

the vigorous involvement. I like the debate. I thought it—you know, it was a very stimulating thing for them and, you know, it was a difficult, challenging election for the people of Israel and, you know, we'll see. I think all of us who watched the returns last night and watched the reports coming in were impressed by the vigor of the democracy and by the determination to participate. And now, you know, they have a very diverse society, and they're trying to find ways to integrate all the various elements of their society. It was very impressive to me what happened.

And so I'm going to wait for the votes to come in and a winner to be declared and the government to be announced, and then we'll see where we go from there.

Press Secretary Mike McCurry. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, does the closeness of the vote make it difficult for anyone to lead? What is the message?

The President. Let's wait a while. Let's see what the vote is, and we'll see what the message is. I don't want to be an instantaneous commentator, but I'll think some more about it and see if I can answer that question.

Q. How late were you up?

The President. Until I found out what all the counted votes were last night, about 1 o'clock.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:20 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, prior to his departure for New Orleans, LA. In his remarks, he referred to Binyamin Netanyahu, Likud Party candidate for Prime Minister in Israel.

Remarks to the Women's International Convention of the Church of God in Christ in New Orleans, Louisiana May 30, 1996

The President. I'm having such a good time, I hate to interrupt it. [*Laughter*] Please be seated.

Audience member. We love you, Mr. President!

The President. Thank you. Thank you.

Bishop Owens, you don't have to calm this crowd for me. I like it the other way. Mother Crouch, thank you for letting me come to your meeting. Now, I know whose meeting this is. And I know that this is supposed to be about the spirit, but if you will forgive me, this is also one fine-looking crowd today.

Last night my wife called me to check in, as we always do when one of us is away from home, and she was on her way to California. And Hillary said, "Well, what are you doing tomorrow?" And I said "Well, I'm going to the Women's Convention of the Church of God in Christ." And she said, "Well, you finally figured out where the power is."

The bishops will find a way to make me pay for that, I think, but I had a good time. [*Laughter*]

I'm glad to be here with some other friends today. I brought two of Louisiana's Congress-

men down here with me, Congressman Bill Jefferson and Congressman Cleo Fields. I'm honored to be here with them. Many of these bishops here have had me in their churches—Bishop Brooks, Bishop Patterson, Bishop Blake, Bishop Quick. I've been in their churches. My friend Bishop Clark from Pennsylvania; Bishop Winbush. Bishop Hamilton gave us a good prayer and got us started off well. I thank Bishop Clemons, Bishop Haynes, Bishop Anderson, all the distinguished leaders of this great church.

I thank that Women's Mass Choir and Natalie Green. It's too bad she has no range to her voice, isn't it? [*Laughter*] Let's give them another hand. She was wonderful, and they were wonderful. [*Applause*]

And I thank Bernard Johnson for coming out here on no notice to play. Bishop Owens and I were sitting there, and I said, "Bishop, I love all this music, but where's that man that played the saxophone for me in 1993 in Memphis? I want to hear him again."

I want to say a special word of thanks, if I might claim a personal privilege, to the two bishops here from my native State of Arkansas, without whom I might well not be here today.

Bishop L.T. Walker and Bishop D.L. Lindsey, thank you for your friendship for so many years, and God bless you. Thank you.

I'm glad to be back in New Orleans. The last time I was here, I was riding in that pretty Presidential limousine on Tchoupitoulas Street, and we lost our hubcap. [Laughter] And budget cutting got so bad in Washington, I was sent here to fetch it back. [Laughter]

I think all of you who were there know that not only one of my best days as President but one of the most memorable days in my life was when I met with you in 1993 at the 86th annual convocation in Memphis. I will never forget that as long as I live. Our good friend Bishop Ford was still living then, and he was my friend and my confidant.

Back in 1993, in that magnificent church where Martin Luther King spoke his last sermon, I asked that we honor his memory by remembering what he lived and died for and by working to tackle the crushing problems of our young people. Since then, I am more certain than ever that there is not a problem in America, and certainly not the problems our young people face, that cannot be solved if we will take responsibility for them and work together to make things better.

