authorities to report, investigate, and prosecute hate crimes. Police Chief Venegas advocated bringing the resources of the Federal Government to bear on the issue.]

The President. Thank you.

Secretary Riley, do you want to wrap up for us?

[Education Secretary Riley concluded the panel and thanked the participants.]

The President. Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you know, we're going to break for lunch now, and then the whole conference will resume. Again, I want to thank President Trachtenberg and George Washington, but I mostly want to thank all of you, because the real answer to our success in this endeavor is obviously that we all have to work together. And all of you can strike new energy into this entire endeavor around the country. We will take our initiatives that we outlined today -- we urge you to give us more ideas -- but you are actually the heart and soul of this endeavor, and a lot of you have stories that I wish all the rest of us could sit and hear today.

Thank you for being here, and thank you for being a part of the conference.

The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. in the Dorothy Betts Marvin Theater at Georgetown University.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 15, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 25 OF 29 DOCUMENTS

Public Papers of the Presidents

June 7, 1997

C Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 843

LENGTH: 902 words

HEADLINE: The President's Radio Address

BODY:

Good morning. This morning I want to talk about one of America's greatest challenges and greatest opportunities: Conquering the forces of hatred and division that still exist in our society so that we can move forward into the 21st century as one America.

We are clearly the world's most diverse democracy, bound together across all of our differences by a belief in the basic dignity of every human being's life and liberty and the right of every American who lives by our laws and lives up to his or her responsibilities to share in the full promise of the greatest nation on Earth.

Especially as we move into a new century, with its global economy and its global society, our rich diversity is a powerful strength, if we respect it. We are clearly stronger as a nation when we use the full talents of all of our people, regardless of race or religious faith, national origin or sexual orientation, gender or disability. Much of America's story is really the stories of wave after wave of citizens struggling over our full history for full equality of opportunity and dignified treatment.

We stand today in sharp contrast to the racial, ethnic, tribal, and religious conflicts which continue to claim so many lives all around the world. But we have still not purged ourselves of all bigotry and intolerance. We still have our ugly words and awful violence, our burned churches and bombed buildings.

A predominantly white suburb of Atlanta, Georgia, last month, an American couple was greeted with racial epithets as they moved into their new home. Just a week later, their home was sprayed with gunfire in the middle of the night. In a recent incident right here in Washington, DC, three men accosted a gay man in a park, forced him at gunpoint to go under a bridge, and beat him viciously while using antigay epithets. Last fall in Los Angeles, a Jewish student's dormitory room was bombed with a quarter stick of dynamite, and a swastika was drawn near the door.

Such hate crimes, committed solely because the victims have a different skin color or a different faith or are gays or lesbians, leave deep scars not only on the victims but on our larger community. They weaken the sense that we are one people with common values and a common future. They tear us apart when we should be moving closer together. They are acts of violence against America itself. And even a small number of Americans who harbor and act upon hatred and intolerance can do enormous damage to our efforts to bind together our increasingly diverse society into one nation realizing its full promise.

As part of our preparation for the new century, it is time for us to mount an all-out assault on hate crimes, to punish them swiftly and severely, and to do

Public Papers of the Presidents

more to prevent them from happening in the first place. We must begin with a deeper understanding of the problem itself. That is why I'm convening a special White House conference on hate crimes this November 10th. We'll bring to the White House victims of hate crimes and their families to understand why the impact of these acts runs so much deeper than the crimes themselves. We'll bring to the White House law enforcement experts and leading officials from Congress and the Justice Department to take a serious look at the existing laws against hate crime and consider ways to improve enforcement and to strengthen them. We'll bring together community and religious leaders to talk about solutions that are already making a real difference in communities all across our Nation.

In preparation for the conference, Attorney General Reno has begun a thorough review of the laws concerning hate crimes and the ways in which the Federal Government can make a difference to help us to build a more vigorous plan of action. But of course, the fight against hatred and intolerance must be waged not just through our laws but in our hearts as well.

A newborn child today does not know how to hate or stereotype another human being; that behavior must be learned. And intolerance does not generally begin with criminal acts. Instead, it begins with quiet acts of indignity: the bigoted remark, the African-American who is followed around the grocery store by a suspicious clerk, the gay or lesbian who is denied a job, the Hispanic or Asian who is targeted because of unfair stereotypes. To truly move forward as one community, it is just not enough to prevent acts of violence to our bodies, we must prevent acts of violence to our spirits.

By convening the very first White House conference on hate crimes this November, America can confront the dark forces of division that still exists. We can shine the bright light of justice, humanity, and harmony on them. We'll take a serious look at the laws and remedies that can make a difference in preventing hate crimes. We'll have the frank and open dialog we need to build one America across all difference and diversity. And together, we will move closer to the day when acts of hatred are no longer a stain on our community or our conscience, closer to the day when we can redeem for ourselves and show to the world the 220-year-old promise of our Founders, that we are "One Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11:47 a.m. on June 5 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 7.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 09, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 2 OF 5 DOCUMENTS

Public Papers of the Presidents

October 2, 1999

See page 6 - ENDA

C: Weekly Comp. Pres. doc. 1901

LENGTH: 3600 words

HEADLINE: Remarks at an Access Now for Gay and Lesbian Equality Dinner in Beverly Hills, California

BODY:

Thank you. Let me say, first of all, I thank you for that. I'm profoundly moved. And I was thinking when I was watching David Mixner make those remarks that 30 years ago, when I let him sleep on my floor -- [laughter] -- when we were much younger men in England, and I didn't charge him a nickel for it -- [laughter] -- I never dreamed that either of us would be in this place tonight doing these things. [Laughter]

David's life has taken a lot of twists and turns since then. He's had his ups and his downs like all the rest of us. But I can tell you something, when I met him when he was young, I thought I had never met a person whose heart burned with the fire of social justice so strongly. He has never forgotten the roots of his childhood. He has never forgotten not only the pain that he and other gay and lesbian Americans have endured; he also cares for other people who are dispossessed and downtrodden and underrepresented and often forgotten.

And tonight I was watching him, and he introduced his wonderful sister -- who has also been a friend of mine for nearly 30 years now -- and I was thinking how fortunate we are in this country at this time, with all the things we've had to do, to have had his energy, his heart, his devotion, his passion. It was 8 years ago that he and Scott Hitt and a few other ANGLE members met with me this week 8 years ago, here. Then in May of '92 we had a big event out here, and some of you were there. And I told you that I had a vision of America, and you were part of it, that we were all part of the same community.

tonight I thank you for helping to make that happen. I think my good friend Governor Gray Davis for the leadership he has given in California. I thank our leader in the House of Representatives, who -- when David made that crack about the "Canterbury Tales" and how we're known by our traveling companions -- [laughter] -- it kind of made me feel sorry for Dick Gephardt. [Laughter] You talk about a guy that gets up and goes to work every day under adverse conditions and continues to do the right thing, he does.

But I know that Representatives Baldwin and Becerra and Kennedy and Sherman and Waxman are here, and they're his good fellow travelers. We just may need five more in the company to make it a much better trip. [Applause] Thank you.

I want to thank Bill Melamed, Skip Paul, Gwen Baba, Roberta Bennett for putting this together. I want to thank the members of our administration who came: Sean Maloney, Karen Tramontano, Minyon Moore, Fred Hochberg, Richard Socarides, Marsha Scott. And I want to thank Scott Hitt, especially, who's been the Chair of the AIDS council. He's having his last meeting as Chair on Monday, and he's been magnificent, and we ought to give him a big hand. [Applause]

Public Papers of the Presidents

I'd also like to thank the Gay Men's Chorus. I was back there feverishly trying to write down all those lines. [Laughter] I want to call Hillary and give her those best lines tonight. You know, I'm trying to remember them all. It's unbelievable. If someone would furnish me with the lyrics of that song, I'd be eternally grateful. [Laughter]

You know, I'd like to put what brought us all here tonight just for a minute -- I know a lot of other people are going to speak and have a lot of great things to say, but I would like to put this in, just for a moment, in the context of history and the larger context of our future, and how the fight for equal rights and equal opportunity and full participation to build one America fits in with all the other things we should be doing as a country, and how what we are at home will determine what we can do around the world in the new millennium.

When I ran for President in 1992, most Americans felt things were pretty dismal in this country. The economy was in bad shape; the society was divided; all the social indicators -- crime, welfare, and other things -- were going in the wrong direction. Politics was, as we all remember from the convention they had back then on the other side, a matter of division, you know, just drive a wedge in society and make sure you wedge is bigger than their wedge; you get more votes, you win; and if everybody is all torn up and upset, who cares, you're in power.

And over and over and over again, things in Washington were sort of repeating themselves like a broken record. And I felt that we could do better with a unifying vision. That's why I set out a vision of America, and you were part of it. But I also had a vision that we could build an economy that was good for working people and employers. I believed we could build a country where we could grow the economy and make the environment better, not worse.

