

Remarks at American University September 9, 1997

Thank you very much. First, thank all of you for that wonderful welcome. I told President Ladner that after you gave me such a buoyant welcome, I really didn't want to speak. I thought I should quit while I was ahead. [Laughter]

I appreciate the president's welcome and his profound words. I thank Neal Sharma for his introduction and for his leadership here among the students. To Chairman Jacobs and Professor Mintz, Secretary and Mrs. Dalton, City Councilman Thomas; to all the trustees and alumni and faculty and staff and students who are here, and the friends of American University who are here.

There are many people in our administration who graduated from AU or who otherwise have affiliation with it, including your former president Joe Duffey. And one of the most important is here with me today, former professor Judy Winston, who is the Executive Director of my race initiative, about which I want to talk a little. But I'd like for Judy to stand, wherever she is. She's here somewhere. Thank you, Judy. There she is.

At the start of a new school year, this is a time when students are going back to work and when those of us here in Washington are going back to work after the August recess of Congress. It is a time of genuine hope and earned optimism for America, and I can hear it in your spirited voices here today. I think it's a good time for me to talk to you and to our country about what we have to do in the remaining months of this year to make the most of this moment in preparing our country for the 21st century.

It is now—hard for me to believe—almost 6 years since I first announced my candidacy for President. Then, in late 1991, America seemed to be moving toward the new century with uncertain steps. Dramatic changes in the way we live and work and relate to each other and the rest of the world threatened the values by which we live our lives. We were in danger of becoming a more divided nation at the very moment when we needed to be moving forward resolutely together.

On the day I declared my candidacy, I said that our mission as a people must be to keep

the American dream alive for all who would work for it; to keep America the world's strongest force for peace and freedom and prosperity; and to bring our own people together, across all the lines that divide us, into one America. America's oldest and most enduring values—opportunity for all, responsibility from all, a community of all—these things had to remain strong and vibrant in a new and different time, which required a new course of action.

Our Nation has remained young and strong now for over 220 years by always meeting new challenges in ways that renew our oldest values. That is the wellspring of our greatness. Our Nation was not founded on religion or race or geography but on a set of incandescent ideals, which have been reiterated and reaffirmed and reembraced at every critical moment in our history: Lincoln at Gettysburg; the Progressives forging a new freedom for an industrial age; Franklin Roosevelt rescuing America from the abyss in the name of our oldest ideals; Dr. King challenging America to live out the true meaning of our creed. At every single moment of challenge and change, we Americans have found a way to keep these old ideals, not musty words scratched on parchment but instead living guideposts for a new era.

For 4½ years now, Americans have worked to make this a time of change for our generation. We set a bold new economic course, reducing the deficit by over 80 percent even before the recent balanced budget agreement, expanding exports through over 200 trade agreements, and investing in our people and their future. We set about establishing America's credibility in the post-cold-war world, forging new alliances and standing up for our values from Bosnia to Haiti. And we addressed a generation's accumulation of profound social problems, bringing work and responsibility and community action to bear on the challenges of crime and welfare and poverty. And we began to build a new Government, not intent on doing everything but not content to do nothing; instead, a progressive Government committed to giving people the tools they need to make the most of their own lives.

Today we see the results: Unemployment remains below 5 percent; nearly 13 million new jobs since 1993; inflation remaining low and stable; investment growth and consumer confidence at their highest levels in a generation; after decades when they remained flat, finally family incomes beginning to rise again; violent crime has dropped dramatically for years now; we have seen the largest drop in welfare rolls in history; and many of our poorest urban and rural communities are in a springtime of renewal.

In late July, America reached a new milestone when I signed into law the first balanced budget in a generation. This was about more than numbers on a ledger. It embodies the single largest increase in aid to education since 1965. It includes the biggest increase in aid to help people go on to college and to community colleges and to graduate schools, the biggest increase since the GI bill was passed 50 years ago, and it will literally open the doors to college education to every person who is willing to work for it. It includes the largest single investment in health care since the passage of Medicaid in 1965, largely designed to insure up to 5 million children who don't have health insurance today. It restores just benefits for legal immigrants, and billions of dollars are provided to help more people even more from welfare to work.

Now, after years in which the deficit dominated our politics and dampened our economy, America finally has lifted that burden from the next generation. After years in which the two parties seemed often as tired and trapped as punchdrunk fighters in a ring getting smaller and smaller, finally we found a way for Democrats and Republicans to work together for the national interest. And in so doing, we've proved to ourselves that America can still work.

