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I appreciate your applause. And I am more grateful by far for just having the chance to share this worship service with you, to be reminded of the truths that I need to hear, too, just like you. You remember that in this country there are only two places—only two, only two—where we have fulfilled both the admonition of the Scriptures and the promise of the Founders that all of us are created equal—only two. One is when you come into your house of worship on Sunday, and the other is when you show up at the ballot box.

So I ask you, there are thousands here. You will see tens of thousands more between now and Tuesday. Be a doer. Tell them they should show up, too. Take them by the hand and bring them. Tell them about Rosa Parks. Ask them not to forget what Dr. King died for. Ask them not to forget what the issues in this election are. But ultimately, it really is all about what Congressman Cummings said. I have done everything I could to bring this country together, to reconcile the American people to one another so we could go forward together.

But in the end, that must be done by all of us together. And Tuesday, it's your turn. Take it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:58 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Walter Scott Thomas, pastor, his wife, Patricia, and David L. Blow, assistant pastor, New Psalmist Baptist Church; Vernon Simms, district administrator for Representative Elijah E. Cummings; Mayor Kurt Schmoke of Baltimore; Gov. Parris N. Glendening of Maryland; State Senator Clarence Blount; Baltimore County Executive C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger; Baltimore City Council President Lawrence Bell; Baltimore City Comptroller Joan M. Pratt; Rosa Parks, civil rights activist; President Nelson Mandela of South Africa; and President Andres Pastrana of Colombia.

Interview With April Ryan of the American Urban Radio Networks in Baltimore

November 1, 1998

African-American Vote

Ms. Ryan. Mr. President, thank you so much for joining us today. The focus: the African-American vote, getting African-Americans to the polls on November 3d. For so many weeks some members of the—some White House officials have been saying that you're trying to get everyone—that there is, indeed, a definite effort to get the African vote; that's why you're at New Psalmist today, to talk to black congregations and blacks throughout the country.

Is the African-American vote a make-it-or-break-it vote for this election?

The President. I think in many districts it will be, and perhaps in some of these close Senate seats. And I think it's important just to take a minute to explain why.

Traditionally, in the United States in Presidential elections, the vote turnout is much bigger, and then it falls off in midterms. When times are good, as they are now, very often the fall off is even greater. And disproportionately, working people, lower income working people, or poor people, are likely to be among those who fall off. Single mothers that have to worry about, on Tuesday, getting their children to school or to child care, and then getting them home; going to work and getting back; people that live in cities, who have to take mass transit to work, and maybe the polling place is not on the bus line or the subway line coming home, they've got to go to a lot more trouble.

So we know that the American people as a whole agree with our program that's at stake in this election. They agree with our position on saving Social Security, on building modern schools, on passing the Patients' Bill of Rights, on raising the minimum wage. They agree with our position by 15 or 20 points when contrasted with a positive message from the Republicans. So the only way we won't do very well in this election is if our turnout is lower than theirs. So this is a big issue.

Ms. Ryan. Well, many people said when you first ran for the office that African-Americans brought you into office. Do you think that this African-American vote, if you reinvigorate it through this election, can help many Democrats in years to come, as well as this election?

The President. Oh, of course. And I think it can be something that we can sustain, that is, the idea that every election is important, that not just the Presidential elections but

every election is important and helps to shape the future.

I think people understand after this 8 months of partisan standoff we had in Congress this last year, when really nothing happened until the very end, and they had to go through the congressional Democrats and me to get a budget. So they had to agree with us on some budget items for education and other things. I think the American people understand that these congressional elections are profoundly important. The Governors race and other races are profoundly important.

And as I said today in the church, election day is a day that everybody counts the same. It's a real tragic thing, I think, when people pass the opportunity to be just as powerful as everyone else.

Republican Campaign Ads

Ms. Ryan. Well, as you said, these votes are important. You have people like Newt Gingrich who said—well, the Washington Post said that Newt Gingrich orchestrated attempts to make you look bad through Republican campaign ads. Do you think those ads are confusing to people? And do you also feel, like the Vice President, shocked that he did this?

The President. Well, I'm not—no, I don't feel shocked that he did it. It appeared to me that the message of the ad was, you know, you should be mad at the President, therefore you should punish someone else who had nothing to do with the mistake the President made. And in the end, you should punish yourself; you should deny yourself the Patients' Bill of Rights, deny your children a better education, deny people a rise in the minimum wage, deny the Democrats the votes they need to make sure we don't squander this surplus until we save Social Security.

