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Remarks at the Florida International University Commencement Ceremony in Miami Beach, Florida

April 27, 1992

Thank you all very much. Thank you, Dr. Maidique, for that wonderful citation, those very kind words. May I salute Elsie Augenblick for the alma mater, Sister Flood for that very moving invocation, Provost Mau for opening the ceremony and presiding over this madhouse. I'm pleased to be here with so many leaders of the State, State legislators, members of the Florida Legislature, so many distinguished leaders in the Miami community. I want to salute Chairman Alvah Chapman, who does so much for this community, and the other members of the board of trustees; Regent Alec Courtelis; your own Congresswoman, or one of the Congresswomen from this area, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, who came down with us. Today she's not known as a Congresswoman; she's known as a graduate of F.I.U. And we're very proud of that. I told Ileana coming down on the plane that the real reason that I'm here today, Andy Garcia made me an offer I couldn't refuse. [*Laughter*]

May I also salute my fellow honorees: Celia Cruz, "Queen of the Latin American Music," "Doctor of Salsa." [*Laughter*] She's captured the soul of a culture in her music. She asked me where Barbara was. I said Barbara is up there trying to get an agent for our rich dog. But I know that if she were here—she's a great Celia admirer—she would give her a *grande abraso* like the rest of us do. Celia, congratulations.

And to our other honoree, a longtime friend, respected friend, Abe Foxman. You heard it in the citation, but he is a lifelong fighter for fairplay and equity. His voice is strong against racism and against anti-Semitism. And all of us in public life can take an example from the man you honor here today. He's a great fighter for human rights and dignity. Abe, congratulations.

And may I salute honorees Bell and Weiser and Rosenberg and your teachers Smith and Jones. Very good going for both of them. They disappeared over here somewhere. But I loved those citations because it says so much about the commitment of our teachers to helping kids all across this country. And may I, too, salute the F.I.U. faculty, the students, the families. Thank you, Panthers, all, for this wonderful welcome to this coliseum.

I know today's commencement is one of the hottest tickets in town. President Maidique told me about one graduate, Yanira Bermudez, who needed a dozen tickets for family members who came all the way from Canada. You can't imagine how pleased I am to receive this degree, knowing, therefore, that I'd be guaranteed a seat at this tremendous turnout. [*Laughter*] It is spectacular.

And I really am, I mean this, I'm very honored to be a part of this special occasion. Today's ceremony marks more than a graduation. This commencement is a coming of age. Twenty years ago, Miami didn't have a public university. Today, under the leadership of President Maidique, Florida International is not simply a fixture in the intellectual and economic life of this thriving city; it is one of the 50 largest universities in the United States of America, and a quality one at that. I can tell you this: They won't be asking, "F.I. who?" anymore. Never again. You've come a long way from those early days 20 years ago, holding class in the air traffic control tower out at Tamiami Airport. And the progress that you've made stands as testimony to the power of a dream and also of your determination to make that dream real.

Let me speak for a moment about the secret of your success. Florida International has blazed its own path. Many of your students are a little older, a little more experienced. You're a little more likely to combine work and study, family life with college life. And because of that, you're a little less likely to treat your university years as some ivory tower exercise and more an extension of the everyday world around you. All of those factors keep this university close to the community it serves. And all of those factors make F.I.U. a force in shaping

south Florida's fortunes in the new century ahead.

Even now, each day brings new changes, new nations, new realities, new hopes, new horizons. And it's not so much technology and science that we marvel at but the startling pace of political change. The democratic renaissance in Central and Eastern Europe, the blossoming of democracy here in our precious hemisphere, the end of the cold war, and the collapse of imperial communism, all would be unimaginable in a world where America turned inward, away from the challenges of a new world.

The changes in the world beyond our shores have real impact right here at home. In the new world you'll call your own, your children won't wake to the nuclear nightmare that played in the corners of your mind. We have made real, dramatic progress toward eliminating the threat of nuclear weapons and in turning our old adversary in the Soviet Union into new partners of peace. And I take great pride that U.S. leadership helped make that dramatic change possible.

