

Aug. 27 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

preeminent organizer and financier of international terrorism whose network we struck in Afghanistan and Sudan last week.

This arrest does not close this case. We will continue to pursue all those who helped plan, finance, and carry out the attacks on our Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which took the lives of 12 Americans and hundreds of Africans.

Let me express my gratitude to our law enforcement and intelligence agencies for a job very well done and to the Kenyan and Tanzanian authorities for their hard work and close cooperation with the FBI.

This is an important step forward in our struggle against terrorism, but there is a long road ahead. The enemies of peace and freedom undoubtedly will strike again. Our resolve must be for the long run. We have and we will continue to use all the tools at our disposal—law enforcement, diplomacy, and when necessary, America’s military might. No matter what it takes, how long it takes, or where it takes us, we will bring to justice those responsible for the murder and maiming of American citizens. We will defend our interests, our people, and our values.

Statement on Vice President Al Gore’s 1996 Campaign Financing Activities August 27, 1998

I am confident that all of the Vice President’s actions were legal and proper and that any review will conclude that.

Remarks on the 35th Anniversary of the March on Washington in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts August 28, 1998

Thank you very much. First of all, hasn’t this day made you proud to be an American? [*Applause*] I want to thank Dr. Ogletree and the entire committee, Skip Gates, Anita Hill, Judge Higginbotham. I want to thank Sebastian for doing a superb job of reminding us of the important facts of Martin Luther King’s life. Marianne, thank you for your work and your words today. I thank Sabrina and Elza for leading us in the singing, and Giles, Olivia, and Mia for reading from the “I Have A Dream” speech. Rebecca, thank you for the books. Mr. Bryan, thank you for making us welcome in your congregation.

And should I say, Reverend Lewis? John, I would not be a bit surprised if, when we walk out these doors today, every chicken on this island will be standing out there—[*laughter*]—in the street waiting for their leader. [*Laughter*]

John Lewis has been my friend for a long time—a long time—a long time before he could have ever known that I would be here. And

he stood with me in 1991 when only my mother and my wife thought I had any chance of being elected. So you have to make allowances and discount some of what he says. [*Laughter*] But I treasure the years of friendship we have shared. I have boundless admiration for him. He and Lillian have been an incredible source of strength and support for Hillary and me, and our country is a much, much better place because of the road John Lewis has walked.

The summer of 1963 was a very eventful one for me, the summer I turned 17. What most people know about it now is the famous picture of me shaking hands with President Kennedy in July. It was a great moment. But I think the moment we commemorate today—a moment I experienced all alone—had a more profound impact on my life.

Most of us who are old enough remember exactly where we were on August 28, 1963. I was in my living room in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

I remember the chair I was sitting in. I remember exactly where it was in the room. I remember exactly the position of the chair when I sat and watched on national television the great March on Washington unfold. I remember weeping uncontrollably during Martin Luther King's speech, and I remember thinking, when it was over, my country would never be the same, and neither would I.

There are people all across this country who made a more intense commitment to the idea of racial equality and justice that day than they had ever made before. And so, in very personal ways, all of us became better and bigger because of the work of those who brought that great day about. There are millions of people, who John Lewis will never meet, who are better and bigger because of what that day meant.

And the words continue to echo down to the present day, spoken to us today by children who were not even alive then. And God willing, their grandchildren will also be inspired and moved and become better and bigger because of what happened on that increasingly distant summer day.

What I'd like to ask you to think about a little today and to share with you—and I'll try to do it without taking my spectacles out, but I don't write very well, and I don't read too well as I get older—is what I think this means for us today. I was trying to think about what John and Dr. King and others did, and how they did it, and how it informs what I do and how I think about other things today. And I would ask you only to think about three things—the hour is late and it's warm in here, and I can't bring the chickens home to roost. [Laughter]

But I think of these three things. Number one, Dr. King used to speak about how we were all bound together in a web of mutuality, which was an elegant way of saying, whether we like it or not, we're all in this life together. We are interdependent. Well, what does that mean? Well, let me give you a specific example.

We had some good news today: Incomes in America went up 5 percent last year. That's a big bump in a year. We've got the best economy in a generation. That's the good news. But we are mutually interdependent with people far beyond our borders. Yesterday there was some more news that was troubling out of Russia—some rumor, some fact—about the decline in the economy. Our stock market dropped over

350 points. And in Latin America, our most fast-growing market for American exports, all the markets went down, even though, as far as we know, most of those countries are doing everything right. Why? Because we're in a tighter and tighter and tighter web of mutuality.

