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the Grecian Room at the Biltmore Hotel. Peter Ueberroth, chairman of the Rebuild In his remarks, the President referred to L.A. Committee.

Remarks to Town Hall of California in Los Angeles

May 29, 1992

Thank you, Lod, for that very warm and very generous introduction and welcome back to Los Angeles. May I greet our Mayor, Tom Bradley, Governor Pete Wilson, and single out two of your former Governors, one sitting on the left and the other on the right of mine, read nothing into that politically—[laughter]—George Deukmejian and Pat Brown. It's a great pleasure to see both of them. And may I single out Pat Saiki, our head of SBA; and our fine Secretary of HUD, Jack Kemp, who is trying to do an awful lot to help over here, Jack, a fellow Californian. And to Adrienne and the others who are officials here with Town Hall, thank you for giving me access to what I am told is one of the most prestigious forums in all of California.

This morning I was over in South Central talking with some of the people that are trying to restore that neighborhood, put it back together. We have a long way to go. But let me say this: I was really struck by the progress that's already been made in bringing this great city back. And I was struck by the spirit of those individuals that were there, not as spear carriers from some TV shot, but were there actually filling out the loans. And these were people that had been devastated by what happened, and there they were with faith in God and with the spirit that they could make it back. I wish everybody could have seen that.

Now, this remarkable effort has brought together Federal, State, and local officials, and most importantly, thousands of volunteers, churches, and neighborhood groups. I think we've seen enough of the horrible images over and over. And my plea is, how about some of the wonderful things going on? Yes, Los Angeles will come back. And with all due respect, I hope the media will tell this heartening story loud and clear and give it as much attention as the looters and rioters received just a few weeks ago.

As you may know, at the outset of the riots I pledged to do whatever was necessary to restore order. And I ordered the federalization, after consultation with Tom Bradley and Pete Wilson, of the National Guard and dispatched several thousand Federal law enforcement officials to L.A. We also had several thousand troops stand by for any emergency, 7th Army and the Marines. And I've been pleased to hear that that swift response did a great deal to stabilize, help stabilize I should say because the LAPD and others were out there helping as well, certainly the sheriff's department, help stabilize an explosive situation.

We were also able to get disaster relief to Los Angeles in record time. Seven relief centers opened in the first week after the rioting, three more a few days later. We have now 10. Housing assistance checks were being mailed to applicants within 3 days. And the SBA, and I would again credit Pat Saiki, with us today, was able to approve loans in weeks instead of months. Within 3 weeks the first checks were cut, and that is a record for this kind of disaster assistance. Our response was massive; it was quick. And to my team, led by David Kearns and Al DelliBovi, and to all the people who made it work, my thanks for a job very well done.

I am proud of what the Federal Government was able to do, but there should be no misunderstanding: Federal assistance offers no reward for rioting. This help has been directed to the victims, not to the perpetrators of the violence. To the criminals who subjected this city to 3 days of terror and hate, the message has got to be unequivocal: Lawlessness cannot be explained away. It will not be excused. And it must be punished.

In the starkest possible terms, this tragedy made clear the great unfinished business that we face as a Nation. We've got to strike

a new course. We'll rebuild our cities. And we can, but only if we learn the lessons of what happened here. Now, what are the lessons? Some people tell us that the hopelessness in urban America is a simple matter of economics, of jobs. Others say, no, the answer lies in tougher law enforcement, safer streets. This is a false choice, really.

Of course, the best antipoverty program is a job. A job provides more than money; it teaches dignity and self-reliance, the first rungs of the economic ladder. And more than that, it gives them hope. But jobs don't get created in a wake of a crime wave. The first lesson of L.A., then, is a simple one. The primary duty of government is to protect the safety of lives and property. There can be no opportunity, no hope in a community where decent citizens are held hostage to gangs of criminals.

