

We can have honest differences over issues, but we can't have honest differences about whether we share a common humanity. And we cannot be under the illusion that either material prosperity or technological breakthroughs alone can purge the darkness in our hearts.

I believe that America's best days are still out there. I believe with all my heart that we can find a way to marry prosperity and peace and humanity. But we must have a unifying vision. I want to say, again, I am grateful to people who have worked in my administration who have made me more alive to the concerns of your community, not only those who themselves are gay and lesbian, but others, beginning with my Vice President, who has been terrific on all of that in ways you will never know.

But people are still scared of people who aren't like them. And other people are scared of themselves, and they're afraid they won't count unless they've got somebody to look down on. And if you have to find somebody to look down on, it must be somebody that is different from you. Because if you look down on somebody who is just like you, then you're looking down on yourself. [Laughter] And so we, in our little minds, come up with all these boxes. But all of life is a struggle to find a more and more and more and more unifying vision that, at least for me, makes us both more human and more in tune with our maker.

I wish I could have done better. But we've done pretty well. And we're a long way from

where we were. But I want you to think about this a little bit every day between now and next year, 13 months until the millennial election to define what America will be like; whether we will continue to embrace these big challenges and change in a positive way, building on what we now have evidence of; whether we will continue to look for those unifying visions that allow us all to join hands and go forward together.

And I want you to remember the enthusiasm with which you greeted me tonight. And I want you to remember that it's easy to shout in the moment. But the world is turned by those who day in and day out, with courage and determination and heart and hope, stay the course. We need you. America needs you. I still believe in the future of America, and you are a part of it.

Thank you, and God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:10 p.m. in the International Ballroom at the Beverly Hills Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to ANGLE member David Mixner, who introduced the President, and his sister, Patricia Mixner Annison; H. Scott Hitt, Chairman, President's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS; Gov. Gray Davis of California; and ANGLE members and dinner cochairs Bill Melamed, Skip Paul, Gwen Baba, and Roberta Bennett. The President also referred to ENDA, the proposed employment nondiscrimination act.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception and Dinner in Brentwood Park, California

October 2, 1999

Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, I've already been to the ANGLE dinner tonight. We had a wonderful time. I've looked forward to coming to Rob and Michele's place; they've been so great to me and to Hillary all these years. But it's 2 o'clock on my body clock—[laughter]—and I'm reduced to being Gray Davis' straight man. [Laughter] I mean, it's humiliating enough to think about leaving office, you know—[laughter]—trading in "Hail to The Chief" for a rap. [Laughter]

I mean, if President Reagan could be an actor and become a President, if Michael Douglas is your next choice, maybe I could become an actor. [Laughter] And I've got a good pension; I can work cheap, which is unusual around here. [Laughter]

I told Mel Brooks when I met him, that I was so thrilled. I mean, I got to see Carl and meet Mel and tell him I've read "The 2000 Year Old Man" book and gotten all my laughs. I have a videotape of "Blazing Saddles," and I watch it every 6 months whether I need to

or not. [Laughter] I told him, you know, all the Republicans, they've been fighting over what to do about Pat Buchanan now that he's got this interesting interpretation of World War II. [Laughter] And I suggested that Mel might put him in a remake of "The Producers." That would be a good thing to do with Pat Buchanan. [Laughter]

Let me say very briefly that the problem with all these events is that at some point, I know we're all preaching to the saved, but there are a few points I would like to make. I want to thank Rob and Michele and Alan and Cindy for cohosting this, and all the cochairs who put this together. I want to thank the Governor and Sharon and Attorney General Lockyer; Speaker Villaraigosa and Kathleen Connell and the assemblywoman who is here, congratulations on your legislation being signed today. I want to thank my longtime friend and former colleague Governor Romer, and Beth Dozoretz, our finance chair of the Democratic Party, and all of you who came here.

You know why you're here, but I would like to just make a couple of points very quickly about what we're facing, what the stakes are, why this is important. When I came to California in 1991, this State was in terrible shape economically, and there was an awful lot of social tension. We even had a civil disorder here. And the politics of America were dominated by the continuing attempts of the Republicans, nationally, basically to demonize the Democrats after the fashion that Gray Davis described. And Washington seemed to be basically in this sort of death grip of repeating the same old fight over and over again.

