

Oct. 29 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1996

Thank you, Edward Bell, for being a good American citizen and asking questions, which is what we need our citizens to do. Thank you, Rex Scouten; and thank you, David Driskell; thank you to the late Sylvia Williams. I'd also like to thank my wife for her insistence that we take up Mr. Bell's suggestion.

Tonight is a happy night for us, to be here, to be a part of this. Tonight reminds us, in all humility, that we are simply tenants here passing through—even though we're trying to get our lease renewed at the moment. [Laughter] There is, in any case, a limit on the lease, and it's a very short period in the very long life of our great country.

And in so many ways, everything that represents America sooner or later has to come to represent a better America, has to come to reflect our ongoing journey. And I was thinking tonight that Thomas Jefferson, whose statue looks directly into the second floor Oval Room, right above us here, would be smiling. You know, on the memorial they have that wonderful quote, when Jefferson said, "When I think of slavery, I tremble to think that God is just." He knew better. And it took us a long time to come to grips with all that.

And this magnificent artist whom we honor tonight had to live in the aftermath of the Civil War and our continuing struggle to come to grips with our obligations as a people, both

moral and constitutional. Now, a long time after that and too long in coming, this great painting will hang in the Green Room and over 1½ million visitors will see it every year. Most of them, but not all of them, will be Americans. Of the Americans, they will come from more than African-American and Caucasian-American stock. They will now come from a myriad of racial and ethnic and religious groups. But when they stop in the Green Room and look at this beautiful work of art, they will know that America here in the people's house is moving again toward its ultimate destiny and living closer to its ideals.

To all of you who have made that possible, I thank you. I thank you for being here tonight. And I ask you now to join us in the reception. Thank you very, very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:52 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rae Alexander-Minter, grandniece of the artist and former owner of the painting *Sand Dunes at Sunset, Atlantic City*; Edward Bell, who wrote to the President informing him that no works of African-American artists were included in the White House collection; Rex Scouten, White House Curator; David Driskell, expert on African-American art; and Sylvia Williams, former director, Smithsonian Institution Museum of African Art.

Remarks at the Saxophone Club Presidential Victory Concert October 29, 1996

Thank you. Let me say to all of you, you have honored me and our party by being here tonight. I can't thank you enough. I want to say a special word of thanks to the Saxophone Club, to the DC Chapter, and to Bennet Kelley, to all of you who had anything to do with putting this together.

I thank Bruce Hornsby and his wonderful band for keeping us pumped up and playing so brilliantly. I thank Stevie Wonder for so brilliantly taking us back across the years and bringing us back today again. He was magnificent, let's give him a hand. [Applause]

And thank you, Kevin Spacey, for being here and for showing your versatility, your patience,

your talent. You know, from "The Usual Suspects" to "Seven" to "A Time To Kill," to Johnny Carson, to killing time creatively—[laughter]—this man has a brilliant past and a more brilliant future. I am so honored that he was here tonight. We ought to give him a Purple Heart for how much time he had to stand up.

You know, I felt so sorry for Kevin up here. It reminded me of some of the licks that I have taken in this campaign. And one day when I was kind of feeling sorry for myself, somebody reminded me of something Mark Twain said and I wish I could have whispered to Kevin. The fellow said, "You know, you ought to consider yourself like the dog Mark Twain talked

about. He said, every dog needs a few fleas; it keeps him from worrying so much about being a dog.” [Laughter] And so no matter whatever happens to Kevin in his performing life, he’ll always remember it will never be as bad as when he had to stand in Constitution Hall and make up jokes for 20 minutes during acts. You were great. Thank you, and God bless you.

You know, this election is in 7 days. It has always been about the future. The work that Al Gore and I have done for 4 years has been about building an America for the 21st century. Whatever else people say or talk about in the end, it’s about the future of the young people in this grand old Constitution Hall tonight and all your counterparts all across our great country.

And so I ask you to give 7 more days of effort and your voice, your passion, your commitment to making sure that we roar into that next century together; that we build a bridge we can all walk across; that we say no to division, no to going back, no to the short-sighted, negative forces that would tend to divide us and cloud our clear vision of the tomorrow we can make together. Our best days are still ahead.

Thank you, and God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:27 p.m. in Constitution Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Bennett Kelley, national cochair, Saxophone Club; musicians Bruce Hornsby and Stevie Wonder; and actor Kevin Spacey.

Remarks at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, Michigan *October 30, 1996*

Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, I’d like to ask right here at the beginning that we give another round of applause not only to Irma Elder but to Juanita Bycraft Walker and to Gail Davis. The three of them represent the whole range of women’s businesses in America today. Let’s give them a hand. They were great. Thank you. [Applause]

Thank you. Let me say I am delighted to be back at Eastern Michigan, where I prepared for one of my debates in 1992. I had a great time here then, and I’m glad to be back now. I want to thank both the marching band and the concert band for playing for us today. Thank you very much.

And just on a purely personal point, I first heard of Eastern Michigan University a long time ago when I hired a young man from one of the poorest counties in America out of the Mississippi Delta, right on the river of the Mississippi in my home State, to work for me in the attorney general’s office and later in the Governor’s office, who told me he had been given his start in life when he got a football scholarship to Eastern Michigan University. And that young man, Rodney Slater, is now the Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, investing billions of dollars in growing the American economy through infrastructure. So

you can always be proud of your mission here and what you’re doing and the opportunity you’ve given to people.

I’d like to thank Vice President Juanita Reid for making me feel so welcome today, and Michelle Vasquez, the executive director of the Ann Arbor Community Development Corporation. Senator and Mrs. Riegle, thank you for coming. Congressman Ford, thank you for coming. I’d like to acknowledge the presence here of the Director of the Small Business Administration, Phil Lader, and the head of the White House Office on Women’s Affairs, Betsy Myers, who have both done a wonderful job for the women business owners of America. Thank you very much. Thank you, Senator Carl Levin, for your speech and for your service to Michigan. And I have a great deal of confidence that you’re going to get your service extended in 6 more days.

And I was looking at Lynn Rivers give her speech, and I thought, I wish everybody in America could see this woman give her talk, could hear her story. I wish everybody in America could meet her husband who’s working down at the UAW—Ford plant down the road here and can’t be here today. That represents what America is all about. The story that Irma told of her life represents what America’s all about.