

Remarks at a Reception for Hillary Clinton in New York City September 11, 2000

Well, if I were showing good judgment, I would say nothing after that. [Laughter] First, let me thank our host and hostess for making us feel so welcome in this beautiful, beautiful place.

I would like to thank all of you for the contributions you have made to America in these last years that I've been privileged to serve as President, because I sometimes think that most of what I did was to get the stumbling blocks out of your way. You did the rest—every one of you, each in your own way.

One of the things that bothers me as I travel around the world today is, I see everywhere I go, in the poorest village in Africa—I can sit with children for 10 minutes, and I see the light of intelligence in people's eyes. I see the energy, the belief, the hope. And I realize that so many times, people like me in positions of responsibility just mess it up for them, if people play games with power and create illusions in the minds of people about false values, and all of a sudden, all these brilliant children grow up and there's nothing for them to do; there's no education for them to get and no dreams for them to fulfill.

And so if I've had anything to do with what any of you have achieved in the last 8 years, I've just tried to make sure that we were doing the right thing so that you would be able to do what you do so well.

And I have to tell you, I think America is profoundly indebted to all of its immigrant people, and there are many people who came here from other countries, not from India, here in this room tonight, and I thank them as well.

But I think I should say a special word of appreciation to the Indian community in the United States which, of all of our more than 200 ethnic and religious groups, ranks first in education and in income, a great tribute to your efforts and to your values.

I loved my trip to India. And when Hillary and Chelsea came home, they told me that if I didn't go to another country before I left the Presidency, I had to go to India. So I did. As you know, I visited more briefly the rest of the subcontinent. I regret that I was not more

help to you in the cause of peace, but I will keep trying.

I had to confess to a reporter the other day—I say this out of deference to my good friends John and Margo Catsimatidis, who are here, who have more than a passing interest in Greece and the relationships between Greece and Turkey and the problems in Cyprus. I do believe when I leave office, I will have made progress on every problem I tackled around the world except, so far, I can't say I moved the ball forward on the Indian subcontinent or in Cyprus. But I have tried, and I will keep trying. I promise you that.

I just want to say a couple of words about this election and about Hillary in particular. So many of you were kind to say things when you went through the line, and you wished I could run for a third term and all of that. But this is a country of citizens, and this has always been a country in which the citizens were the most important people.

When Harry Truman went home to Missouri after an enormously important period in our country's history, when he basically organized our world to deal with the cold war, he said that he was resuming his most important title, that of citizen. And so now that my party has a new leader and my family has a new candidate—[laughter]—I suppose my official title should be Cheerleader in Chief instead of Commander in Chief. [Laughter]

But I will say this because I think all of you who have enjoyed great success in our country will identify with it. If you work hard, you also have to work smart. Ideas have consequences. If you have a bad idea, it doesn't matter how hard you work with it; you still won't get good consequences out of it. And the important thing that I think that has been at the core of all my concern about this election is that I think it is easier for a free people to make a mistake when times are good than when times are bad.

The American people took a chance on me and Hillary and Al and Tipper Gore in 1992, but it wasn't much of a chance, because we were in trouble, and everybody knew we had to change and try something new. So they gave

us a chance. But we changed the economic policy, the education policy, the health care policy, the environmental policy, the criminal justice policy, and big parts of the foreign policy of our country.

You now have had a test run. And so, yes, I feel especially strongly, obviously, about Hillary. But the thing that matters to me as an American is that we keep changing but that we keep changing in the direction in which we are going, because we still have big challenges out there. There are still too many children living in poverty in this country when they should not be. There are still too many children that don't have excellence of education that they should have. There is still inadequate preparation for the aging of America when the so-called baby boom generation retires. And under present estimates, there will only be about two people working for every one person retired and on our Social Security system. We must not let the aging of America impose a burden on our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren.

So we have these big challenges. We also, as Americans, have not fully recognized the extent to which we are interdependent with the rest of the world. We should be doing more to develop the capacities of Indians within India and other peoples around the world and building trading and other ties with people and working with people more. That's why I came up here and spent 3 days last week at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, meeting with leaders from all over the world, doing my best to try to create the impression that America does not wish to dominate the world but to work with it so that we can all win together.

There is a very interesting book out today called "Non Zero," by an American writer named Robert Wright. But it might have had some roots in Oriental philosophy. The basic argument of the book, the "Non Zero" book, is that as societies grow more advanced and complex, people inevitably grow more interdependent, both within nations and across national boundaries.

And therefore, notwithstanding the terrible things that happened in the 20th century and the World Wars and the oppression of the dictatorships, the world essentially has continued to grow more interdependent, which means that

wisdom dictates that we look for more and more human interaction where everyone wins, which are not, in the parlance of game theories, zero-sum solutions, but win-win solutions, where we look for non-zero solutions.

