

House leaders for their commitment to scheduling a House floor debate on this critical issue before Congress adjourns for the year.

This bipartisan call for action is a promising sign that we are moving forward in our response to America's demand for reform. I urge the Members of the House to take the next step and give their full support for the meaningful bipartisan campaign finance reform offered by

Representatives Shays and Meehan. This measure is both balanced and effective, and it addresses many of the most pressing needs for reform.

Congress faces the best opportunity in a generation to enact campaign finance reform. Let us work together in a bipartisan spirit to enact the Shays-Meehan legislation and answer the public's call for reform.

## Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Future Free Trade Area Negotiations

September 25, 1997

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In accordance with section 108(b)(4) of the North American Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (19 U.S.C. 3317(b)(4)), I transmit herewith the report containing recommendations on future free trade area negotiations.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Bill Archer, chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means, and William V. Roth, Jr., chairman, Senate Finance Committee.

## Interview With Tom Joyner, Tavis Smiley, and Sybil Wilkes on the Tom Joyner Morning Show in Little Rock

September 26, 1997

*Mr. Joyner.* Mr. President, good morning.

*The President.* Good morning. You're having a lot of fun there for this early in the morning. [Laughter]

*Mr. Joyner.* And you're having a lot of fun, too, aren't you? Now that Chelsea is gone, you all are having some fun, aren't you, Mr. President? [Laughter]

*The President.* That's what Hillary says.

*Mr. Joyner.* See, Sybil? See, Tavis? I told you. [Laughter]

*Ms. Wilkes.* But he's the President. He can say that. You can't say that about him.

*Mr. Joyner.* And what was going through your mind when you saw all this that was happening here in Little Rock?

*The President.* I thought it was a bad thing. I didn't understand why people were so upset. But as I said yesterday, most of the white kids didn't think about it one way or the other until it actually happened. Until the Little Rock Nine were turned away, I think most people didn't think about it one way or the other. Children are basically self-absorbed in their own lives. It's part of the privilege of childhood.

But then, all of a sudden, kids that had never thought about it before, it's all they talked about for weeks. And everybody then had to decide really how they felt about it. It seemed obvious to me that sooner or later this was going to have to be done; it might as well be done sooner.

### *Desegregation of Central High School*

*Mr. Joyner.* Mr. President, when this happened 40 years ago, how old were you?

*The President.* Eleven.

But I also—I was always amazed at how there was an element in the South and probably in the rest of the country, too, of people that were—they always just needed somebody to hate, needed somebody to look down on. But it's no way to run a country and no way to run a life. Sooner or later, to me, it was obvious it had to change.

*Ms. Wilkes.* Mr. President, there seems to be so much symbolism to the fact that you were opening the door yesterday for the members of the Little Rock Nine coming through, as well as this year that you have stepped before the Nation, before the world, and telling them that you are taking this step into the 21st century and making a difference in terms of race relations. This is a year in which you are just really making us aware and bringing these things out to us. And I commend you for that.

*The President.* Well, thank you. I think part of the symbolism yesterday was that—[*applause*—thank you very much. I think yesterday part of the importance of the symbolism was that political leaders closed the doors and stood in the doors in the fifties and the sixties and kept people out of the doors. And apparently, that idea to open the door came from the students at Central High themselves. It was a great, wonderful idea, and I was glad to be a part of it.

*Mr. Joyner.* First of all, to the affiliates of 93 stations around the country on the Tom Joyner Morning Show, as you can tell, we are running long. We're going to go right through the break. We want you to hang with us.

Mr. President, you said that what happened 40 years ago really developed your idea of what race relations in this country should be about. At 11 years old, you were thinking race relations?

*The President.* Well, it was discussed in my home because my grandparents were interested in it. That's what I said yesterday. So I had a chance to think about it earlier just because my grandfather expressed himself very strongly about it. He had once been a grocer and had a lot of black customers, and he knew a lot about black people as human beings and about the troubles they were facing and the problems in their lives and the potential they had. He thought it was wrong.

My grandmother was a nurse and she had a lot more contact with black people in the fifties than most white people did, and she

thought it was wrong. And they just had a big impact on me, and they talked about it a lot. And even though my grandfather died in 1957, and everybody was talking about this happening in the 2 years coming up to that, I still remember as a little boy, 9, 10 years old, sitting around the table, having him walk through this with me and telling me that this was something that had to be done.