I have always believed that the real purpose of life and growth is to try and figure out how to develop these unifying visions and to move closer to them and to break down all these funny walls we have to put up in our minds to organize life into little boxes so we can figure out how to get from here to there.

You know, in '92, the American people just sort of took a chance on me and Bill Clinton. I mean, it was an argument we made and there was no evidence for it because the other crowd had been in so long. We just made an argument. And it was not an easy race. A month after we had that meeting out here in May of '92, I won the California primary. And the headline the next day was that the exit poll showed that all the people that voted for me really wanted Ross Perot to be President. [Laughter] And I was in third place.

And then he and President Bush got in a fight about who messed up whose daughter's wedding or something. [Laughter] You remember that? I mean, it was an amazing -- and I thought to myself, people don't have jobs; they're being foreclosed on; why are you guys fighting about this? The wedding went off without a hitch. What is this about? [Laughter] And somehow the American people decided to give me a chance, decided to give Al and Hillary and Tipper and all the people that came in the administration a chance.

I guess what I'd like to say tonight, first of all -- not with arrogance, but with humility -- is that we now know that there is evidence that we're right and that pulling things together and moving forward actually works. We have the

Public Papers of the Presidents

lowest unemployment in 29 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the lowest crime rates in 26 years, the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years, the highest homeownership in history, the best peacetime expansion in history.

You have to -- 15 million Americans took leave under the family leave law. And when it was vetoed in the previous administration, they said, "Oh, well, we've got to veto this bill because if we let people take time off from work when their babies are born or their parents are sick, why, it will ruin the small business economy." And every year, we've set a new record for new small businesses in America.

Ninety percent of our kids are immunized against serious diseases for the first time, our young children. We're giving 5 million more of them health insurance. A hundred thousand young people served in AmericCorps. I could just go on and on. And along the way, we gave America the most diverse, truly representative government by far in the history of America. That included you and everybody else.

What I want to say to you is, this is not an argument anymore. [Laughter] We have evidence. And so you should be of good cheer. And when you look ahead to these elections in 2000, you should be absolutely sure that anybody who is not with you knows they're doing it in the face of the evidence.

And because -- what really bothers me about what's going on in Washington now, it's like there are all these people out there making decisions in the congressional majority as if the last 6 1/2 years just didn't happen. And that bothers me. So I say to you, when they say, looking at the Vice President and our party, "Well, America needs a change," I agree with that. America always needs a change. We've got a lot more to do on your agenda. America needs a change? The question is not whether we'll change, but how are we going to change? How are we going to change?

You mark my words, the world is changing so fast in how we work and live and relate to each other and folks around the globe, that the world will change. The question is, how? And are we going to use this unprecedented moment, the chance in a lifetime to say, okay, what are our big challenges out there, and so what? Or are we going to do what got us into so much trouble in the first place? Are we going to pretend that the last 6 1/2 years just didn't happen? That's very important.

And I want to try to put the things that you're thinking about now into that context. What are the really big challenges facing America that affect you, too? One, the aging of America -- I hate it because I'm doing it. [Laughter] But I'm the oldest of the baby boomers. The number of people over 65 will double in the next 30 years; there will be two people working for every one person retired and drawing Social Security.

Now, we have never been in a position, until now, in my lifetime, to deal with that challenge. But we now have the ability to run the life of Social Security out 50 years, to add more than a decade to the life of Medicare, to cover prescription drugs for elderly people -- three-quarters of them cannot afford quality prescription drugs today -- and to do it in a way that all of you who are younger than that should rejoice about. Because I can tell you those of us in the baby boom generation are plagued by the notion that our retirement

Public Papers of the Presidents

will be so expensive for our country that it will burden our children and our ability to give our grandchildren the childhoods they deserve. But we can fix it now. So I gave them a plan to do it. So far, they say no.

One thing that really bothers me -- we've got the largest and most diverse group of children in our school in history. We never had over 53 million children in schools, and they come from more different backgrounds than ever before. And that will be a godsend to 21st century America if, but only if, they all have a world-class education. And I think they're entitled to it.

So I gave Congress a plan to build and modernize 6,000 schools and hire 100,000 teachers for smaller classes; make sure all the kids had computers in their classrooms; make sure we stopped social promotion, but had after-school programs for the kids who needed it; and more of these charter schools that California has led the way in bringing to our children. So far, they said no.

Funny thing, maybe Mr. Gephardt will talk about this later, but one of the most interesting things is last year, right before the election in '98, they got religion on this education program. [Laughter] And they supported this big downpayment on our plan for 100,000 teachers, and we funded 30,000 of those teachers. And you had those real liberals, like Mr. Armey -- [laughter] -- going home -- this is serious business, ask Dick. You had these real liberals going out and saying, "Man, this is a great thing we've done. We've made a big downpayment on 100,000 teachers; we're going to put 30,000 teachers out there, and this is a great Republican program because there is no bureaucracy in it. We just give it to the schools, and they hire the teachers." They thought it was the greatest thing since sliced bread before the election.

They have just voted not only to refuse to fund any more of those but to no longer earmark the money for the 30,000. So there's a big difference here.

I'm worried about the families of our country. I'm worried about all these working people. How are they going to have the child care they need? How are they going to have the health care they need? Why don't we pass the Patients' Bill of Rights that protects working people? There's a difference between the two issues on that, and I think it's important.

We're finally going to get a chance -- we've been working for 2 years -- finally going to get a chance to vote on the Patients' Bill of Rights in the House next week. I'm very worried about this fabulous economy, because we've left some people behind. Yes, we've got the lowest poverty rate in 20 years, but there are still people in places that have not felt this recovery. If you come from -- a lot of you come from other places, the Mississippi Delta, Appalachia, the Indian reservations, many of the inner cities. So I want to do some things that I think will change all that. I want to, first of all, give Americans with money the same incentives to invest in poor areas in America we give them to invest in poor areas around the world. I think that's important.

I hope in the near future we'll be able to make access to the Internet as universal as telephone access is. It will have a huge impact on the economy. Last night I was in northern California, and I was with some people who work with eBay. A lot of you probably buy things on eBay. [Laughter] It seems like everybody does now. And I learned that over and above the employees of that company, there are now over 20,000 people, including a lot of people that used to be on welfare, who actually make a living buying and selling things,

trading on eBay, over 20,000 people.

Well, I'm telling you, that means nothing at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, where the unemployment rate is 73 percent. Now, we can't stop there. And we ought not to quit until every American has the chance to participate in our prosperity if he or she is willing to work. And I won't rest until that happens.

I want you to keep a checklist in your mind, and when I get to the end, ask yourself what's all this about, what's it got to do with you as Americans. This is part of being part of America. I think we need to do more, not less, for the environment. The Vice President has this livability agenda to deal with, using all kinds of computer technology to alleviate traffic congestion, to buy more green space in urban areas. We're trying to lead the world toward recognizing that this global warming is real, but that you do not have to end your economic growth, because now there are technologies available to allow us to grow the economy as we reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. There are people in the other party who believe that this is some sort of subversive plot to wreck America's economic future.

Not very long ago, I came out here and went to San Bernardino, to the Inland Empire, and we announced a housing development for low income working people in which the developers pledged, by the use of energy conservation technologies, to cut the utility bills of these low income working people by 40 percent. And I just got a report that the average reduction is 60 percent. That's good for the economy. That's not bad for the economy, and it's good for the environment.

Let me just mention a couple of other things. I am very concerned that America, even though we've got the lowest crime rate in 26 years, is still a pretty dangerous country compared to other countries. We should be the safest big country in the world. This is a free and prosperous place. We welcome all kinds of people. It is not rational. Why aren't we the safest country in the world? Because we haven't taken reasonable steps, not enough of them, to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children. And because, frankly, even though we've put 100,000 more police on the street in community policing, we've still got neighborhoods that don't have enough coverage.

I gave Congress a plan to deal with both those things: put 50,000 more police officers out there to prevent crime in the highest crime areas of the country and to deal with guns and so forth. They say no. Our crowd says yes; their crowd says no. Big difference.

What about our role in the world? I've tried, from Bosnia to Kosovo to the Middle East to Northern Ireland, to stand up for the idea that people ought not to be murdered or moved wholesale because of their race or their religion. We have worked to support other countries and to build the capacity in Africa to prevent future Rwandas, because people ought not to be murdered because of what tribe they're in. And you can define tribe however you want. [Laughter]

We're about to start a great debate on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, to end nuclear testing, something that Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy wanted us to do years ago. We're finally going to have a chance to do it. In so many of these areas, there are partisan differences which surprise me: And let me come back to you.

