

Remarks to the NAACP National Convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
July 17, 1997

Thank you very much. First, let me thank all of you for that warm welcome and for what you do. I thank Myrlie Evers-Williams for the wonderful comments she made and for the distinguished service she has performed as your chair. And I thank your president of the united NAACP. That was pretty good, Madam Mistress of Ceremonies, you did a good job. [Laughter]

Let me say that when Kweisi called me and told me he has going to leave the Congress to become president of the NAACP, I had very mixed feelings. I felt a little bereft. I don't like it when a great Member of Congress leaves. But I thought it was a higher calling, and my instinct, it was—it would be a good thing for him and for our country. And I think it has certainly proved to be. And I thank him for that.

Of the many things that I have to be grateful for, I thank you for the extraordinary effort you've made to bring young people into the NAACP. I think that is a great, great thing.

I'm glad to be joined here by the mayor of Pittsburgh, my good friend Tom Murphy. And I'm glad to see all the board members. I have many friends on this board. Bishop Graves is my bishop, and if they let me go home, I'll be in his jurisdiction again. And I know that—I've been looking for them out of my eye, but I know there must be a delegation from Arkansas here, Dale Charles and the others. Where are you? Where are my people from home there? Thank you very much.

I want to thank you for honoring a number of the people that you have honored here. And I'm especially grateful for your giving meritory service awards to two members of my Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Fogelman and Admiral Kramek, the Commandant of the Coast Guard. Thank you for that.

I know you have undergone some losses. And our grief goes out to you in the untimely death of the president of the Maryland chapter, Mr. Norment, who was killed shortly before this convention. I thank you for honoring Dr. Betty Shabazz, a wonderful, remarkable woman. And I thank you for the resolution you passed just a few moments ago for Aaron Henry, who was

a longtime personal friend of mine and a very great man.

I am joined today by a distinguished array of people from the administration, the Secretary of Education, Dick Riley; the Secretary of Labor, Alexis Herman—[applause]—I know you know them. The Chairman of our Advisory Board on Race Relations and our Executive Director, Dr. John Hope Franklin and Judy Winston, they're here. And there are a number of other people from the White House here. I'd just like to ask all the people from the administration who are here to stand up and be recognized, including—I see Chris Edley, who is helping us at the Advisory Board who is now a professor at Harvard. He doesn't fool with us mere mortals anymore. And Terry Edmonds, my speechwriter; Maria Echaveste; Minyon Moore; Ben Johnson; Sylvia Mathews—there are a lot of people here from the administration. You all stand up and be recognized here. Look at all of them. [Applause] Anything good I do, they had a hand in. The mistakes are mine. [Laughter]

I am honored to be here to add my voice to yours in discussing what we have to do to prepare our people for this new century. Since 1993 I have worked hard to build one America on a simple formula: opportunity for all, responsibility from all, a community of all Americans prepared to continue to lead the world toward peace and freedom and prosperity. Much has been done, but much remains to be done.

I believe, especially as it relates to bringing us together, the keys are education, economic empowerment, and racial reconciliation. It is fitting that the NAACP has made education the focus of this conference because you have always emphasized the importance of education. That was true in 1909 when you issued a mighty call for America to do its—and I quote—"elementary duty" in preparing African-Americans through education for the best exercise of citizenship. It was true in 1954 when Thurgood Marshall and the Legal Defense Fund led the successful fight to end segregation in the schools. It is true today when we know that more than ever, knowledge is power, and the struggle in education today involves two things

that are inextricably bound: a fight for equal opportunity and a fight for educational excellence.

Each generation must embrace its own battle in the ongoing struggle for equal rights. A generation ago, it was simply a fight to open the schoolhouse door that united Americans of every race and background. Today, though much segregation remains, the schoolhouse doors are open. Yet behind too many doors too little learning is taking place. Therefore, the struggle for excellence for all must be our great mission. We must demand high standards of every student; our schools and teachers must meet world-class standards. But we must demand that every child be given the opportunity to meet those standards. Every child must have a chance to succeed in this new economy. We must not replace the tyranny of segregation with the tyranny of low expectations.

We know that in this new world we're moving into so quickly, new technologies and the globalization of information and communications and the economy will require of us all new skills. We know already from what has been happening in the last 20 years that those that have the skills to succeed will do so in this new economy. They will thrive. And those who lack the skills will not. We know that we can never make real our ideal of one America unless every American of every background has access to the world's best schools, the world's best teachers, the world's best education.