We are steering the vast changes underway today in technology, trade, and our social make-up—the very changes that once produced so much doubt and unease—in ways that will ensure that they will become powerful forces for good. In all this I want to emphasize that we are not merely riding the crest of the latest rise in the economic cycle. Our economic plan with the balanced budget at its center is the platform on which we are building America's future. Americans of this generation are forging and leading an entirely new economy. A larger proportion of Americans work in the computer industry today than worked in the auto industry

at the height of the 1950's. And in the cutting edge industries of the future—computers, biotech, aerospace—America leads the world. But America also leads the world again, for the first time since the 1970's, in automobile production and sales.

In this new economy there'll still be ups and downs. There'll be recessions and crises. They'll demand action. But the economy has fundamentally changed. Once, the wealth of people came mainly from the gold in the ground or the abundance of our farmland or the power of our factories. Now, you know as well as anyone it will come from the skills of our people and the power of our imagination.

The news is good today. And in the face of good news, the easiest thing to do is to rest, to take a vacation, to believe our work is done, and to be satisfied that our challenges are met. But complacency is not an option and vacations have to remain short in a time still full of challenge and change. There is, in fact, a lot more to do to renew our values, to strengthen our Nation, to deal with problems still unresolved, if we are really going to give you the 21st century you deserve. Now we have to take the steps that are clearly before us. And the time to start is now, this fall, with a series of concrete actions we can take to cap a year of real progress for America.

First and foremost, we must press on to make opportunity available for all of our people. Equal opportunity is our central value, but the very meaning of that has fundamentally changed. For example, in the 19th century, opportunity meant access to a land grant. In the 21st century, it will mean access to a Pell grant, to a community college, to a trade school, to a university. And more education is important. We have made enormous progress. As I said, this budget contains the biggest increase in funds to help give people access to higher education in 50 years: not only the largest Pell grant in our history but in the last two budgets, 300,000 more work-study positions, new opportunities for savings in IRA's for college education, and tax credits which will literally make it possible for everybody in the country who doesn't have any access to college to get 2 years of college, and will help people to pay for 4 years and for graduate school. Nothing like this has ever been done before, and it will revolutionize opportunity when it comes to getting a college education.

But I want to explain something that's very important about why we're focusing on the next 3 months. The balanced budget agreement contains a 5-year plan for balancing the budget and contains the tax cuts. It has a spending plan in it. But the spending plan still has to be implemented every single year. And that is what Congress will do in the next 3 months in passing appropriations. So they have to authorize the money for the Pell grants. They must authorize the money for the work-study slots. They must authorize a doubling of funds for computers in every classroom so that we can meet our goal of hooking every classroom and library up to the Internet by the year 2000. It must authorize the America Reads initiative, which will help us to mobilize some of those community service folks you were talking about, work-study students all across the country, thousands of AmeriCorps students going into our schools, working with teachers and parents to make sure every single third grader in this country can read independently. We have to do that.

We also must get through the appropriations process with our commitment to national education standards intact. We know, for example, that America has the finest system of higher education in the world, and people come from all over the world to be a part of it. And I'm very proud of that. We also know, however, that we do not do as well as we should in our K through 12 education for all of our children. Of course, it's harder in America than a lot of other places; we have more diversity. We have more racial diversity; we have more linguistic diversity; we have more cultural diversity; we have more income diversity than we would like—the other diversity is all to the good, I think.

But we are making progress. For the first time this year on the international math and science scores, our Nation ranked well above the national average in math and science scores—well above the world average in math and science scores for fourth graders. But we still ranked below the world average in scores for eighth graders, as our children meet adolescence and all the difficulties that many of them face come to bear. We have to do better.

We are the only major nation in the world that does not have high, clear, uniform academic standards of excellence in basic courses in public education. We don't have them. It is a legacy of our State constitutional responsibility for edu-

cation, K through 12, and local control of the schools. But uniform standards—mathematics are the same in Maine and Montana, and children have to learn to read whether they live in Washington or the southern tip of Florida.

We are now on the brink of being able to have a nonpartisan board set up by Congress for this purpose, to approve the development of examinations of fourth graders in reading and eighth graders in math. There are some who don't think we should do it. They say it's a Federal power grab. It isn't. The tests are voluntary. No State, no school district has to participate. The Government is not developing the tests. We're simply paying for it.

