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to do—in the coaching ranks and the management and the scouting and all of that. We ought to keep working on it.

The second thing I'd like to say is, I hope that everybody who's in an athletic program also learns good life skills to make good choices, good decisions; can take something out of the teamwork, the rules of things that you get from being in athletics so that if they play in high school but not in college that they're still better off and they're better citizens.

The same thing if they play in college, not in pros. The same thing when they finish their pro career. We didn't talk much about that tonight, but I thing that's important—that the lessons learned from athletics carry over into good citizenship, including attitudes about people of different races. If that happens, we're going to be a lot better off.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7 p.m. in the Cullen Theater at Wortham Theater Center. In his remarks, he referred to former Houston Mayor Bob Lanier. The townhall meeting was broadcast live on the ESPN cable network as ''Sports and Race: Running in Place?'' The meeting was part of ''One America: The President's Initiative on Race.''

Exchange With Reporters in the Pratt City Neighborhood of Birmingham, Alabama

April 15, 1998

Tornado Damage

Q. Mr. President, now that you've seen it firsthand, what do you think?

The President. It's horrible. But I'm glad so many people lived, like these people here. They were in the—they got warning, so they went in the bathroom and lay down. They have two 8-year-old twins. They had their children with them. So they're all unhurt.

We've just got to make sure that they get—they have no livelihood here. And the important thing is that we move this assistance as quickly as we can to them.

Disaster Assistance

Q. What assistance are you bringing today?

The President. We have all kinds of personal assistance, and we're also going to try to help them with the cleanup so they can get back to normal and also hire some people around here, while they're otherwise idle, to be part of the cleanup.

Q. What are you trying to say to these people? It's got to be so difficult to talk to people——

The President. I think the most important thing is that they—right now a lot of them are still almost in shock, but they're beginning to think—it's been a few days now—they're beginning to think about how they're going to live. And the important thing is that we work out all the practical problems of their lives right now—make sure everybody has got a place to live and food and income to live on—and then that we move all these claims through as quickly as possible and do everything we can to speed the process by which they can return to normal.

There is so much grief and frustration and loss. The most positive thing that can be done is just to get everybody focused on tomorrow. If they've all got something to look forward to tomorrow, some progress, no matter how halting, it's been my experience that that's the healthiest thing that can happen, that everybody—just start people focused on coming back. And so that's what we're trying to do.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 a.m. while touring tornado damage in the area. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks in McDonald Chapel, Alabama

April 15, 1998

Thank you very much. Thank you. Let me, first of all, thank Governor and Mrs. James, Senator Shelby, Congressman and Mrs. Bachus, Congressman Hilliard, and we were joined earlier today by Congressman Riley and Congressman Aderholt, my long-time friend Mayor Arrington and my friend Senator Heflin. I thank all of you for joining us, Senator Escott, Representative Hilliard, Sheriff Woodward, and all the law enforcement officials.

I want to thank James Lee Witt and our SBA director, Aida Alvarez, for their presence here today and all the FEMA workers

beginning with Mr. Witt, for the wonderful job they've done here in Alabama. I'd like to thank the people who've shared their stories with me, Pastor Homer and Shelva Jordan, as we stood in their Chapel Hill Baptist Church down there. I thank Bill and Gayle Reed and Morris and Bonnie Rembert and Phil and Cindy Rutland, who are our hosts. We're on their property today. They are throwing an open house for us. [*Laughter*]

All of you know that we're looking at what remains of one of the deadliest tornadoes in Alabama's history, one of the most powerful tornadoes ever recorded in the United States. I've just come from a recovery center in Pratt City where I spoke with some other grieving families. I met a young man who was on his way to his wife's funeral. They were married just a year and a month.

When the Vice President came back from his tour here, he told me about the destruction, but this really is a place that has to be seen to be believed and understood. I want all of you to know, here in Alabama, that the entire country has been moved by this disaster, by its scope, by its sweep, and by the way that you have recovered and tried to fight through it.

Our country has prayed for and hoped for you and for your neighbors in Georgia. As always, I have been especially moved by the way people in the community have pulled together, have reached out to their neighbors whom they knew and their neighbors whom they did not know before this terrible tragedy struck, and I thank you for that.

I never cease to be amazed when I see people who have lost everything, who can still express their gratitude that they and their children and their neighbors are still alive and they have the ability to start again. Your community has pulled together. Your State has been here, and there is a responsibility that your fellow citizens throughout the country feel.

The reason we have a Federal Emergency Management Agency, the reason the Small Business Administration has disaster assistance, the reason we do all these things is because all of us recognize that from time to time in America things will happen that no community, not even one State, can handle on its own.