This means first, not only high standards but high expectations and high levels of accountability of students and parents, schools and teachers and communities. Second, we know that we can't have high standards and high expectations unless all our students have the tools they must have to meet the standards and master the basics. If we do this, all our children, no matter where they live, can achieve.

When I came to Washington, the old title I program called for watered-down curricula and watered-down standards and tests. We ended that, thanks to Secretary Riley. Now the new title I says, we're going to have the same high standards for all of our children. We're not going to sell any of them short just because they're poor.

In the State of the Union Address, I called for national standards for the basics—not Federal Government standards but national standards—of what every child must know to do well

in the world of the 21st century beginning with reading and math. English is, after all, the same in the Bronx as it is in Appalachia. Mathematics is the same in Portland, Oregon, and Tampa, Florida. And by 1999, I believe strongly that we should give every fourth grader an examination in reading to see whether these standards are being met, and every eighth grader an examination in math just to make sure the standards are being met. This is not a normal exam that you grade on the bell curve; this is an exam where you say, "Here's what everybody ought to know to do well in the world and to be able to go on in school." Everyone should be able to get over this bar. And these exams should never be used to hold children back but to lift them up. And if they are not meeting the standards, the school must change until they can.

We don't do anyone any favors by not holding them to high standards. Often when we see people in difficult circumstances, we feel compassion for them, and we should. But when this compassion leads to expecting less of their children, that is a mistake, for it sells their future down the drain. I am tired of being told that children cannot succeed because of the difficulties of their circumstances. All we do is consign them to staying in the same circumstances. It is wrong.

We now have fresh evidence, by the way, that our children can succeed. For years and years we have been told that Americans always lagged behind the rest of the world on any test that fairly measures our competence and knowledge and achievement of our children against children in other countries. And for many years it was true, not the least because we were unwilling to hold ourselves to high standards. Hiding behind the cherished value of local control of our schools, which I support, we pretended that there were no national standards. But for more than a decade now, people of good will all over this country in all kinds of circumstances have been working to improve our schools.

This year on the international math and science tests given to fourth and eighth graders, for the very first time our fourth graders scored well above the international average, near the top. And it was a representative sample by race, by region, and income. The children can learn. The children can learn.

Now, that's the good news. The challenging news is that the eighth graders still scored below the international average. And you know why, don't you? Because when these children start to reach adolescence, then all the problems of their circumstances, plus what goes on in everybody's life when they reach adolescence, reach a collision point. And we have not yet mastered how to take children in the most difficult circumstances through adolescence and keep them learning and keep their schools working.

But you look at those fourth-grade test scores. Don't tell me that children can't learn because they are children of color, they are children from poor neighborhoods, they are children with only the mother at home taking care of them. We can do this. But we have to believe we can do it, and, more importantly, we have to believe they can do it. And then we have to understand that it is our responsibility—not theirs, ours—to make sure they do it.

So I ask you to work with us. No one has all the answers. The NAACP has always had high expectations for America. When we were living through the worst of the civil rights movement, you had high expectations for white people. You knew we could do better. [*Laughter*] You knew we could do better. This is a high expectations organization.

You had high expectations for yourselves, which is why you have revived the NAACP, and you're riding higher than ever. Do you seriously believe we would be where we are today, with this chair and this president and this board and this crowd and all these young people here, if you had had no expectations, no dream, no discipline, no drive? Of course not. You got here because you worked for it, because you had a dream, and because you expected things of yourselves.

It is no different in this education business. We know it's going to be hard, and we know we have to do it together. But it is a solemn duty we owe to our young people. The children will follow the lead of their parents and of the people in the community who may not be their parents but do have a responsibility for them. My wife was right about that; it does take a village to raise a child.

We do have to do more to give all our students the tools they need. We know, for example, that many of our urban schools and our rural schools in really poor areas are succeeding.

We know that every city can actually point to some schools where committed teachers and other staff members working with parents manage to inspire and equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

For example, Hansberry Elementary School in the Bronx has made a remarkable turnaround. It was once shut down by the board of education, it was doing such a poor job. But when it reopened with a renewed commitment to excellence, the percentage of students passing the New York State Math Skills Test went from 47 to 82 percent. The New Visions Charter School in Minneapolis is known as the reading school. This public school has helped students who formerly struggled to make 12 to 18 months of progress in reading each year and is training teachers now in other Minnesota schools to do the same thing.