Public Papers of the Presidents

Why are we for the hate crimes legislation? Why are we for "ENDA"? Because if we can't build one America, it's going to be very hard to have a unifying force that will deal with every other one of these issues. And that's what I want to think about. Don't you think that it's interesting that here we are on the verge of this new millennium with all these absolutely breathtaking technological breakthroughs that people who are technologically challenged, like me, can hardly keep up with? [Laughter]

I mean, isn't it amazing to you that we have -- modernity is bursting out all over in the form of high technology. And yet, the world's largest problem, and America's largest problem, that you can see when those kids got shot at that Jewish school and that Filipino postal worker was murdered here; that you could see when that guy who said he belonged to a church that didn't believe in God but did believe in white supremacy killed all those people of color and wounded others in Illinois and Indiana; that you could see when Matthew Shepard was murdered and James Byrd was torn apart; and that you can see in the tribal slaughters of Rwanda, and the persecution of the Kosovar Albanians or the Bosnian Muslims or the fights in Northern Ireland or the continued agonies of the Middle East -- here we are on the verge of this great modern world, where we can make movies with virtual reality now, and virtual reality seems sometimes more real than what is real. And the biggest problem we've got is the primitive, age-old fear and hatred and dehumanization of the other people who aren't like us.

And so I say -- I'm nearly done; I just want to say this -- [laughter] -- I'm going to do everything I can, every day that I have, to remind people of that, that we have to be one America. We can have honest differences over issues, but we can't have honest differences about whether we share a common humanity. And we cannot be under the illusion that either material prosperity or technological breakthroughs alone can purge the darkness in our hearts.

I believe that America's best days are still out there. I believe with all my heart that we can find a way to marry prosperity and peace and humanity. But we must have a unifying vision. I want to say, again, I am grateful to people who have worked in my administration who have made me more alive to the concerns of our community, not only those who themselves are gay and lesbian, but starting beginning with my Vice President, who has been terrific on all of that issues; you will never know.

But people are still scared of people who aren't like them. And other people are scared of themselves, and they're afraid they won't count unless they've got somebody to look down on. And if you have to find somebody to look down on, it must be somebody that is different from you. Because if you look down on somebody who is just like you, then you're looking down on yourself. [Laughter] And so we, in our little minds, come up with all these boxes. But all of life is a struggle to find a more and more and more and more unifying vision that, at least for me, makes us both more human and more in tune with our maker.

I wish I could have done better. But we've done pretty well. And we're a long way from where we were. But I want you to think about this a little bit every day between now and next year, 13 months until the millennial election to define what America will be like; whether we will continue to embrace these big challenges and change in a positive way, building on what we now have evidence of; whether we will continue to look for those unifying visions that allow us all to join hands and go forward together.

Public Papers of the Presidents

And I want you to remember the enthusiasm with which you greeted me tonight.
And I want you to remember that it's easy to shout in the moment. But the world
is turned by those who day in and day out, with courage and determination and
he d hope, stay the course. We need you. America needs you. I still
b in the future of America, and you are a part of it.

Thank you, and God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:10 p.m. in the International Ballroom at the
Beverly Hills Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to ANGLE member David
Mixner, who introduced the President, and his sister, Patricia Mixner Annison;
H. Scott Hitt, Chairman, President's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS; Gov. Gray
Davis of California; and ANGLE members and dinner cochair Bill Melamed, Skip
Paul, Gwen Baba, and Roberta Bennett. The President also referred to ENDA, the
proposed "Employment Non-Discrimination Act."

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: November 10, 1999

LEVEL 1 - 3 OF 5 DOCUMENTS

Public Papers of the Presidents

June 24, 1999

C Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 1175

LENGTH: 278 words

HEADLINE: Statement on the Proposed "Employment Non-Discrimination Act"

BODY:

Today Members of the House and Senate will reintroduce, on a bipartisan basis, the "Employment Non-Discrimination Act" ("ENDA"). This important civil rights legislation would extend basic employment discrimination protections to gay and lesbian Americans. I strongly support this bill, and we will work hard for its passage.

Americans instinctively believe in fairness. They believe that individuals should not be denied a job on the basis of something that has no relationship to their ability to perform their work. Yet most Americans don't know that men and women in 39 States of this Nation may be fired from their jobs solely because of their sexual orientation, even when it has no bearing on their job performance. Sadly, as congressional hearings have documented, this kind of job discrimination is not rare.

Those who face job discrimination based on sexual orientation usually have no legal recourse, in either our State or Federal courts. This is wrong. Last year I issued an Executive order making permanent a long-standing Federal policy against discrimination based on sexual orientation in the civilian Federal workplace. I hope that Congress will make that policy a national one by passing this important legislation.

I applaud the bipartisan efforts of Senators Jeffords, Kennedy, and Lieberman and Congressmen Shays and Frank to make the "Employment Non-Discrimination Act" the law. "ENDA" failed to win passage by only one vote when the Senate last considered it. My administration will continue to work for its passage until it becomes law.

NOTE: The statement referred to Executive Order 13087 of May 28, 1999 (63 FR 30097).

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 23, 1999

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a tabbed divider. Given our digitization capabilities, we are sometimes unable to adequately scan such dividers. The title from the original document is indicated below.

TE/SA: One America

Divider Title: _____

LEVEL 1 - 1 OF 29 DOCUMENTS

Public Papers of the Presidents

November 10, 1999

See page 4

CI Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 2341

LENGTH: 4739 words

HEADLINE: Remarks at a National Coalition of Minority Business Award Dinner

BODY:

Thank you very much. Thank you. Whew, this is a pretty rowdy crowd tonight. We have to sing that song before we're done. [Laughter]

Chairman Garrett, when you were sort of introducing Weldon, and you kept reading all those quotes about his influence, and this, that, and the other thing -- and I thought, this can all be distilled in one sentence: Bill Clinton does what he asked him to. [Laughter]

I want to thank Weldon and Mel for having me here. And I want to thank you, Chairman Garrett, and the board and all of you who made this dinner possible tonight. I want to thank the members of the administration who are here. Secretary Slater -- do you know what I thought about when Secretary Slater got up to read Reverend Jackson's letter? If Jesse had known Rodney was going to read for him, he probably would have come back for fear that Rodney would read it better than he would. [Laughter] I'll pay for that later. [Laughter]

I want to tell you, I think Reverend Jackson is where he ought to be tonight, and you should know that he's been with me every step of the two new markets tours we have taken, and it's been a great joy. We've been friends for many years. I can still remember when we ate french fries in the kitchen of the Arkansas Governor's mansion, more than a decade ago, and talked about how foolish it was that we weren't trying to include all Americans in the economic mainstream of our life. And he was on this road before I was, and I'm glad that we're walking it together now.

to thank Secretary Alexis Herman and Aida Alvarez for their leadership. There are others here in this administration -- Alvin Brown does a wonderful job for the Vice President and for me, leading our empowerment zones and enterprise community initiative. And one of the things I want to compliment him on is that we just got -- among the victories in this last-minute budget process is we've now fully funded the second round of empowerment zones to give more poor communities opportunities. Thank you, Alvin.

I told Aida Alvarez that if Weldon really had the guts to tell Erskine Bowles that she was the best Administrator of the SBA, we could all enjoy his misery tonight -- [laughter] -- because you have done a wonderful job. And there are others who are here. Bill Lann Lee, the head of the Civil Rights Division; thank you, sir, for your leadership. And I see Dave Barram, the Government's landlord, GSA; thank you for what you have done here. And Fred Hochberg, at the SBA, out there. And a person who used to be a part of this administration who had a lot to do with "mead it, don't end it," and a lot of other good things, Deval Patrick. Thank you for being here tonight. Bless you, sir.

Public Papers of the Presidents

And thank you for acknowledging Minyon Moore, my political director; and Ben Johnson who runs our One America office; and my good friend Ernie Green. I tell you, I wish every one of you had been in the White House yesterday for that Gold Medal celebration for the Little Rock Nine. It was one of the most moving things at I have ever had the opportunity to be involved in. [Applause] Thank you.

I want to also acknowledge the Members of Congress here tonight that I believe are here; Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard; Congressman Ruben Hinojosa, my good friend from south Texas; Congressman John Conyers is here, obviously.

And I want to pay special recognition to one other person who is here, because he's up for reelection next year; he needs your help, and he is one of the most courageous Members of the United States Congress. If ever we had a friend who deserves to be reelected, it's Senator Chuck Robb from Virginia. And I want to ask him to stand up. Thank you. [Applause] He may well be the greatest Virginia -- greatest Governor Virginia had since Thomas Jefferson, in his record in education and in so many other ways. We served together, and I have seen him cast vote after vote in the Senate, knowing that it might cost him his seat. And he just gets up every day and does what he thinks is right. He deserves the support of every thinking person in America who cares about the direction of the United States Senate. He's got a hard fight. I believe he's going to win, but he has to have all kinds of help, financial, vote, and otherwise, to win. And I want to urge you to support him in every way you can. Thank you. [Applause]

I'm told that Mayor David Dinkins from New York is here tonight. If he's here, or was here, anyway -- and if you're not here, I still think you're great. [Laughter] You've heard this speech before.