I had this idea that no one else in America thought like they behaved in Washington—unfortunately, it is still largely true—[laughter]—and that we needed a unifying theory of our national politics, one that would bring people together; that would increase opportunity for every responsible citizen; that would say to every person, without regard to their race or gender or sexual orientation or their religion, you can be part of our America if you're willing to do your part; and that unless we did that we could never fulfill our responsibilities around the world or maximize people's opportunities here at home.

But it was just an argument. I mean, I said, look, you know, we can help labor and business; we can improve the economy and actually make

the environment cleaner, not worse. We can expand trade and put a more human face on the global economy. We can prevent crime and still punish people, who do really bad things, more severely. We can have a unifying theory. We've got to get out of this either/or business and dividing the electorate up into wedges and hope you get the biggest piece of the pie. But it was just an argument, because there was no evidence because they'd had the White House a long time.

And except for the 4-year Carter interregnum, they'd had it since 1968, with various incarnations of the same social politics of division. And then Mr. Reagan and Mr. Bush brought in the supply-side economics, which defied arithmetic and quadrupled the debt in 12 years. [Laughter]

And there were periods when we had a good economy, but I used to have a senior Senator named Dale Bumpers who had a great line about supply-side economics. He said, "If you'll let me write \$2 billion worth of hot checks, I'll show you a good time, too." [Laughter]

Anyway, so I said, "Look, this may give you a headache, but we've got to get rid of this debt. We've got to bring the deficit down, eventually get rid of it, turn it around, and we've got to do it in a way that continues to invest in our future." I tried to find unifying ways of getting people to think about how we could all win and all go forward. But it was just an argument.

And then the American people gave Al Gore and me a chance to serve, led by the electoral votes of California. And in '96, things were rocking along pretty well, so you gave us another chance to serve, and we got an even bigger vote in California.

But it's not an argument anymore. The evidence is in. And that's what makes the present struggle in Washington and the reported political strength of our adversaries so interesting, because the evidence is in. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 29 years, the lowest welfare rates in 32 years, the lowest crime rates in 26 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the lowest African-American poverty rate ever before, the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years, the highest homeownership in history, the longest peacetime expansion in history. This is not about argument; it's about evidence.

Now, I say that not to say, "Boy, I did a great job." Because I don't believe—I'm very touched if somebody comes up to me and says,

“Gosh, I wish you could run again.” You know how politicians are. You hear one person, you’re convinced they’re 50 million calling. [Laughter]

I say that to make this point—not a personal one. I feel privileged to have been able to serve. I’m grateful. If my life ended tomorrow, I’d be way ahead. But if we had done the wrong things, we would not have gotten those results. The reason I’m here for the Democratic Party—I can’t run for anything else—I’m here because I think we did the right things. And I want us to keep doing the right things, and I want America to keep doing the right things.

The other guys will say, “Well, we ought to make a change.” And guess what? I agree with that. I wouldn’t vote for anybody who said, whose campaign was, “I think Bill Clinton’s the greatest thing since sliced bread; vote for me, and I’ll do what he did.” [Laughter] I would vote against that person. We’re not around here after over 200 years for any reason other than we kept true to our principles, but we were always reinventing ourselves, always seizing new vistas.

The issue is, what are we going to do now? I’ve asked the Congress and the country to take this huge moment of opportunity to deal with the consequences of the baby boomers retiring; to save Social Security and Medicare; to deal with the consequences of the largest and most diverse student population in history, being in our schools; to bring genuine excellence to our schools; to deal with the consequences of the fact that there’s still a lot of people, believe it or not, who aren’t a part of this marvelous economy of ours.

If you go to the Mississippi Delta or to Appalachia or to the Indian reservations or to many of our inner-city neighborhoods, there are people and places where there is no free enterprise. And I’ve offered a plan for that to give people like you the same incentives to invest in poor communities in America that we give you to invest in poor communities overseas. I think we ought to work to make Internet access as universal as telephone access is. It will make a huge impact in the poor areas of our country.

You know, I learned in northern California last night that there are 20,000 Americans making a living on eBay—not people who work for eBay, not people who work for the company, people who—including a lot of people who used to be on welfare—people who make a living trading on eBay. Just think what we could do

in America if access to the Internet were as universal as access to the telephone.