#### *School Choice and Integration*

*Mr. Smiley.* Mr. President, Sybil asked you a moment ago about the symbolism of yesterday—this is Tavis—and I want to ask you about the substance, if I can. As you know, the two issues that are facing this country, certainly facing black America, with regard to education as we talk about this incident 40 years ago are the issue of school vouchers and this whole issue of resegregation of schools. You know, the NAACP was even considering earlier this summer reassessing their position on school integration. What are your thoughts specifically on how the issue of school vouchers and the issue of school integration are impacting the African-American community? Where do you come down on that debate on those issues?

*The President.* Well, let me say, first of all, school vouchers—that is, giving people money that used to go to the school district that they can then use and spend in the school district or they can use it to defray the cost of tuition to private schools—school vouchers are the most extreme version of more school choice for parents and students. I have supported for years and years giving students and parents more choice for the public schools their kids attend, and also the national charter school movement which allows groups of teachers and parents to organize schools on their own and be more loosely affiliated with public school districts and to meet the special needs of the community, and then they can have a lot of freedom from the rules and regulations of the school districts and the State as long as they meet high standards. I support the school uniform movement which a lot of private schools have and which have made a big difference in a lot of school districts.

The reason I have opposed school vouchers is that I think if you look at the facts, it's a relatively small financial contribution to give somebody, for example, what the Federal Government gives to a school district, but if you

take it away, you can have a big adverse impact on the school districts without helping any individual children very much.

Now, I will say this: I believe that sooner or later there will be a lot of people who will try it, going beyond Milwaukee and, I think, Cleveland, unless we can prove that the public schools can work for children again. But I think from my point of view, particularly with the Federal dollars, I simply don't believe that we should be diverting resources when our schools have been relatively underfunded on the whole. Instead, we ought to be concentrating on making them excellent.

On the other hand, there ought to be some competition there. The parents ought to have some say, which is why I think they ought to have more choice over the schools their kids attend, and they ought to have the right to participate in new schools that are outside a lot of the bureaucratic rules that burden school districts.

On the resegregation, I think that my own view is that we ought to continue to try to have integrated schools. We ought to recognize that segregated neighborhoods and different patterns in who has children of school age in various places have led to a resegregation of a lot of our schools. We still ought to try to integrate these neighborhoods and mix them not only racially but economically. We still ought to have, where reasonable, transportation plans that work and aren't too burdensome for the kids. But we shouldn't use the fact that a school is not especially integrated at this moment as an excuse not to give those kids an excellent education and do the very best we can.

#### *Desegregation of Central High School*

*Mr. Joyner.* Ten years ago, Mr. President, there was a 30-year celebration for the Little Rock Nine that you helped organize when you were Governor here in the State of Arkansas. It was a lot smaller celebration than the one we've had this week, huh?

*The President.* It was a lot smaller. I think they enjoyed it, but some of them—I'm not sure, you'd have to ask them—but I think there were a couple that hadn't been back to Arkansas very much before then. But everybody gathered. I wanted them to be able to come to the Governor's Mansion because it was the symbol of opposition to their efforts, and it was the place where a lot of the plotting was done to keep

them out of school. I thought it would be a good thing if they came into the house that had once shut them out.

*Mr. Joyner.* If you were one of them back then, do you think you could have had the courage to do what they did, in all that adversity?

*The President.* I don't know. Boy, I'd like to think I would have. I think we all would like to think we would have. But I think, to be honest, none of us can know. You don't know until you're in a situation like that. I wish I could say yes, because I certainly would like to have been a part of it. And I can tell you this: I'm glad they did. I'm certainly glad they did.

*Mr. Smiley.* That's why he's the President, Tom, he's smooth, ain't he?

*Mr. Joyner.* That's right.

*Mr. Smiley.* He's smooth.

*Ms. Wilkes.* And you know, Mr. President, I think your grandfather would be very proud of you for what you have done in terms of stepping forward not only yesterday but, as I said before, with taking people and making us take stock of ourselves and our relationships with others, people that don't look like us. And you've done that certainly in your Cabinet and on your staff of people who look like a lot of us that listen to the Tom Joyner Morning Show as African-Americans.