I thank you for this award. You know, I always feel generally that Presidents shouldn't receive awards, that having the job is award enough. But I confess I kind of like this one. [Laughter] And I'm going to put it on my desk in the Oval Office tomorrow, so you'll begin to see it on television, and you'll know how much I like it.

I told that joke about "Lift Every Voice and Sing." I remember one time Vernon Jordan and I sang that song to a group of unbelieving people on Martha's Vineyard. [Laughter] You know, this is all beginning to cause me some difficulty. Last night I spoke to a Hispanic Democratic dinner, and I was introduced by my friend Miguel Lausell from Puerto Rico. And he stood up and said, "This President has a Latino soul." [Laughter] And not long ago, Toni Morrison said that I was -- Toni Morrison, the Pulitzer Prize-winning African-American writer, said that I was the first black President America had ever had. [Laughter] So I thought to myself, now I'll never be able to go home to Ireland. What am I going to do? [Laughter]

All of this that we're laughing about really stems from something I deeply believe. I believe it about America, but I believe it about every person's journey through life. We all struggle, and we all fail. But we all struggle to live a life of integrity, which means literally that we are integrated, that our mind and our body and our spirit are in the same place at the same time, centered and connected to other human beings. And I've always believed that, in so many ways, the purpose of politics is to find a unifying vision that will

Public Papers of the Presidents

allow people to release the barriers that keep them from one another so they can join hands and enhance our common destiny.

It is a privilege to serve. I don't really deserve any awards. I got to be President, and it's the greatest honor that any American could ever have. Your success is the greatest award I could get, because of the mission of our country, the eternal mission of our country is to deepen the meaning of our freedom and widen the circle of opportunity and strengthen the bonds of our community. And it turns out that trying to make sure that everybody shares in our prosperity is not only the morally right thing to do, it's good for all the rest of America, too -- which is why all these businesses are here tonight. So we have come a long way by following the admonition of the Scriptures to be doers of the Word and not hearers only.

Twelve years ago, or in the 12 years before the Vice President and I came here, we had a very different view, I think, of ourselves as a country, which dominated Washington, and a very different economic philosophy. But in the end, by 1992, it had brought us to a place where we had economic distress and social division, with a Government that had been discredited by the people who were running it, who said the Government was the problem. And even though along the way I thought they did some quite good things -- standing up against communism, signing the Americans with Disabilities Act -- but all the time telling us that the Government was the problem. And also defying the basic laws of arithmetic when it came to doing our budget. [Laughter]

So in 1992, Vice President Gore and I asked the American people to give us a chance to put people first, to be driven by a vision of opportunity for all, but responsibility from all Americans. I always thought, contrary to the prevailing political rhetoric, that most people wanted to be responsible and would respond to a challenge to do that -- and to build a community of increasingly diverse Americans.

We had some new ideas about the economy, about welfare, about crime, about the environment, about national service, about the environment, about national service, about America's role in the world. And with the help of a lot of you here, the American people gave us a chance to try our ideas. And after 7 years, the results are in. And I am very grateful that we have the longest peace-time expansion in our history. By February it will be the longest economic expansion in American history, including the Second World War and World War I and the times we were fully mobilized. Nearly 20 million new jobs; a 30-year low in unemployment; a 32-year low in the welfare rolls; a 25-year low in the crime rate; 20-year low in the poverty rates; the first time we've had back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years, with the smallest Federal Government in 37 years. You've been a part of that. That's the America you have made because you have been given a chance to make it. And you should be very proud of yourselves for the role you played in it.

Along the way, we tried to make sure that people who worked 40 hours a week and had kids in their homes should not be poor. So we doubled the earned-income tax credit and cut taxes for 15 million working Americans, raised the minimum wage, and I hope we're about to raise it again. We passed the Brady bill, which has now kept 400,000 people with criminal or other problem histories from getting handguns, giving us the lowest murder rate in 30 years.

Public Papers of the Presidents

We fought for and won an increase in children's health coverage that will enable us, I hope and believe, over the next year or so, to cover 5 million more children with health insurance. Ninety percent of our kids are immunized against serious childhood diseases, for the very first time in our history. We ended Head Start, and the family and medical leave law has now enabled over 10 million Americans to take a little time off from work without losing their jobs when a baby is born or a parent is sick.

We've opened the doors of higher education with the HOPE scholarship and other tax credits and more Pell grant fundings and tax deductibility for interest on student loans. The air is cleaner; the water is cleaner; the food is safer. We set aside more land in protected areas than any administration in the history of this country, except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt.

One hundred and fifty thousand young Americans, and some not so young, have entered the AmeriCorps program and served in their communities all across America, solving problems and working with people, helping children, dealing with natural disasters, rebuilding dilapidated housing, doing any number of things to make our country a better place. And we have made a clear commitment to building one America in the 21st century.

We've tried to reach out, I might add, in ways that are not always apparent. You know, and you've made -- I like that joke about how my administration doesn't look like the one on "West Wing." I don't recognize that White House, you know? [Laughter] It's a cute show, but it ought to be more diverse, because America is. And our administration is. You know that. You know the record of our appointments to the Federal Bench and the efforts to increase the effectiveness of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. We've also, I might add, tried to make sure that people who have different political views than mine had their rights respected, that all Federal employees were citizens and could be citizens, that the religious convictions of Federal employees and children in our schools could have the widest possible protection. So I haven't tried just to bring into this tent of one America people who will vote for me at the next election, but all people who should feel that they have a place at America's table.

We have made a special effort on the economic front to help people who have additionally been left behind. We've increased by 2 1/2 times the number of small business loans to African-American entrepreneurs, and by 2 1/2 times the number of SBA loans to Hispanic entrepreneurs since 1992. And beneath those economic statistics that I just ran off -- the 30 years, 30 years, 20 years -- I wish you all could remember that and just tell everybody between now and the next election -- [laughter] -- we have the lowest levels ever recorded of African-American poverty and child poverty, the lowest Hispanic poverty rate in a generation, the lowest female unemployment rate -- listen to this -- lowest female unemployment rate in 46 years, and the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates ever recorded since we started separate statistics in the 1970's.

Now, I think the important question is, what do we intend to do with this. You know, I worked as hard as I could, and I will continue to every day for the next 430-some odd days I have to be President, to keep this country going in the right direction, to build that bridge to the 21st century we talked about in 1996. A nation is almost like a vast ocean liner out in the Pacific somewhere. To turn it around, you can't do it on a dime; it takes time. And we've worked

Public Papers of the Presidents

hard for 7 years, and the country is moving in the right direction. The question is, what are we going to do with it?

s the only time in my lifetime that we have had this level of economic st free of any pressing domestic crisis or foreign threat, so that we lie ay can look ahead into this new millennium and say, what would we like America to be for our children and our grandchildren? Because as good as things are, we know two things. We know, number one, nothing stays the same forever, good or bad. So like all moments, this one will pass. Something will happen sometime down the road. Nothing stays the same forever. The second thing we know is, we know right now that we have some big challenges still out there. I'll mention some I won't talk about tonight in any detail, but just you ought to think about them. We know right now that the number of people over 65 is going to double in the next 30 years, and we'll only have two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. We have to decide right now whether we're going to deal with that.

We know right now that Medicare is supposed to run out of money in 15 years and that 75 percent of the elderly people in this country can't afford prescription drugs. We know right now -- children bigger than the baby boom generation, and they're much, much more diverse. In Senator Robb's home State, just across the river from the White House, the Alexandria school district has children from 180 different racial and ethnic groups whose parents speak 100 different languages. One school district. And we know that while we have the best system of higher education in the world, and this administration has succeeded, literally, in opening the doors of college to everybody who is willing to work for it now, no one can seriously assert that every one of our children is getting a world-class education, kindergarten through 12th grade. And we know if we really want to have one America, we have to deal with that.

We know right now that people who are connected to the Internet and are computer-literate and understand that have big economic advantages. Even poor people get big economic advantages. I learned in northern California last week that this company, eBay -- I bet a lot of you have bought things from eBay, you know eBay -- you know there are now over 20,000 people making a living off eBay? No -- ng for the company; trading through the site. Many of them, I learned f: company people, used to be on welfare. So we know that it makes a huge di: ence, and yet we know there's a digital divide out there. The Vice President and I have worked hard to close it in the schools.

Four years ago, we had only 4 percent of our schools and classrooms connected to the Internet. Now 51 percent are, and we're trying to make sure 100 percent are by the end of next year. We're getting close. But there are kids out there in schools that cannot be wired because they are so old and in such disrepair. Forty percent of the schools in New York are over 70 years old. Some of them are still heated by coal. The average age of school buildings in Philadelphia is 65 years. And I could go on and on. I was in a little town in Florida not very long ago, a little town, where there were 12 trailers out behind the grade school. So this is a challenge; we know about this.