These schools are just two of hundreds of examples that show us that, given proper support, all our children can learn despite the extra hardships they carry with them to school. We have to answer the question, if it can happen somewhere, why isn't it happening everywhere? And we have to provide the answer because we know that far too many schools are not serving our children well, and too many children from our inner cities and poor rural areas are graduating without the skills they need. And I say again, that is not their failure; that is our failure. Along with demanding more of our students, we must hold schools and teachers and parents and communities to higher standards. We must have a bold and a national effort to improve schools that serve predominantly minority, inner city, and rural areas.

First, we have to make sure these kids do have the help they need to meet the standards. And that means, in the beginning, that every parent and every community leader must join the teachers. That's why we're mobilizing a million volunteer tutors to make sure that by the beginning of the next century, every 8-year-old, wherever he or she lives and whatever their native language may be, will be able to read independently by the third grade. If you can't read, you can't learn the rest of what you need to know.

The second thing we have to do is make sure that every school has good, well-qualified, well-trained teachers. Our Nation faces a very significant teacher recruitment challenge. Over the next decade, we will need to hire—listen

to this—over 2 million teachers because of increasing teacher retirements and an enrollment boom that will bring more students than ever into our classrooms, a total of 54 million students by the year 2006. Just over the next 5 years, we must hire 350,000 teachers in high-poverty urban and rural schools.

Now, for years the Government worked to reduce the shortage of doctors in many urban and underserved rural areas by offering scholarships to students who agreed to work in those communities. When I was Governor of Arkansas, I don't know how many rural communities we had that were literally saved by physicians who were serving there because they had their way to medical school paid in return for their commitment to go out to poor areas and tend to people who would never have had a doctor otherwise.

Today I am announcing a similar initiative to help recruit and prepare teachers to serve in urban and rural communities. Next month, as part of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, I will forward to the Congress a proposal for a new national effort to attract quality teachers to high-poverty communities by offering scholarships for those who will commit to teach in those communities for at least 3 years. We will have a special emphasis on recruiting minorities into teaching because while a third of our students are minority, only 13 percent of their teachers are. We need a diverse and an excellent teaching force.

Our proposal also includes funds to strengthen teacher preparation programs so that those who go into teaching are better prepared to teach their students. We know students in distressed areas who need the best teachers often have teachers who have had the least preparation. For example, right now 71 percent of students taking physical science courses like chemistry and physics, and 33 percent of English students in high-poverty schools, take classes with teachers who do not even have a college minor in their field. So our proposal will focus not only on training future teachers well, it will also improve the quality of teaching in those schools now, through partnerships between the schools and the teacher training institutions.

And finally, there is a national board for certifying professional teachers as master teachers. In our budget—there are only a few hundred of these teachers now, and they are infectious in the enthusiasm and skills they breed in the

schools where they teach. Many States are offering them higher salaries. Our budget contains enough money to have 100,000 of these master teachers so that every single school in America will have one, including every poor school in America. We cannot stop until we have given the best teachers the opportunity to teach the children who need them the most.

Third, let me say I believe that charter schools can be an important tool for improving education, especially for children having difficulties in traditional public schools. Charter schools give parents and local communities the flexibility to create performance-based schools, open to everyone, and they work. Our budget has enough funds to create 3,000 of these schools by the year 2001. They're open to all; they offer excellence and accountability; they can infect the atmosphere of an entire school district and help other public schools to perform better, by offering parents and community residents the chance to take matters into their own hands and to be held accountable for the results.

I am pleased that Rosa Parks, who taught us a lot about dignity and equality, is now working to open a charter school in Detroit. And I urge you to consider doing so in your communities. If you believe it will help, the Department of Education will help you.

Fourth, I think we have to commit to rebuilding rundown schools. Many of them are located in our central cities. When I was in Philadelphia the other day, at a beautiful old school building, the superintendent of schools told me that the average age—the average age—of the physical facilities in the Philadelphia school system was 65 years. Now, a lot of these old buildings were very well built and will stand up a long time, but they have to be rehabilitated if they're going to be serviceable.

I have been to school districts—there are school buildings in Washington, DC, where two floors are open and a whole floor has to be closed because they are literally not inhabitable. This is wrong. Forty percent of the school buildings need major repair or replacement today. My tax plan includes tax credits to finance the rehabilitation and construction of schools in distressed neighborhoods. Students cannot be expected to learn in buildings that are falling down, in serious disrepair, or painfully overcrowded.