So I want us to do something about that. I want to think about the economy of the next generation. I want us to—we’re paying the debt down now. If I’d run for President, if I had come here in ’92 and said, “Vote for me; I’ll balance the budget, run a surplus, and start paying down the debt,” you would have said, “He is such a nice young man, but he’s totally deluded.” [Laughter] “Let’s see if we can’t get him a good psychiatrist to see and vote for someone else.” If I had told you, “Vote for me, we’ll have 19½ million jobs, in 6½ years, we’ll be paying the debt down,” you would have thought I was crazy.

But we can pay this debt down. And the Democrats, as the progressive party, should be for our plan to pay the debt down over the next 15 years so that we’re out of debt for the first time since 1835 when Andrew Jackson was President. Why? Because in a global economy, money is fungible and crosses international borders quickly. And if we don’t owe anything as a government, all the money you have to borrow, and people like you, will be cheaper. That means there will be lower cost business loans, more businesses, more jobs, higher incomes; families can send their kids to college cheaper; they can finance homes cheaper; and when our friends around the world get in trouble, the way the Asians did over the last couple of years, they can get the money they need for less. This is a huge deal.

Now, those are just some of the things. Let me just mention a couple of other things. I believe, as strongly as I can tell you, that the environment will be an even bigger issue in the next 20 years than it has in the last 20. And I believe that the United States will either lead the way or block the way toward a solution to this problem of global warming. Global warming occurs when we burn things that put greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, primarily coal and oil.

It used to be that you couldn’t grow a modern economy and get a whole people rich unless you burned a lot of coal and oil. That is not true anymore. That’s a big idea that’s no longer true. Just outside Los Angeles, in San Bernardino, there’s a working class, low income housing development that our administration built with the homebuilders with a view toward energy conservation, and we promised these low

income working people, if they bought those homes, their utility bills would go down an average of 40 percent. So far, the average is down 60 percent. Why? Better windows, better lights, better insulation. It is not rocket science.

One of the Japanese car manufacturers will offer a car in the United States next year that will get 70 miles to the gallon, that will run on a composite of electricity and gasoline: Turn it on with electricity, get up to 30 miles an hour, automatically kicks into gasoline; you break down, it automatically kicks back into electricity. These are just two simple examples.

There's a new book out I commend to you by Paul Hawken and Amory and Hunter Lovins called "Natural Capitalism." And if you read it, you will be convinced that whatever you're doing and however well you're doing it, you could make a lot of money on the side by getting into alternative sources of energy and energy conservation. This is a huge deal.

What do all these ideas have in common? They are things that bring us together instead of driving us apart. We ought to do—Gray Davis did a good thing on gun control, but we can make America so the crime rate's the lowest it's been in 26 years. We ought to make America the safest big country in the world. If we're the most prosperous big country in the world, if we're the freest big country in the world, we ought to be the safest big country in the world. Why aren't we? Because we don't do enough to keep guns out of the hands of the wrong people, because we don't do enough to give kids positive things to do, because we don't do enough to get mental health care in a preventive way to people who need it. We can make America the safest big country in the world. But to do it, we have to have a unifying theory.

We can't continue to believe that if we jail more people than anybody else on Earth and that's all we have to do because that'll get us by the next election, that that's enough. Now, I am a Democrat by heritage, instinct, and conviction. But we have proved that the ideas we have will give us a stronger economy, a safer country, a more constructive role in the world, a fair and more decent society, and a cleaner environment. We've proved that.

But there are these huge challenges out here. And I'll just close with this. I've spent a lot of my time as your President trying to stop people from killing each other because they

hated each other over their racial or regional or tribal differences, whether it was the Kosovar Albanians or the Bosnian Muslims or the continuing conflict in the Middle East, in Northern Ireland, or trying to help African nations build their own ability to stop future Rwandas.

And when you put that—we look at that and we think, oh, that's so horrible, and just look what happened in America in the last few weeks. Here is Los Angeles, you had the shooting at the Jewish school, and then the same guy apparently murders a Filipino postalworker. Then, there is a guy out in the Middle West in Illinois and Indiana who says he belongs to a church that doesn't believe in God but does believe in white supremacy, so he kills a black former basketball coach and a young Korean coming out of his church—a church where he did believe in God—and a number of others. Then you have—this is the year anniversary of Matthew Shepard's death, and you had that African-American man literally dragged to death and torn apart in Texas. And I could go on and on.