I know, and I hope that you believe, that there is really an environmental challenge that the whole world faces in this climate change business and that if we continue to warm the climate at this rate, at some time in the next century the water levels will rise as the polar ice caps melt. The sugarcane fields in Louisiana will be flooded; much of the Florida Everglades will be flooded;

Public Papers of the Presidents

some island nations could disappear. And the whole quality of life in America could be changed. The distribution of agricultural opportunity could be irrevocably altered.

also know that you don't have to burn more greenhouse gases to get rich, more, as a nation. It's not necessary. There are technological advances that are now available, and those that will soon be available, which will enable us to totally change that. Congressman Conyers and I went to the Detroit auto show together, and we looked at automobiles that use mixed gasoline and electrical engines that will soon become commercially available, that get 70 miles a gallon, and that can be economical even at presently relatively low gasoline prices. But we have to -- we know that.

We know that in the future we'll have to deal with the challenges from terrorists and drugrunners and organized criminals around the world, and they'll increasingly work together, and they will use the very things that we're using -- the Internet and technology and the openness of borders -- against us. We know that. What are we going to do about it?

I say all these things not to alarm anyone, but to say that we know right now what most of the large challenges of the next 30 years will be, and right now, for the first time in my lifetime, we have the prosperity and the confidence and the coherence to deal with them. But they require decisions.

I said yesterday, when we were celebrating Ernie and the other members of the Little Rock Nine, that the things that those kids did when they walked up the steps and into the schools, and they were abused and they were run off and they went through this trial, is they forced everybody else to make a decision. Before that I was like everybody else; I thought segregation was a terrible thing, but I never had to really speak about it. I was 11 years old; what the heck did it matter to me? I was more worried about when recess was, or something. You know, it was just the way things were. But sometimes when people act, they change everything. And everybody had to make a decision then. Because there it was. Well, that's where we are now. Except there is no crisis so we don't have to make a decision. We can just wander on and not deal with

how many times in your personal life, in your family life, or in your business life, have you made a mistake because you thought things were going so well you could afford to be distracted, diverted, or indulgent? How many times? It happens to everybody. There's not a person in this room it hasn't happened to. It is human nature.

And so I say to you, the greatest honor I could have is to know that you will work with me for the next 430-some odd days and that you will continue to work to make sure that we do not blow this precious moment. This is an incredible opportunity and an enormous responsibility. And it's never happened in my lifetime, ever. Not once have we ever had this much prosperity, this much confidence, and the absence of a pressing, convulsing domestic crisis or foreign threat. And we will never forgive ourselves if we let our children and our grandchildren down by not looking into the future and saying, here are the big challenges facing this country, and we intend to meet them.

And I just want to mention two more. Number one is there are people in places which still have not participated in this prosperity. That's what the

Public Papers of the Presidents

Vice President's employment zones and enterprise community initiative has been all about. That's why we worked hard to establish these community development financial institutions that some of you have participated in. That's why we worked hard to enforce the Community Reinvestment Act and then to save it in the banking legislation, because 95 percent of all the lending ever made under that 22-year-old law has happened since this administration has been in office.

And that's what this new markets initiative is all about. We will never have every single neighborhood in an employment zone; we can only pick those that have their act together and have the biggest problems and try to make the fairest judgments we can. But what I have sought to do by going around the country is to say, look, there are all these other places, and shouldn't we at least give investors in America the same incentives to invest in poor areas in America we give them to invest in poor areas in Latin America or Africa or Asia? I support American investment around the world. I am trying to pass right now the Africa trade bill and the Caribbean Basin initiative before this Congress goes home. But I believe that the most important markets we have are the untapped markets still in this country that need to be developed.

So I ask you to think about that. You'd be amazed -- again, this is another example where doing -- what the right thing to do is also good for the rest of America. You would be amazed how much time we have spent over the last year and a half figuring out how can we keep this economic expansion going. All previous economic expansions have come to an end either because the economy gets so heated up that we get inflation -- and then when you break the inflation, the medicine to break the inflation is so strong, it breaks the recovery -- or because the recovery just runs out of steam.

Now, we've kept this one going, largely thanks to you and people like you. Thirty percent of it has been powered by technology; 30 percent of it, until this Asian financial collapse, was powered by exports. Traditional economic theory dramatically underestimated the impact of technology to increase productivity and underestimated the impact of open markets in holding down inflation.

can keep it going. But to keep it going, with unemployment at 4.1 percent, what have we got to do? If you go into a neighborhood in an inner city, if you go into an abandoned small town that lost its factory and has nothing left, if you go into a Native American reservation -- Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, there are plenty of smart people up there. I walked up and down the street with a 17-year-old girl that is as intelligent as any high school child I've talked to since I've been President. But they have 73 percent unemployment. That is wasted human potential. And if you invest there, you create new businesses, new jobs, and new consumers and new taxpayers, and you grow the economy without inflation, by definition, because you are getting both new producers and new consumers. This is the right thing to do for the people that are there. It's the right thing to do for the rest of us because we want this ride to go on just as long as it can.

The other thing I want to say is, if I could leave America with one legacy, and somebody said to me tonight, "Well, you're going to have to go now, and we'll give you one wish" -- you know, the genie deal -- [laughter] -- "But you don't get three wishes; you just get one," I'd still pick one America. Why? Because I think when we're getting along and when we're not just tolerating

Public Papers of the Presidents

each other, but when we respect and like each other, when we've got a framework for dealing with our honest differences that enables them to be worked out without everybody falling out, the American people nearly always get it right. I mean, why do you think we're around here after over 220 years? Look at all the things we've weathered. I mean, we had these Founding Fathers who said we're all created equal, and they were slaveholders. And even white guys couldn't vote if they didn't own property, never mind the women, right? We worked it out. So now we just kept on working at it, and we worked it out. But what is the signal measure of our progress? We kept finding ways to bring more and more and more people into the circle of freedom and opportunity. And then their minds figured out how to maximize the benefits of the Industrial Revolution, how to provide mass education, how to integrate immigrants from all over the world into the mainstream of American life.

This one America deal is much bigger than just sort of, feel good; let's all be nice; don't anybody be prejudiced or say anything at a dinner party you'd be embarrassed by. [Laughter] And, to be serious, it's much more than being tough on people who commit hate crimes, although I badly want that hate crimes legislation to pass. It is an understanding about the way we should live if we all want to do well. It is in the nature of the American idea and the core of what it means to be a human being.

Isn't it interesting to you -- I mean, do you ever think about this? We continue to have these horrible hate crime incidents in America, and then we see these other countries convulsed by the tribal slaughter in Rwanda; the awful, terrible treatment of the Kosovar Albanian Muslims in Kosovo; the treatment of the Bosnian Muslims in Bosnia; the continuing conflict among the Catholics and the Protestants in Ireland which we're trying to bring to an end; the continuing conflict in the Middle East. What is the common element in that and the hate crimes?

It is that, for all of the wonders of the modern world, we're most bedeviled as societies by the oldest problem of folks living together: We still have a hard time with people who aren't like us, you know, have a hard time with people that aren't like us. And yet, the truth is, when we get over it and let it go, we find that life is a lot more interesting than it used to be. I told somebody last night, the first time I went to a Cinco de Mayo celebration in San Francisco, I thought, where has this been all my life? [Laughter] Man, I like this. Where has this been? I like this. So we're laughing, but there's a grain of truth here. Why do American Christians buy books by the Dalai Lama in record numbers, about the ethics of the new millennium? Because he has a very important piece of the truth, and he has very important peace inside.

So I say to you, look for the unifying vision and continue to work for it. And be clear and focused on the magic moment in which we live. Be humble enough to know it will not last forever; it is not in the nature of human affairs. And if you really want to honor what you have done and the spirit of this award, which you have so kindly given me, make the most of this moment. It is the chance of a lifetime to build a future of our dreams.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:16 p.m. in the Corcoran Ballroom at the Four Seasons Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to James F. Garrett, chair, and Weldon Latham, general counsel, National Coalition of Minority Business;

Public Papers of the Presidents

Melvin Clark, president and chief executive officer, Metroplex Corporation; civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson; Ernest Green, one of the Little Rock Nine; attorney Vernon Jordan, long-time friend of the President; and Miguel La' chair, Hispanic Leadership Council. A tape was not available for ve .ion of the content of these remarks.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 14, 1999

LEVEL 1 - 8 OF 29 DOCUMENTS

Public Papers of the Presidents

July 20, 1999

CI Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 1426

LENGTH: 3458 words

HEADLINE: Remarks to Representatives of the Legal Community

BODY:

Thank you. Let me say to all of you, I can't do any better than that. [Laughter] It was terrific. I wish every newspaper in American would reprint those remarks. Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.

I want to thank you all for coming. What a wonderful group we have here. First, I thank Attorney General Reno and Deputy Attorney General Holder for the wonderful job they do in so many ways. Associate Attorney General Fisher is here with them and Bill Lann Lee of the Civil Rights Division. One big civil rights issue is getting him confirmed, I might add. [Applause] Thank you.

