

came up. And the questioner said, "Well, Mr. President, aren't you worried about what happened after the convention and this big tax cut promise and the movement in the polls, and doesn't that really bother you?" And I said, "No." I said, "I'm not against a tax cut. I just don't want one that's too big, that we can't pay for. I don't want one that's big and indiscriminate, that will either explode the deficit or force us to really hurt people with more cuts in education and the environment and Medicare and Medicaid. But we can have a tax cut targeted at childrearing and education and family savings, and pay for it. But I'm not worried about that."

He said, "Well, what if it causes all these changes in the polls? Everybody else that's ever run on one has won." I said, "Well, first of all, it's a false choice between a tax cut and no tax cut. The issue is, are you going to have a good one that you can pay for?"

I said, "You know, Hillary and I used to live around the corner when we were living in Arkansas from this wonderful place called the Community Bakery." I used to go down there all the time, and in the morning I'd buy bagels. [Laughter] Sometimes on the weekend I'd buy other things, but there were wonderful things in the Community Bakery. [Laughter] There were cookies, bagels, doughnuts, fruit tarts. And so I was telling this fellow; I said, "You know, every one of them was good, but if you bought them all and ate them all at once you'd get sick. That's my attitude about this tax cut issue. We can have one, but we have to have what we can afford, that's consistent with balancing the budget, investing in our future, bringing our people together. That is the right decision."

And then I said—and this is what I want you to think about for 79 days—"If the American people want to go back to a failed economic plan of the past that quadrupled the deficit, gave us high interest rates, increased unemployment, increased welfare, and weakened America, they can do it. But that's what the election is for." I cannot do that. I will not do that. That is the wrong thing for America. There is another choice there. I won't do that.

So my gift to you is to remember that this is a choice. And I'm delighted that you're

here to celebrate my birthday. And I'm going to have a wonderful time tonight. But I want to remind you that we have 79 more days before we can really celebrate the assurance that America will march into the 21st century with the vision I articulated in 1991 that I reaffirm to you today. I want us to go into the 21st century with three things unquestionably true. I want every child in this country, without regard to race or gender or station in life, to be able to live out his or her dreams if they're responsible enough to work for it. I want to know that our country is the world's strongest force for peace and freedom and democracy. And I want to know that with all of our incredible diversity—unlike all these other countries that are coming apart at the seams because of their racial, their religious, their ethnic, their tribal hatred—I want America to be the one country in the world that says, we believe in our common humanity, and we are growing stronger through our diversity, not weaker. That is my dream, and that's the present I want for you.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:05 p.m. in the Imperial Ballroom at the Sheraton New York Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Don Fowler, chairman, Democratic National Committee; Hugh Carey, former Governor of New York; Carolyn McCarthy, Democratic candidate for the 1st Congressional District in New York; Mark Green, New York City public advocate; Judith Hope, New York State Democratic Party chair; playwright Neil Simon; and historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee 50th Birthday Gala for the President in New York City

August 18, 1996

The President. Thank you. First of all, I just want to say I hope all of you have had just half as good a time tonight as I have. I want to thank my friend Whoopi Goldberg and all the other magnificent entertainers and Jeff Margolis, who did the production; let's give him a hand. He was great.

I know the hour is late, but I'd like to say just a thing or two. I mean, I only turn 50 once, you know. [Laughter] First of all, I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude tonight.

A lot of times some of you will come up to me somewhere around the country when something is not going so well. You ask me how am I doing, and I've tried to develop the discipline of saying——

Audience members. Shame! Shame! Shame!

The President. Okay, okay. We hear you. You want to hear them anymore?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. Okay, we've heard your message now. Thank you very much. All right, give them a hand as they exit, will you? We heard them. Give them a hand. Give them a hand. [Applause] Be nice to them; don't be rough. They don't have a right to do this, but they don't have a right to be roughed up. Just show them to the door.

Thank you.

You know, one of the greatest things about this country is you can say whatever is on your mind, and nobody can shut you up. On the other hand——

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you. Four years from now some of them will come back and say, "You know, you were right about that, Mr. President. You were right about that."

Let me say just one or two things if I might——

Audience member. Throw them out!

The President. Relax. Relax. Lay back. Anyway, even now, what I was going to tell you is I've tried to develop the discipline—when somebody comes up to me and says, "Well, how are you doing," and something is not going very well, of saying, "Better than I deserve, thank you." And you ought to think about it.

Because I was looking at all those decades pass by—I don't know where all the time went—and I was thinking of all the gifts that I have been given. I thank God for my family, for those who are here and those who aren't. I wish my brother could have been here tonight, but his wife and his son are here. I wish my wonderful father-in-law were still living; I miss him. And Lord, I miss my mother. She liked a good party, you know, and she would have liked this tonight. But I thank them. I mean, who could have thought it, where we all started.

