

However, this is not the last time I will see the President. I am confident that the friendship we have made will last beyond our—my time in office and his time in office. I look back—I look forward to welcoming him back to America as a non-President. We'll be members of the ex-Presidents club.

And so, Mr. President, I'm really glad you're here. I look forward to having dinner with you tonight and your great wife. And again, in front of these cameras, I want to thank you for your steadfast leadership, for your courage, for your wisdom, and your advice.

[At this point, President Aznar spoke in Spanish, and no translation was provided.]

President Bush. Thank you all.

Q. Translation?

President Bush. He doesn't need to translate for me. I understood every word. [Laughter]

[The interpreter then translated President Aznar's remarks as follows.]

President Aznar. Good evening, everyone. I want to thank President Bush once again for this very warm welcome, for the invitation, for his hospitality. For me, it is a satisfaction and an honor to be here with

him again. I consider him a very good friend. He has been my friend during my time as President of the Government of Spain, and I will continue to consider him my friend afterwards.

And a friend—I am a friend of the United States now, and I will continue to be a friend of the United States in the future. I consider that, at present, the relationship between Spain and the United States is closer and tighter than it has ever been.

I will continue to work to do everything to strengthen the relationship, the Atlantic link. I will work for freedom, for human rights, for democracy, for stability, prosperity around the world. And I know that President Bush will be able to count upon me to continue working in that direction. So I will continue to work for the world and for the relationship between the United States and Spain.

President Bush. Adios.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:28 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ana Botella de Aznar, wife of President Aznar. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to Faith-Based and Community Leaders in New Orleans, Louisiana

January 15, 2004

Thank you all very much for your warm welcome. Reverend Brown, thank you for your hospitality, your gracious hospitality. It's not easy to host a President. [Laughter] It seems as if the entourages are quite large. So I want to thank you for accommodating me and this cast of characters that travels with me. [Laughter] I'm here to talk about something vital to the future of the country, and I appreciate you giving me

a chance to share with you my dreams and aspirations for all our citizens.

I'm really not worthy to stand here, when I think about the fact that not only Reverend Brown preaches here on a regular basis, but this is the very place where Martin Luther King stood as well some 42 years ago. It's from this pulpit that he preached. Today would have been his 75th birthday. It's important for our country to honor his life and what he stood for.

Dr. King understood that faith is power greater than all others. That's what he knew. It's an important lesson for us to remember here in America, that God's word can humble the mighty, can lift up the meek, and can bring comfort and strength to all who yearn for justice and freedom. Those of us who are involved with public policy must not fear that philosophy as we all work together to save lives.

I'm at this church to talk about the importance of what we call a Faith-Based Initiative. Really what I'm here to say is that in the land of plenty, we must recognize there are still people who hurt. In the land of plenty, there are people who search for the light, who simply want a chance to succeed and realize their God-given talents. And those of us who have been blessed with the opportunity to help must play to the strength of our country in order to help save lives. The strength of America is found in the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens. This country must not fear the influence of faith in the future of this country. We must welcome faith in order to make America a better place.

So Reverend Brown, thank you, and thank your wife, Mary, and your son, Benjie, for your hospitality. I appreciate so very much the Governor being here. The Governor not only was kind enough to meet me at the airport, but she was kind enough to ride from the airport to this church. We had a good discussion about the needs of Louisiana. She's not a shrinking violet when it comes to describing what she would like to see in terms of responsiveness. I appreciate that. I'm glad you brought Coach. *[Laughter]*

I'm honored that Congressman David Vitter has traveled today with me. Thank you, Congressman, for coming. The mayor was at our roundtable discussion, which, by the way, happened to be at a square table, but—*[laughter]*—I appreciate working with the mayor.

Traveling with me today from Washington, DC, is a longtime friend. He is

the Acting Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. When the Senate gets together, he's going to be the Secretary of the Housing—of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Alphonso Jackson. Thanks for coming, Alphonso. I appreciate you being here.

