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I started out my Presidency with one of the greatest men I ever met in my life, the late Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin. I miss him so much. There are a lot of people I miss, and I'm sorry they had to leave this Earth before I did. But you know, all of us left ahead, because we got to live out our dreams. And most of us here, truth were known, we'd have to say we've done better than we deserved. And I would like for every child in this country and every child in this world to be able to say that more than they can say it now when our time here is done.

We have to get this country ready for the next century. It will be the time of greatest possibility in all of human history. More of our kids, without regard to their race, their gender, their station in life, will have a chance to live their dreams if we do our job. That is really what we're here about.

I've been luckier than most people because I had family who loved me, friends who took care of me, folks who worked with me and made me look better than I deserved, and a chance to do work I loved. But in the end, all that matters is whether, when we finish, we have made it possible for more people to be what God meant them to be. And you have helped to give me that chance, and that is the best birthday present of all.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 p.m. at Radio City Music Hall.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee 50th Birthday Dinner for the President in New York City

August 19, 1996

Let's give Jessye Norman a hand. That was about the best ''Happy Birthday'' I ever saw. [*Applause*] I often thought—please sit down—I often thought my birthday might resemble a soap opera, but never a real one. [*Laughter*] So I am deeply honored that Jessye is here tonight.

Let me say very briefly—I said what I had to say at Radio City—but I want to thank all of you from the bottom of my heart for making this night possible. I thank our hard-working Democratic Chairman Don Fowler, and Marvin Rosen, our finance director, and all the people at DNC. They work so hard.

The chairs of this event, Jay and Maryanne Alex, Noah Dear, Beth Dozoretz, Larry Harris, Susan and Allen Patricof, Stan Schuman, Paul Verrochi, Harvey Weinstein—let's give them all a big hand. They've been great. [*Applause*]

I want to thank my good friend, the former Governor of Mississippi, Ray Maybus who put together all the satellite events around the country, 89 of them. Thank you, Ray. I'd like to thank the distinguished political leaders from New York who are here, former Mayor Dinkins; Congressman Rangel; Congressman Lowey; Senator Lautenberg; the minority leader of the Senate, Senator Martin Conner; and Speaker Shelly Silver; and the New York State Democratic co-chairs, Judith Hope and John Sullivan.

I think that there are a lot of other—I want to thank all of the entertainers who are still here, those who performed tonight. You were magnificent. It was a great event at Radio City Music Hall.

There is one—in addition to Jessye, there is one very great American artist here who just came in from Europe, could not be here earlier for the performance, but I think is one of the most gifted musicians of my lifetime, Mr. Wynton Marsalis is here. Thank you very much for being here.

Let me say finally that what Vernon said about the birthday present coming on November 5th is not entirely true. This is a deeply personal night for me and a great joy. I know that a lot of you worked very, very hard on this evening. You know who you are; I know who you are. I know what an enormous effort it was, and I don't know where you got some of the home movies and the pictures. If I knew where, the people who gave it to you would be in trouble, but I thought it was fabulous, and I thank you for that.

In terms of the election, I ask you only to remember that we really are going to make a decision which I think is even more important than the one we made in 1992. We have to validate the direction this country is going in. We cannot permit it to be reversed, and we cannot permit people to turn away from the fact that we are in better shape as a na-

tion than we were 4 years ago. The choice is clear about the competing visions for the future, and it's very important for us to build on the progress that has been made, not to sit on it but not to reverse it, either.

And when we go to our convention in Chicago and we're going into this campaign, I want all of you to help me elevate this campaign. I want this to be a campaign in which the American people have an honest, civil discussion with one another about how we ought to go forward into the 21st century. I don't want you to check your passion, I want you to turn it up. I don't want you to decline to say that you disagree with our opponents, when you do, and why you do, but I do not want it to be personally demeaning or negative.

You know, this is not the world's oldest democracy because every single election has been decided between a saint and a scoundrel; that is not what has happened. Our political system has worked, and we're still around here after 220 years because we had a lot of people who loved their country who had different views and, more than half the time, the American people, the majority, have made the right decision and kept us moving into the future. And that's how we ought to look at this. We don't have to demean anybody. We don't have to put anybody down. We have to lift the country up, put people together, and move into the future. And I want you to lead that. And I want you to have no amount of overconfidence. I want you to be intense, focused, and committed, because a lot is riding on it.

Finally, let me say—I want to thank a man I've known a long time and I really admire on many, many levels. But tonight, we heard his great music and the music of his orchestra. Thank you, Peter Duchin, for what you've done. Thank you. Thank you for being a good Democrat.

And lastly, Vernon, I was sitting there listening to you speak, and you about had me convinced I was a great man. [*Laughter*] I believe you could talk an owl out of a tree. And I want you to know that we did not ignore your birthday. Even though I was away aching from that—as I called it—that death march of dehydration that I took the press on when we climbed down from Mt. Washburn in Wyoming, having been there a day and a half, we were still thinking about you. And I'd like to present you with your own birthday cake since you gave me mine.

Where is it? [*Laughter*] Happy birthday, Vernon. I love you.

Thank you, and God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at midnight in the Grand Ballroom at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to singer Jessye Norman; David Dinkins, former mayor of New York City; and Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.,; dinner emcee. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Salem Missionary Baptist Church in Fruitland, Tennessee

August 19, 1996

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you very, very much. Reverend Donaldson, before the sun went underneath that cloud for a minute, I was beginning to wonder how a place so close to heaven could be so hot. [*Laughter*]

But I am very glad to be here. Hillary and I are delighted to be here with Reverend and Mrs. Donaldson, and Reverend and Mrs. Vaughan, and our good friend John Tanner, Governor McWherter, and the other folks from Tennessee public life. I also wanted to say Reverend Donaldson gave you a big plug, Mr. Barnett. He said if it hadn't been for you and the leaders of the church, you all wouldn't be here today. And I thank you, too, for what you've done. Thank you.

I want to begin my remarks by presenting to Reverend Donaldson and Reverend Vaughan a plaque with a statement I made about this whole issue not very long ago that says, "We must come together as one America to rebuild our churches, restore hope, and show the forces of hatred they cannot win." And I wanted you both to have these plaques when you reopen your church so that people all over this part of the country could see that what you have done is a symbol of the best in our faith and the best in our country.