*Mr. Smiley.* Thank you, sir.

*Mr. Joyner.* And we're all FOB's.

*Ms. Wilkes.* Yes, we are.

*Mr. Joyner.* We're FOB's.

*The President.* Thanks, Tom. [Laughter]

*Ms. Wilkes.* That would be a Fan of Bill.

#### *Chelsea Clinton*

*Mr. Joyner.* So how is Chelsea doing in school? Has she called for money?

*The President.* Well, not for money yet. We've talked to her a couple of times, and she's having a good time.

*Miss Dupree.* Well, tell her if she needs some campus fashion, Miss Dupree got some little cousins who can hook her up. [Laughter]

*Mr. Joyner.* Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you for being a guest on the show, and thank you for being a part of all of the celebration here for the 40th anniversary of the Little Rock Nine. Thank you, sir.

*The President.* Thank you. Goodbye, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 8:45 a.m. The President spoke from a private residence to the interviewers in the Clinton Ballroom of the Excel-

sior Hotel in Little Rock. Comedienne Jemma Jones also participated in the interview, using her on-air name, Miss Dupree.

## Remarks at San Jacinto Community College in Houston, Texas September 26, 1997

Thank you. Well, Esmerelda may be getting a degree in mathematics, but today she got an “A” in public speaking. [Laughter] Let’s give her another hand. I thought she was great. [Applause]

Mayor and Mrs. Lanier, Mayor Isbell, and Commissioner Mauro, Chancellor Horton. I also see out there Mr. George Abbey, the Director of the Johnson Space Center, something that’s very close to my heart. I’ve tried to promote the space program as President. I think Ellen Ochoa may be here as well. But I thank them for their work. And weren’t you proud when we landed that little vehicle on Mars, and we got to see those pictures? I loved it.

I’d like to say a special word of appreciation, too, to Congressman Ken Bentsen. He has done a very, very fine job for you in the United States Congress, and he has steadfastly supported our efforts to balance the budget, to restore health to the economy, but to do it in a way that kept educational opportunities increasing, not decreasing, for the people of this country and the people of this district. And I thank him for that.

I’m very excited to be here today for a couple of reasons. First of all, I know we’re actually close to the place where the battle of San Jacinto occurred. Right? And Sam Houston, in addition to having an interesting life which was amazing—he lived with the Cherokees; he led the Texas army in the battle for independence; he was a president of the Republic of Texas and a United States Senator; he also was a teacher. And if you have read much about Sam Houston, you may have seen that he—and I quote—he said that his time as a classroom teacher was, quote, “the most satisfying time of my life.” I think that I would be remiss if I did not say to all the educators who are here, as I look at this sea of young people, I thank you for your devotion to education, and

I hope that it will always be something that brings you great satisfaction.

Here, so near the site where Texas fought a battle to win its political independence, you are all gaining your economic independence by being in this marvelous institution. And the way the community college system works here in Texas and across America, in my view, is a model of the way America ought to work.

You think about it. This place, first of all, is open to all. Nobody gets turned away because they’re too old or too young or because of the color of their skin or because of their gender or anything else. If you’re willing to work and take responsibility for yourselves and your course of study, it’s open to all—first thing.

Secondly, it very much focuses on results, not rhetoric, because the graduates of community colleges, they either succeed—that is, they get a job, or they go on further with their education—or they don’t get a job based on what they studied, and so you have to change the curriculum. So there is not much room for a lot of hot air and talk. You either produce or you don’t.

The third thing about the community colleges is that they’re always about change, not the status quo. Because of the way they’re hooked into the economy of every area in our country, they are—much more than educational institutions or institutions of any kind—supersensitive to what’s going on in people’s lives, because otherwise the students wouldn’t show up after a while if the institution weren’t relevant to the future, to their future, and to the community’s future.

So, open to all; rhetoric, not results; change, not the status quo; and the last thing that I think is very important is, it’s much more about partnerships than politics. Nobody asks you whether you’re a Democrat or a Republican. Nobody asks you whether you like or dislike some person or thing. The whole thing only