Archbishop Alfred Hughes is with us today. Archbishop, thanks for coming. I'm honored you are here.

I know this will embarrass him, but I've got to mention him. One of the people that influenced me a lot when I was the Governor of Texas, influenced me in terms of what faith-based programs can mean in people's lives, was Kirbyjon Caldwell. Kirbyjon is from Houston. He's the senior pastor of the Windsor Village United Methodist Church. He is a true social entrepreneur. He has used his position as a pastor to change lives and communities in significant ways, ways that government couldn't possibly do. Kirbyjon, thanks for coming. I appreciate you being here.

I mentioned a roundtable discussion. We just had a lot of people from the community, people who have been helped, people who are helping, neighborhood healers here to share their stories. I want to thank all of them for coming to talk about the influence of faith and their capacity to help change lives. I appreciate the choir being here.

Not only was I met by local dignitaries and elected officials when I landed at the airport, I was also met by Tenisha Stevens. Where is Tenisha? Tenisha, there you are. If you're wondering why I would mention Tenisha, she is a soldier in the army of compassion. She's a soul who is interested in listening to a universal call and is a tutor. She's taking time out of her life to work in the after-school programs right here in this church, Pastor. She is a mentor. She's willing to help save a life.

That's the spirit of America, isn't it, when citizens who are willing to sacrifice time on behalf of saving a life. We need more mentors in our society. If you're a citizen

in this community or any community around the country who want to know what you can do to help America, mentor a child; teach a child to read; love a child.

Tenisha, I want to thank you for serving. You're such a good example for other people around the country. Thank you for being a soldier in the great army of compassion here in America.

Many of the problems that are facing our society are problems of the heart. Addiction is the problem of a heart—of the heart. I know I've told this story before. I was a drinker. I quit drinking because I changed my heart. I guess I was a one-man faith-based program. [Laughter]

Problems that face our society are oftentimes problems that require something greater than just a government program or a government counselor to solve. Intractable problems, problems that seem impossible to solve, can be solved. There is the miracle of salvation in our—that is real, that is tangible, that is available for all to see. Miracles are possible in our society, one person at a time.

But it requires a willingness to understand the origin of miracle. Miracles happen as a result of the love of the Almighty, professed, by the way, taught, by the way, by religions from all walks of life, whether it be Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu—people who have heard that universal call to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself and then surround someone who hurts with love. Love is powerful. Love is soul-changing. Love doesn't happen because of government. Love happens because of the inspiration of something greater than government. That's what we're here to talk about, programs based upon faith.

Right here in this church, there are faith-based programs. Any program emanating out of a church or a synagogue or a mosque is a faith-based program. So when you hear some people talk about faith-based programs, those are programs that start as a result of a group of folks of faith deciding to do something about a problem. And the

fundamental question in our society is, how does the Federal Government relate to programs of faith? "The mighty check writer"—how does it relate when it writes checks to meet social needs with people who are solving our problems in spite of government? My attitude is, the Government should not fear faith-based programs. We ought to welcome faith-based programs, and we ought to fund faith-based programs.

This church receives Federal funding for childcare. It must be comforting for a mom or a dad to drop off his or her child to a childcare center run by a church. It's a safe place, to begin with, but it's also a place where there's values. The handbook of this particular childcare is a universal handbook. It's been around for a long time. It doesn't need to be invented. Let me see your handbook there. [Laughter] This handbook is a good book; it's a good go-by.

And yet our governments have, frankly, discriminated against faith-based programs. It's the truth. How does it happen that way? Well, oftentimes a faith-based program that applies for Federal Government says, "I want to help." And they say, "Fine, you can help, but take the cross down from the wall. Take off the Star of David. Take down the crescent." And my answer to that is, how can you be a faith-based program if you can't practice your faith? It seems to be a contradiction in terms.