As I have said so many times, when we Americans take responsibility and we work together, we always seem to succeed. But when we deny our responsibility and when we are divided, we defeat ourselves. Long before Abraham Lincoln said it, our Saviour reminded us that a city or a house divided cannot stand. Today I'd like to take up where I left off back in 1993 and talk about what we can do to help our children build better lives.

We stand on the threshold of a new century, indeed, a new millennium. It will be an age of great possibility and enormous challenge. I have worked hard to see that all our children enter that century with the opportunities they need to make the most of their God-given abilities, to stand against the forces of division and destruction, to stand for rewarding work and honoring families, reducing crime and protecting our environment, celebrating our diversity, not running away from it, and building a strong, secure, vital democracy that is still a model for the world.

I am pleased at the progress which has been made. Compared to 4 years ago, we have 8½ million more jobs. We have the lowest unem-

ployment rate among African-Americans since the 1970's. We have 1.3 million families going from welfare to work, 1 million families moving from food stamps to self-sufficiency. The crime rate has gone down for 4 years. We are fighting for the minimum wage, and we've fought for other things to help families like the family and medical leave law and a tax program that would reduce the taxes of our hardest pressed working families so they would have more money to raise their children on. Those things are making a difference.

And we've fought against some things as well. We've fought against budget cuts that were too harsh on Medicare and Medicaid and education and the environment, that would have raised taxes on working people and given people like me a tax cut. I was against that, but I'm for balancing the budget; we just ought to do it in the right way.

We have fought to mend affirmative action, but not to end it. It should not be ended until there is no need for it anymore, and I'm sorry to say there's still some need for it.

We have fought to define religious freedom and the Constitution's requirement that the state should not impose any religious views on anybody. We have fought to make it clear that our public schools don't have to be religion-free zones as long as nobody's imposing their view on anybody else.

We've fought against racial discrimination in all its forms. And I tell you today, we are fighting hard to get to the bottom of this rash of black church burnings and to find out who is responsible and to prosecute them to the full extent of the law. We cannot let people of faith be persecuted by people of hate again in America.

That's all good, but it's not enough. We know we have to do more, and we know we have to do it together. All around us, we see evidence of our society's need for renewed commitment, for the moral leadership you provide. Yes, we do need more economic advancement, but that may not be our biggest need, for it is said in the Scriptures, and we must remember, that man does not live by bread alone.

Every day our children are bombarded by influences that would turn them from a positive, good path. You are here this week to talk in real terms about what you can do to build better homes and better communities and better schools and better tomorrows for our children.

You are here to reach out—not to curse the darkness but to light a candle, put it on a candlestick, and give that light to all of America's house.

And you are, for you are working every hour and every day to keep our children free from harm, free to grow up, free to make the most of their own lives; laying the spiritual foundation that is now, because of this church's efforts, helping thousands of young boys develop into men of courage and character with programs like Rights of Passage and God's Male Choice; teaching young boys and girls how to say no to sex and yes to the rest of their lives through the purity classes that you run in your churches; strengthening families and futures by your efforts to increase the involvement of parents in their children's schools and education.

I thank you for this, more than any of you can imagine. I want the rest of America to know what you are doing, and I want the rest of America to do what you are doing. That is what we have to do together. I want our country to reject the voices of division and hatred that would weaken our nation, to walk away from the cynicism which is the chief excuse for inaction, to work together for solutions. There is no more powerful force in this country than the force of conscience and commitment. And that is the force we all feel in this room today.

All of us must step up to the challenges our children face. As I said, I have worked hard to help them where Government can help. I am glad that African-American unemployment is in single digits for the first time since the Vietnam war, that during the past 4 years more than 100,000 African-American businesses have been created. I am proud that homeownership is at a 15-year high, with record increases in homeownership among African-Americans. But all of the homes in the world don't mean a thing if the children can't play outside in the yard or on the street in front of them.