I thank Secretary Slater and Secretary Daley for joining us, and Ben Johnson, who runs our one America Initiative; and Chris Edley, who used to be part of our administration -- still is -- I just don't have to pay him anymore. [Laughter]

Thank you, Senator Leahy and Congress-man Becerra, for coming. I think there are at least two people in this room, Jerry Shestack and Bill Taylor, who were here in 1963 with President Kennedy. I thank them for coming. Thank you, Mayor Archer, for coming -- former Secretary of State Warren Christopher, former Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti.

There are so many people here -- I just have to mention one person because it's my most intimate, personal acquaintance with affirmative action, the president of the American Bar Association, Phil Anderson, gave me a job in 1981, when I was the youngest former Governor in American history -- [Laughter] -- with future prospects. So I thank him for being here, as well. [Applause] Th

And I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to the man who directs our national service program, Senator Harris Wofford, who was very intimately involved with President Kennedy's civil rights initiatives. Thank you for being here, sir, today.

As has been pointed out, President Kennedy called more than 200 of America's leading lawyers to this room 36 years ago, the summer of 1963 -- when America was awakening to the fact that in our laws and in our hearts, we were still far short of our ideals.

It is difficult today to imagine an America without civil rights. But when I came here 36 years ago in the summer of 1963, as a delegate to American Legion Boys Nation, there were only four African-American boys there, and the hottest issue was what we were going to do about civil rights.

It didn't seem so inevitable back then. Across my native South, there were sheriffs, mayors, Governors defying the courts; police dogs attacking peaceful

Public Papers of the Presidents

demonstrators; firehoses toppling children; protesters led away in handcuffs; and too little refuge in the hallowed sanctuary of the law.

in this atmosphere that the President turned to America's lawyers and en them in the fight for equal justice. With Vice President Johnson and Attorney General Robert Kennedy at his side, the President asked the lawyers there to remember their duty to uphold justice, especially in places where the principles of justice had been defied.

The lawyers answered that call, creating a new Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and a new tradition of pro bono service in the legal profession. I asked you here today because we need your help as much as ever in our most enduring challenge as a nation, the challenge of creating one America. We have worked hard on that here. In the audience today I see Dr. John Hope Franklin, Governor William Winter, Judy Winston. I think Angela Oh and Dr. Suzan Johnson are here, but I haven't seen them yet -- people who worked on this for me to shine a special spotlight on the issues. And we have now institutionalized that effort insofar as we can in the White House. But there is a limit to what we can do without you.

Just as your predecessors, with the Constitution as their shield, stared down the sheriffs of segregation, you must step forward to dismantle our time's most stubborn obstacles to equal justice -- poverty, unemployment and, yes, continuing discrimination. Behind every watershed event of the civil rights struggle, lawyers, many pro bono, remain vigilant, securing equal rights for employment, education, housing, voting, and citizenship for all Americans. Their success, as you just heard from Bill -- every time a lawyer does that, it inspires a whole new generation of people to seek the law as a career. I suspect many of us were inspired to go to law school because we thought lawyers were standing up for what was right, not simply because they were making a good living.

Thirty-six years ago, in that 200, there were 50 African-American lawyers. They came to the White House, but they couldn't have found the same welcome in the hotels, restaurants, and lunch counters of America -- a cruel irony.

thanks in large measure to the efforts of our lawyers, Americans of all backgrounds and colors and religions are working, living, and learning side by side. The doors of opportunity are open wider than ever. We are living in a time of unprecedented prosperity, with the longest peacetime expansion in our history and the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployments ever recorded since we began to keep separate data in the early 1970's. Our social fabric is mending, with declining rates of welfare, crime, teen pregnancy, and drug abuse.

But the challenge to build one America continues. It is different, but it is just as real as it was when Vernon Jordan started with the Urban League as a young man, or before he was working in the South on registering voters. I saw firsthand in the new markets tour I took a couple of weeks ago, we will never be one America when our central cities, our Indian reservations, our small towns and rural areas here in the most prosperous time in history are still living in the shadows of need and want. They're struggling with unemployment and poverty rates more than twice the national average -- over 70 percent on some of our reservations. Your fellow Americans, many of them, are living in houses that it would sicken you to walk through -- at the time of our greatest prosperity.

Public Papers of the Presidents

Everything President Johnson worked for and dreamed of that he thought could happen after all these years has still not reached quite a large number of your fellow Americans. So, what are we going to do about it?

That two out of five African-American and Latino children under the age of 18 are still in poverty, in spite of all of our prosperity, in spite of the fact that a million children were lifted out of poverty just in the last couple of years. We also know that we can't be one America when a lot of minorities still distrust law enforcement and our legal system generally and shy away from entering the legal profession.

We can't be one America when, here we are, on the eve of the new millennium, when we act as if everything good will happen and all the rationality will fade away, but we still have to read about brutal killings like those in Indiana and Illinois, allegedly conducted on the basis of religious conviction; or what happened in Jasper, Texas; or to Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming.

The struggle for one America today is more complex than it was 36 years ago, more subtle than it seemed to us that it would be back then. For then, there was the clear enemy of legal segregation and overt hatred. Today, the progress we make in building one America depends more on whether we can expand opportunity and deal with a whole range of social challenges. In 1963 the challenge was to open our schools to all our children. In 1999 the challenge is to make sure all those children get a world-class education.

And of course, if I could just expound on that for a moment, we've worked hard on that. And one of the things we have to do is to bring teachers to the communities where they're needed most. I offered an initiative to give scholarships to young people who would go and teach in inner-city or rural schools that were underserved. And I call for these scholarships as part of our race initiative. I believe they will make a real difference.

The efforts we have made to make the class sizes smaller and to bring the Internet to all of our kids, even in the poorest classrooms, these things are beginning to make a difference. The hundreds of thousands of people who have gone to the elementary schools to teach people to read are making a difference. I can tell you that in the last 3 years we have seen, for the first time in a very long time, at the 4th, 8th, and 12th grade level substantial improvements in reading scores, our children moving up about half a grade level. But there is a long way to go.

Last year, just before the election, the Congress came together across party lines, and I shouted, "hallelujah," because they voted to create and fund -- to create 100,000 school teachers to lower class size in the early grades, something we know that is particularly important to poor children and people who don't come from strong educational backgrounds. And we now have the research that shows it has continuing benefits. I just released the funds to hire the first 30,000 of those teachers.

But now, unbelievably, in this non-election year -- although you wouldn't know it from reading the press -- [laughter] -- there are some who propose to kill the class size initiative and replace it with a program that doesn't guarantee that one red cent will go to hiring a single teacher or reducing the size of a single class. Now, this is very important because we now, finally, for the last 2 years, have a student population that is bigger than the baby

Public Papers of the Presidents

boom generation. So it is not only the most diverse in history, it is the largest in history; and about 2 million teachers are scheduled to retire in the next few years.

I'm happy to report, I hope in part because of the importance of education in the national consciousness, as the Secretary of Education told me 2 days ago, that we now have 10 percent of our college students saying they're considering being teachers. That's twice the percentage of 5 years ago, and that's encouraging. But we have to get them in the classroom.

So if the research says it's a good idea, if we voted to do it, if we've already funded 30,000 of the teachers, why in the world would we turn around and reverse field? The people who want to kill the 100,000 teacher initiative say they want to do it because they want to improve the quality of the existing teacher core. Well, I'm for that, and we've set aside sums to do it. But that shouldn't be a cover for the fact that we've got to do more to lower class size in the early grades, especially for our poorest children, especially for our minority children, especially for all these children whose first language is not even English.

Across the river here in Alexandria we have kids who literally speak 100 different languages as their native tongue, from 180 different racial and ethnic groups. We cannot afford to back up on this. I also believe very strongly that it would be wrong to pass a risky tax scheme before we first fund education and make sure we can save Social Security and Medicare, something that also has a big impact on minority communities in our country and will have a huge impact on the ability of the baby boom generation to retire in dignity without imposing new burdens on their children and their grandchildren, just as many of them are moving into the middle class for the first time in their family's history.

So I hope that -- this is a nonlegal issue, but since all of us, as our detractors never tire of saying, are overeducated -- those of you who believe in education will stand with us as we try to preserve this important reform. Well, strengthening our schools is important, and bringing economic opportunity to those places that I visited and all those places like them in America, it is absolutely essential. But what I asked you here today for was to simply say we stand with the ideas lawyers. We need the work lawyers do. We need the ideas lawyers get. We need the dreams lawyers dream. We still need people to fight for equal justice.

And so I ask you to do two things today. First, I ask you to recommit yourselves, as Bill has asked, to fighting discrimination, to revitalizing our poorest communities, and to giving people an opportunity to serve in law firms who would not otherwise have it. You can help inner-city entrepreneurs negotiate loans to start new businesses. You can help neighborhood health clinics navigate the regulatory mazes they have to do to stay open. You can help nonprofits secure new super-markets and merchants in underserved communities. Just for example, those of you who come from urban areas, today in the highest unemployment urban areas in America, there is still at least a 25 percent gap between the money that the people who live there earn and have to spend to support themselves and the opportunities they have to spend it in their own communities.