I know perhaps more acutely than anybody here that this is a campaign year. And every time someone mentions crime or law and order the accusations fly about "playing the race card." Let me just say, stop right there. There is nothing racist, there is nothing divisive about protecting decent people from crime. Some say it's playing politics. Well, they're wrong. Playgrounds overrun by gangs, senior citizens locked behind triple-bolted doors, or mothers shot through open kitchen windows: this isn't the America we want. Making neighborhoods safe isn't politics; it's just plain, simple decency. And it's the right thing to do.

That fact points to the second lesson of Los Angeles. Other people say that our urban problems are only about money, taxpayer money, your money. They tell us the solution lies in ever-higher Government spending. Well, this, I think, is another false choice, more Federal money versus less, as if the problems of our inner cities are simply the result of a lack of Federal funds. They're not. And let's be clear about this: Over the last 25 years, we have spent the staggering sum of \$3.2 trillion on our social welfare system. And the fact is, in hopes of eliminating poverty, we spent more money in the eighties than we did in the seventies, more in the seventies than in the sixties. For all of the good intentions, decay and despair have only seeped deeper and deeper into our inner cities. But the tragedy

is not about wasted money; it's about wasted lives.

The fact points to this second lesson, then, of Los Angeles: For those left behind, the system itself is broken. We won't fix it with a simple increase in Federal funds. You don't pump more gas into a car that doesn't run. You lift the hood up, roll up your sleeves, and get to work. We need to overhaul the engine. So we start with the most basic question: How has the system failed? What went wrong? The American dream is based on the belief that if you get a good education, find a job, work hard, raise a family, save for the future, you will prosper. Our free economy, in which the important decisions are made by the people themselves, makes this possible.

But decent people in the inner cities, particularly those with low incomes, labor under an entirely different set of rules, some laid down by the lawless, others laid down by government. As the bureaucratic power of government has grown in the inner cities, the power of the residents there to shape their own lives, to make the important decisions, has steadily gone down, steadily declined. The system operates on an unspoken premise that Americans who live in depressed neighborhoods are simply incapable of making the decisions that other Americans make every single day. And it assumes they're unable to take advantage of the same opportunities that Americans have always used to better their lives. And worst of all, worst of all, it presumes they don't even want to. That's wrong. That's not compassion; it's condescension. It is paternalism. And there's no room for that in America.

Think how the system works for families in the inner cities. They find their choices and opportunities restricted at every turn—

Audience member. Mr. President, Mr. President—

The President. Can I finish, and then I'll be glad to hear from you. Okay, thank you.

Audience member. Mr. President, Mr. President, from Paul J. Myer. Paul J. Myer, your best buddy. This is for you.

The President. Thank you, sir. An unusual way to deliver the mail, but I'll be glad to

receive it. I know Paul J. Myer. Thank you very much.

Audience member. I apologize for—

The President. No, that's all right. No, no problem.

Audience member. I apologize for ruining the party.

The President. No, no, you're not ruining anything.

Audience member. But it's an important message. I have waited 7 years to get you that message. I am from the community, okay. I have received the benefit of a message that you gave to Mr. Paul J. Myer, or gave for him, 11 years ago, an idea which revolved around a concept called "Realize Your Full Potential."

The President. Yes.

Audience member. And I emerged from the community a very successful businessman—

Audience members. No, stop. No, no—

Audience member. And I think everybody in the community needs these benefits of these bigger ideas, concepts, and precepts. And ladies and gentlemen, please forgive me, but that just had to be said today. Thank you very much.

Audience members. Sit down, sit down.

The President. Okay. Now, wait a minute; it's all right. I know the man he's talking about. But now, let me start where I was, if that's okay. I'll finish.

Here's my point. And he makes a good point—struggled, worked to get out of what I think I've been describing as some hopelessness there. But if you live in a public housing situation, the government now forbids you from owning your apartment, making it a private home, building equity. If you want to give your kids a decent education, the government tells you where to send them to school, even if crack dealers have taken over the playground. If you save to send your kids to college, you're accused of welfare fraud. If you marry someone with a full-time job, you're penalized with a loss of income. If you're still ambitious and try to open a business, to create jobs in your neighborhood, you face an informal red line. Government regulation and capital are already too expensive for our entrepreneurs in the inner city. Add the extra expenses there of job training and security, plus the

reluctance of investors to bring capital and credit into your neighborhood. No wonder the system doesn't work; no wonder it breeds irresponsibility and despair. It rejects a fundamental principle of a free society: People will act responsibly if they are given responsibility. And it is also true, people won't act responsibly if they are denied responsibility.