I don't think it's a very persuasive message once you tell people what the message is and give them a chance to think about it. And I hope it won't be successful. I don't think it will be.

Voter Turnout

Ms. Ryan. Well, President Clinton, I watched you in church today. You walked the walk, and you talked the talk. You quoted from Matthew. A lot of people called you "Reverend Clinton". [*Laughter*] But what happens if you cannot generate the kind of support for the blacks to go to the polls like you want? What kind of answers will you have when the finger-pointing starts?

The President. Well, we've done everything we could to get the votes out, and I think we're going to do very well. If you look at the history of these midterm elections, particularly in the 6th year of a Presidency, almost everyone concedes, even the Republicans do, that we're going to outperform the historical average. And of course, it's unbelievable, since they have literally raised, through the Senate and House committees and the Republican National Committee, $110 million more than our people have.

So we're out here to work, and I don't worry about finger-pointing. I just do the best I can and work like crazy until the election is over and hope—you know, we've got a lot of good people out there who have done, I think, astonishing things, being outspent two-, three-to-one in the last week, maybe four-to-one or more, still hanging in there in these races. And I just want to make sure we light a fire under our voters and that they know what's at stake. And I think we're going to do pretty well on Tuesday.

African-American Support

Ms. Ryan. Did you see the response from the congregation when you came in? Did you see the people just jump up and shout and just—I mean, the faces were just brimming over with joy that you would come here to this church.

The President. I was very moved.

Ms. Ryan. Do you understand that African-Americans just love William Jefferson Clinton? And you know, it's gotten to the point where there are even some authors that are writing about you. Have you read the piece by Toni Morrison in The New Yorker magazine saying that President Clinton is a black man?

The President. No, but I take it as a compliment.

Ms. Ryan. Oh, do you?

The President. I mean just generally. I haven't read the piece, maybe there is some

unflattering things Toni has to say in the piece. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Ryan. But do you understand that the African-American community just embraces you?

The President. Yes, I do. I do. And it has been a source of enormous—pride is the wrong word—but I have been very grateful for it.

A man came up to my wife the other day, a couple months ago, and said, to Hillary, he said, ''You know''—an African-American man said, ''the people who attack the President all the time say they don't understand why the African-American community supports him so strongly and why we like him so much.'' And he said, ''It's not a very complicated thing. We support him, and we support you''—talking to Hillary—''because you like us, and we know it, and we can tell.''

I don't know, I think it's more than just the policies I've supported and the African-Americans I've appointed to the Cabinet and to the Judiciary. I think people do understand that down deep inside I believe that we ought to be one America and that we ought not to be fundamentally about race. I think that comes across. That's the only explanation I can give you, and I'm very grateful for it.

Reverend Thomas' Sermon

Ms. Ryan. So getting back to the church service today, the sermon from Reverend Thomas was on spiritual warfare. What did you get out of that?

The President. Well, first of all, I thought it was a very interesting sermon, theologically. He, obviously, has thought about this a lot; he's thought about what the nature of evil is. And he argued that evil is not embodied in any person or persons; evil infects everybody or threatens to. It's a force of life that is always there.

And then he argued that the church, the meaning of the church was to give redemption and give people who have flaws, who have been through difficulties, a chance to literally be reborn and to serve. And he had that great image of the open doors, the doors of death were only supposed to open one way. But if you believe in God and if you believe in the Christian faith, you believe that you can force the doors back open the other way, into internal life, not just in death. I thought it was a very powerful sermon. It was both practical but extremely philosophical.

Ms. Ryan. Did it touch you?

The President. Oh, yes. I thought it was a magnificent message.

First Family

Ms. Ryan. President Clinton, you've been really great with me in granting me several interviews. And I want to ask you this, and you can say whatever you want to say. But the American public cares about you, one way or the other, and your personal life has been spread across the newspapers and in television. And your supporters and your detractors both want to know, how are you and the First Lady doing?

The President. Well, the thing that I want the country to know is that I'm doing my best, my dead-level best to heal my family as well as my relationship with the American people—my wife and my daughter. And I love them very much, and I'm working on it. And I think that what the American people, I hope, will agree is that beyond that, it ought to be private; the good times and the tough times, they ought to be private. I think most Americans want to know that I'm trying to do the right thing, and I can tell you, I am. But I think to talk about it would further degrade the privacy that I think has already been plundered too much in too many ways for too many people in America.