Government policy said, "On the one hand, perhaps you can help. On the other hand, you can't practice your faith." Faith-based programs are only effective because they do practice faith. It's important for our Government to understand that. Government oftentimes will say, "Yes, you can participate, but you've got to change your board of directors to meet our qualifications. You've got to conform to our rules." The problem is, faith-based programs only conform to one set of rules, and it's bigger than Government rules. The inspiration is

not from bureaucracy, and that's what's important for Government policymakers to understand.

I have asked Congress to not fear faith. See, the debate in Washington oftentimes is, well, the church will become the state, or the state will become the church. To me, that's never going to happen, and we won't let it happen. As a matter of fact, the separation of church and state is a vital part of our country. The freedom of religion is a vital part of our country.

But on the other hand, when people are able to deliver results, people should not say—people shouldn't say, "Well, the results are coming from the wrong source of programming." We ought to say, "We want results. We welcome results, and we're willing to fund programs that are capable of delivering results. We want to fund programs that save Americans, one soul at a time."

In order to get beyond the debate of process, we must say—we must ask the question in Washington, "Does the program work? Does the program to help the addicted work? Is the homeless program working?" That's the question that must be asked.

So I called on Congress to join me in passing laws that would allow the—open up the Federal Treasury to faith-based programs, and they balked. They got caught up in the process. So I signed an Executive order, an Executive order that instructed all Federal agencies not to discriminate against religious groups. Cabinet Secretary—soon-to-be Cabinet Secretary Jackson now knows the call. One reason he's the Cabinet Secretary is because he already heard it, however, and that is that we're not going to discriminate against faith-based groups when it comes to housing initiatives.

We're spending a lot of time traveling the country. I've got a fellow that works in my office in the White House named Jim Towey. Towey is an interesting character. He is a—well, I shouldn't call him

a character; he's a fine citizen. [Laughter] Believe it or not, Towey—you're not going to believe this, but it's true—he was Mother Teresa's lawyer. It's an interesting society where Mother Teresa needs a lawyer. [Laughter] But Towey's job is to educate people to what is possible, educate the social entrepreneurs, those who are on the frontline of saving lives, about what is possible, and to assure people who try to access Federal funds that you won't have to change your mission.

In other words, we're changing a culture, and it takes a lot of work. And I appreciate you all giving me a chance to come and be a part of explaining what is taking place in Washington, DC. Cultures change because others will then go out and say, "It's okay to try to access money to meet our need. The Government now is not going to thwart you." It's going to take a while to make sure that these faith-based offices which we've created in every Cabinet Department—or most of the Cabinet Departments in Washington—are able to get out the word.

But we want you to help spread the word. We want those of you on the frontline of saving lives to feel comfortable now of accessing the billions of dollars which are available at the Federal Government level. What we said is, "The playing field is now level." You've got a chance to bid, right along with other types of organizations, to be a part of the grantmaking process without fear of discrimination. It's a significant change. I'm comfortable in pushing the change because I know the nature of the work that is taking place.

Let me give you one example. Three months after HUD opened its doors to faith-based groups, 600 such groups have received \$168 million to provide shelter for the homeless. In other words, we're beginning to change. I love the idea of religious organizations providing help for the homeless. What a comforting place for someone who is lost and looking for help to be able to provide that help.

It is a—it's just the beginning, Mr. Secretary-to-be. And it's just the beginning of a lot of change. Health and Human Services Department, HHS, is now opening up its grantmaking process for faith-based programs. It's billions of dollars now available. And that's good for the society. And it's good for our country.

Let me give you an example of some progress being made. Donna Blackburn—raise your hand, Donna. Donna's a—she's a good soul. She started a shelter for battered women and their children in Baton Rouge. First of all, thank you for starting a shelter. It's a noble calling. It's important for people like Donna to know there's a problem and respond to it. Donna didn't wait for a law to be passed, by the way. She didn't get permission from the President. She didn't say to the Governor, "Can I do this?" She just did it. That's what happens in America. People see a problem, and they move.