Asia has these economic troubles. So even though we've got the best economy in a generation, our farm exports to Asia are down 30 percent from last year, and we have States in this country where farmers, the hardest working people in this country, can't make their mortgage payments because of things that happened half a world away they didn't have any direct influence on at all. This world is being bound together more closely.

So what is the lesson from that? Well, I should go to Russia, because, as John said, anybody can come see you when you're doing well. I should go there and we should tell them that, if they'll be strong and do the disciplined, hard things they have to do to reform their country, their economy, and get through this dark night, that we'll stick with them. And we ought to meet our responsibilities to the International Monetary Fund and these other international groups, because we can't solve the world's problems alone. We can't even solve our problems alone, because we're in this web of mutuality. But I learned that from the civil rights movement, not from an economics textbook.

The second thing, even if you're not a pacifist, whenever possible, peace and nonviolence is always the right thing to do. I remember so vividly in 1994—John writes about this in the book—I was trying to pass this crime bill, and all the opposition to the crime bill that was in the newspapers, all the intense opposition was coming from the NRA and the others that did not want us to ban assault weapons, didn't believe that we ought to have more community policemen walking the streets, and conservatives who thought we should just punish people more and not spend more money trying to keep kids out of trouble in the first place. And it was a huge fight.

And so they came to see me, and they said, "Well, John Lewis is not going to vote for this bill." And I said, "Why?" And they said, "Because it increases the number of crimes subject to the Federal death penalty, and he's not for it. And he's not in bed with all those other people, he thinks they're wrong, but he can't vote for it." And I said, "Well, let him alone.

There's no point in calling him, because he's lived a lifetime dedicated to an idea." And while I may not be a pacifist, whenever possible it's always the right thing to do, to try to be peaceable and nonviolent.

What does that mean for today? Well, there's a lot of good news. It's like the economy. The crime rate is at a 25-year low; juvenile crime is finally coming down. Yesterday we put out a handbook to send to every school in the country to try to increase the ability of teachers and others to identify kids in trouble, to try to stop these horrible, although isolated, examples when young people wreak violence on others. We've got, all over the country now, these exciting community-based programs that are dramatically reducing violence among young people—the school uniforms and curfew programs, and summer school in Chicago now is the sixth biggest school district in America—the summer school. Over 40,000 kids are now getting three square meals a day in the schools of that city. There's a lot of great things going on. But it is still a pretty violent world.

A black man was murdered recently in Texas in the most horrible way, because people not representative of that community but people living in that community were driven crazy through their demonic images of a man of a different race.

We have more diversity than ever before. It's wonderful, but there are still—we now see different minority groups at each other's throat from time to time, not understanding their racial or their cultural or their religious differences. And again, there is this web of mutuality.

Half a world away, terrorists trying to hurt Americans blow up two Embassies in Africa, and they kill some of our people, some of our best people, of, I might add, very many different racial and ethnic backgrounds, American citizens, including a distinguished career African-American diplomat and his son. But they also killed almost 300 Africans and wounded 5,000 others.

We see their pictures in the morning paper; two of them who did that, we're bringing them home. And they look like active, confident young people. What happened inside them that made them feel so much hatred toward us that they could justify not only an act of violence against innocent diplomats and other public servants but the collateral consequences to Africans whom they would never know? They had children, too.

So it is always best to remember that we have to try to work for peace in the Middle East, for peace in Northern Ireland, for an end to terrorism, for protections against biological and chemical weapons being used in the first place.

The night before we took action against the terrorist operations in Afghanistan and Sudan, I was here on this island, up until 2:30 in the morning, trying to make absolutely sure that at that chemical plant there was no night shift. I believed I had to take the action I did, but I didn't want some person, who was a nobody to me but who may have a family to feed and a life to live and probably had no earthly idea what else was going on there, to die needlessly.

It's another reason we ought to pay our debt to the United Nations, because if we can work together, together we can find more peaceful solutions. Now, I didn't learn that when I became President. I learned it from John Lewis and the civil rights movement a long time ago.

And the last thing I learned from them on which all these other things depend, without which we cannot build a world of peace or one America in an increasingly peaceful world bound together in this web of mutuality, is that you can't get there unless you're willing to forgive your enemies.