But I hope that all of you who got here to this university will look at all—there are 52.2 million children enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade in America now, the biggest number of children ever, from the most diverse backgrounds ever. We are robbing them of the future you are here to claim if we let them get out of school without the basic skills they need to succeed in the university. And I hope you will support our efforts at national standards.

Now, your student body president made a wry remark about Social Security—[laughter]—and I know a lot of you don't think it's going to be there, but it is. It is going to be there. Clearly, one of our most serious responsibilities is to make sure that Social Security and Medicare are there for the next generation of Americans. It is wrong to let people pay into the fund for a benefit they will never receive. That is wrong.

We will begin in the next 3 months to build on this budget agreement in dealing with Medicare. This budget agreement extends the life of the Medicare Trust Fund by a decade. In fact, the structural changes that we have built in may even save enough money to carry it far beyond that. But we will also appoint, the leaders of Congress and I, members of a bipartisan commission to study Medicare and make recommendations for how it can be preserved for the next generation of Americans well into the 21st century.

We have shown that we can put our fiscal house in order while improving services for our elderly. Now we have to secure the future of this program. And then, we'll be beyond that to deal with Social Security as well. We can do this. If we can balance the budget, we can

plainly do this. These are problems that revolve around demographic changes in our society, and we owe it to you not to have to face this burden. I am confident that we will fulfill our responsibilities.

The next thing we have to do is to continue our efforts to expand trade to the rest of the world. The United States is now the world's number one exporter again. But we must continue to do this. We must continue to do it not only because it is right for us, because it is right for the world. Let me just give you a couple of interesting statistics. We have less than 5 percent of the world's people in this country; we have about 20 percent of the world's wealth. We cannot maintain our wealth unless we sell what we have to the other 95 percent of the people in the rest of the world.

Second, the growing economies of the emerging countries, principally in Asia and Latin America but also increasingly in Africa, are going to grow much more rapidly in the next 10 years than the advanced economies of America, Canada, and Europe. If we participate in that growth, we can move huge numbers of countries now classified as poor nations into the ranks of middle-income nations, where millions of children will have a more decent, more humane, more supportable future, where democracy will thrive, where we will have good partners not only in economic relationships but also in solving the other problems of the world when you have to take responsibility for them.

The United States has a clear, clear obligation to continue to expand the frontiers of trade. And tomorrow in the East Room at the White House, I will launch a campaign to persuade the Congress to renew the traditional authority Presidents have had for over 20 years now to break down foreign barriers to America's goods and services. This is very important to you and your future.

We do not need to be afraid to trade with the rest of the world. We are the most productive economy in the world. There will always be changes in this economy. There will always be new jobs being created and some going away. But on balance, we have benefited for 60 years by leading the way to integrate the world's economies. And that will promote peace. It will promote freedom. It will promote stability. It will raise the level of living standards in other parts of the world even as it maintains America

as the world's most prosperous nation. And I hope you will support that as well.

As we expand opportunity, we must also continue to demand responsibility from our citizens. Among other things, we have a common responsibility to do all we can to strengthen our families for the 21st century. This new economy puts extraordinary pressures on parents, demanding more time away from their children, imposing new demands for affordable child care, bombarding children themselves with commercial images that make it harder than ever for them to be raised according to our most basic values.

We are working to pass a juvenile justice bill to help keep our children out of gangs, off of drugs, and away from guns. We will host the first ever White House Conference on Child Care, to explore ways all sections of society, including our Government, can better address perhaps the greatest problem facing working parents today. And we must make this historic opportunity real in our efforts to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco by passing sweeping legislation that focuses first and foremost on reducing smoking among young people. More people die from that than any other problem in our society today.

Next, we must meet a very large environmental challenge in the next 3 months. We will work toward a worldwide climate change treaty this December in Kyoto that protects the environment even as it promotes global growth by committing the nations that sign on to it to specific, clear guidelines in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. We know—[*applause*]*—*you can clap for that—that's all right.

Now, there are students here from all over the world, students from all over the country. Many of you have witnessed and your families have witnessed, in your own homes, significant changes in climatic patterns in the last decade and more extreme climatic developments. It is becoming a part of the common parlance of America, all over the country, to talk about the 500-year flood we had along the Mississippi River. One Member of Congress, who happened to be a member of the other party, said to me the other day—he said, “Mr. President, we've had three 100-year floods in the last 5 years in my home State.” He said, “Does that mean I get to wait 500 years before we have another bad flood?”