Don't you think it's interesting that we are living in the time of greatest technological advance in history? You know, if you think about it, the Internet is probably more significant, in terms of its long-term impact on the change in the nature of communication, maybe even than the printing press. Just think about it; it's the fastest growing—do you know there were only 50 webpages in the entire world when I became President? In the whole world. The Internet was the providence of theoretical physicists when I took office.

So every day all we do is think about all this modernity and all this great technology and all this stuff going on, and yet, all of our dreams for our children are threatened by our vulnerability to the most primitive of human weaknesses: the fear, the hatred, the dehumanization of the other people who are different from us. Interesting, isn't it?

So we're going into this new millennium where we're going to all have 500 channels on our television, and we're all going to be able to shop on the Internet, and all of our kids will live to be 150 because they will get a little genome map—at least our grandchildren, at my age. And they're looking at this world which should be the most brilliant, wonderful, interesting, exciting time in all of history, and from

the Middle East to Northern Ireland to the Balkans to Africa to our own mean streets, we are all fighting the most primitive of human weaknesses.

And if you look at every issue I mentioned, the position my party has taken since I've been privileged to be President is different from the position being advocated by the other party. And the consequences for our country are enormous in these coming elections for Congress, for Senate, for the White House. Look at the difference Gray Davis has made here with these legislative leaders, that are here with him, in the last year in California. You've gone—in 11 months only, you've gone—leading the country on the cutting edge of these important issues.

And if you think about what kind of world you want for your children, just remember what I told you. I'm glad we've got a good economy. I've worked hard for it, and I'm grateful that I've had a good team and enough insight and a great country behind me that we got these results. And I'm glad we've made progress on the environment, on giving children health care and immunizing, all of the things we've done.

But I'm telling you, it won't amount to a hill of beans unless we figure out how to get along together. It won't amount to a hill of beans unless we figure out how to develop a more unifying understanding of our relationship to one another, our relationship to the future, our relationship to the Earth. And if—when you strip it all away, I belong to a party that believes in the fundamental unity of our common hu-

manity. And we are struggling for the direction of America. We're the party that enjoys power and is willing to divide people to get it.

The money you invested to come here tonight, I'm going to do my best to see is well spent. I won't be on the ballot in 2000, but as long as I have breath and strength to do it, I will fight for the things that I believe in to make this country what it ought to be.

And you just remember this when you leave here: We were just making an argument in 1992. It's not an argument anymore. The evidence is in. And all of us ought to be willing to fight to take the next steps for our children's future in a millennium that should contain America's greatest days.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to film director Rob Reiner and his wife, Michele, dinner hosts, and Alan Horn, president, Warner Brothers Studios, and his wife, Cindy, dinner cohosts; Gov. Gray Davis of California and his wife, Sharon; actor Michael Douglas; comic actors Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner; Patrick Buchanan, author of "A Republic, Not An Empire"; State Attorney General Bill Lockyer; State Assembly Speaker Antonio R. Villaraigosa; State Controller Kathleen Connell; State Assemblywoman Shelia Kuehl; and former Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado, former general chair, Democratic National Committee. The President also referred to ANGLE, Access Now for Gay and Lesbian Equality.

Remarks at a Luncheon for Representative Brad Sherman in Beverly Hills, California

October 3, 1999

Thank you very much. Thank you. Let me, first of all, say to Dick and Daphna, Brad Sherman said I was patient; I could have stayed up there all day. I'm looking at you and all your happy faces and the kids on the trampoline and the other kids in the playhouse back there and these beautiful children who sang for us and somebody back up there with half a dozen saxophones—it must be a wise person—[*laugh-ter*—in this beautiful, beautiful setting.

So let me begin by just thanking you all for coming. I thank our attorney general, Bill Lockyer, and Controller Kathleen Connell and, of course, our wonderful first lady, Sharon Davis, for being here. I want to say I just got off the phone with Hillary a few moments ago, and we admire so much the work that Daphna has done and the prodding of us she has done to try to change the laws of our country to make adoption easier and to do what is always in the best interest of the children. And she