

This week marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan. It is a time for rejoicing and celebration, but it is also a time for reflection and rededication. On this occasion, let us rekindle our commitment to the cause of peace among all the peoples of the Earth. If we are dedicated in our belief and constant in our labor, we can build a better future, one of cooperation, understanding, and compassion, for ourselves and for our children.

Let us also remember the values of family and community, as well as our responsibility for those who are less fortunate, ideals that lie at the heart of Ramadan. These principles of per-

sonal commitment to faith and to society truly are universal values.

So as the new Moon ushers in this holy celebration, let me say to all who follow the faith of Islam here in the United States and around the world the traditional greeting: *As-Salaamu Alaykum*, may peace be with you, and may God grant you health and prosperity now and in the years ahead.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at 5:26 p.m. on February 16 in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. This item was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 20.

Remarks at the Swearing-In Ceremony for Kweisi Mfume as President of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People *February 20, 1996*

Thank you very much, Myrlie Evers-Williams, for your introduction, for your remarks, and most importantly, for your willingness to take on what appeared to be a thankless and could well have been a no-win situation in seizing the helm of the NAACP and helping to bring it to this moment of great celebration and unity. The entire Nation is in your debt, and we thank you.

To the distinguished Members of Congress, the mayors who are here, the clergy, members of the administration; to the young people who have performed and the family of Congressman Mfume. Kweisi told me today before we came out that this is a celebration of rebirth and renewal. And the Vice President and I were standing there amidst his—four of his five strapping young sons; the other is in school or he would be here, showing that he still has his priorities in order. [Laughter] He said, “This is going to be a celebration of rebirth and renewal. And so I have given this over to the young people and to Roger Wilkins.” [Laughter] And I must say, as I heard Jaimie speak, and as I heard Jason speak for the Arkansas contingent here, and as I heard Ayinde speak—by the way, I memorized that poem, and I never spoke it half that well—and then I heard the Morgan State Choir sing, I thought this really is about rebirth and renewal and energy and youth. And I kept

cutting my speech shorter and shorter. [Laughter]

I just want to make a couple of brief points. This country does still need the NAACP. Oh, we are here in the Justice Department today because of what the NAACP has meant to us. When I was the age of these young people here, I can remember what it was like, still, to have a church burned in your home State, to have people intimidated away from pursuing their legal rights. We are here because of what the NAACP has meant to America. To me and to Al Gore, growing up as white southerners in the South, we loved the NAACP. It made us believe that something good was going to come at the end of the civil rights struggle. It made us believe that we could all live together and grow together.

But we know today in this age of incredible possibility for our country, when we have the African-American unemployment rate in single digits for the first time in 20 years, 100,000 new African-American owned businesses—we know still that more than half our people are working harder just to keep up. We know still that, as we glory in these young people being in college, that the college-going rate is going up, but the college-going rate among young people who come from the poorest fifth of our families has leveled off and going down because

of the costs. And we know we must never go back to the days of the black church bombings, the other terrible acts of racial terrorism. And so I want to say, too, we need the NAACP today not only because there are still economic problems and elementary social divisions. We have to do everything we can to see that we determine, in this Justice Department, who created these recent crimes and all of us stand together against any kind of return to that.

Let me say as I look across this crowd and I see so many people—I don't want to call names, but I want to say just one thing about our public life. I see Reverend Jackson and Mrs. King and Dexter and Congressman and Secretary Kemp standing there, sitting there. One of the men who wanted to replace me in the Presidential election this year had to undergo the agony of having leaflets passed out against his Asian-American wife. That is wrong. We still need the NAACP, and no party can tolerate that sort of thing. And none of our people should. We're all the same in this country, and we still haven't learned that yet.

If you look at where we are and where we're going, we can never create opportunity for all Americans who are willing to assume the responsibility to seize it unless we determine to go into the future together. That's what the NAACP must remind us of. That is the great lesson of America, and unfortunately, not every American has learned it yet. And until we all learn it and live by it, we will need the NAACP.

Let me also say that when Kweisi called me to tell me that he was going to take this job, in the words of the old country song, I didn't know whether to kill myself or go bowling. [Laughter] I had become almost emotionally dependent upon him being in the Congress—[laughter]—supporting me when I needed it, reprimanding me when I needed it, whether I knew it or not. [Laughter] I never have much time for television, but whenever I channel-surfed and saw him doing his talk show on television, I always stopped and marveled at how well he related to all those different kinds of people. He is a uniquely gifted man, with a personal history that shimmers with the promise of America and the possibility of personal renewal and the virtue of never giving up on yourself or your family or your common possibility.