But change brings new challenges. We've put an end to a long era of military confrontation and entered a new age of economic competition. And yes, dictators have given way to democracy, and yet, clearly, dangers still remain. Here in Miami, I know the great gains for democracy we've seen in the world have a bittersweet edge. Each triumph for freedom, each victory for the people from Moscow to Managua calls attention to the one island where communism continues to hold sway. And I cannot pretend to imagine the anguish that so many of you or your parents or your other family members must have felt at a cruel choice, the cruel choice between the land of your birth and the love of freedom. I share the dreams that you have for a democratic Cuba.

I have thought a great deal about this and anguished about it. And I am absolutely convinced that that day will come. And with the collapse of Soviet communism, Cuba now stands isolated and alone, and we continue to keep the pressure on to tighten the trade embargo, to champion the cause of human rights. The fact that dictators cling to power is a fact that will soon become a footnote. We are witnessing the collapse of the Communist idea, the demise of the crippling concept of the all-powerful state.

There are many reasons for this collapse. But in the end, one fact alone explains what we see today. Its advocates saw the triumph of communism written in the laws of history, and they failed to see the love of freedom written in the human heart. I know there's a Spanish saying about the Castro regime that is true in any language: *En las noventas, se revienta.* I guarantee you, freedom will come to Cuba. Make no mistake about it. And none of you professors give me a grade on my accent, either.

But the change we see doesn't stop at America's doorstep. Here at home we've got to ask: How can we open the doors of opportunity for every American? Our challenge, our new American destiny is to give the American dream room to grow. And to make that destiny our own, we must advance American ideals, help communism's old captive nations take their place among the world's democracies. We must advance America's economic interests, meet the competitive challenge of a new world economy.

Here in Miami, we see this new American economy in microcosm. This city is the hub, the economic gateway to the Americas. Here's the figure: Forty-five percent, nearly half, of all U.S. trade with Latin America passes through the Miami area. And that translates into 35,000 jobs in the Miami area alone tied to trade. And here's what that means for the graduates that are here today. Your standard of living, your opportunities, your future are certain to be influenced by the world beyond our shores.

Now, I know that there are some who see a different future, people who want to sound retreat, run from the new realities, seek refuge in a dream world of economic isolationism or protectionism. Those voices have nothing to say to this Nation. There is no turning back. There is no hiding from the new reality. We have no choice but to compete. The new reality of our new world economy is simply this: To succeed economically at home, we must lead economically abroad.

And finally, if we want to make a new American destiny our own, we've got to bridge the gap between the American people and the Government that's meant to serve it. I know there's a discontent. Travel around the country; you can't help but feel it, a deepening cynicism about the way things work or fail to work in Washington, a doubt about one person's ability to change, really change the system. To them, Government has grown more distant. Too often, the Government we get is not accountable. It is not effective. It is not efficient. And regrettably, it's not compassionate.

It's not that people are apathetic. It's that people are angry with Government. Many of you recycle empty cans and plastic bottles because when it comes to the environment, you believe that one individual's actions can make a difference. But when it comes to self-government, cynicism kicks in, and too many people have come to doubt the power of a single vote.

This didn't happen just overnight. It's the legacy of a theory of government grown too used to promising what government will do for the people. And this theory fails to see that people don't want government to make their decisions for them; they want government that gives them the freedom to choose. And they want a Government that spends within its means in the way families do. And they want welfare programs that provide opportunity, not the dead-end street of dependency. And they want to be free to choose the school that is best for their children, public, private, or religious.

And that message is getting through. Because in spite of the cynicism, we see positive signs, a new ethic of responsibility alive in America. The days of the no-fault lifestyle are coming to an end. We see it all around us: individuals taking responsibility, individuals taking action. In their private lives, people know actions have consequences. And what they want from government are policies and programs that hold people responsible for their actions. And that government is responsible to the people. And if you think about it, that's nothing more than a working definition of the word "democracy."

We've got to bring the ethic of responsibility back into government. And when we do, we'll see the sense of public trust return to politics. And we'll see a Government that reflects the real values of this great Nation, proud, confident, caring, and strong. That's my mission as President. It's our challenge as a Nation. And the way we do it is through reform.

