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Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:15 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Herbert and Patrice Miller; Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado, general chair, Leonard Barrack, national finance chair, Donald L. Fowler, former national chair, and Carol Pensky, treasurer, Democratic National Committee.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner

June 16, 1998

Thank you. I want you to look up on that screen. This is as close as I'll ever get to the BET jazz channel. [*Laughter*] You know, Bob was doing such a good job up here, I was kind of hoping he'd never call me up. [*Laughter*] Ramsey did such a good job on ''Body and Soul,'' I was kind of hoping he'd never quit. [*Laughter*]

Let me thank Bob and Sheila for having us here, Debra, all the other people associated with BET and with this wonderful restaurant. It's a beautiful place; the food was terrific; the atmosphere is great. I thank all of you for coming. I especially want to thank Congressmen Charles Rangel and Don Payne and Bill Jefferson and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton for being here. I think Mayor Webb from Denver is here along with Governor Romer, the chairman of our party. The hour is late; we've had good food, good music, and good companionship. And I won't give a long speech.

Let me say that I was very moved by what Bob had to say about our trip to Africa. It was for me, and for Hillary also, a truly transforming experience, although she had already been. I don't think I'll ever quite be the same again. I came back determined to continue to build our relationship with Africa, determined to work with Congressman Rangel and others to pass the Africa trade bill, determined to build a better future for all of us together.

Let me make just a couple of brief statements. When I ran—started running for President in late 1991, I was concerned about the direction of our country, not just the problems we had at the moment but the direction. And I had some ideas that I thought were both modern and consistent with what my party had always stood for. I wanted to get the country moving again, get the society coming together again, and reassert our leadership for peace and freedom and prosperity and humanity around the world.

And the American people, in no small measure because of overwhelming support from the African-American community, gave me a precious chance to serve as President and gave our party a chance to try our ideas for the 21st century out on the country.

Five and a half years later we have the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 29 years, the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years, the lowest inflation rate in 32 years, the smallest Federal Government in 35 years, the highest homeownership, the lowest African-American unemployment, and the highest rate of business formation among minorities in the history of the country. I think that's a pretty good record for 5½ years of our working together.

And I want to thank all of you who made that possible. There are a lot of people in this room tonight that started with me in '91 and '92. I will never forget that. A lot of you have come on, thanks to Bob and other friends, and I'm very grateful to you.

But I want to say, ideas, if they're translated into action, have consequences. And a great number of the things I have done never would have been possible if it hadn't been for the congressional support I have received. I think the people in this room and those that are running on the ticket with them in November deserve to be rewarded for being right. You know, when they voted for the economic plan in 1993, the other guy said it would bring a recession. Well, we've got 5½ years and 16 million jobs of experience. We know who was right and who wasn't.

When we passed a crime bill to put 100,000 people on the street and ban assault weapons and passed the Brady bill, the other side said we were going to take guns away from law abiding people, and the crime rate would skyrocket. Well, 5½ years later we've got 300,000 people with criminal records who couldn't get handguns and a crime rate at a 25-year low and 75,000 more police paid

to go on the street. We know who was right and who was wrong.

And these Members of Congress here and those who are running with them deserve the chance to take the next steps, to take advantage of this economic opportunity to really make a dent in inner-city poverty where the recovery hasn't reached yet; to take advantage of this economic prosperity; to take a serious look at what we have to do to improve our school systems and make them the best in the world, like our colleges and universities are; to take advantage of this moment of real security and prove we can grow the economy and preserve the environment; to take advantage of this moment of security and reach out to Africa, to the Caribbean, to Latin America, to help our friends in Asia in their moment of trouble, so that we can build a unified world that is coming together instead of being torn apart; to take advantage of this moment to say to America, if you want to lead a world that is more and more bedeviled by racial and ethnic and religious conflicts—that is, if you, America, want to do good around the world, you must first be good at home. We have to do this right. And we have a unique opportunity to do that. That's what this is about.

These people need your help. They deserve your help. I'm not running anymore. I'm going out there working for them because I believe in what we have done together; I believe in what we can do in the next 2½ years; I believe what we can do in the next 10 years if we get a chance to shape 21st century America. And you have done a very good thing tonight. I hope you will continue to be involved.

And again, let me say to Bob and Sheila, I'll never forget you for all the wonderful things you've done, but this was special tonight. Thank you, Ramsey Lewis. I always loved hearing you play, but I'll have dreams about "Body and Soul" tonight.

God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 p.m. at the BET On Jazz Restaurant. In his remarks, he referred to Robert L. Johnson, chairman and chief executive officer, BET Holdings, Inc., and his wife, Sheila; jazz musician Ramsey Lewis; Debra Lee, president and chief operating officer, BET Holdings, Inc. The President also referred to BET On Jazz: the Cable Jazz Channel.

Remarks on the 21st Century Community Learning Center Initiative and an Exchange With Reporters

June 17, 1998

The President. Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, Hillary and I are delighted to have all of you here in the Rose Garden today for a subject that we care a great deal about. I thank especially Senator Jeffords for his leadership, Congressman Boswell, all the Members of Congress who are here. I thank Secretary Riley and the Attorney General for their consistent and dedicated efforts for our children and to improve the lives of our children. And Chief Frazier and Gloria Nava did, I thought, a marvelous job.

Let me say, as Hillary and Gloria made clear, for millions of Americans, "Home Alone" is not a funny movie; it is a serious risk that children and parents undertake every day all across this country. On any given school day in America, there will be as many as 15 million children left to fend for themselves, idle in front of the television sets or out on the streets and exposed to gangs and guns and drugs.

Incidents of violent crime by juveniles more than double in the hour after school lets out, and interestingly enough, our children are also at greatest risk of becoming victims of crime in the hours immediately after school. But in communities where children have something positive to do, youth crime is dropping and academic performance is on the rise.

The Justice Department and the Department of Education are today releasing a report to every school district in the country and to the public at large which shows just how much of a difference these after-school programs are making. In Chicago, for example, a program with which Hillary and I are familiar, the Lighthouse program is now reaching more than 110,000 children and nearly 250 schools around the city with intensive after-school instruction in reading and