And I thank my friends. Some of them have been subject to ridicule, you know. FOB's has become, I don't know, an epithet in some quarters. But I wouldn't be here today without them, and all of you who were there with me in each step along life's way, I thank you. I thank all of those who worked with me in every job I ever had, and all of you who helped me to come to this point. I just feel a great sense of gratitude.

I'd also like to make just two other observations in closing. The first is that I appreciate what Hillary said. I'm sure I'm not the best man she's ever known, but I sure have loved her and my wonderful child, and I thank them.

There's something that's happened in our country in the last few years that I don't think is very good. And that is that a lot of people in public life have taken to trying to show how good they are by showing how bad the people who disagree with them are, and I don't think that's a very good thing. And I have my mother to thank for that attitude, because she taught me never to resent anyone else's success, never to look down on anybody else, and never, ever to think I was better than anybody else, that it was a hard enough job in life just to be a good person yourself without trying to lift yourself up in putting somebody else down. And I'd like to see more of that in our country. I think it would be more civil and a better place.

The second thing I'd like to leave you with is the image of those children that were up here behind us. You know, we have debates from time to time—were they right or am I right about the welfare reform issue. And I disagree with my opponent, Senator Dole, on so many things. But let me ask you this: Just think about your own life here and ask yourself, why are we doing this? Why are we here? The purpose of politics is nothing more or less than to enable more kids like those kids that just sang on the stage to live their dreams the way I got to live mine. There is no other purpose here.

And I thank God for everybody I've ever been able to work with, those of you who are here. A lot of them are gone too, now. I miss my friend and brother, Ron Brown. He would have liked this tonight, and what a wonderful job he would have done.

I started out my Presidency with one of the greatest men I ever met in my life, the late Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin. I miss him so much. There are a lot of people I miss, and I'm sorry they had to leave this Earth before I did. But you know, all of us left ahead, because we got to live out our dreams. And most of us here, truth were known, we'd have to say we've done better than we deserved. And I would like for every child in this country and every child in this world to be able to say that more than they can say it now when our time here is done.

We have to get this country ready for the next century. It will be the time of greatest possibility in all of human history. More of our kids, without regard to their race, their gender, their station in life, will have a chance to live their dreams if we do our job. That is really what we're here about.

I've been luckier than most people because I had family who loved me, friends who took care of me, folks who worked with me and made me look better than I deserved, and a chance to do work I loved. But in the end, all that matters is whether, when we finish, we have made it possible for more people to be what God meant them to be. And you have helped to give me that chance, and that is the best birthday present of all.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 p.m. at Radio City Music Hall.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee 50th Birthday Dinner for the President in New York City

August 19, 1996

Let's give Jessye Norman a hand. That was about the best "Happy Birthday" I ever saw. [Applause] I often thought—please sit down—I often thought my birthday might resemble a soap opera, but never a real one. [Laughter] So I am deeply honored that Jessye is here tonight.

Let me say very briefly—I said what I had to say at Radio City—but I want to thank all of you from the bottom of my heart for making this night possible. I thank our hard-working Democratic Chairman Don Fowler,

and Marvin Rosen, our finance director, and all the people at DNC. They work so hard.

The chairs of this event, Jay and Maryanne Alex, Noah Dear, Beth Dozoretz, Larry Harris, Susan and Allen Patricof, Stan Schuman, Paul Verrochi, Harvey Weinstein—let's give them all a big hand. They've been great. [Applause]

I want to thank my good friend, the former Governor of Mississippi, Ray Maybus who put together all the satellite events around the country, 89 of them. Thank you, Ray. I'd like to thank the distinguished political leaders from New York who are here, former Mayor Dinkins; Congressman Rangel; Congressman Lowey; Senator Lautenberg; the minority leader of the Senate, Senator Martin Conner; and Speaker Shelly Silver; and the New York State Democratic co-chairs, Judith Hope and John Sullivan.

I think that there are a lot of other—I want to thank all of the entertainers who are still here, those who performed tonight. You were magnificent. It was a great event at Radio City Music Hall.

There is one—in addition to Jessye, there is one very great American artist here who just came in from Europe, could not be here earlier for the performance, but I think is one of the most gifted musicians of my lifetime, Mr. Wynton Marsalis is here. Thank you very much for being here.

Let me say finally that what Vernon said about the birthday present coming on November 5th is not entirely true. This is a deeply personal night for me and a great joy. I know that a lot of you worked very, very hard on this evening. You know who you are; I know who you are. I know what an enormous effort it was, and I don't know where you got some of the home movies and the pictures. If I knew where, the people who gave it to you would be in trouble, but I thought it was fabulous, and I thank you for that.

In terms of the election, I ask you only to remember that we really are going to make a decision which I think is even more important than the one we made in 1992. We have to validate the direction this country is going in. We cannot permit it to be reversed, and we cannot permit people to turn away from the fact that we are in better shape as a na-