In East St. Louis, where I visited, there is a 40 percent gap. We went to a Walgreens store that was the first new store to open in the inner city in 40

Public Papers of the Presidents

years. Mayor Archer here is exhibit A. The unemployment rate in Detroit is less than half what it was in 1993 when I took office, because he convinced people that there were people in his community that could work and that were already working and that had money to spend and that they ought to be part of the economy. And we need to do that everywhere, and that work cannot be done without legal assistance.

And it is a civil rights issue. It is a civil rights issue for people to have jobs and dignity and a chance to start businesses and the chance to be able to shop in their own neighborhoods and walk to the grocery store, instead of having to ride a bus and wait on the schedule and stand in the rain and do all the things people have to do. It is a huge issue. And if we can't do it now, we'll never get around to doing it. So I ask you to help us with that.

I hope you will help me to pass my new markets initiative, because what it says is, we're going to give people the same incentives to invest in inner cities and rural areas and Indian reservations, the same incentives to invest there we give them to invest in the Caribbean, in Africa, in Latin America and Asia. I don't want to repeal those incentives; I want Americans to help poor people all over the world rise up. But they ought to have the same incentives to invest in poor people right here at home, and I hope you'll help me do that.

The second thing I want you to do is to set the best possible example. Mr. McBride has spoken better than I can. We may have torn down the walls of segregation, but there are still a lot of walls in our hearts and in our habits. And sometimes, we can -- we are not aware of those walls in our hearts, but we have to test them against our habits. So invite more lawyers of all backgrounds to join your firms. How are we going to build one America if the legal profession which is fighting for it doesn't reflect it? We can't do it.

I am so pleased that the organizations here have made the commitments they've made to diversity and to pro bono work. I thank the American Bar Association, the Corporate Counsel Association, for pledging to launch new initiatives to promote greater diversity in the profession. The ABA will bring together lawyers and academics, law firms and bar associations, to provide financial aid to minority law students and to mentor them as they embark on their legal careers. We've got to do more work to mentor them before, in the places that have tried to do away with affirmative action -- I believe wrongly -- sometimes undo court decisions with which I respectfully disagree. But if you don't get there in the first place, it won't matter if there's someone helping you once you do get there.

The Counsel Association has promised to encourage its 11,000 members to hire more minority-owned law firms and to dedicate more of their resources to pro bono legal work in communities. I thank the hundreds of law firms who have agreed to dedicate at least 3 percent of billable hours -- about 50 hours a year per lawyer -- to pro bono work, which is the ABA standard. As Bill pointed out, this booming economy has been pretty good to America's lawyers and law firms. Last year, top firms increased their revenues by 15 percent. There will never be a better opportunity to help those who need it most. If Mr. McBride's firm thought it was a good idea, it's probably a pretty good idea for other firms, as well.

And there's one other point I would make, following on what he said. I think it's good business strategy over the long run, not only for all the reasons

Public Papers of the Presidents

you said, but because the recovery of the last 6 years has proved a fundamental thing about a community: that is, when other people, particularly people who haven't had a chance, do well, those of us that are in a position to take it, the going to do all right, regardless, do better. When the least of us do we rest of us do better. We are all stronger. And we should never fo. nat.

So I hope every American firm will meet the ABA standard. Just imagine this: if every lawyer in America -- about 800,000 -- dedicated just 50 hours a year to pro bono work, that would be 40 million hours of legal help. That's a lot of personal problems solved, a lot of headaches gone away, a lot of hurdles overcome, a lot of business started. Think of what we could do.

A 1993 ABA study found that half of all low income households had at least one serious legal problem each year, but three-quarters had no access to a lawyer. Now we can fill that gap. Now America's lawyers can afford to fill that gap. And I would argue, if we really believe in equal justice we cannot afford not to fill that gap.

I want to thank the Association of American Law Schools for pledging to help more schools incorporate community service in their curriculum -- something I strongly believe in -- so that more law graduates will come out of law school predisposed to do volunteer work and pro bono work. All these are wonderful pledges. I thank the presidents of the ABA, the Minority Bar Associations here, the American Corporate Counsel Association, the representatives of the San Francisco and New York City bars, the cochairs to the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights for agreeing to meet every month.

You heard what Eric Holder said -- for our part the Justice Department, working with Ben Johnson and the White House Office on One America, will do whatever we can to support these efforts. And a year from now, we'll gather again and see where we've succeeded and where we need to do more. I don't want to wait another 36 years. I ask you to work on this. I want it to be steady work for America's lawyers.

Eric Holder and Neal Katyal of the Justice Department to report to me or ogress. We will know we have succeeded if more lawyers begin to make community service a vital part of their practice. We will know we will have succeeded when we have more businesses, more health clinics, more affordable housing in places once bypassed by hope and opportunity. We'll know we'll have succeeded when our law schools, our bar associations, and our law firms not only represent all Americans, but look like all America.

One of the best things Dr. King ever said was that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Our Nation's lawyers have bent that arc toward justice. Our Nation has been transformed for the better. So I ask you again to lead us along that arc -- from the America we know to the one America we all long to live in.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Robert B. (Ben) Johnson, Assistant to the President and Director of the President's Initiative for One America; Judith A. Winston, Executive Director, One America in the 21st Century: The President's

Public Papers of the Presidents

Initiative on Race; John Hope Franklin, Chairman, Christopher Edley, consultant, and Angela E. Oh, Suzan D. Johnson Cook, and Mayor Dennis W. Archer of Detroit, member President's Advisory Board on Race; former Gov. William Winter of Mississippi; Jerome J. Shestack, former president, American Bar Association; Cincinnati attorney William W. Taylor III, Zuckerman Spaeder law firm; Bill McQuinn, managing partner, Holland & Knight law firm, who introduced the President; and Neal Kumar Katyal, Adviser for National Security to the Deputy Attorney General, Department of Justice.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 31, 1999

LEVEL 1 - 19 OF 29 DOCUMENTS

Public Papers of the Presidents

September 25, 1997

See pg 19

CJ Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 1416

LENGTH: 2580 words

HEADLINE: Remarks on the 40th Anniversary of the Desegregation of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas

BODY:

The President. Governor and Mrs. Huckabee; Mayor and Mrs. Dailey; my good friend Daisy Bates; and the families of Wylie Branton and Justice Thurgood Marshall. To the cochair of this event, Mr. Howard, and all the faculty and staff here at Central High; to Fatima and her fellow students; to all my fellow Americans: Hillary and I are glad to be home, especially on this day. And we thank you for your welcome.

I would also be remiss if I did not say one other word, just as a citizen. You know, we just sent our daughter off to college, and for 8 1/2 years she got a very good education in the Little Rock school district. And I want to thank you all for that.

On this beautiful, sunshiny day, so many wonderful words have already been spoken with so much conviction, I am reluctant to add to them. But I must ask you to remember once more and to ask yourselves, what does what happened here 40 years ago mean today? What does it tell us, most importantly, about our children's tomorrows?

Forty years ago, a single image first seared the heart and stirred the conscience of our Nation, so powerful most of us who saw it then recall it still. A 15-year-old girl wearing a crisp black and white dress, carrying only a notebook, surrounded by large crowds of boys and girls, men and women, soldiers and police officers, her head held high, her eyes fixed straight ahead. And she was utterly alone.

September 4th, 1957, Elizabeth Eckford walked to this door for her first day at school, utterly alone. She was turned away by people who were afraid of change, instructed by ignorance, hating what they simply could not understand. And America saw her, haunted and taunted for the simple color of her skin, and in the image we caught a very disturbing glimpse of ourselves.

We saw not "one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all," but two Americas, divided and unequal. What happened here changed the course of our country here forever. Like Independence Hall, where we first embraced the idea that God created us all equal; like Gettysburg, where Americans fought and died over whether we would remain one Nation, moving closer to the true meaning of equality; like them, Little Rock is historic ground, for surely it was here at Central High that we took another giant step closer to the idea of America.

Elizabeth Eckford, along with her eight schoolmates, were turned away on September 4th, but the Little Rock Nine did not turn back. Forty years ago today, they climbed these steps, passed through this door, and moved our

Nation. And for that, we must all thank them.

Today we honor those who made it possible, their parents first -- as Eleanor Roosevelt said of them, "To give your child for a cause is even harder than to give yourself" -- to honor my friend Daisy Bates and Wylie Branton and Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP, and all who guided these children; to honor President Eisenhower, Attorney General Brownell, and the men of the 101st Airborne who enforced the Constitution; to honor every student, every teacher, every minister, every Little Rock resident, black or white, who offered a word of kindness, a glance of respect, or a hand of friendship; to honor those who gave us the opportunity to be part of this day of celebration and rededication. But most of all, we come to honor the Little Rock Nine. Most of us who have just watched these events unfold can never understand fully the sacrifice they made. Imagine, all of you, what it would be like to come to school one day and be showed against lockers, tripped down stairways, taunted day after day by your classmates, to go all through school with no hope of going to a school play or being on a basketball team or learning in simple peace.