I'm glad that more of our children are taking more challenging courses and that we are seeing at long last some improvement in the performance across the country in many of our educational areas. But all the schools in the world don't mean a thing if children are afraid to walk to and from those schools. All of the opportunity and hope that comes from a job, that doesn't mean much if our children are raised in fear, seduced by the false allure of drugs or crime or gangs into a world of distorted val-

ues and diminished hope and ultimate disappointment.

We simply cannot go into the 21st century with children having children, children killing children, children being raised by other children or raising themselves on the streets alone. That is not the America I grew up in, not the America you grew up in, not the America we can pass on to our children and their children.

Let me say again what I have said many times to my country men and women across this land. Sometimes I think people just give up on these problems. You haven't given up. So if we send one message out today, let's tell America: We refuse to accept that crime and drugs and rampant teen pregnancy and children being killed and dragged down and destroyed are things that we can't do anything about. We can do something about it. You are doing something about it. Our country must do more about it.

In Washington, that's why I worked so hard to pass the crime bill, to put 100,000 police officers on the streets. The sheriff here of Jefferson Parish is pointing out how much the crime rate in New Orleans had gone down because they use these people not just to catch criminals but to prevent crime, to work with neighbors, to work with children, to find things that will help us to identify people who are problems and not only catch criminals but stop it from happening in the first place. And that's why I am committed to keeping on until we have every one of those 100,000 police officers in a uniform walking the street, getting the crime rate down, making people feel safe.

That's why we took on the interest in Washington that was so powerful in the gun lobby, to try to take guns out of the hands of criminals, taking 19 kinds of assault weapons off our streets, passing the Brady bill that requires a waiting period to buy a handgun.

You know, some people in our country were told that if those bills passed, they would lose their hunting weapons. Well, we now had quite a few seasons and we've hunted everything you can imagine in America, and everybody that wanted to is still hunting with the weapon they had the day I signed those bills. There's only one group of people that don't have the weapons they wanted, 60,000 people with criminal records who couldn't get handguns because the Brady bill passed. And it's a good thing.

That's why I supported zero tolerance for weapons in our schools and community-based

programs not only to punish criminals but to prevent crime in the first place, to help our kids stay out of trouble, to give them something to say yes to as well as something to say no to. I think people ought to be able to say yes to jobs in the summertime, yes to staying in schools after hours if they don't want to be on the street, yes to adult supervised recreation, yes to things that will enrich their lives and give them a good group to hang out with. I think that is important.

And yes, I am pleased with the progress. I'm glad that the crime rate is down. I'm glad the welfare rolls and the food stamp rolls are down. I'm glad the teen pregnancy rate is finally coming down. But the truth is, it's not good enough. Because even though the crime rate's coming down in America as a whole, random violence among people under 18 is going up. Even though drug use is coming down, random careless use of marijuana among people under 18 is going up. And, unbelievably enough, after 20 years of working at it, smoking among teenagers is going up as 3,000 young people a day take up a habit that will end 1,000 of their lives earlier than would otherwise have happened.

So there are a lot of challenges still out there. And we need you. We also need you to reach them. How many mothers, I wonder, in this country hold their breaths in fear when their kids leave home? How many wonder whether their kids will be shot by a gang or pressured to buy drugs or robbed of their money or beat up because of their clothes? This is no way to live.

It has not always been this way. We have shown we can make progress. It does not have to be this way. We do not have to tolerate it. But we all have to be willing to do something about it.

There are some more things we can do in Washington. We ought to ban those cop-killer bullets that pierce the bulletproof vests our law enforcement officers wear. They're not needed to shoot anything in the woods. We ought to do more to preserve the safe and drug-free school program so that every school will be able to do things like stay open later or open earlier, or bring in the D.A.R.E. officers or others that are helping our children and supporting the work our parents are trying to do.

We ought to have welfare reform that moves people from welfare to work, but there ought to be enough child care support in there so

that the kids aren't hurt and supervision of children is not sacrificed. And we have to do more to inspire every community to protect our children.

I challenged one million citizens the other day across America to join the anticrime patrols in their community. There are 20,000 anticrime groups in America today. If every one of them could just get 50 more folks to show up and help prevent crime, that would be a million Americans, and it would change the future and increase the safety of our children. They deserve that.

