

Jan. 15 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

rates ever recorded, the lowest African-American poverty rate ever recorded, and the lowest Hispanic poverty rate in 25 years. We are coming together as a community. Our social fabric is on the mend.

But still there are people and places throughout America that have been left behind by this economic recovery. Minority unemployment and poverty still is about twice the national average. Still there are too many barriers on the road to opportunity, too many examples of Americans facing discrimination in daily life.

No American in the 21st century should have to face such discrimination when it comes to finding a home, getting a job, going to school, securing a loan. That's why I'm very proud that my budget for the coming year will include the largest ever investment to enforce our civil rights laws, to help make sure that protections in law are protections in fact.

I'm proposing a 20 percent increase for the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department. That would almost double the annual budget for the office since I became President 7 years ago. Under the leadership of Acting Assistant Attorney General Bill Lann Lee, the Civil Rights Division has enforced our civil rights laws justly and fairly. And so again, on behalf of all Americans, I ask the Senate to confirm Mr. Lee as our Nation's top civil rights enforcer.

Our budget also includes a 14 percent increase for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, so that it continue its work to enforce laws prohibiting employment discrimination. And we're beefing up our other civil rights enforcements effort throughout our National Government.

We must also do more to root out forces of hate and intolerance. We've seen far too many acts of violence targeted at others solely because of who they are, from the dragging death of James Byrd to the brutal killing of Matthew Shepard to the murder of the African-American basketball coach and the Korean-American student in the Midwest to the shooting at the Jewish school in Los Angeles and the murder of the Filipino postal worker. Such hate crimes leave deep scars not just on the victims but on our larger community, for they take aim at others for who they are. And when they do, they take aim at America. So once again, I ask Congress to stop the delay and pass strong hate crimes legislation.

Taken together, these efforts will move us closer to building one America in the 21st century.

Dr. King taught us the most important civil right is to provide every citizen with the chance to live the American dream. This is the best chance we've had in my lifetime, maybe even in Mrs. Filmore's lifetime, to give every American a shot at that dream.

So as we celebrate Dr. King's life and legacy, let's keep following his footsteps to draw from that deep well of democracy and deepen the meaning of freedom for all Americans.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. The Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday proclamation of January 14 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Exchange With Reporters at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Washington January 17, 2000

### *Israel-Syria Peace Talks*

Q. Mr. President, are the peace talks still on track?

*The President.* We're working on it. That's what I've been doing this morning.

Q. Who are you talking to?

*The President.* Just our team, so far today.

Q. Mr. President, the Syrians say there is an issue that needs to be resolved before they

can come; they may not come on Wednesday. Is that right?

*The President.* I'll probably put out something later today. I'm working on it, trying to make sure—we're trying to figure out what the most effective way to go forward is. The good news is I'm convinced they both still want to do it. They're not as far apart as they might be; they're not as far apart as they have been. So that's the good news.

The difference is right now about how or what the best way to go forward in the—so I'm working on it. We'll try to make a decision by the end of the day, the next couple of days, about what the best way to go forward is, and we'll let you know.

*Q.* Meaning a decision as to whether there will actually be talks on Wednesday?

*The President.* Yes. The decision about what the best way is, based on where they both are, to take the next steps.

#### *Residence in Chappaqua, NY*

*Q.* Are you going to start doing this in Chappaqua?

*The President.* If I need to. [*Laughter*] I've done a lot of other stuff. We've got a lot of work to do on that place. But it's a great house,

and we're making progress. We did a lot of work the last few days when I was up there.

#### *President's Race Initiative Report*

*Q.* Mr. President, some are curious about how your book on race relations is coming on this Martin Luther King Day. Can you give us an update on that?

*The President.* You know, I'm not going to put it out until I have lots of time personally to spend on it. I don't want it to be something somebody else did that my name is on. The Middle East peace talks took away a lot of the time that I was going to spend on it, so I'm a little behind. But I'm working on it.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:01 a.m. in the computer lab. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

## Remarks at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Washington *January 17, 2000*

Thank you very much. Good morning. First of all, I want to take my notes out, because the older I get the worse my memory is. [*Laughter*] I want to begin by thanking Alex and all the people of DC Cares—the executive director, Susan Linsky, and all the others who are here with DC Cares. I want to thank the Washington CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs, Pat Shannon. Thank you. And I want to say, Charles Mann, it's good to see you. Wish you had been on the field. [*Laughter*] Next year. We'll get it next year.

Let me also say how honored I am to be here with your Mayor and your Representative in Congress. The Mayor used to be a member of our administration, actually. A lot of people don't know that. I always think that's why he's such a successful mayor; he got good preparation. [*Laughter*] And everything he said about Eleanor Holmes Norton is absolutely true. When she asks you for something, there is only one question: Are you going to do it now, or are you going to do it later? [*Laughter*] Because, in the end, she always gets what she wants. She's been a brilliant Representative.

When Hillary and I moved here to Washington, we wanted to be good citizens of the

District of Columbia. Some of you may remember, one of the first things I did after I moved to Washington was to go to Georgia Avenue and walk up and down it, talk to business people there. And ever since then, we've tried to be involved in the life of the city. And it's a source of immense pride to me to see the success that Washington is having and to have had the opportunity to work with so many of your local officials.

I see also my good friend Charlene Drew Jarvis back there—welcome. And Sharon Ambrose, who is the councilperson for this ward, I think is here. Thank you very much. Where are you? There you go.

So this is, to me, a source of immense pride to see DC really coming back and doing well. But it won't happen, we cannot realize the full potential of this city without Greater DC Cares, without other volunteers, without people, companies like AT&T doing their part to help everybody become what they ought to be and to make all these neighborhoods come alive again.

And let me also say a special word of appreciation to the head of our national service program, who has already been mentioned several times, Senator Harris Wofford. It is actually