The reason that I think it is important for Hillary to be in the Senate is that for 30 years, starting with the welfare of children and their families, with the need for people to balance work and childrearing with the understanding that the most important work of any society is raising children well, she has spent a lifetime looking for solutions in which everyone comes out better.

Now, the book is not naive, and neither am I. There is a race for President. One person will win, and one person will lose. There's a race for this Senate seat. One will win, and one will lose. But we should vote for the person who will make us all win more, who realizes that we all do better when we help each other and when everyone has a chance. And for all the advances in this country, we can't yet say that is the truth.

One of the things that upsets me from time to time is when some of our critics—and I say it because, regrettably, she's inherited most of my enemies—[laughter]—and probably, maybe she's made one or two on her own, but not many—[laughter]—they'll say, "Well, she wouldn't be up here running for the Senate if she weren't the First Lady." The truth is that if she hadn't been married to me and spent 30 years trying to help other people and do things for other people, she might have been doing this 20 years ago.

So I want you to understand that, yes, I'm biased, but New York could not pick a person who is better suited for the genuine challenges that our State, our Nation, and our world face in the new millennium than Hillary. And I thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:43 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts Sant and Daman Chatwal; and John A. Catsimatidis, former president, U.S. Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council, and his wife, Margo.

Remarks at the Partners in History Dinner in New York City September 11, 2000

Thank you very much. Let me say, first of all, Hillary and I are delighted to be here with all of you, and especially you, Edgar, with all of your family, including Edgar, Clarissa, and the about-to-be 22d grandchild here. They are probably an even more important testament to your life than this important work we celebrate tonight.

I thank Israel Singer and the World Jewish Council leadership, Elie Wiesel, my fellow award recipients, especially Senator D'Amato and Congressman Leach, without which we could not have done our part, and Stuart Eizenstat, without which I could have done nothing. And I thank you all.

I thank the members of the Israeli Government and Cabinet who are here and those of you who have come from around the world. But I would like to say, not only as President but as an American, a man who studied German as a child and went to Germany as a young man in the hopes of reconciling my enormously conflicted feelings about a country that I loved which had done something I hated.

Foreign Minister Fischer, I have rarely in my life been as moved as I was by your comments tonight. And I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Edgar once said that, "in forcing the world to face up to an ugly past, we help shape a more honorable future." I am honored to have been part of this endeavor, and I have tried to learn its lesson. Within our country, I have been to Native American reservations and acknowledged that the treaties we signed were neither fair nor honorably kept in many cases. I went to Africa, to Goree Island, the Door of No Return, and acknowledged the responsibility of the United States in buying people into slavery. This is a hard business, struggling to find our core of humanity.

As Edgar said, we are here in an immediate sense in part because Edgar buttonholed Hillary back in 1996 and said I had to see him the next day. And that night, she told me I had to see him the next day, because the time for redress was running out. And I did, as he said.

I do want to thank Hillary for more than has been accounted, because I can't tell you

how many times she reminded me of her meetings with elderly survivors all around the world, and how many times she tried to shine a light on the quest for material and moral justice. So thank you for helping me be here tonight.

I would like to say again what I said before, Senator D'Amato and Representative Leach made it possible for us to do what we did together as Americans, not as Republicans or Democrats but as Americans. Governor Pataki and Alan Hevesi marshal city and State governments all across America, not as Republicans or Democrats but as Americans. People like Paul Volcker, Larry Eagleburger, and Stan Chesley, all of whom could choose to do pretty much whatever they like, chose instead to spend their time and their talents generously on this cause.

And I would like to thank Avraham Burg, former Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, and the current Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, and the members of his government who have supported this cause after it had begun earlier under a different administration of a different party, not out of party reasons but because of humanity. And again, let me say how personally grateful I am to the dedication of Stu Eizenstat, who is literally unmatched in his commitment to doing the right thing and his skill in actually finding a way to get it done.

I would like to echo what Foreign Minister Fischer said about the German *Bundeskanzler*, Gerhard Schroeder. He showed remarkable leadership. He showed a generosity and a courage of memory, and no little amount of political prodding could do what his country has done. And we are grateful to him, as well.

Thanks to all of you, humanity begins this new millennium standing on higher grounds. Of course, we can never compensate the victims and their families for what was lost. It is beyond our poor power to restore life or even to rewrite history. But we have made progress towards setting history straight and providing compensation for lost or stolen assets and forced or slave labor.

We have an especially sacred obligation to elderly survivors, particularly the double victims who endured first the Holocaust and then a half century of communism. For their sake,