I am pleased that Federal assistance checks are already in the hands of Alabama residents who are repairing or rebuilding their homes or those who need temporary housing or medical care. I spoke to some folks today who hadn't received them yet, and I assured them that they would be there soon, and that if they aren't they ought to call us and let us know.

I know, too, that today the first disaster loans to businesses went out from the Small Business Administration, about $600,000 worth of them. Also today I can say that we are making available all categories of public assistance funding for local governments and non-profit organizations to rebuild, restore, and reconstruct public facilities, including schools and infrastructure, and I think that's very important.

And I think its also important that we recognize that for all the courage and heroism and just plain old-fashioned resilience of the people, there are emotional and physical stresses associated with a disaster like this that go beyond the cost of the buildings blowing down and the homes blown away and the family letters and pictures that will never be seen again, even beyond the hospital costs of legs that have to be set and cuts that have to be sewn up.

So we're authorizing a crisis counseling assistance and training program here to provide up to 9 months of community services and outreach to help people who need to be supported as they start trying to look to tomorrow again.

Finally, I talked to a number of people today who obviously can't go to work right now because of what's happened, who are concerned about their situation. Secretary Herman and the Department of Labor are going to provide over 3 million jobs for temporary jobs to assist in the clean up and recovery. And I hope some of the people in this neighborhood who may be unemployed as a consequence of the tornado will be able to get some temporary work helping to put their neighbor's lives and their communities back together again.

Finally, let me say that our FEMA Director, James Lee Witt, contacted the National Council of Churches about the loss and destruction to churches here, and they have

pledged to help on a national basis to assist in the effort to rebuild and repair all the churches that were damaged and destroyed here in Alabama as a result of this tornado.

Let me just close with a special commendation for all the State and local emergency management officials, the search and rescue teams, the volunteers who have labored so long; the Governor told me about some of the horrible human loss just within yards of where we're standing. I thank the people in our military uniforms. Many of them have been here for hours and hours and hours without relief. I know that many of these relief workers have been working more than 18 hours a day to clear debris, to cut trees, to lift telephone poles. I would like to compliment your power company for getting the power back on within 48 hours and allowing some measure of normalcy to return.

I would like to thank the Salvation Army for providing the free meals and all the people that contributed food from all over America. I would like to thank the people who have provided quilts or medicine or other physical support. I would also like to say—Bill and Gayle Reed said something to me I think I ought to say to all of you—they said, you know, a lot of times in the last few days the most important thing they got from their friends and neighbors was just a kind remark or a pat on the back or an expression of support. And for all of you who have done that, I thank you.

My experience has been, from being Governor of a State with a lot of tornadoes for 12 years and then being President during some of the most profound natural disasters of the 20th century, is that the most important thing for people in trouble is that they know their friends and neighbors and family members are supporting them and that they have some concrete thing to look forward to tomorrow. We have to give people a way to look forward to tomorrow—a project, work to do, something that can be done to make a difference.

I'm always struck by the strength and bravery, the generosity of the American people at a time like this. The families I have seen today have reaffirmed that and I thank them. Back behind us over here in McDonald Chapel, the Open Door Church may lie in a rubble, but I understand that on Easter morning the congregation gathered on folding chairs and held a service in the parking lot. The Book of Isaiah has a verse that has particular meaning to me. I'll just leave it with you. ''You were wearied with the length of your way, but you did not say it was hopeless. You found new life for your strength, and so you were not faint.''

My friends, the road to recovery is long. Your grief and your pain are profound. It will take weeks, months, even years to rebuild all that has been destroyed. But the process of restoration has begun because the most important thing you have, your spirit, was not destroyed. And we look forward to working with you all the way.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. in the McDonald Chapel neighborhood of suburban Birmingham, Alabama, which was struck by a tornado on April 8. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Fob James, Jr., and his wife, Bobbie; State Senator Sundra Escott-Russell; State Representative John R. Hilliard; Mayor Richard Arrington, Jr., of Birmingham; Sheriff Jim Woodward of Jefferson County; Pastor Homer Jordan of Chapel Hill Baptist Church and his wife, Shelva; mechanic Bill Reed and his wife, Gayle, whose mobile home was destroyed in the tornado; tornado survivors Morris and Bonnie Rembert and Phillip and Cindy Rutland; and Marcus Coleman, widower of Colet Coleman.

Proclamation 7082—National Recall Round-Up Day, 1998

April 15, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

More than 21,000 Americans lose their lives each year in accidents involving consumer products, and more than 29 million are injured. These accidents cost our Nation over $200 billion annually, and the cost in terms of human suffering is immeasurable.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is on the front line of the Federal Government's efforts to protect the safety and well-being of our citizens, especially