I never will forget one of the most—I don't think I've ever spoken about this in public before, but I—one of the most meaningful, personal moments I've had as President was a conversation I had with Nelson Mandela. And I said to him, I said, "You know, I've read your book, and I've heard you speak, and you spent time with my wife and daughter, and you've talked about inviting your jailers to your Inauguration." And I said, "It's very moving." And I said, "You're a shrewd as well as a great man. But come on, now, how did you really do that? You can't make me believe you didn't hate those people who did that to you for 27 years."

He said, "I did hate them for quite a long time. After all, they abused me physically and emotionally. They separated me from my wife, and it eventually broke my family up. They kept me from seeing my children grow up." He said, "For quite a long time I hated them." And then he said, "I realized one day, breaking rocks, that they could take everything away from me—everything—but my mind and my heart. Now, those things I would have to give away. And I simply decided I would not give them away."

So, as you look around the world you see, how do you explain these three children who were killed in Ireland, or all the people who were killed in the square when the people were told to leave the city hall, there was a bomb there, and then they walked out toward the bomb? What about all those families in Africa? I don't know; I can't pick up the telephone and call them and say, "I'm so sorry this happened." How do we find that spirit?

All of you know, I'm having to become quite an expert in this business of asking for forgiveness. It gets a little easier the more you do it. And if you have a family, an administration, a Congress, and a whole country to ask, you're going to get a lot of practice. [Laughter]

But I have to tell you that, in these last days, it has come home to me, again, something I first learned as President, but it wasn't burned in my bones, and that is that in order to get it, you have to be willing to give it.

And all of us—the anger, the resentment, the bitterness, the desire for recrimination against people you believe have wronged you, they harden the heart and deaden the spirit and lead to self-inflicted wounds. And so it is important that we are able to forgive those we believe have wronged us, even as we ask for forgiveness from people we have wronged. And I heard that first—first—in the civil rights movement: "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

What does it all mean and where do we take it from here? I'm so glad John told you the story of the little kids, of whom he was one, holding the house down. I want to close with what else he said about it, because it's where I think we have to go in order for the civil rights movement to have a lasting legacy.

In the prolog of John's book, he tells the story about the kids holding the house down. And then he says the following: "More than half a century has passed since that day. And it has struck me more than once over those many years that our society is not unlike the children in that house, rocked again and again by the winds of one storm or another, the walls around us seeming at times as if they might fly apart. It seemed that way in the 1960's when America felt itself bursting at the seams; so many storms.

"But the people of conscience never left the house. They never ran away. They stayed. They came together. They did the best they could, clasping hands and moving toward the corner

of the house that was weakest. And then another corner would lift, and we would go there. And eventually, inevitably, the storm would settle, and the house would still stand. But we knew another storm would come, and we would have to do it all over again. And we did. And we still do, all of us, you and I. Children holding hands, walking with the wind. That is America to me. Not just the movement for civil rights, but the endless struggle to respond with decency, dignity, and a sense of brotherhood to all the challenges that face us as a nation as a whole."

And then he says this: "That is a story, in essence, of my life, of the path to which I've been committed since I turned from a boy to a man and to which I remain committed today, a path that extends beyond the issue of race alone, beyond class as well, and gender and age and every other distinction that tends to separate us as human beings rather than bring us together. The path involves nothing less than the pursuit of the most precious and pure concept I have ever known, an ideal I discovered as a young man that has guided me like a beacon ever since, a concept called 'the beloved community.'"

That is the America we are trying to create. That is the America John Lewis and his comrades, on this day 35 years ago, gave us the chance to build for our children.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:54 p.m. in the Union Chapel. In his remarks, he referred to event host committee chairman Charles J. Ogletree, Jr., professor, Harvard University Law School, and members Henry Louis (Skip) Gates, Jr., director, W.E.B. DuBois Institute for Afro-American Research, Harvard University, author Anita Hill, visiting professor, University of California at Berkeley, and A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., former Chief Justice, Third Circuit, U.S. Court of Appeals; students Sebastian Corwin, Giles Welch, Olivia Lew, Mia Gonsalves, and Rebecca Chastang; author Marianne Larned; singers Sabrina Luening and Elza Minor; James H. Bryan, president, Union Chapel; Representative John Lewis and his wife, Lillian; murder victim James Byrd, Jr.; U.S. Embassy bombing suspects Mohammed Sadiq Odeh and Mohammad Rashid; and State President Nelson Mandela of South Africa.