So this third lesson, then, is the simplest of all. If we have the courage to act, we can fix this system. But we have got to start right now. We have the right principles, and we've developed a straightforward plan, a plan for a new America. First, it makes government services, especially law enforcement, more responsive. Second, it returns the decision-making power to individuals and communities and gives them a stake in their own future. Now, why will it work? Because it takes what works for the rest of America and brings it into the inner cities. And that is long overdue.

In the wake of the riots, I met with the congressional leaders of both parties at the White House, and I presented them with the new American plan. And we talked; I think we found common ground. We agreed that the need for action was urgent. That was 3 weeks ago. Since then, nothing has happened on Capitol Hill. I just met with your able Mayor and your Governor and Peter Ueberroth. I told them I still believe and I certainly still hope that Congress can put partisanship aside, in what I would concede is an extraordinarily difficult election year, and pass this plan now and not pass something that they know I cannot sign. And that means doing something important now for people who need help now. And it means making this Nation a Nation of opportunity for all our people.

Let me briefly touch on our plan. First, we must attack crime with everything we've got. And I urge Congress once again to pass our comprehensive crime bill. The bill goes back to the fundamentals: If you commit a crime, you are going to be caught. If you're caught, you're going to be convicted. And if you're convicted, you'll go to jail. To redouble our war on crime, we have launched an initiative that I think is taking hold nationwide called "Weed and

Seed.” With increased Federal resources, we can weed out the criminals from inner cities and then seed those areas with a concentration of social services so that crime can no longer take root.

Second, we must streamline the jumble of Federal job training programs. Our Job Training 2000 initiative offers essentially what I saw today in these headquarters out here, these 10. I went to one of them, a one-stop shopping system for those who want training, but can’t get it now. For example, talking with Pete Wilson earlier today, I let him know of a new \$12 million Labor Department effort targeted to rebuild L.A.’s employment base.

Third point, as Jack Kemp has said so often, we must turn the red line around our cities into a green line, to cut the costs of opening an inner-city business and create jobs. And that’s what this concept of enterprise zones are all about. Now, I know that Tom Bradley agrees with me on that. I thank him for his strong support. Pete Wilson, the same; he agrees about that concept. I thank him for his support. Peter Ueberroth, who is trying to mobilize the private sector and get new businesses to take a shot at investing in the inner city, agrees with me on that point. He is supporting this concept. And as you know, I’ve asked Congress to cut the capital gains tax on all Americans. And in America’s inner cities, where the need is most urgent, we ought to cut it to zero, eliminate it entirely. And that is how you bring real jobs to the inner city. And here’s an open invitation to the mayors of America’s cities and a challenge to the Congress. I want every American city with a deserving neighborhood, neighborhoods with high crime and high unemployment, to become an enterprise zone. And I urge the mayors, take your case to Congress, and we will support you all the way.

Fourth principle, and this is a valid one, is to extend the principle of private property into the inner city. And that means homeownership. Our HOPE initiative will offer residents the chance to turn public housing into private homes. Ownership gives people a stake in their neighborhoods. It instills pride and a sense of responsibility for what happens next door and down the block.

Fifth, welfare reform to strip away the

penalties for people that want to work, who want to save, who want to start a family. Any genuine reform must meet three tests: It must encourage individual responsibility; it must tie welfare to work; and it must promote and sustain stable family life. Our welfare system is a travesty, and I am determined to help these Governors and help everyone change it.

Sixth, and I think we’d all agree on this one, education reform. Every American child deserves a shot at a world-class education. And that means developing innovative schools free of drugs and violence. And it means community support for high standards and educational excellence. And it means that whether a family lives in the inner city or lives out in the suburbs, parent should be able to choose their children’s schools.