I can't help but say that in the continuing struggle we have to rescue our young people. When you see these young people, you know

there is nothing that they cannot do. And when you see so many others we are losing, when the crime rate goes down in America, the juvenile violence rate goes up, when drug use goes down in America and drug use among juveniles goes up, you ask yourself, there's got to be something wrong here when not all of our children don't do this and don't have these opportunities and don't shimmer with their own energy and integrity and possibility. That's what Kweisi Mfume will help to bring to America through the NAACP.

Because he is a Congressman from Maryland and we have so many of his colleagues here, I think we must also say that a lot of our hearts were broken when those eight young Job Corps trainees from Maryland perished in the train crash just a few days ago. Like most of you, I sat there, a helpless citizen, watching it on television, thinking about all of the promise of those children. But let me remind you that they were given a chance, and we should remember them and honor them by determining to give every child who needs a chance the chance they were given. And that is why we need the NAACP and why we need Kweisi Mfume to lead it. We should honor that.

Let me finally say that his constituents have given him the greatest recommendation possible for this job in what is going on in the effort to succeed him. [Laughter] You can tell how good a person is by whether others want to do what he once did or she once did. We had a mayor in my hometown once spend his entire term offering to fix parking tickets in non-grammatical ways, and when he left office, it took us months to find anyone to run. [Laughter] When he announced he was leaving, 32 people showed up; it's almost impossible to sort out the election process. It's a great tribute to the standard of public service set by this Congressman. I am laughing about it; I am dead serious: 28 Democrats and 4 Republicans showed up because they know it means something to represent the American people in the United States Congress because of the way he represented the people of his district.

So I say to you, my fellow Americans, as someone who is in the personal debt of the NAACP, and as your President, we need the NAACP. I thank every person here who worked with Myrlie to bring it back together to this point, to shed the old baggage and to go forward with a clear mind and a free heart. And I thank

my good friend Congressman Mfume for his willingness to lay down his political career for even higher public service. It is a wise choice. It will give us a better future. And we are all here to celebrate as I ask the Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals, Judge Harry Edwards, to come forward and administer the oath to the new president and CEO of the NAACP.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:38 p.m. in the Great Hall at the Department of Justice. In his

remarks, he referred to Myrlie Evers-Williams, chair, board of directors, NAACP; Roger Wilkins, author and professor, George Mason University; Jaimie Smith, student, Baltimore School of the Arts; Jason Hines, student, Morgan State University; Ayinde Jean-Baptiste, student, Whitney Young Magnet High School; civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson; Coretta Scott King, founder, and Dexter King, president and chief executive officer, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Non-violent Social Change, Inc.; and former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Jack Kemp.

Statement on the Balkan Peace Process *February 20, 1996*

This afternoon I met with my senior national security team to review the situation in Bosnia. I received a report on this weekend's meeting in Rome with the Presidents of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia.

I am pleased that in Rome, the Balkan leaders recommitted themselves to keeping peace on track. The parties pledged to resume contacts with the NATO-led Implementation Force, to reunify Sarajevo on schedule, to release all remaining war prisoners, to remove any remaining foreign forces, to cooperate in the investigation and prosecution of war crimes, and to strengthen the Bosnian-Croat Federation and reunify Mostar.

I have instructed my foreign policy team to continue efforts to convince all the parties that their Rome commitments must be implemented faithfully and without delay. The road to peace is a hard road, but it is the right road. We are proud to be part of the NATO force, and I am pleased to be meeting with NATO Secretary General Solana today.

While serious problems remain, it is important to keep the situation in Bosnia in perspective. After nearly 4 years of war, peace will not take hold overnight. We should not lose sight of the remarkable progress that has been made since Dayton. The cease-fire is holding. The zones of separation are in place. And in Sarajevo, once a dying city haunted by snipers and shells, the markets are filled. People are back on the streets. Builders are repairing shops and small

businesses in the center of town. Sarajevo has come back to life, with a future for all of its people.

These are the kinds of tangible benefits that will help give all the people of Bosnia a greater stake in peace than in war. Tomorrow, I am sending to Capitol Hill a supplemental appropriations request for \$820 million to support IFOR and its mission. This includes \$200 million to assist the essential process of civilian implementation—specifically, economic reconstruction and reform, deployment of international police monitors, and demining. I will work with Congress to secure these funds as quickly as possible. The sooner the Bosnian people recover the blessings of a normal life, the surer the chances for a peace that endures.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the enormous dedication of Assistant Secretary Holbrooke, who has spearheaded the peace effort for us since last August. As Ambassador Holbrooke steps down, I want to thank him for his service to our Nation. The people of Bosnia and American people owe him a tremendous debt of gratitude. My new Special Adviser for Implementation of the Dayton accords, Ambassador Robert Gallucci, one of our most experienced and successful diplomats, joined our meeting today and will continue our mission of moving the peace process forward.