Many of you who are studying this issue know that a panel of over 2,500 scientists has concluded that the climate of the Earth is significantly warming in ways that will have not entirely predictable but almost certainly destructive consequences unless we do something about it.

This is something that will affect people of all incomes, of all backgrounds, from all parts of our country and, indeed, the whole world. We need the young people of America, particularly the university students who are in a position to study this issue, to make this a gripping national issue. And we also need people who have the confidence in our ability to break new technological and scientific barriers to stand up and say, "You cannot make me believe that we can't reduce greenhouse gas emissions substantially and still grow the American economy." We could reduce them 20 percent tomorrow, with technology that is already available, at no cost, if we just change the way we do things.

Now, this will be a very controversial debate. And there will be people who say, "President Clinton has spent 5 years killing himself to revitalize the American economy, and now he's going to take it down overnight by committing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in America." That is not true. But if you let the sea level rise and we flood the southern coast of Florida and we flood the southern coast of Louisiana and we otherwise disrupt what life in the United States is like over the next 50 years, then your children will pay the price for our neglect. We can grow this economy and do right by the environment. I think you believe that, and I need you to help me convince the American people that it can be done.

Finally, let me say we have a responsibility to improve the way our political system works. The amount of money raised by both parties is more than doubling now every 4 years. The primary driving thing is the cost of access to you, the voters. That is what is driving this, the cost of access through television time, through radio time, through mail, through printed materials. One of the things we have to do is to guarantee free or reduced air time for candidates for offices so that they won't need so much more money. And we are seeking that now.

But there is also a very important piece of legislation sponsored by Republican Senator John McCain and Democratic Senator Russ Feingold which will come to the floor of the

Senate later this month. Every year I have been President I have supported a good campaign finance reform bill. And every year I have seen the bills blocked by a filibuster in the United States Senate—every single year. Now, the people who don't want it this year say they're going to do it all over again. They may do it, but if they do it this year, we intend to see that it happens in the full glare of public light. I ask for your support for campaign finance reform this year.

The third thing we have to do is to do a lot of work in the next 3 months to advance our interests and our leadership around the world. We live in a world very different from the cold-war world, and we still have to do a lot to shape it. We have an opportunity to lock in the gains of democracy and stability and free markets and lay the foundations for the century in which you will live most of your lives.

So far this year, we have ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, so our soldiers and citizens will be safer from the threat of poison gas. We have worked hard to build an undivided, democratic, and peaceful Europe for the first time in history, inviting Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to join NATO. I look forward to working with the Senate to ratify this historic step next year, and I'm pleased today that a group of America's leading citizens endorsed it. We're forging new partnerships with Russia, with Ukraine, with Europe's other new democracies, working with all of our friends in Europe to give the people of Bosnia a chance to share in Europe's democratic future. First, we stopped the war and turned killing fields into playing fields again and bomb shelters into schools. Now we have to redouble our efforts to build a lasting peace.

In the months to come, we will continue to pursue peace in the Middle East, in Northern Ireland, continue to fight rogue states and terrorists, continue to make sure our military and diplomacy are the strongest in the world. But above all, in the remaining months of this year, we are going to reach out to our hemisphere and to Asia.

Over the last decade in the Americas, coups, conflicts, and command economies have given way to democracies and free markets. Next month I'm going to Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina to work to expand trade, to fight drugs, to protect the environment, and to strengthen

our partnerships. The Americas can become a stronghold for our own peace and security.

By the way, 70 percent of our increased trade in the last year has come from the Americas, from our own neighbors in our hemisphere, and we should stick with them.

Because I want this effort to be truly bipartisan, I reached my hand across the aisle to choose an Ambassador to one of our most important allies and neighbors, Mexico, when I asked the Republican Governor of Massachusetts, Bill Weld, if he would serve. I believe, still, that he is the best person to be Ambassador to Mexico. And I believe—and I would believe this if there were a President of another party with a nominee with whom I did not agree—I believe when a President nominates someone for a job, that person is entitled to a hearing before the Foreign Relations Committee, and I think he ought to get it.

This fall, the President of China will come to Washington. China is home to a quarter of the world's people. In less than two decades, its economy may be the largest on Earth. America has a profound interest in seeing that China is stable, open, at peace with its neighbors. We want it to embrace political pluralism and the international rules of civilized conduct. We want a China that works with us to build a secure and prosperous future. China will choose its own destiny, but if we engage China instead of isolating ourselves from her, we can help to influence the path it takes.

