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Remarks on Arrival in Los Angeles, California

May 6, 1992

Well, I'm very pleased to be here in Los Angeles and thankful to see that calm has returned to the city; glad to receive that report just now from the Mayor, members of the city council, and from the Governor. As I think back today to what I said last Friday, I do think of the oath that I took when I entered the office, the Constitution's charge to every President to "insure domestic Tranquility." This I know: We can never condone violence, because without peace there certainly can be no hope. We cannot begin to move forward, could not begin to rebuild until the violence had stopped and the order restored. We've met the first mission, and I salute those who have participated in it. And now, the good people of south central L.A. are free to come out from behind those closed doors to begin the difficult but extremely important process of rebuilding the city.

Tomorrow I'll be meeting with community leaders, with some citizens, to see and speak with the people who have firsthand knowledge of last week's tragic events. I will assure them, as I can assure all the citizens of Los Angeles: The Federal Government is committed to help this city, help this city rebuild.

Let me focus just for a moment on the actions that we're taking at the Federal level to help. Through my Presidential disaster declaration, FEMA, that's the Federal Emergency Management Agency, will make an estimated $300 million in assistance available to individuals and families in the city and county of Los Angeles. It will make grants directly to people hit hardest by the violence, personal grants up to $11,500 to meet urgent needs like food and clothing and medicine. Now, these grants will also help with temporary housing, money for repair to homes with minimal damage, and to provide shelter for those families who lost their homes. We're also helping with crisis counseling and disaster unemployment assistance for those who are now without jobs as a result of the disaster.

A disaster field office is already up and running, and FEMA's 800 assistance number is ready right now to receive calls in a wide array of languages: English, Spanish, Chinese, Thai, Korean, Vietnamese, and Laotian. In addition, FEMA will assist the public sector in repairing and restoring public utilities like water and electricity that are absolutely essential to everyday life.

Beyond these emergency grants, we will provide SBA loans, disaster loans they're called, up to $500,000 for physical damage and lost inventory. Homeowners and renters are also eligible for assistance under SBA for programs up to $100,000 for damage and losses. Preliminary estimates indicate that roughly $300 million in loans will be made in this area.

All told, aid to speed the recovery process could total approximately $600 million. This assistance will help get boarded-up and burned-out businesses open again, up and running. It will help people clean up the streets, help the individuals and families who lost their home and all their belongings to cope with this most personal of tragedies.

Finally, the Department of Agriculture has arranged for delivery of over 2,000 cases of rice cereal, over 2,000 cases of infant formula, nearly 250 cases of nonfat dry milk, and continues to assess the emergency food needs.

This is a good beginning. The urgent need for assistance must not obscure the magnitude of the larger challenge that we face. Beyond these short-term actions, we must bring hope and opportunity to our inner cities. The aim must not simply be to recreate what we had but to build something better in its place. There must be no return to the status quo. Too often in the past, we've measured our compassion the wrong way, by budgets and bureaucracies instead of how many poor people have permanently escaped poverty. So this must end. And there's no question, the Federal Government has a terribly important, a fundamental role in ending poverty and despair in our cities. But the time really has

come to try a new way. So we need to let poor families take back control of their lives by making our commitment to end poverty and despair greater than ever before.

So this time, we've got to make certain to put the Government on the side of opportunity, on the side of human dignity, on the side of hope. Anything less would really be a disservice to the people of Los Angeles who need our help. Anything less would be unworthy of our great country.

In 5 short days, Los Angeles has made great strides, and the number of people who deserve thanks runs up into the tens of thousands: The firefighters, the police officers who worked hours on end. There's this enormous corps of volunteers, I'm told, the churches, the churchgoers, those out in the communities organizing. The many people known and unknown who came to the aid of people that were hurt, people in need, who stepped forward to stop the violence, to save a life.

Let me say something, something I promised myself I'd say the moment we got here, say this to every one of the people who reached out across the barriers of color and put their own safety at risk to help others: Thank God for what you did. You did more than simply save a life. You gave a Nation great cause for hope. And you proved amidst the hate and the horror that this is still the City of the Angels.

I salute the local officials. I'm very grateful to the Mayor and the others who are here to greet me, from the city council to our Governor. I've listed what the Federal Government can do, but we recognize this is a team effort. I understand that on the ground already is a fantastic volunteer operation, one to stimulate the volunteer sector, and we salute those who are working in that way, too.

So it's a pleasure to be here. I know I will learn a lot from what I see. And I salute those, all of them standing right here with me, incidentally, who have worked tirelessly night and day to restore order and to return the city to a city of hope. Thank you all very, very much.

Note: The President spoke at 8:50 p.m. at Los Angeles International Airport.

Remarks at Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles

May 7, 1992

Thank you, Reverend Hill. Let me just say to his parishioners and to his fellow members of the clergy that we Bushes have great respect for your pastor, respect for what he stands for, respect for his leadership, and respect for his emphasis on family values.

I listened to the prayers with wonder, admiration. I think we got a pretty good start, don't you, with Miss Elmore singing, but I heard what His Eminence Cardinal Mahoney said about racial tension. We must address that. What Bishop McMurray and Dr. Billy Ingram said about healing, we've got to address that; what Dr. Massey said about the importance of the church. And as you look at the chaos and turmoil in this country, not just in the wake of the riots of Los Angeles but all the problems we face in the country, the problems we face internationally, I keep coming back in my own thinking to the importance of the church, the importance of our faith. Then Reverend Massey talked about this is no time for blame, and he's right about that. This is not a time for blame, and I am not here in the mode of politics. I am not here in the mode of partisanship. I am not here in the mode of blame. I'm here to learn from the community and at this moment to tell you of the values that I strongly believe in.

When Reverend Hill and other national leaders came last Friday to the White House, I reminded the group of what Mayor Tom Bradley and other mayors, urban mayors, rural mayors, had to tell me not so many months ago. They told me of their concerns for their cities, their munici-