[At this point, there was a disturbance in the audience.]

The President. Speaking of simple peace, I'd like a little of it today.

I want all these children here to look at these people. They persevered, they endured, and they prevailed. But it was at great cost to themselves. As Melba said years later in her wonderful memoir, "Warriors Don't Cry," "My friends and I paid for the integration of Little Rock Central High with our innocence."

Folks, in 1957 I was 11 years old, living 50 miles away in Hot Springs, when the eyes of the world were fixed here. Like almost all southerners then, I never attended school with a person of another race until I went to college. But as a young boy in my grandfather's small grocery store, I learned lessons that nobody bothered to teach me in my segregated school. My grandfather had a sixth-grade education from a tiny rural school. He never made a bit of money. But in that store, in the way he treated his customers and encouraged me to play with other children, I learned America's most profound lessons: We really are a people. We really do have the right to live in dignity. We really do have the right to be treated with respect. We do have the right to be heard.

I never knew how he and my grandmother came to those convictions, but I'll never forget how they lived them. Ironically, my grandfather died in 1957. He never lived to see America come around to his way of thinking. But I know he's smiling down today, not on his grandson but on the Little Rock Nine, who gave up their innocence so all good people could have a chance to live their dreams.

But let me tell you something else that was true about that time. Before Little Rock, for me and other white children, the struggles of black people, whether we were sympathetic or hostile to them, were mostly background music in our normal, self-absorbed lives. We were all, like you, more concerned about our friends and our lives, day-in and day-out. But then we saw what was happening in our own back yard, and we all had to deal with it. Where did we stand? What did we believe? How did we want to live? It was Little Rock that made racial equality a driving obsession in my life.

Public Papers of the Presidents

Years later, time and chance made Ernie Green my friend. Good fortune brought me to the Governor's office, where I did all I could to heal the wounds, solve the problems, open the doors so we could become the people we say we want to be.

Years ago, the Little Rock Nine came back to the Governor's Mansion when I was there. I wanted them to see that the power of the office that once had blocked their way now welcomed them. But like so many Americans, I can never fully repay my debt to these nine people. For, with their innocence, they purchased more freedom for me, too, and for all white people. People like Hazel Brown Massery, the angry taunter of Elizabeth Eckford, who stood with her in front of this school this week as a reconciled friend. And with the gift of their innocence, they taught us that all too often what ought to be can never be for free.

Forty years later, what do you young people in this audience believe we have learned? Well, 40 years later, we know that we all benefit -- all of us -- when we learn together, work together, and come together. That is, after all, what it means to be an American.

Forty years later, we know, notwithstanding some cynics, that all our children can learn, and this school proves it. Forty years later, we know when the constitutional rights of our citizens are threatened, the National Government must guarantee them. Talk is fine, but when they are threatened, you need strong laws faithfully enforced and upheld by independent courts.

Forty years later, we know there are still more doors to be opened, doors to be opened wider, doors we have to keep from being shut again now. Forty years later, we know freedom and equality cannot be realized without responsibility for self, family, and the duties of citizenship, or without a commitment to building a community of shared destiny and a genuine sense of belonging.

Forty years later, we know the question of race is more complex and more important than ever, embracing no longer just blacks and whites or blacks and whites and Hispanics and Native Americans, but now people from all parts of the Earth coming here to redeem the promise of America.

Years later, frankly, we know we're bound to come back where we started. After all the weary years and silent tears, after all the stony roads and bitter rides, the question of race is, in the end, still an affair of the heart.

But if these are our lessons, what do we have to do? First, we must all reconcile. Then we must all face the facts of today. And finally we must act. Reconciliation is important not only for those who practice bigotry, but for those whose resentment of it lingers, for both are prisons from which our spirits must escape.

If Nelson Mandela, who paid for the freedom of his people with 27 of the best years of his life, could invite his jailers to his inauguration and ask even the victims of violence to forgive their oppressors, then each of us can seek and give forgiveness.

And what are the facts? It is a fact, my fellow Americans, that there are still too many places where opportunity for education and work are not equal,

where disintegration of family and neighborhood make it more difficult. But it is also a fact that schools and neighborhoods and lives can be turned around if, but only if, we are prepared to do what it takes.

a fact that there are still too many places where our children die or gi before they bloom, where they are trapped in a web of crime and violence and drugs. But we know this too can be changed but only if we are prepared to do what it takes.

Today children of every race walk through the same door, but then they often walk down different halls. Not only in this school but across America, they sit in different classrooms. They eat at different tables. They even sit in different parts of the bleachers at the football game. Far too many communities are all white, all black, all Latino, all Asian. Indeed, too many Americans of all races have actually begun to give up on the idea of integration and the search for common ground. For the first time since the 1950's, our schools in America are resegregating. The rollback of affirmative action is slamming shut the doors of higher education on a new generation, while those who oppose it have not yet put forward any other alternative.

In so many ways, we still hold ourselves back. We retreat into the comfortable enclaves of ethnic isolation. We just don't deal with people who are different from us. Segregation is no longer the law, but too often separation is still the rule. And we cannot forget one stubborn fact that has not yet been said as clearly as it should: There is still discrimination in America.

There are still people who can't get over it, who can't let it go, who can't go through the day unless they have somebody else to look down on. And it manifests itself in our streets and in our neighborhoods and in the workplace and in the schools. And it is wrong. And we have to keep working on it, not just with our voices but with our laws. And we have to engage each other in it.

Of course, we should celebrate our diversity. The marvelous blend of cultures and beliefs and races has always enriched America, and it is our meal ticket to the 21st century. But we also have to remember with the painful lessons of the civil wars and the ethnic cleansing around the world, that any nation that indulges itself in destructive separatism will not be able to meet and master the challenges of the 21st century.

We have to decide -- all you young people have to decide -- will we stand as a shining example or a stunning rebuke to the world of tomorrow? For the alternative to integration is not isolation or a new separate but equal, it is disintegration.

Only the American idea is strong enough to hold us together. We believe, whether our ancestors came here in slave ships or on the Mayflower, whether they came through the portals of Ellis Island or on a plane to San Francisco, whether they have been here for thousands of years, we believe that every individual possesses the spark of possibility, born with an equal right to strive and work and rise as far as they can go, and born with an equal responsibility to act in a way that obeys the law, reflects our values and passes them on to their children. We are white and black, Asian and Hispanic, Christian and Jew and Muslim, Italian- and Vietnamese - and Polish-Americans and goodness knows how many more today. But above all, we are still Americans. Martin Luther King

Public Papers of the Presidents

said, "We are woven into a seamless garment of destiny. We must be one America."

Little Rock Nine taught us that. We cannot have one America for free, not 40 years ago, not today. We have to act. All of us have to act. Each of us has to do something. Especially our young people must seek out people who are different from themselves and speak freely and frankly to discover they share the same dreams. All of us should embrace the vision of a colorblind society but recognize the fact that we are not there yet, and we cannot slam shut the doors of educational and economic opportunity.

All of us should embrace ethnic pride, and we should revere religious conviction, but we must reject separation and isolation. All of us should value and practice personal responsibility for ourselves and our families. And all Americans, especially our young people, should give something back to their community through citizen service. All Americans of all races must insist on both equal opportunity and excellence in education. That is even more important today than it was for these nine people, and look how far they took themselves with their education.

The true battleground in education today is whether we honestly believe that every child can learn, and we have the courage to set high academic standards we expect all our children to meet. We must not replace the tyranny of segregation with the tragedy of low expectations. I will not rob a single American child of his or her future. It is wrong.

My fellow Americans, we must be concerned not so much with the sins of our parents as with the success of our children, how they will live, and live together, in years to come. If those nine children could walk up those steps 40 years ago, all alone, if their parents could send them into the storm armed only with school books and the righteousness of their cause, then surely together we can build one America, an America that makes sure no future generation of our children will have to pay for our mistakes with the loss of their innocence.

At this schoolhouse door today, let us rejoice in the long way we have come through 40 years. Let us resolve to stand on the shoulders of the Little Rock Nine and press on with confidence in the hard and noble work ahead. "Let us lift every voice and sing, till Earth and Heaven ring," one America today, one America tomorrow, one America forever.

God bless the Little Rock Nine, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. on the front steps of Central High School. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas and his wife, Janet; Mayor Jim Dailey of Little Rock and his wife, Patti; Daisy Bates, NAACP attorney in 1957; and Rudolph Howard, current principal, and Fatima McKendra, current student body president, Central High School.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: November 17, 1997