President Jiang's visit is an important opportunity, not so much for grand statements and dramatic gestures as for constructive work on common challenges like the one we face on the Korean Peninsula, or protecting the environment, or stopping the spread of nuclear weapons, and for expanding the frontiers of free trade between us. It's also a chance for us to address, candidly and face to face, our differences on issues like human rights and religious freedom.

Sitting down together across the table is far more likely to produce progress than pointing fingers across the Pacific. So when President Jiang comes here, I hope the American people will welcome him and will say, "Yes, we have things that we disagree with you about, but you represent a quarter of the world's people, a large measure of the world's future, and your people and our people will be better off if we find a way to forge that future together."

Finally, in the next 3 months, we will be working for new ways to preserve perhaps the most fragile value of all, the bonds of community that bind us together as Americans. In this century, we have absorbed wave after wave of immigrants, drawn here by our abundance and our ideals. This century has seen unparalleled racial progress as African-Americans and other minorities join the American mainstream. Still, the very forces of progress that are propelling us forward could also pull us apart, threatening to isolate us, each with our own webpage but linked by few human bonds of community.

The age-old dilemma of racial inequality, racial prejudice, or just plain old fear and mistrust of people who are different from us is compounded by the new task of absorbing new immigrant groups into what is already the world's most diverse democracy. Within a decade, our largest State, California, will have no majority race. Within just a few decades, this entire country will have no majority race. We can study the demographic patterns and know what America will look like in the 21st century, but we have to look inside to imagine what America will be like in the 21st century. That answer is up to all of us.

I have asked the Nation to join me in a great national conversation about race, an effort to redress imbalance, to root out hatred and prejudice, to deal with real underlying problems that may have nothing to do with race but that manifest themselves in racial inequality and tensions, and above all, to bring Americans of different backgrounds together to face one another honestly across the lines that divide us.

Your president noted that you have people from 140 different racial and ethnic groups here on this university campus. Good for you. You can be America's laboratory. You figure it out and let us know.

This diversity of ours is a godsend. It is a huge gift in a global economy and a global society. If we can find a way not only to respect our differences but to actually celebrate them and still say what binds us together is even more important, we will have solved the conundrum that is paralyzing Bosnia, that is still leading to people blowing themselves up to kill innocent children in the Middle East, that has my people in Ireland still arguing over what happened 600 years ago, that has led to vicious tribal warfare in Africa, leaving hundreds of

thousands of people hatched to death. And yet, look around this room.

This is a question of imagination, of vision, of heart. And it is also very important to be hard-headed about it. Until everybody has economic opportunity that is real and educational opportunity that is real and streets that are safe, there will be racial disparities in America which will manifest themselves in things that look like racial discrimination whether they are or not. We have to deal with the underlying real causes here as well.

But don't kid yourself—fear of people who are different is an underlying real cause. How did people get to be Serbs or Croats or Muslims in Bosnia? How did they belong to the Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, or the Muslim faith in Bosnia? It's an accident of history, of geopolitics going back hundreds and hundreds of years. The people are biologically indistinguishable. But they were more than happy to abandon decades of peace and begin within weeks to murder each other with abandon and shoot each other's children not very long ago.

There is something in us all that in our most defensive periods makes us want to find somebody else we can look down on—I mean, no matter how bad it is for me, at least I'm not her or him. Isn't there? And every one of us at some point in our life has been guilty of that in some way or another.

You come here in this magnificent university environment. You cheer with your great enthusiasm and hope for the future. You look at each other, and you're different, and you like it. That's the way we've got to make daily life in America. People have to get up in the morning and feel good about this country with all of its diversity, because we have to know what's good about the differences between us and celebrate them, and we must know, too, what it is that binds us together. What are the requirements of membership in the American community? What do you have to believe in and be willing to live by and be willing to stand up for in order to be an American? That is what we are going to do. We have to visualize our future as a truly multiracial, multiethnic, multi-religious democracy that still runs in a straight line from here all the way back to George Washington. I'm convinced we can do it, but I'm convinced that all of you have to lead the way.

Now, let me say that a lot of this work has to be done with Congress. And I'm very pleased

by the relationship that we had working on the balanced budget. I'll work with them to do everything we can to implement the budget, to confirm the judges and the others who await action. We are in uncharted territory, to some extent, but we know the times demand action of us, and I am sure the American people, without regard to their party, want us to work together in the public interest.