We are taking steps to give parents more control over the things that influence their children. We've passed legislation that requires parents be given in new television sets something called the V-chip so that you can screen out TV programs you think are inappropriate for your young children to watch, and the entertainment industry is helping by providing a rating system.

We're taking steps to prohibit advertising being specifically directed toward young people with cigarettes because of the dangers that that is causing that I mentioned. We're trying to help communities do what they can to bring more order and discipline and structure into their children's lives. One of the things that we have supported is giving every community in America the option, not the requirement but the option, to consider whether schools ought to have a uniform dress policy and have uniforms for the students.

Let me tell you, I was out in Long Beach, California, the other day, the third largest school district in California, where they adopted a uniform policy and they let the kids and the teachers pick what their uniform was going to be in every school. They got up a little fund for the children who couldn't afford their own uniforms. And I listened to the children talk about what had happened. I listened to one young man say that his school picked a green and white uniform because that would clearly show to everybody that they weren't in any of the gangs around since none of them used those colors, and now the children were walking to and from school in safety. I listened to a young girl say that the uniform policy had not just been good for the poor children in school, it had been good for the wealthier children and the middle class children because they stopped judging each other by what they had on and instead by what was inside. And nobody gets

rolled anymore because of their jacket or their shoes. Now, people ought to have the option to see if that works. All I know is there, there is more order, more learning, less violence, and the kids feel better.

Today, as the summer approaches, I want to talk to you about another idea that New Orleans has made the most of, and that's community-based curfews to keep young people off the street. These are just like the old-fashioned rules most of us had when we were kids. "When the lights come on, be home, Bill." [Laughter] How many of you were told that? "When the lights come on, be home." They're designed to help people be better parents. They help keep our children out of harm's way. They give parents a tool to impart discipline, respect, and rules at an awkward and difficult time in children's lives.

Different cities have different ways of enforcing their curfews. Some of them take a kind of a punitive approach. Some of them—even a few have gone so far as to fine parents if the kids aren't home. But some have done much to go the other way, to say that the parents can decide whether they want the curfews to apply to their children; they just have to tell the police and decide.

But the evidence shows that wherever these curfews are in place, they are working. The Justice Department in Washington has just completed a study of seven of these programs that are up and running, in Dallas, in Phoenix, in Chicago, in Denver, in Jacksonville, and in North Little Rock, Arkansas. They also looked at one that works perhaps the best, right here in New Orleans. And I want to thank Mayor Morial and law enforcement officers who are here today. Where's the mayor? Stand up, Mayor—our host mayor.

He is here with his police chief, Richard Pennington, and Deputy Chief Ronald Docette, who is in charge of juvenile enforcement; with two pastors I want to talk about in a moment, Reverend Harold Mayberry and Reverend Kenneth Thompson; with the sheriff of this parish, Harry Lee, and the FBI special agent James De Sarno. And the most important thing of all is he brought two of the young people that have been in his program. I'd like to ask them to stand if they're still here, Shelita Smith and Anthony Anderson. I think they're here. Where are they? Right over there. Let's give these young people a hand here. [Applause] And the pastors, stand

up. Let's give the pastors a hand. Thank you. [Applause] And the law enforcement officers. [Applause]

Now, let me tell you what all these folks are part of here. New Orleans, when I became President, had one of the highest crime rates in the country, very high rates of violence of all kinds. They were worried about the rampant increase in juvenile crime. But this mayor and an army of concerned parents said, "Enough is enough; we have to do something about this."

They put in place, in this city that is famous for its nightlife, a dusk-to-dawn curfew, 8 o'clock on school weeks, 9 o'clock in the summertime, 11 o'clock on the weekends for people under 17. Now, it basically says, if you're young, after a certain amount of time you ought to be home and not on the street where you can get shot or fall in with a bad crowd.

Now, you want to know if it works? During the very first year, youth crime dropped by 27 percent during the curfew hours; armed robberies dropped by a third; auto thefts fell by 42 percent. This is working.