And then the fundamental question is, when you find that spirit moving, what is the role of Government? She wanted to make the shelter, of course, a safe haven. But she also wanted to make a place where God's grace shines. She wanted the presence of the Almighty there to help her and her staff deal with the problems, the difficult problems that a battered woman and her children face. The problem was—and she applied for Federal money, housing money to take this donated warehouse and convert it into a house of love. The local government said, "Yes, you can probably have some money, but you can't have prayer. You can't express faith."

Donna understands that the use of Federal money is not to proselytize. All comers are welcome. If a person of another faith walks in as a battered woman, she will be received. But Donna also understands that in order to make her program work, that they've got to be able to exercise their faith.

We moved at the Federal level to say, "No discrimination against faith-based programs." Last night, she reported to us that

the Baton Rouge city council approved her faith-based grant, no strings attached, and now she's got \$60,000 to help convert her shelter.

Somebody said, "Well, thank you for the Federal Government." Now, see, you've got it wrong. You don't need to be thanking the Federal Government. We're talking about the people's money, anyway. It's the Federal Government's job—the Federal Government's job is to thank the Donnas of the world, the social people—the social entrepreneurs, the people who are literally changing America, one heart at a time. That's who we're here to thank, and that's where our society must recognize and welcome.

Nicole Hilliard is here. Where are you, Nicole? There you go, okay. I embarrassed her. Nicole is a single mom. By the way, that's the toughest job in America, being a single mom. She's got a 15-year-old son. She was hurting. I shouldn't be giving her testimony for her, but I will paraphrase. She hurt, and she was worried, just like a mom would worry. She didn't have any housing. She was broke, stone broke, and she was worried as a mom, "How do I take care of my child?"

So she went to the First Evangelist Housing—went to the First Evangelist Church. This says, went to the First Evangelist Housing CDC. That's a little too technical. She went to the church, is where she went. She said, "I hope to be able to get some help at this church." Her pastor is here; Pastor Taylor is with us as well. She said, "I want some help." She was trying to escape not only an abusive relationship, she was trying to escape desperation and hopelessness. There's nothing better, by the way, than a faith-based program to provide hope. Again, I don't care what religion it is. Nothing more hopeful than the Word. She and her son moved into a one-bedroom apartment managed by First Evangelist. That apartment was supported by Federal money. Alphonso shouldn't worry about where that money goes. He

just ought to be worried about whether or not that money is saving lives and providing a chance for people to find shelter.

By the way, as a result of interfacing with this faith-based group, she went back to school. She found a job. She lives in a neighborhood, by the way, which has been transformed by the faith-based institution itself. She's talked about what it means to walk from the bus stop without fear of life.

It's amazing what can happen when faith-based programs begin to influence entire neighborhoods. People change; the attitude of the people in the neighborhood change. Nicole's story is one that shows that individual lives are rescued on a daily basis. Our job is to help the rescuers find those who need to be saved and helped.

Tonja Myles is here. I got to know Tonja because in my State of the Union last year, I introduced her to the country. And she's still talking to me, fortunately. [*Laughter*] She's from Baton Rouge. She directs what's called Set Free Indeed. It's an interesting name, isn't it? Set Free talks about the inspiration of the program. She receives money, Federal money to help save lives.

Addiction, addicts need to be treated. They need to be helped. A small number of people consume most of the drugs. We need to find them and help save their lives. Sometimes a government counselor can work. It can make a difference. A lot of times, it requires a faith-based program to help break that terrible habit.

And Tonja understood that. She started this program. She said she heard a call from God to start the program. It wasn't a Government bureaucracy that she talked to. It was a call from a higher being. And as a result, that program is inculcated with that spirit, and she's saving lives, one at a time.

Interestingly enough, by heralding her program, a lot of other people came. I want you to herald programs. When you find something that's working in your local community, make sure that the citizenry knows

what's happening. This is not me. This is not the Governor. It's just not the mayor. It's local community leaders willing to hold up examples of great success, of great healing. People need to know what's available. People need to know that there's love and the capacity to help save lives in their very neighborhood. You're here because you're interested. You're leaders, yourselves. Please make your programs and what is available known.

