

Jan. 9 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

You have to make sure that you have raised your sights as high as you can.

And let me just say, I don't want to embarrass him, but I'd like to compliment the principal here at Mission High School, Mr. Ahmadian. He came here in the late seventies from Iran, without being able to speak a word of English. Now, as the leader of this remarkable school, he's helped thousands of people go on to careers in education, in medicine, in law enforcement. He's helping them to do what he did with high standards for higher education. Whether you're the son or daughter of a migrant laborer, or a doctor, the same formula applies: high standards and higher education; taking responsibility; sitting down with family, teachers, guidance counselors; committing to work hard to learn, to do the homework, to think about the future.

We're going to do our part in Washington to make sure that those of you who are prepared

for the future can go on to college. We've removed the obstacles. There's an open field ahead, but you have to reach the goal line. Take the ball and run with it. Your future is bright; the future of the valley is bright; and the future of the Nation is in your hands.

God bless you. *Gracias. Viva el valle.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 a.m. in Tom Landry Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Mission High School student body president Elizabeth Gonzales, who introduced the President, principal Masoud Ahmadian, and alumnus Koy Detmer, NFL Philadelphia Eagles player; Lucille de la Garza, wife of former Representative Kika de la Garza; and William H. White, chair, Texas State Democratic Party.

Remarks at a Reception for Representative Ruben Hinojosa in McAllen, Texas

January 9, 1998

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Ruben. Thank you very much to the Cantus, to Alonzo and Yoli, for having us in their modest little home here. [Laughter] Is this a beautiful place, or what? It's really wonderful. I'm so glad to be here.

I want to thank the Congressman and Marty and their entire family for making me feel so welcome down here. I thank Congressman Solomon Ortiz and Congressman Ciro Rodriguez who are also here and have been good friends of our administration and good for this country. I'm glad to be joined here today by the Secretary of Education in my administration, Dick Riley; our land commissioner, Garry Mauro; our State Democratic chair, Bill White; the county Democratic chair, Ramon Garcia; McAllen's mayor, Leo Montalvo, and all the other local elected officials.

I'd also like to thank Alfonso Hinojosa who created those beautiful wooden chairs inside. I don't know if you've seen them, but they commemorate my visit. And I said when I sat down in one that it actually made me feel like a real President. I felt—actually, I almost felt like a

monarch sitting in that chair. It's a little too highfalutin for me on a daily basis. [Laughter]

Hector Reyna, Sr., I thank you for creating the stained-glass Arkansas State bird and flower. And I'd also like to welcome State Representative Richard Raymond, who is a candidate for land commissioner. Thank you all for being here, and I'm very glad to see you.

Let me say that I'm honored to be here to help this Congressman mobilize his district, to sit down this morning, early, with a lot of community leaders and talk about the economic challenges still facing the valley: what should be done to generate more jobs, more investment, to rebuild the transportation system and improve the quality and supply of water—all the issues we discussed this morning.

I loved going over to the school and seeing the children and telling them that starting this January we could honestly say we had opened the doors of college to all Americans. We've made community college virtually free to nearly everybody in this country now with tax credits called the HOPE scholarship. We've given a \$1,000 tax credit for the junior and senior year

of college, for graduate schools, for adults that have to go back to school. We've got an education IRA now that allows people to save for their kids' education and then withdraw from it tax free. We have dramatically expanded Pell grants. We have dramatically expanded work-study positions.

I love talking about all that. But when the Congressman was talking about the two people that I met in the handicapped section of the rally, it reminded me of something I've been thinking a lot about lately as I try to ponder how I should spend every remaining day in this term. I must say, when I saw that crowd out there today, Congressman, I thought it was a good thing we had the 22d amendment, which limited my ability to run again, because I'd do it again after today if I could. *[Laughter]*

Here's what I want to tell you. He saw a great crowd, and he remembered the stories. In Washington we tend to talk of statistics. Today it came out that in December our economy created another 370,000 jobs, now 14.3 million jobs in the first 5 years of our administration—14.3 million. Well, that's a statistic. But behind that statistic there are over 14 million stories. There are people who have the dignity of work, who can support their children, who can create a different future because of that statistic.

The statistics say there are about 14 million people—maybe more now—who have taken advantage of the family and medical leave law so they could get a little time off from work when there's a sick family member or a new baby born. That's the statistic. The story is it strengthens family life. One of the great challenges in this country is, how do people balance the demands of being parents and the demands of work? There is no more important job for Americans than taking care of their kids and raising them well. So how are we going to balance that? Those are stories; they're not statistics.

I saw the other day something over a quarter of a million—I can't remember—but something over a quarter million people who had criminal or mental health histories were not able to buy handguns because of the Brady law. How many people didn't get killed, didn't get wounded, didn't get injured because of that? We don't know, but every one of them has got a different story because of that.