Fifth, we have to recognize that all this new technology, which seems so far beyond the reach

of a lot of ordinary citizens, actually gives us a chance to jump-start quality and opportunity in our poorest districts. I have challenged every school and library in the Nation to be connecting all their classrooms to the information superhighway by the year 2000. We have got a plan working with the private sector, headed by the Vice President, to put the computers in the classrooms, to get the educational software out there, to train the teachers. The Federal Communications Commission has offered steep discounts and rates for hooking on to the Internet for schools and libraries so that all of our children can do it.

If we do this right, for the first time in the history of this country, the children in the poorest school districts will have access to the same information in the same way at the same time as the children in the wealthiest school districts in America. And that's what ought to be the rule.

The last thing I want to say is that we've got to send our children to schools that are safe and drug-free. There are still a lot of children who do not learn every day because they are afraid. And if you think of the times in your life when you have been afraid, it was hard to think about anything else. We must take the fear out of our schools. It is unacceptable to have children falling behind because of that.

We fought hard to keep weapons and drugs out of our classrooms. We supported parents and communities who wanted to have things like school uniform programs, tougher truancy programs, who wanted to have curfew programs, things that they thought would improve the safety of our students' lives. But the bottom line is this: We can have equal opportunity and excellence in education; we can have it only if we are determined to have both. We will not have one without the other.

And lastly, let me say, in addition to that, if you look at what this modern economy requires, we must open the doors of college education to every single American by the year 2000. We must make at least 2 years of college as universal by the time the century turns as a high school diploma is today. We must do that.

If you look at the high school graduation rates for African-Americans, it's very encouraging to see how much they have increased. There is not much difference now in the high school graduation rates between African-Americans and

the white majority in America. There is a world of difference in the college completion rates. We have got to do more.

Our budget has the biggest increase in Pell grants in 20 years and provides tax credits in a way that would make the first 2 years of college opportunity literally open to everyone. We have got to keep going until we push more and more and more of our minority children into higher education. First, finish high school; then at least get 2 years more of college so that you can compete and get a decent income with prospects for growth and opportunity in the years ahead. That must be our shared objective.

Now, let me just briefly say, in addition to education, I think there are two other things we have to focus on if we're going to get where we want to go. The first is economics. We have got to rebuild the economic life of our inner cities and our poorest rural areas. They are the biggest economic opportunity today for the rest of America. Unemployment in this country is at a 25-year low—23-year low. When you hear that the unemployment rate is 5 percent, don't be fooled; that's a national rate. We've got 10 States with unemployment rates below 3½ percent. And there are that many people just moving around all the time. If you get around 3 percent, it's almost functionally zero, because people are just moving around in their lives.

But you know as well as I do there are cities or there are neighborhoods within cities that still have double-digit unemployment. There are poor rural counties that still have double-digit unemployment. There are people who are employed but grossly underemployed, who are working part time just because that's all they can do. There are places where people get up and go to work every day, but they're always going somewhere else to work because there are no businesses in their neighborhoods.

Now, that is a huge opportunity. We have development funds in the United States with countries that used to be Communist countries because we want to help build a private sector economy. We have got to move in our thinking from the idea that our inner cities and our poor rural areas should have their future dependent primarily on Government payments to saying, "No, no, they're entitled to the same range of economic opportunities as all other American communities."

We've got to have a private sector, job-related, investment-related, business-related strategy to bring economic opportunity to the young people who live in these areas. It is not true that these folks don't want to work. Most of them are working like crazy. They're working like crazy. Last year, for every entry-level job that opened up in St. Louis, Missouri, there were nine applicants—nine for every job that opened up. Now, if we can't do something to revitalize the economy of our poorer areas when we've got the lowest unemployment rate in 23 years and business is out there looking for new opportunities to invest, when can we do it? We have to do it now.

What should we be doing? We've been working on this since 1993, to try to create the environment in which people would wish to invest and give people a chance—empowerment zones, enterprise communities, community banks that loan money to people who live in the neighborhood to start small businesses, cleaning up the environment of our cities so people will feel free to invest and they won't worry about somebody coming along and suing them because we've already cleaned up the problems, giving tax relief to our lowest income working people through the earned-income tax credit, strengthening the Community Reinvestment Act so that more banks would invest money in the inner cities, opening up housing opportunities.

I heard you say that before—if you want the schools to be integrated, we've got to have middle class housing with poor people's housing in the cities again. We have to have housing back in the cities where people are living together and working together, a real serious strategy to move people from welfare to work, and a serious strategy to do something about crime, because people won't invest money if they don't think that they're going to be safe in their business operations.