Now, each of these steps that I’ve outlined will work to restore a sense of self-sufficiency, of personal dignity to inner-city residents. Today I’ve talked about the need to overhaul our obsolete bureaucratic system, about the fact that the system robs the poor as well as the taxpayer, about the need for justice and order on our streets. But I also believe that there are deeper issues at work here, ones that transcend the present moment.

Now, let’s be honest. The problems we face cannot be solved simply by adjusting economic outputs and inputs. Human beings respond to more than tax codes and bureaucratic rules. We are motivated first and foremost by values, by a sense of what is right and what is wrong. If we are to take values seriously, and we must, we should summon the courage to be frank about them. The word “values” is not relative. Values deal in absolutes. They separate right from wrong, virtue from vice.

Laws and budgets are not enough. We need a moral and, yes, a spiritual revival in our Nation so that families unite, fathers love mothers, stay together in spite of pain and hard times because they love their children and look forward to another generation growing up tall and confident in the warmth of God’s love. That woman I saw today, whose beauty parlor had been ransacked or burned, said, “I am going to make it. With God’s help, I am going to make

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it.” That was a powerful message, and I think people are craving all around this world for that kind of spiritual, inner strength.

The Federal Government cannot teach values, but it can create an environment where they take root and grow. In every neighborhood in America, there are well-springs of traditional values. And when I was last here in your great city, I had the privilege of meeting with the kids at the Challengers Boys and Girls Club. For those who haven’t seen it, I expect there are other examples, Tom, around your city like it, but those who haven’t seen this one, you really ought to check it out. The club was founded by a remarkable man, a man who flew back with us yesterday from Washington, being back there to share his experience with people in DC, his name, Lou Dantzler.

Now, Lou works day and night, day and night, to give these kids the values and habits that they have to succeed. And in the gym where I spoke there were huge hand-printed signs covering the walls. And the signs said: “Preparation is the key to success.” “Always have a positive attitude.” “Education plus hard work plus discipline equals achievement.” And in this sophisticated age, I suppose some people might find these old home truths a little on the corny side. But I don’t, and I’m sure that Lou Dantzler’s kids don’t either. They’ve

learned something that Americans across the generations have learned: Traditional values bring hope in place of despair; they hold the power to transform a neighborhood, a city, and indeed, a human life.

And this is a time of great change for our country. Change sometimes seems to threaten the most valuable legacies that we hope to leave our children: good jobs, strong families, a Nation at peace. Changes breed uncertainty and, yes, skepticism. And I understand that. But I also understand this: The skeptics won’t do the work that needs to be done. People like Lou Dantzler will. He and every American like him are what make America a rising Nation, a country buoyed by the hopes and determination of people who refuse to settle for the status quo. Their faith is the best antidote to pessimism, the surest proof that the best days of America, the greatest and freest Nation on the face of the Earth, still lie before us.

Thank you all very, very much. It’s a pleasure to be with you.

Note: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. in the Biltmore Bowl at the Biltmore Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Lodwrick M. Cook, chairman and chief executive officer, ARCO; and Adrienne Medawar, president, Town Hall of California.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the Sheriff’s Youth Athletic League in Los Angeles

May 29, 1992

The President. Hey, you Dodgers, good to see you all. Sheriff Block, may I salute. Did you all meet the Governor of this State? Some of you have probably seen him. Where is Governor Wilson? There he is, right there.

Let me tell you all something. I’ve known Sheriff Block for a long time, long time, and probably before some of you all were born. But I have great respect for him. And after today, as I’ve seen the dimension of this program that helps so many kids, I’ve

got a lot of different feelings now. The respect level is still there, but I didn’t realize the extent of what he started, what, way back in 1972 when the first program started. I think it’s a wonderful thing, and it’s a great example for other communities all across our wonderful country.

I understand that not only do you get training, physical training, keep up an interest in sports, which is fundamental, but that you also are getting the concept from your deputies, from the deputies here and from