How many million people will now go on to college or stay in longer because we have opened the doors of college to everyone? That's the biggest, that list I just mentioned to you, the biggest increase in aid to college education since the GI bill was passed when our soldiers came home 50 years ago from World War II. That will create millions of different stories.

The reason I undertook this race initiative this year, to try to get people together across all the racial and ethnic and religious lines that divide America, is because I know that when we can celebrate our differences and then say what binds us together as Americans is even more important, then there is no stopping the United States in the 21st century.

But you can't take that for granted. Look at the problems we see in the world, from the tribal wars in Africa to the ethnic fight in Bosnia, from the longstanding religious conflict in Ireland to the religious and ethnic conflict that endures in the Middle East. You look all over the world, people have a hard time getting along with those that either look different or believe differently than they do about the nature of God and humanity's relationship to God. It's fascinating.

But we in America have always said if you believe in freedom, if you believe in the rule of law, if you believe in our Constitution, and if you show up for work every day—or you show up for school if you're a kid—that's all you've got to do. You can be part of our America if you respect other people and their right to live, just as they respect you and your right to live. That is the fundamental lesson that if we can embody, we will continue to grow and prosper in the 21st century, and we will be able to lead the world toward greater peace and freedom.

Finally, I want to say a special, personal word of thanks to Ruben for taking all the heat to stick with me on the fast-track issue and trying to continue to expand America's outreach to the rest of the world.

I can tell you that I do not believe that there is a majority in the House, just like there is clearly not one—we had almost 70 percent of the Senate with us last year—there is not a majority of Members of the House of Representatives who don't want to continue to expand trade. What they reflect is the ambivalence, the fears people have about the

globalization of the world economy and the explosion of information and technology and science, and how it's bringing us all closer together. And what everybody wants to know is, is everyone going to have a chance to participate in this new economy, or are some people going to be left behind? Are we going to have a higher level of citizenship and a higher level of society, or are we going to be thrown to the winds of chaos and anarchy by having global marketplace dominate democratic institutions and people?

There is a lot of anxiety about that out there, not only in our country but throughout the world. Our answer is to help people who are dislocated resume their normal lives as quickly as possible. And we have a plan to do more of that, to invest more in communities that have been left behind, invest more in people who need to upgrade their skills, give people tax incentives to invest in areas where the unemployment is too high. But don't let America run away from the rest of the world. America should be embracing the rest of the world and setting a standard of cooperation and an advance of freedom and democracy and prosperity at the same time. That's what your Congressman believes, and I appreciate that.

Thank you all for what has been an unbelievably wonderful day. I'll remember this day for

the rest of my life. I flew all the way down from New York City last night. I didn't get in until about 2 o'clock in the morning. And I got up this morning wondering if I would be tired, but all the faces I have seen and the stories I have imagined have kept me going.

But you remember what I said: Politics is nothing more than people organized to pursue their common destiny. Our political system gives free people the assurance, number one, that their voice counts; number two, that they can make changes if they get together, and they can prevail; and number three, there will always be some limits on the Government so they can't be abused. And within that, politics gives us the chance to imagine what kind of life stories we want all of our people to have.

I hope the people I met on that ropeline will remember it for the rest of their lives, but I will, too. And when I go back to Washington, I'll be thinking what I have to do is to create more good stories. If we can do that, the American people will take care of the rest.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:26 a.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts Alonzo and Yoli Cantu; Representative Hinojosa's wife, Marty; and Garry Mauro, Texas State land commissioner.

Remarks on Arrival in Brownsville, Texas

January 9, 1998

Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you. I believe that we should begin by giving Alma another hand. She did a great job, didn't she? Thank you. [Applause]

I want to thank Secretary Riley for his work and for coming here with me today. I want to say a very special word of thanks to your fine Congressman, Solomon Ortiz. Thanks to his leadership, you are finally going to have the Port of Brownsville bridge you need so much. Thank you, Congressman Ortiz.

I'd like to thank the State legislators who are here, Representatives Oliveira and Solis; Judge Hinojosa; the city commissioners; the city manager; President Juliet Garcia, UT-Brownsville; Mayor Gonzalez. I'd like to thank Congressman

Ruben Hinojosa for coming over with me, and Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee.

I'd like to say, too, that my family and our administration feel that we owe a lot to Brownsville. The First Lady was here about a year ago, and Hillary told me that she kind of resented my coming back without her today. This community has given two of our real stars to the Clinton-Gore administration, first of all, the president of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, one of 12 children here, George Munoz, and his parents are both here. Thank you, George, and thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Munoz. And second, our Secretary of Energy Federico Pena, whose parents, Gustavo and