Now, we've been working on that. When I spoke to the mayors in San Francisco, I said, here's what we're going to do for the next 4 years. We want to double the number of empowerment zones and enterprise communities. We want to double the number of these community banks to make loans in the inner cities. We want to clean up the brownfields of these cities so that nobody refuses to invest because the environmental problems are out there. We want to clean up 500 of the worst toxic waste

dumps. Who's going to put a plant next to a toxic dump? We want to do this so that people can get investment.

We want to pass a juvenile crime bill that will be modeled on what Boston has done, where not a single child has been killed with a handgun in over a year and a half now—almost 2 years in Boston—not one. And I'll tell you something—just for the record, because we're going to debate this all year—yes, they're tougher on gangs and guns, but they also give kids something to say yes to. They have probation officers and police officers who get in the car at night and make house calls to homes of children who are in trouble. And just like a doctor making house calls, you can always find a patient there. They have 70 percent compliance with probation orders in Boston—70 percent—unheard of. Give our kids something to say yes to. So we've got to do that.

We have to do something about homeownership, as I said. We have to do something about public health, more basic services, do more to fight HIV and AIDS, include millions more children with health insurance.

All these things we intend to do, but you have to help us. The NAACP has always done a good job of involving business leaders of both parties in your endeavors. But we need to go back to the business community and say, now is the time. I will do everything I possibly can to create the environment in which people can invest and work.

Creative mayors have ideas about how to do this. But if we can't do it now with the national unemployment rate at 5 percent, when can we do it? It is America's best opportunity for continued growth. If we had this many consumers in a nation 50 miles out in the Gulf of Mexico, we would be pouring money into it, in investment money. I say to you, our cities and our rural counties, where there is unemployment and underemployment, is our next big avenue of growth. And we have to get together and make sure it gets done.

The last thing I want to say is, economics; education; thirdly, racial reconciliation. Look at the world. You pick up the newspaper any given day and you find people killing each other half-way around the world because of their racial and ethnic and religious differences: the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi; the Catholics and the Protestants in Ireland—my people still argue over what happened 600 years ago;

the Muslims, the Croats, the Serbs in Bosnia; the Jews and the Arabs in the Middle East. And here we are with our long history of black-white issues rooted in slavery, with the appropriation of a lot of Mexican-Americans after the war with Mexico into our country, and then with wave upon wave upon wave of immigrants.

Now, in a global economy, in a global society where we're being closer together, it is a huge asset for us that we have people from everywhere else. We just announced an initiative on Africa, on promoting economic development in Africa. And there was a lot of excitement about it. And we had a lot of Republican Congressmen interested in it because they think we can make a lot of money there. [Laughter] I don't mean that in a bad way. I mean several African countries grew at 7 percent or greater last year and are doing the same thing again this year. And more than half the countries on the continent are democracies.

Now, we can all understand that. But why are we in a good position to do well there? Because of you. Because of you. Why are we in a good position to unite all of Latin America with us in a common economic group early in the next century? Because of the Hispanic-Americans, all the Latinos. Why are we in a good position to avoid having Asia become a separate economic bloc and a destabilizing force in the world? In no small measure because of all the Asian-Americans in this country. Why do we have some hope of being a major force for peace in the Middle East? Because of all the Jewish-Americans here and the increasingly active and constructive Arab-American community here.

In other words, it's a good deal that there are so many of us who are so different from each other. This is a good deal, not a bad deal. This is a good thing, if we can find a way not only to respect and tolerate but to celebrate our differences, and still say, "But the most important thing is I'm an American. I'm bound together. I'm part of this country, I believe in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and I have an equal chance."

Now, that's what Dr. Franklin and Judy Winston and all the people who are working with me over the next year, that's what we're trying to figure out how to do. And we know we have to do certain things that are Government policy, but we also know that this is an affair of the mind and the heart as well.

First, the law. The law makes a difference. We've had a Community Reinvestment Act requiring banks to invest money in our underinvested areas on the books for 20 years. But since I became President and we said we were serious about it, of all the 20 years' investment, 70 percent of it has been done since 1993. The law matters. The law matters.

We have to enforce the civil rights laws. I hope you will help me to secure the confirmation of my nominee to be the next Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, Bill Lee. For 23 years, this son of Chinese immigrants has worked for the cause of equal opportunity; for many years as a lawyer of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. I thank you for your support of him, but I ask you now to stay with him and let's make sure he will be confirmed.

