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senior year and graduate school. We've got more Pell grants, more work-study positions, more national service positions—we've got more opportunity. And, I think—I'll say this—for me, that's the answer. I don't think—otherwise, a college simply can't have an athletic program or recruit its athletes.

My view is they ought to be able to recruit athletes, but they ought to give enough scholarships so that every young, gifted person who can get admitted to the school should be able to go without regard to the money that they or their families have. That's what I believe.

[*After a commercial break, Mr. Thompson responded to Matt's question, saying that students from wealthy families and children of alumni also received special preference from universities. Mr. Ley then asked the President to summarize his thoughts on the meeting.*]

The President. Well, I feel better about my country than I did before we started. And I think all of you do, don't you? [*Applause*]

I want to applaud the panelists for their candor and their honesty. I want to thank the members of the audience for the questions that were asked.

I want to say just two things. Number one, I think it's obvious that athletics in a way is leading America toward a more harmonious, united society, but we still have work to do—in the coaching ranks and the management and the scouting and all of that. We ought to keep working on it.

The second thing I'd like to say is, I hope that everybody who's in an athletic program also learns good life skills to make good choices, good decisions; can take something out of the teamwork, the rules of things that you get from being in athletics so that if they play in high school but not in college that they're still better off and they're better citizens.

The same thing if they play in college, not in pros. The same thing when they finish their pro career. We didn't talk much about that tonight, but I think that's important—that the lessons learned from athletics carry over into good citizenship, including attitudes about people of different races. If that happens, we're going to be a lot better off.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7 p.m. in the Cullen Theater at Wortham Theater Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Lee Patrick Brown and former Mayor Bob Lanier of Houston. The townhall meeting was broadcast live on the ESPN cable network as "Sports and Race: Running in Place?" The meeting was part of "One America: The President's Initiative on Race."

Exchange With Reporters on Tornado Damage in the Pratt City Neighborhood of Birmingham, Alabama

April 15, 1998

Q. Mr. President, now that you've seen it firsthand, what do you think?

The President. It's horrible. But I'm glad so many people lived, like these people here. They were in the—they got warning, so they went in the bathroom and lay down. They have two 8-year-old twins. They had their children with them. So they're all unhurt.

We've just got to make sure that they get—they have no livelihood here. And the important thing is that we move this assistance as quickly as we can to them.

Q. What assistance are you bringing today?

The President. We have all kinds of personal assistance, and we're also going to try to help them with the cleanup so they can get back to normal and also hire some people around here, while they're otherwise idle, to be part of the cleanup.

Q. What are you trying to say to these people? It's got to be so difficult to talk to people——

The President. I think the most important thing is that they—right now a lot of them are still almost in shock, but they're beginning to think—it's been a few days now—they're beginning to think about how they're going to live. And the important thing is that we work out all the practical problems of their lives right now—make sure everybody has got a place to

live and food and income to live on—and then that we move all these claims through as quickly as possible and do everything we can to speed the process by which they can return to normal.

There is so much grief and frustration and loss. The most positive thing that can be done is just to get everybody focused on tomorrow. If they've all got something to look forward to tomorrow, some progress, no matter how halting, it's been my experience that that's the healthiest thing that can happen, that everybody—just start people focused on coming back. And so that's what we're trying to do.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 a.m. while touring the area struck by a tornado on April 8. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks in McDonald Chapel, Alabama
April 15, 1998

Thank you very much. Thank you. Let me first of all thank Governor and Mrs. James, Senator Shelby, Congressman and Mrs. Bachus, Congressman Hilliard, and we were joined earlier today by Congressman Riley and Congressman Aderholt, my long-time friend Mayor Arrington and my friend Senator Heflin. I thank all of you for joining us, Senator Escott, Representative Hilliard, Sheriff Woodward, and all the law enforcement officials.

I want to thank James Lee Witt and our SBA director, Aida Alvarez, for their presence here today and all the FEMA workers, beginning with Mr. Witt, for the wonderful job they've done here in Alabama. I'd like to thank the people who've shared their stories with me, Pastor Homer and Shelva Jordan, as we stood in their Chapel Hill Baptist Church down there. I thank Bill and Gayle Reed, and Morris and Bonnie Rembert, and Phil and Cindy Rutland who are our hosts—we're on their property today. They are throwing an open house for us. [*Laughter*]

All of you know that we're looking at what remains of one of the deadliest tornadoes in Alabama's history, one of the most powerful tornadoes ever recorded in the United States. I've just come from a recovery center in Pratt City where I spoke with some other grieving families. I met a young man who was on his way to his wife's funeral. They were married just a year and a month.

When the Vice President came back from his tour here, he told me about the destruction, but this really is a place that has to be seen to be believed and understood. I want all of you to know, here in Alabama, that the entire country has been moved by this disaster, by its scope, by its sweep, and by the way that you have recovered and tried to fight through it.

Our country has prayed for and hoped for you and for your neighbors in Georgia. As always, I have been especially moved by the way people in the community have pulled together, have reached out to their neighbors whom they knew and their neighbors whom they did not know before this terrible tragedy struck, and I thank you for that.

I never cease to be amazed when I see people who have lost everything, who can still express their gratitude that they and their children and their neighbors are still alive and they have the ability to start again. Your community has pulled together. Your State has been here, and there is a responsibility that your fellow citizens throughout the country feel.

The reason we have a Federal Emergency Management Agency, the reason the Small Business Administration has disaster assistance, the reason we do all these things is because all of us recognize that from time to time in America things will happen that no community, not even one State, can handle on its own.

I am pleased that Federal assistance checks are already in the hands of Alabama residents who are repairing or rebuilding their homes or those who need temporary housing or medical care. I spoke to some folks today who hadn't received them yet, and I assured them that they would be there soon, and that if they aren't they ought to call us and let us know.

I know, too, that today the first disaster loans to businesses went out from the Small Business