But I want to tell you the most important thing about it, because this is consistent with your mission in the Church of God in Christ. Maybe the most important thing is, what do they do with people who they find out after curfew? Dozens of police officers hit the street to enforce the curfew, but they picked up children and didn't send them to jail. Instead, they took them to a central curfew center staffed with counselors, doctors and nurses, and police officers and, most important, an energetic and committed local religious community represented by those two fine pastors I just introduced. A local group of ministers called—listen to the name—All Congregations Together has several ministers at the curfew center to counsel young people and their parents or guardians. And I met with these folks earlier, as I said. I'm very grateful to them.

I also was told the story of the one city council member who worked in the curfew center who found a 7-year-old child picked up from the streets shivering from fear. He was having trouble walking up the stairs, so she just picked him up and carried him up. She said, "Do you want to sit down?" And the boy said, "No." "Well, what do you want?" she said. "I want you to hold me," he replied. That's what a lot of these kids need, somebody to care, somebody to hold on.

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I'm sure that a lot of the teenagers think this curfew is too strict. It was a long time ago, but I can still dimly remember what it was like to be that age. But they must also know that it's a dangerous world out there, and these rules are being set by people who love them and care about them and desperately want them to have good lives.

And there is one thread that seems to run through all of these curfew programs across the country, and that is, once they are put in, the most intense supporters of the curfews are young people who know that they are too often at risk of being victims of violent crime. They want our protection, and we ought to give it to them.

So today I directed the Attorney General to distribute this report we did on curfews that are working to mayors and community leaders all across this great country. We want to share what is working, not to tell every place they need it—maybe they don't—but at least to let them know that it's out there, that it's a tool, that people have made it work, that children's lives have been saved and their futures have been rescued.

We've read enough of the other kind of stories; it's time to read some of the good stories. I want everybody to know about the school uniforms in Long Beach and the curfew in New Orleans. I want people to know that if we work together and we put our children first, we can make a difference and rescue their lives. That's what I want people to know.

This past January, I had the great honor of speaking at the funeral of my friend and one of this country's most eloquent women, the great Barbara Jordan. She devoted her entire life to making sure this country lived up to its promise, and she once said, and I quote, "We must ad-

dress and master the future together. It can be done if we restore the belief that we share a sense of national community, that we share a common national endeavor. It can be done."

Ladies and gentlemen of this great church, my fellow Americans, can there be any greater national endeavor than saving our children, saving all of our children? Don't we have to remember—you know, a lot of people in public life love to quote the Scripture, and all of us probably do it selectively. But there are hundreds of admonitions in the Bible, hundreds, to take care of the children, especially the poor children. "Even as you have done it unto the least of these, you have also done it unto me." If that was true for Jesus, surely it must be true of America.

So I say to you, I honor your commitment; I honor your actions. We must honor these actions I have cited today, but most of all, we must believe that if we will take responsibility for these children and if we will work together, it can be done.

God bless you all, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Bishop Chandler D. Owens, presiding bishop, Atlanta, GA; Mother Emma Crouch, convention president; Bishop P.A. Brooks, secretary, general board, Detroit, MI; Bishop Gilbert E. Patterson, Memphis, TN; Bishop Charles E. Blake, Los Angeles, CA; Bishop Norman Quick, Bronx, NY; Bishop Melvin E. Clark, Aliquippa, PA; Bishop R.H. Winbush, Lafayette, LA; Bishop W.W. Hamilton, Salinas, CA; Bishop Ithiel Clemons, Hollis, NY; Bishop Neaul J. Haynes, DeSoto, TX; Bishop C.L. Anderson, first assistant presiding bishop; and Mayor Marc Morial of New Orleans.

Statement on Drought Relief for Southern Plains States

May 30, 1996

I am today directing the Secretary of Agriculture to take action to provide relief for producers suffering from drought. Specifically, small grain producers with Federal crop insurance who have suffered major small grain and forage crop losses will be eligible for assistance under

both the Nominated Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) as well as crop insurance.

Millions of acres of seeded small grain forage have been lost due to drought. Even though all acreage is recognized as grain, some producers intended more than one use from a single