And then I ask you to continue to work with Dr. Franklin and Judy Winston and our advisory panel. We have to do this together. For this whole century, the NAACP has been a moral beacon, reminding us that in the end we have to become an integrated society, or one America. That's going to be more important than ever before.

Today, the only State in America without a majority race is Hawaii, but within 5 years there will be no majority race in California, our biggest State, with 13 percent of our population. In Detroit—Wayne County, Michigan, which we used to think of as the great melting pot of white ethnics and black folks from the South that couldn't make a living on the farm anymore that went to find a job in the car plants, there are now more than 145 different racial and ethnic groups in that county—in Detroit. We are changing very rapidly. And we have not given much thought not only to how we're going to heal our old wounds and meet our old challenges, but how we're going to become one America in the 21st century. We need your help.

In September I'm going home to Little Rock to observe the 40th anniversary of the integration of Little Rock Central High School. When those nine black children were escorted by armed troops on their first day of school, there were a lot of people who were afraid to stand up for them. But the local NAACP, led by my friend Daisy Bates, stood up for them.

Today, every time we take a stand that advances the cause of equal opportunity and excellence in education, every time we do something that really gives economic empowerment to the

dispossessed, every time we further the cause of reconciliation among all our races, we are honoring the spirit of Daisy Bates, we are honoring the legacy of the NAACP. We have to join hands with all of our children to walk into this era, with excellence in education, with real economic opportunity, with an unshakable commitment to one America that leaves no one behind.

I came here to offer you my hand and to thank you for your work and to challenge you for the days ahead.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in the David Lawrence Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Myrlie Evers-Williams, chair, and Kweisi Mfume, president, NAACP; Bishop William H. Graves, presiding bishop, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church; Dale Charles, NAACP Arkansas State conference president; the late Hanley Norment, NAACP Maryland State conference president; the late Betty Shabazz, widow of civil rights activist Malcolm X; the late Aaron Henry, NAACP Mississippi State conference president; and Rosa Parks, civil rights activist.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the National Association of Black Journalists in Chicago, Illinois July 17, 1997

The President. Thank you very much. I must say, when Arthur was speaking, I thought to myself that he sounded like a President. [Laughter] And I said to myself, if I had a voice like that, I could run for a third term, even though the—[laughter].

I enjoyed meeting with your board members and JoAnne Lyons Wooten, your executive director, backstage. I met Vanessa Williams, who said, “You know, I’m the president-elect; have you got any advice for me on being president?” True story. I said, “I do. Always act like you know what you’re doing.” [Laughter]

I want to say to you, I’m delighted to be joined here tonight by a distinguished group of people from our White House and from the administration, including the Secretary of Labor, Alexis Herman, and the Secretary of Education, Dick Riley, and a number of others from the White House. Where is my White House crew? Would you all stand up, everybody here from the administration, Department of Education, Department of Labor.

I don’t know whether he is here or not, but I understand Congressman Bobby Rush was here earlier today, and I know there are some other local officials from Chicago who are here. And this is a great place to come. Chicago is such a wonderful city that there was an article this morning in the New York Times bragging on Chicago. And I saw the mayor today; he said, “I know we have finally arrived. If they’re

bragging on us in New York, we have made it.” And I congratulate all the people here on the remarkable improvements they’ve made in this magnificent city in the last few years.

I’d also like to say a special word of thanks to Reverend Jesse Jackson. I see him here in the audience, and I know he’s here. Thank you. I always kind of hate to speak when Jesse is in the audience. [Laughter] You know, I mean, every paragraph gets a grade. [Laughter] Most of them aren’t very good. I can just hear it now—all the wheels turning.

I want to thank Reverend Jackson for agreeing to cochair, along with the Secretary of Transportation, Rodney Slater, an American delegation to an economic conference in Zimbabwe, where he’ll be going next week. And I know you all wish him well on that. We are doing our best to have a major initiative reaching out to Africa, recognizing that more and more countries in Africa are becoming functioning, successful democracies; that half a dozen countries in Africa have had growth rates of 7 percent or more last year and will equal that again this year; and that this is an enormous opportunity for us not only to promote better lives for the millions and millions of people who live on that continent but also better opportunities for Americans and better partnerships with Africa in the years ahead.

Well, you heard your president say that I promised to come here in 1992 if I got elected.