I've already mentioned one of the areas where we need urgent action: expanding trade, to open new markets the world over to American goods. Beyond trade, there are four other key issues that together form the core of our reform agenda.

We've got to fight for legal reform to end the explosion of litigation that strains our patience and saps our economy. America would be better off it we spent less time suing each other and more time helping one another.

And we've got to reform this country's health care system, open up access to all Americans, and control the runaway cost without sacrificing the quality education that separates us from every other country in the world: choice and quality.

We've sparked a revolution in American education, community by community, to help our children get the world-class education that our new world demands. And I know the need for education dollars is great, and that's why at the Federal level we've increased our education budget by 41 percent since I took office. And I saw those stickers out there, and believe me, I came prepared with those statistics, 41 percent increase.

And finally, we've got to push forward on Government reform because only if we reverse a generation of creeping bureaucracy, only if we restore limits to Government, can we restore public trust.

Each reform is essential. And I've called on Congress to take action in each of these areas—legislation on Capitol Hill right now in most of it. Each reform will succeed so long as we draw on the strengths that got each of you here in this room today. As a society, as a Nation, we stand to gain from your skills and your training, your insight and your energy. But the most precious resource of all is this: It's that sense of optimism, your optimism. And there is still plenty of optimism in the American charac-

ter.

Let me take someone many of you will know, a senior named Sylvia Daniels. She took her first class at F.I.U. 15 years ago, and she graduates today at the age of 77. And I've saved the best for last: This summer, Sylvia, they tell me, starts graduate classes in Cambridge, England. Good luck. And Sylvia, if you're looking for a new challenge to take on until school starts, there's always the national windsurfing championship. Good luck. [*Laughter*]

We see the power of optimism in Jose Marrero, who today becomes the first in his family to graduate from college. And he's done it at the age of 19. And we see it in Michael Yelovich. Ten years ago, at the age of 15, Michael was paralyzed, the result of an accidental shooting. And Michael's mother wrote me at the White House about that difficult time when, in her words, "Life to Michael and the rest of our family seemed unbearable." Michael's battled back against the odds and the obstacles to get here today. And his mother wrote that "When he graduates, the whole world should know." And it seems to her now that the whole world does know. And what a great story that is.

And so, when I hear that in America you can't get ahead, I say, "Tell that one to Michael Yelovich. Try that one on." And when I hear that in America our kids are in crisis, I say, "Tell that to Jose Marrero." And when I hear that in America our best days are behind us, I say, "Tell that to Sylvia Daniels." Here's what I know: America's best days always lie ahead. In the next century, as in this one, America will be the strongest, the bravest, the freest Nation on the face of the Earth.

As President, I have made it my mission to preserve and advance three legacies close to all our hearts: a world at peace; an economy with good jobs, real opportunity for all Americans; a Nation of strong families, sturdy values of character and culture. To make this destiny our own, we've got to be part of a larger movement. As parents, as citizens, as members of the communities we call home, we must rekindle a revolution to bring change to the country that, indeed, has changed the world.

Thank you, once again, for this warm welcome and this high honor and for inviting me to share this special day with you and your families. And may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very, very much.

Note: The President spoke at 2:50 p.m. at the Miami Beach Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Andy Garcia, actor and F.I.U. alumnus; Robert Bell, Sherwood M. (Woody) Weiser, and Mark B. Rosenberg, F.I.U. Distinguished Service Award recipients; Mary Ann Smith, Broward County Teacher of the Year; and Angel Stanford Jones, Dade County Teacher of the Year.

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on Syria's Lifting of Restrictions on Syrian Jews

April 27, 1992

We are pleased to have obtained official confirmation from the Syrian Government on Saturday of the lifting of restrictions on travel and disposition of property for the Syrian Jewish community.

The Syrian Government has now informed us that, in the aftermath of President Assad's recent meeting with the leaders of Syria's Jewish community, all members of the Syrian Jewish community will be accorded the same rights as those enjoyed by all other Syrian citizens. We have been told that Syrian Jews will be allowed to travel abroad as families, on business, and for vacations. Further, the Syrian Government has removed difficulties encountered by its Jewish citizens with regard to the sale and purchase of property. The Syrian Government has also released the Soued brothers, who had been imprisoned for violating