

Tuesday, December 8, 1998

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To Burkhardt for
reply?

Yes

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Gregory W. Chang
5788

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December 4, 1998

William Jefferson Clinton
President of the United States of America
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to inform you that today is my last official day as the special assistant to Ira C. Magaziner. It has been the greatest honor and privilege to serve you, your Administration, and my country.

I first met you in February of 1992 at a rally in a high school gymnasium in Nashua, New Hampshire, the weekend before the primary. I spent that snowy weekend in New Hampshire knocking on doors and explaining to the people of New Hampshire why you should be our next president. Ever since that day, I knew you would be the one who would lead our country to prosperity and renew our hope and spirit.

After I graduated from Brown University in 1994, I worked in the White House for Ira Magaziner as an intern. In May of 1995, I left the White House and was one of the first to work on your re-election campaign. After the campaign, I worked on your Inauguration, served as an assistant to Secretary Federico Peña, and returned to the White House last January.

I dedicated the last four years to you and your Administration because I believe that you have the vision, leadership, compassion, and integrity to lead our country into the next millennium. You have helped create one of the most prosperous and peaceful times in our nation's history and the world looks to you for your great leadership.

I believe that every generation produces a leader that fundamentally transforms our culture and society. And if we are fortunate, we experience two great leaders in our lifetime. For my father, it was President John F. Kennedy and you. For me, it is you, and I hope one day someone that will challenge our human capacity and compassion as you have.

I am certain that when historians and future generations review the presidency of William Jefferson Clinton, they will conclude that you forever changed the Democratic party and our society for the better. You brought us together when we were coming apart.

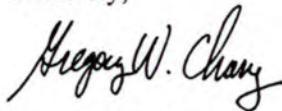
I leave my government service with great pride for my accomplishments, excitement for the future, but with sorrow. It is difficult to leave a White House where the staff is so strongly united behind your vision to change America.

Thank you for the wonderful opportunity to serve. In four short years, I have given you my

strength, energy, and commitment, but you have given me something far greater. You have given me a lifetime of memories, for which I will be eternally grateful.

I wish you, the First Lady, Chelsea and your family all the best. I only hope that one day I will be able to serve you again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gregory W. Chang". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'G' and 'C'.

Gregory W. Chang

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Date 12/8

To: John Podesta.

From: The Staff Secretary

POTUS would probably want to see this. Wolford makes grand proposals that may or may not be good ideas, but certainly haven't been through any staff vetting.

I could send this forward with a note saying you'll discuss proposals with a small group of senior staff. Thoughts?
Phil

98 DEC 7 - 7:55

December 7, 1998

President William J. Clinton
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President,

This end-of-the-year letter is as presumptuous as the beginning-of-the-year letter I sent you last January. That missive was pegged on Andrew Marvel's 17th century proposition: "Let us roll all our strength and all our sweetness up into one ball" This is still what the nation needs you to do.

No doubt you get more advice than you can handle. Based on our years of laboring together in the vineyard of National Service, I am taking the liberty of giving you my unvarnished view of what it will take to realize our dream of making service the common expectation and common experience of all Americans. So here goes . . .

The events of the last year have been a terrible diversion from what we could have done, if not engulfed in the unrelenting, uncivil war of these past too many months. "Events have controlled me," Lincoln said of his leadership as the man of peace who led the nation through a sea of blood. In the end, after times when he feared people would vote him out of office, Lincoln prevailed and, in a profound sense, controlled events. In very different difficult circumstances that is your challenge in the remaining 700 days – to control events, to overcome the noise, to summon what Martin Luther King called "the fierce urgency of now."

More now than ever, you must do everything in your power to roll all your strength and all your sweetness up into that one ball – into a vision that integrates the three great themes you have most championed: education, racial unity, and citizen service. With the best of your imagination, creativity, and energy you can turn this into one clear, unforgettable, and commanding vision.

Let me stress I'm not here making a case for the specific policy proposals we are crafting with your staff. I'm also not arguing here for the proposal we submitted to your staff last week to vastly increase public understanding of and support for AmeriCorps by using your extraordinary power of persuasion and other White House assets to put in place a new strategy of emphatic communication about citizen service.



This personal letter goes beyond policies and speeches or anything you have yet done. My call is for a quantum leap in your personal leadership to give your vision life and force, making it a legacy and challenge to the American people that they can never forget. This will require more of your time, your attention, and perhaps most importantly, your sweat, for the cause of citizen service. In the beginning is the Word – but the word must be made flesh.

In the next one hundred weeks, if you commit a far greater part of your self to this endeavor, you will make an indelible mark on the mind and spirit of America. With that high hope, I offer two specific suggestions as a start:

First, commit yourself – and your schedulers – to arranging at least once a month for you to engage in some personal service in a school or community. These occasions do not have to be high profile, and it is neither necessary nor desirable that your service always be with AmeriCorps. Engage in service projects where with a few hours of work you can accomplish something, demonstrate something, and learn something.

Your service projects could include helping with a book drive at a local school or library, assisting in a homeless shelter, attending to a person with AIDS, building a playground, spending time in a senior center, working in environmental clean-up, rehabilitating housing, reconstructing trails in a National Park, or working with a faith organization (perhaps your own church) in a local project. Almost any project can be linked to larger themes of the Administration – but the real point of the service should be more personal than political.

Second, plan to lead a series of conversations to help shape future strategies of citizen service. Since you first took up the banner of service through the National Governors' Association and the Democratic Leadership Council, the field has grown and changed significantly, thanks in large part to your leadership in advancing AmeriCorps, the Corporation's other service programs, and the Presidents' Summit. Today there is lively debate about how citizen service can help meet national goals; how to get more people involved in high impact service and volunteering; how service can help to bring together people from diverse backgrounds; how to end the false division between part-time volunteering and full-time service; how to define the role of government in supporting "civil society" and mediating institutions; and how to best capture the special potential for religious organizations. You and the First Lady should become actively involved in convening and leading these discussions.

I recommend that early in the New Year you and the First Lady host an off-the-record discussion tackling some of these questions with a small, ideologically diverse group of leading thinkers and activists, including perhaps:

Susan Berresford (Ford Foundation)
Geoff Canada (Rheedlen Center, a star program based on AmeriCorps members
and featured in John Kasich's new book)
John DiIulio (Public Private Ventures, leading thinker on faith organizations)
E.J. Dionne (Journalist, Brookings Institute Fellow, new book *Community Works*)
Bill Galston (National Commission on Civic Renewal)
John Kasich (New book *Courage is Contagious* about individual volunteers)
Alan Khazei (City Year founder)
Charlie Moskos (Northwestern University)
Bill Moyers (Journalist, philanthropist)
Michelle Nunn (Hands on Atlanta)
Colin Powell (America's Promise)
Kathleen Kennedy Townsend (Lieutenant Governor of Maryland)
Oprah Winfrey (Television talk show host, philanthropist)

The list can be improved, but the idea is for this to be a non-political and non-ideological setting. With a relatively small investment of your time, you and the First Lady would be a major influence in the national conversation already underway.

* * *

We have made remarkable progress as a nation over the past six years. Yet, despite almost unparalleled prosperity, many Americans feel that something is missing – a sense of community, a set of common values, a shared national purpose. By making the kind of personal commitment I propose, you will help all of us understand better the power of service – in our own lives and in the lives of the people we serve. You will point the way to service as a strategy for the nation in the 21st Century – to produce stronger communities, more compassionate and informed citizens, and more solutions to the problems that once seemed insurmountable. This is your legacy. What is needed now is for you to claim it as your own.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harris", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Harris Wofford