

person, every family, every group, every nation is guilty from time to time of trying to give meaning to life by denigrating someone else who is different in some way. Honest and real differences can only be explored, confronted, and worked through, and diversity can only be celebrated when we recognize that the most important fact of life is our common humanity. They all knew that in some instinctive way.

The truth is almost all children know that. They have to be taught differently. Because so many were taught differently, it fell to these nine Americans when they were young, as children, to become our teachers. And because they taught us well, we are a better country. And we honor them today, but let us not forget to heed their lessons.

The Book of Job says, "My foot has held fast. I have not turned aside. And when tried, I shall come forth as gold." For holding fast to their steps, for not turning aside, we now ask these nine humble children, grown into strong adults, to come forth for their gold.

Major, please read the resolution.

[At this point, Maj. William Mullen III, USMC, Marine Corps Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals.]

*The President.* Now we have a special treat to cap off this event. But before I introduce the final presenter, I want to say again how much I appreciate the very large delegation

from Congress from both parties who are here and particularly the fact that every Representative from our home State is here, Representative Hutchinson, Representative Dickey, Representative Berry, and Congressman Vic Snyder, the Congressman from Central High School. Thank you all for being here.

And I want to thank the really large number of people from our home State, from Arkansas, who are here, many who live in Washington, many who have come up here from Arkansas to be here, and thank all of you for coming.

And now I would like to ask Reverend Wintley Phipps to come forward to sing us on our way, a great gift to America. And thank you for sharing your time and your gift with us. God bless you, sir.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:55 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to gospel singer Rev. Wintley Phipps; the late Daisy Bates, civil rights activist; Vinton G. Cerf, senior vice president of Internet architecture and technology, MCI WorldCom; and Eric Lander, director, Whitehead Institute/MIT Center for Genome Research. The Congressional Gold Medals were presented to Ernest Green, Elizabeth Eckford, Jefferson Thomas, Dr. Terrence Roberts, Carlotta Walls Lanier, Minnijean Brown Trickey, Gloria Ray Karlmark, Thelma Mothershed-Wair, and Melba Pattillo Beals, collectively known as the Little Rock Nine.

## Statement on Proposed Minimum Wage Legislation

November 9, 1999

The Senate Republican leadership made a serious mistake by insisting on using a minimum wage increase as a cynical tool to advance special interest tax breaks that aren't paid for and do little to help working families. I cannot let this bill become law in its current form. I once again call on Congress to give working American

families the pay raise they deserve. Congress should pass clean legislation that boosts the minimum wage by one dollar over the next 2 years and simply restores the value of the minimum wage to what it was in 1982. American workers deserve no less.