The Government can help. I mean, we're calling for special initiatives: \$100 million for drug treatment; 48 million for the Compassion Capital Fund, which is really to help startup faith-based programs. Like Kirbyjon—I told Kirbyjon, I said, "Kirbyjon, you're successful. Help another church learn how to be successful. Reach out. Use your entrepreneurial skills and find another church to help that pastor understand what is available." That's what the Compassion Capital Fund does.

We've got \$50 million, by the way, in the budget that supports mentors for children whose moms or dad might be in prison or are in prison. See, this—the money is—it's important, and we're funding out of Washington and funding out of the State level. But more important is, where does the money go? And that's what we're here to talk about. Congress must not fear faith-based programs that interface and save lives. They must welcome such programs. So that's what I'm here to talk about, Pastor, good public policy based upon the willingness of our citizenry to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.

One of my favorite pulpit stories came when a preacher was preaching. A guy, right where Congressman is sitting, he stood up and said, "Use me, Lord. Use me." The man was about halfway through the sermon. He kind of ignored him. Maybe that's happened to you before, and you kind of ignore whoever is standing up yelling. Next Sunday, halfway through the sermon, same fellow pops up and says, "Use me, Lord. Use me." Third Sunday,

the same thing happens. So the pastor comes down, he says, "Fine, you said, 'Use me, Lord. Use me.'" He said, "I'll be glad to use you. Why don't you paint and scrape all the pews." [Laughter] Next Sunday, the guy stands up and says, "Use me, Lord, use me, but only in an advisory capacity." [Laughter]

No, no, the people here are not advisers. They're doers. People in faith-based programs all around the country just don't sit around and say, "Here's some advice." They say, "What can I do to answer a call? How can I help change my community and thereby change my country?" And that's what you're doing.

Our Government must understand America is a hopeful and optimistic place, par-

ticularly when we apply the great strength of our country, which is the love of our citizens, to changing America, one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

May God bless your work, and may God continue to bless America. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:57 a.m. at the Union Bethel AME Church. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Thomas B. Brown, pastor, Union Bethel AME Church; Gov. Kathleen Blanco of Louisiana and her husband, Raymond "Coach" Blanco; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes, archdiocese of New Orleans; and Rev. Warren Taylor, pastor, First Evangelist Missionary Baptist Church.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in New Orleans January 15, 2004

Thank you all. Thank you all very much for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's great to be back in the Big Easy. I've got a lot of good memories from this part of the world. [Laughter] Some I can share with you—[laughter]—and some I can't. [Laughter]

We love New Orleans, fabulous city. Thanks for coming. I appreciate your support. It's great to be in the State of Louisiana, the home of those Bayou Bengals, the mighty LSU Tigers. That's pretty—that was—that's awesome. [Laughter] It was exciting for Louisiana. I'm proud for you. I'm also glad that you didn't play the University of Texas this year. [Laughter] Wait a minute. [Laughter]

I want to thank you for what you did for Vice President Cheney and me last—that last time we were ran, in 2000. We carried Louisiana. I'll tell you what we're doing today: We're laying the foundation for what is going to be another victory in the great State of Louisiana, and we're lay-

ing the foundation for what is going to be a great national victory in November of 2004.

And I appreciate your help. I want to thank you for coming today. I want to thank you for your support. I want to thank you for your prayers. I want to thank you for what you're going to do, which is turn out that vote, find those voters and turn them to the polls.

I'm getting ready, and I'm loosening up. [Laughter] But politics is going to come in its own time. See, I've got a job to do. There's a lot on my agenda, on behalf of all the people of this country. As this campaign gets cranked up, you tell the people that I'm working on their behalf and I'm going to continue to work hard to earn their confidence by keeping America secure and strong and prosperous and free.

I am sorry Laura is not here. She is a fabulous First Lady. She's doing a great job. She is—she really, really, makes me proud and thankful she said yes when I