For all of you who are students here, consider this: It is now 844 days to the year 2000, to a new century and a new millennium and a new era of human endeavor. Will it bring new progress, new prosperity, and new greatness for America? It is basically up to us.

Thirty-four years ago, here at American University, President Kennedy delivered what many people believe was his greatest speech. It was an era bristling with superpower tension, but President Kennedy looked forward and saw a day when the cold war was a thing of the past. Because of decades of work to uphold our values by Americans of both parties, we are now living in the world John Kennedy imagined 34 years ago at American University.

So I leave you with this thought: It all depends on your imagination. It all depends on your imagination. Think how many children's lives we could save in all these trouble spots of the world if all the people with power and the people that support them just imagined their future in a different way, just took their heart and their head together and came up with a different picture than the one they see before them every morning when they get up. It is the most important force in the world.

President Kennedy imagined the world we are living in today, 34 years ago in the speech here at American University. Now it is up to you and to me and to our fellow Americans to imagine what the 21st century will be, and then to do what is necessary to make that vision a reality for all our people. That is what I came here to ask for your help in doing—for your help and for that of every other American. You've got a lot riding on it, and I'm betting that we're going to get there.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:30 p.m. at Bender Arena. In his remarks, he referred to Benjamin Ladner, president, Neal Sharma, student confederation president, William Jacobs, board of trustees chairman, and Mary Mintz, university senate

president, American University; Secretary of the Navy John H. Dalton and his wife, Margaret; Harry L. Thomas, Sr., District of Columbia City Council member, Ward 5; and President Jiang Zemin of China. The President also referred to

the "Commencement Address at American University in Washington, June 10, 1963," *Public Papers of the Presidents: John F. Kennedy, 1963* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), p. 459.

Remarks at a Democratic Business Council Dinner September 9, 1997

Thank you very much. First I want to thank Steve Grossman for his leadership and his dedication. I had an opportunity to be with Steve and his wife during my holiday, and I met his son, who was singing for me with the Princeton Glee Club. You saw Steve standing here—his son is 6'5" and weighs 290 pounds. [Laughter] So I tell you that to say, do not underestimate this man. [Laughter] He has hidden power that manifests itself in all kinds of interesting ways.

I thank Tom Hendrickson for the work that he's done on the Democratic Business Council. I love this group, and I'm very proud of the fact that since I've been President we've added hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of members to this group, people we asked to give contributions that are quite generous but by today's standards are still fairly moderate, because we want to get large numbers of people who want to participate with us in making the future for the Democratic Party.

I thank Alan Solomont. And I want to thank my Budget Director, Frank Raines, for coming tonight. After he engineered the balanced budget agreement, I thought he would never do anything else for the rest of his life. [Laughter] He thought he was entitled to retire, but I said no.

I had a great day today. I hope you did. I had a great day. I met with some wonderful people. I was able to see some progress in a lot of areas where we've been working hard. But I started the day—or I didn't start the day but in the middle of the day, at noon, I went to American University to give a speech about what I hoped we would do in the last 3 months and couple of weeks of this year. And it's a fascinating place, American University. They have students from over 140 different racial and ethnic and national groups. Ninety percent of

the students are involved in community service. That's an astonishing thing.

American University 34 years ago was the site of President Kennedy's famous speech on arms control in the cold war. And many people believe it was the finest speech he ever gave. What I reminded the students of today was that in that speech, instead of just focusing on the problems that existed then between the United States and the Soviet Union, John Kennedy actually imagined a world where there was no more cold war, there was no more communist threat, our two nations were no longer enemies. We are now living in the world that he imagined 34 years ago.

And I made that point to tell them that they had to imagine the world they wanted to live in in the 21st century, and that everything I have done for the last 4½ years was a product of what I had imagined we would do and should do as a country.

It was almost 6 years ago that I announced for President, at a time when our country was in a very different position than it is now, when we seemed to be drifting into the future and be more divided than we ought to be and somewhat uncertain about what our role in the world ought to be. It seemed to me clear that we were going through a time where people were dramatically changing the way they work, the way they live, the way they relate to each other, the way we relate to the rest of the world, and that what is always called upon at a time like that is to take a new course that is consistent with the oldest values of this country.

And to me, my whole work has always been about three things: One, creating opportunity for everybody responsible enough to work for it; two, making sure our country remains the leading force for peace and freedom and prosperity in the world; and three, making sure that