

The President's Radio Address *March 29, 1997*

Good morning. Spring is a season of renewal, not just of the world around us but of the ideals inside us, those that bind us together as a people. Millions of families will come together to celebrate Easter this weekend and Passover in the coming weeks, to reaffirm their faith in God and their commitment to our sacred values.

And in this season of renewal, I ask all Americans to reaffirm their commitment to this central ideal, that we are many people but one nation, bound together by shared values rooted in the essential dignity and meaning of every American's life and liberty. That is the root of the American idea of a community of equal, free, responsible citizens and the American dream to build the best possible future for our children.

The divide of race has been America's constant curse in pursuit of our ideals. The struggle to overcome it has been a defining part of our history. Racial and ethnic differences continue to divide and bedevil millions around the world. And as we become an ever more pluralistic society with people from every racial and ethnic group calling America home, our own future depends upon laying down the bitter fruits of hatred and lifting up the rich texture of our diversity and our common humanity.

We're not there yet, as we often see in the tragic stories in the news. Just last week in Chicago, a 13-year-old boy, riding his bike home from a basketball game, was brutally attacked and almost beaten to death, apparently for no other reason but the color of his skin. Lenard Clark is black; the young men accused of attacking him are white. This weekend, I hope all Americans join Hillary and me in a prayer for Lenard and his family.

There is never an excuse for violence against innocent citizens. But this kind of savage, senseless assault, driven by nothing but hate, strikes at the very heart of America's ideals and threatens the promise of our future, no matter which racial or ethnic identity, the attackers' or the victim's. We must stand together as a nation against all crimes of hate and say they are wrong. We must condemn hate crimes whenever they happen. We must commit ourselves to prevent them from happening again. And we must

sow the seeds of harmony and respect among our people.

And let's be honest with ourselves: racism in America is not confined to acts of physical violence. Every day, African-Americans and other minorities are forced to endure quiet acts of racism, bigoted remarks, housing and job discrimination. Even many people who think they are not being racist still hold to negative stereotypes and sometimes act on them. These acts may not harm the body, but when a mother and her child go to the grocery store and are followed around by a suspicious clerk, it does violence to their souls. We must stand against such quiet hatred just as surely as we condemn acts of physical violence, like those against Lenard Clark.

At the same time, black Americans must not look at the faces of Lenard Clark's attackers and see the face of white America. The acts of a few people must never become an excuse for blanket condemnation, for bigotry begins with stereotyping—stereotyping blacks and whites, Jews and Arabs, Hispanics and Native Americans, Asians, immigrants in general. It is all too common today, but it is still wrong.

In Chicago, we see leaders of different races and political philosophies coming together to decry the crime against Lenard Clark. That is good, and it is reason for hope.

The holidays of this season teach us that hope can spring forth from the darkest of times. Those of us who are Christians celebrate a risen God who died a painful, very human death to redeem the souls of all humanity without regard to race or station.

So as families come together to celebrate Easter and Passover, as parents reunite with their children, their brothers and sisters, and friends with each other, let us all take time to search our souls. Let us find the strength to reach across the lines that divide us on the surface and touch the common spirit that resides in every human heart.

And let us also remember there are some Americans who feel isolated from all of the rest of us in other ways, sometimes with truly tragic consequences, like the events just outside San

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Diego which have so stunned us all this week. Our prayers are with their families as well.

In this season of reflection, we must find kinship in our common humanity. In this season of renewal, we must renew our pledge to make America one Nation under God. In this season of redemption, we must all rise up above our differences to walk forward together on common ground, toward common dreams.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11:50 a.m. on March 28 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 29. In his address, the President referred to the mass suicide of Heaven's Gate cult members discovered on March 26.

Remarks at the White House Easter Egg Roll

March 31, 1997

Good morning. Let me say, first of all, it's getting warmer. [*Laughter*] And I want to thank all the sponsors who make this possible this year and the more than 500 volunteers. A lot of them worked here all weekend. I went down and visited with them. Let's give them all a big hand. [*Applause*] Thank you very much.

This is the 119th year we've had the White House Easter egg roll, and every year it gets a little better, I think, and a little different. We've worked hard to make this a good time not only for children but for their parents and family members, so that we could have fun together and we could learn together.

There is a Learn Big Things tent, which I hope you'll all visit. For many of the young people, it will give them a first chance to log on to the Internet or even to visit our White House home page. There is a Learning Adventures tent where children can learn to use CD-ROM's and learn about things like nutrition. Then there is the opportunity to do Easter egg painting and to listen to storytelling.

And I want to thank all the people who have been willing to be part of this, especially one of our special guests today who is down here with us along with two of her four children, "Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman," Jane Seymour. Thank you, Jane, for coming. We're glad to have you here.

And now, are they ready over there at the Easter egg roll? Are you all ready? Now, you can't start until I blow the whistle. On your mark—are you ready? Come on, line up. Shape up here. One of us needs to be able to run. [*Laughter*] On your mark, get set, go.

[*At this point, the President blew the whistle to start the egg roll.*]

Thank you, and God bless you. Happy Easter.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. from the South Portico Balcony at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to actress Jane Seymour.

Remarks on Action To Protect Pension Programs

March 31, 1997

Thank you very much, Marian Jones, for that fine introduction. Acting Secretary Metzler, Secretary Daley, thank you for your good work at the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

I'd like to welcome Congressman Pomeroy and former Congressman Jake Pickle, from Texas, who had so much to do with the success

of our administration's endeavors in this area; AFL-CIO President John Sweeney; the Acting Director of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, John Seal; Olena Berg, from the Department of Labor. And I'd also like to thank all the other members of the Department of Labor who are here today for the work that