And so for all my teachers, for the ones I mentioned, for my junior high school band directors, Carol Powell and Joel Duskin, for my wonderful friend Virgil Spurlin, who taught me in high school, some are still with me, some have gone on to their reward, I want to say again, I don't think I would be President if it hadn't been for school music.

And I am very grateful to John Sykes, to VH1, to all the wonderful stars and performers who are here tonight, because they want to give all our young people that same opportunity to learn, to achieve, to express themselves—and to develop their math brain cells. [*Laughter*]

This century has been called the American Century. It gave rise to democracy around the world. For the first time in history, more than half the world's people are living under governments of their own choosing. So we gave that to the world. But at the same time, we mustn't forget that America brought the world the rhythm of jazz, the consolation of country, the hard truth of the blues, the excitement of rock and roll. And the diversity of our music and our musicians—which we have seen tonight—mirrors the diversity of our people and reminds us of the greatest lesson we have always to teach and always to learn, that we are stronger when we're playing in harmony, based on our common humanity.

A stunning example of that is the great American songwriter George Gershwin, a Jewish boy from New York who wrote the magnificent black opera, "Porgy and Bess." He listened to others. And he once said, "True music must repeat the thought and inspirations of the people and the time. My people are Americans and my time is today."

Let us promise that we Americans will keep American music and the spirit it represents, inspiring our children and their children as we enter the new millennium.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 5:30 p.m. in a tent on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John Sykes, president, VH1, who presented the President with a guitar signed by the artists who performed in the program entitled, "Concert of the Century for VH1 Save The Music." The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Message on the Observance of Make A Difference Day, 1999

October 23, 1999

Warm greetings to everyone throughout the nation participating in Make A Difference Day. I am delighted that so many Americans are joining together with their neighbors on this day of helping to create a better world for us all.

It is a very American idea that we meet our challenges not through big government or as isolated individuals, but as members of a true community, with all of us working together. Upholding this fine tradition, citizens young and old are working on this special day to raise awareness of the power of citizen service not only to give hope and help to individuals in need, but also to renew the strength, vitality, and character of communities across our nation.

As you clean up parks and neighborhoods, read stories to young people, collect clothing and other necessities for families recovering from Hurricane Floyd, and participate in numerous other community efforts, I thank each of you for devoting your time, talents, and energy to fulfill America's bright promise for all our people.

Earlier this week, we celebrated the fifth anniversary of AmeriCorps, our national service initiative that engages thousands of citizens in projects that are changing lives and changing America. AmeriCorps members are living up to the highest obligations of American citizenship—creating opportunities for others, taking responsibility for themselves, and fostering a community of all Americans. I commend everyone participating in Make A Difference Day for adding your own contribution to the tradition of citizen service that has always been a hallmark of our democracy.

Hillary joins me in sending best wishes for a productive and meaningful day.

Bill Clinton

Proclamation 7244—United Nations Day, 1999

October 22, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As the 20th century draws to a close, Americans are taking time to reflect on the institutions that have shaped our past and that hold great hope for our future. One of the most important of these institutions is the United Nations. A dream of peace rising from the ashes of World War II, the U.N. has made great strides toward fulfilling the goals of its founders by saving lives, enhancing the security of law-abiding nations, and improving living conditions across the globe. This year, in marking the 54th anniversary of the founding of the U.N., we celebrate not only the organization's many accomplishments, but also its potential to bring the family of nations together to work toward a more peaceful, democratic, just, and prosperous world.

Since the U.N.'s founding more than half a century ago, humankind has learned a great deal—how to produce enough food for growing populations, how human activity affects the environment, how telecommunications can link the countries of the world into a single global community. But one of the most important lessons humanity has learned is one that Americans have always known: open societies are more just and open markets create more wealth.

Through the United Nations, America has access to a powerful forum where we can join with the other peoples of the world to raise awareness of these truths and to advance common interests and shared values. During the past decade, U.N. conferences have brought together nearly 50,000 people in Beijing to advance the rights and well-being of women; 47,000 in Rio de Janeiro to discuss ways to promote development while protecting the environment; and 30,000 people in Istanbul to seek solutions to urban problems.

In the last year alone, we have seen abundant evidence of the ways in which the United Nations benefits America and the world. The United Nations is the primary multilateral forum to press for international human rights and lead governments to improve their relations with their neighbors and their own people. As we saw during the Kosovo conflict, and more recently with regard to East Timor, the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing and mass murder can find no refuge in the United Nations and no source of comfort in its charter. It is the institution the international community turns to in pursuit of solutions to armed conflict. It is the primary vehicle for broad international cooperation in addressing the needs of refugees and of the tens of millions of people around the world who remain mired in abject poverty. The United Nations and its affiliated agencies also provide a powerful voice for upholding and furthering the development of the rule of law and standards of international commerce—rules and standards that are crucial to global and economic stability and progress.

In acknowledging the far-reaching contributions of the United Nations to the international community, we must renew our commitment to work with our fellow U.N. members to advance international peace and prosperity and to champion human rights. In achieving these goals, the United Nations should make wise use of the international resources at its disposal; and the United States should meet its obligation to provide our share of these resources. By doing so, we can ensure that the United Nations will be an integral player in making the next millennium an era of unprecedented global peace, security, and prosperity.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 24, 1999, as United Nations Day. I encourage all Americans to acquaint themselves with the activities and accomplishments of the United Nations and to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies, programs, and activities furthering the goal of international cooperation.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred