

**Remarks at a Dinner Honoring the
United States Winter Olympic
Athletes**

April 13, 1994

Thank you so much. Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President and Dr. Walker and—what am I supposed to call Hillary in public?—*[laughter]*—Madam First Lady.

You know, one of the things these Olympians learn is a whole lot of discipline and, along with that, sort of good conduct and good manners. But I think we're about to test it. They've already heard all of us give one set of speeches today, and now they're having to sit through a second or stand through a second, as the case may be. It was wonderful for us to have all of them at the White House today. And I want to thank them for coming, for giving all of us who work in the White House a big thrill at having the opportunity to meet them and congratulate them and express our great pride in their achievements.

One potentially unfortunate thing occurred at the White House today. Several of them invited me to jog in the morning. *[Laughter]* So there's a whole bunch of them coming, and now that I've announced it, doubtless more will come as well. And so I'm going to have to go home early and get some extra sleep tonight. The Vice President would come, too—and he's a better runner than I am—but he's on his way to Marrakesh tonight. He's really taking a marathon—going to the meeting which will finalize the understanding among all of our nations for a new worldwide trade agreement and reminding the other countries that they promised that the next time we make a worldwide trade agreement, it will be a green round, one devoted to protecting the global environment and proving that that, too, can be good for our common economic destiny. So I thank him for that.

A few moments before he ran and won the 100-meter final and captured the gold medal in an Olympics a long time ago, one of the heroes of my youth, Jesse Owens, said, "A lifetime of training for just 10 seconds." Dr. Walker and I were talking out here before we came out to visit one more time and stand with the Olympians, and we were spec-

ulating about what the longest Winter Olympic event is, maybe the cross-country skiing, maybe the biathlon. But even the longest one is just the flash of an eye compared to all the training. Think of how many of these young athletes have worked their lifetimes to compete for a minute, sometimes slightly less, sometimes slightly more; a long event, an exhausting event in some of these encounters is 2 or 3 or 4 minutes. But really, it isn't a lifetime of effort for 10 seconds or 2 minutes or 2 hours. It's a lifetime of effort for a lifetime of reward. The reward of knowing that you have done your best with your God-given abilities, the reward of knowing you have lived a good life and stand out as a good model.

I asked all these young people today to continue to visit schools and see the children of America, as they did today. So many of our children today don't have parents or coaches or teachers who can get them up early in the morning, encourage them to great heights, provide the opportunities that so many of the rest of us take for granted. And yet I think these young Olympians, simply by talking to disadvantaged kids who may have no hope, who may have no opportunity in their own mind, who may not even be able to imagine what it is like to make a commitment for a year, much less 5 or 10 years or 20 years, the incredible impact that they can have on the young people of America is something that we must never underestimate and something that I hope and pray they will never underestimate.

I'd also like to say, to echo what the Vice President said, that we are doing our best through the President's Council on Sports and Physical Fitness to try to spread opportunities for participating in athletics to all of our people. And I have to tell you that one of the real tragedies of the economic hardships our country endured in the 1980's is that many of our schools and many of our cities cut back on recreational facilities. Here in the Nation's Capital, I am told that there are only three functioning ballparks that are open to kids who want to start teams. We have kids growing up on streets in America today who get all the way through their teen years without ever holding a baseball bat in their hand or having a mitt on their hand.

We have whole cities where there are no Olympic-size swimming pools for children to swim in.

And so the second thing I ask of you all is to try to remind the city fathers and the State officials and the Federal officials, too, that body and mind go hand in hand, and we've got to bring recreational opportunities back to kids. We have to give them the spirit of teamwork and possibility even those who can never be Olympic athletes.

And finally, let me remind you that when the Olympics started, I mean, really started a long time ago, it gave all the warring Greek city states an excuse to quit fighting with one another and find a way to compete in peace and harmony and to forge bonds of understanding among people who literally were at war one with the other. We saw that in a gripping way in these Winter Olympics when the courageous Olympians from Bosnia somehow made their way to Lillehammer.

And so I ask all of you who have had the experience of the Olympics always to be emissary for a decent and humane set of relations among the people of the world. Most of what people are fighting for in this old world today, with the end of the cold war, is based on ancient hatreds, not present rational divisions, not principled arguments over differences in a way of life but old-fashioned bigotry that somehow they can't quite overcome. The spirit of the Olympics can help that, and all of you can embody that for the rest of your lives.

Somehow I think that all of these words that we've just said may not be quite registering on all the athletes because they've been through so much this year. Robert Frost once said about the present, "It is too much for the senses, too crowded, too confusing, too present to imagine." But soon the present will be past, and all the athletes will fully comprehend, with the benefit of time, the magnitude of their achievement in making our Olympic team and what they mean in their own lives and to the lives of their friends and families and what they can mean to the lives of so many millions of others in America. The Olympic moment may be over, but their lifetime of training will bring a lifetime of benefits to themselves and to all the rest of us as well.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:10 p.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Leroy Walker, president, U.S. Olympic Committee.

**Proclamation 6669—251st
Anniversary of the Birth of Thomas
Jefferson**

April 13, 1994

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

"I am certainly not an advocate for frequent and untried changes in laws and constitutions," Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "But . . . laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths disclosed, and manners and opinions change . . . institutions must advance also, and keep pace with the times."

These words have challenged and inspired the countless millions who have come to America's capital and have seen them inscribed on the marble wall of the Jefferson Memorial. Jefferson's statue presides nobly over America's capital city, a steadfast and enduring reminder of the democratic government that he helped to found. Yet unlike his unchanging visage, our democracy's institutions have proved to be remarkably agile in governing, maturing as society has progressed, evolving as human knowledge and technology have advanced—far beyond Jefferson's imagining. Of all the truths Jefferson knew to be self-evident, of all the freedoms he held dear, this understanding of the need for political and social innovation is perhaps his most lasting gift. He helped to endow us with the freedom to embrace change.

As we complete the year celebrating the 250th anniversary of his birth, it is entirely fitting that we again pause to reflect upon both the contradictions of Jefferson's life and the meaning of his legacy. Far from the sculpted perfection of his statue, Jefferson acknowledged, even anguished about, his failings as a leader. In expressing his fervent