Ms. Ryan. Well, I just want to say this on that point, and that's the end of that, but a lot of—you're public; you are the leader of the free world, and Mrs. Clinton is the First Lady. And you recognize when you walk to the plane, when you have Buddy running around you or, you know, just together, people are looking at body language. You know, you are the President, and you've had something happen that many marriages have had happen. And people want to know, and they watch your body language. How does it make you feel that you're literally under a microscope just for that right there?

The President. Well, on that, believe it or not—let me just say this. All the pain and

humiliation and the anger and every other thing for me is behind me now, and I don't think much about that. What I think about is, how can I take care of my family? How can I take care of my country? I have always found that I should simply trust the American people. I don't agree with every decision they've made in every election. I wish they hadn't elected the Republican majority in 1994. But I've always found that if you give the American people enough time, they get it right. And we're still around here after 220 years because at every important time the American people have gotten it right. So they are free to think about whatever they wish to think, to say whatever they wish to say, to do whatever they wish to do. That's what makes this a great country. And I will continue to work on my family and on my country.

But I will say this to all the American people, without regard to what they think about that or any other issue, as I said to this church today: Tuesday is the only day of the year where every citizen counts the same. Everybody listen to me, everybody within the sound of our voice, yours and mine, on Tuesday they count just as much as I do; they count just as much as Mr. Gingrich does; they count just as much as any editor of any newspaper or any owner of any television network. They count just as much. And the only thing I would do is to implore them to remember that in the end, this country belongs to all the people. And the progress we make depends upon what they do and, in the case of the voters, whether they do. My main goal for the next 48 hours is to get everybody there.

Iraq

Ms. Ryan. Okay, last question. There are some movements, or nonmovements, in Iraq now. What's the next step through the administration for Saddam Hussein?

The President. Well, we're examining that now. As a matter of fact, this afternoon my national security team is meeting. I've already had a couple of briefings about it. I think it's important to go back to the basics. First of all, let's look at the basics.

At the end of the Gulf war, as part of the conditions of peace, Saddam Hussein agreed to suspend his biological, chemical, and nuclear programs, to be subject to inspections to see that that was done and to see that all the materials were destroyed. We were actually making, I thought, quite a bit of progress in that inspection after the last little crisis we had. And we were moving toward a resolution of some of the issues when he first suspended the inspections and now, apparently, has decided to terminate his participation in the U.N. inspection system.

It's a clear violation of the commitments that he made, a clear violation of the U.N. Security Council resolutions. I, personally, am very pleased that the U.N. Security Council, including some people that I think have been a little tolerant with him in the past, strongly condemned what he did. From my point of view, we should keep all our options open, examine the nature of the action and where we are, and then do what's best for the integrity of the United Nations and the interests, the security interests, of the people of the United States.

I think that's all I should say about it now. I want to let my people meet, let them give me some advice, and see where we go from here.

Voter Turnout

Ms. Ryan. Mr. President, thank you so much. Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

The President. I just hope everybody who is listening to this will go and vote on Tuesday. It's no ordinary time and no ordinary election—big stakes. And when it's over, if you vote, even if you don't get your choice, you'll feel a lot better than if you pass.

Voter Intimidation

Ms. Ryan. Thank you so much.

Mr. President, we have a caveat to our interview. In the sermon—well, not the sermon, but when you spoke to the congregation, you talked about voter intimidation.

The President. Yes.

Ms. Ryan. Now, where is this coming from, and what's going on?

The President. Well, for the last several elections there have been examples in various States of Republicans either actually or

threatening to try to intimidate or try to invalidate the votes of African-Americans in precincts that are overwhelmingly African-American, mostly in places where they think it might change the outcome of an election.

And we got some reports yesterday that some unusual steps were going to be taken, which I think you could only conclude would constitute voter intimidation here in Maryland, where we are, and perhaps in Michigan and Kentucky and Georgia and North Carolina and one or two other places. We have always fought it. We asked the Republicans to renounce it yesterday, the idea of having extra police officers just look at people when they go vote, or photographing them or doing videotapes when they go vote or otherwise trying to scare people off from voting is totally abhorrent.

We don't try to keep anybody from voting for the Republicans. We think they have a perfect right to show up and do it. This is not American, this whole voter intimidation business. And if it's going on as has been reported, it ought to be stopped. I would challenge the Republican Party to stand up and stop it. They ought to be like me. I haven't discouraged any Republicans from voting on Tuesday. All I'm trying to do is get the Democrats to go vote. It would suit me if every registered voter in America would show up. And that ought to be their attitude, too.

Ms. Ryan. But you know what the Republicans are going to say. They're going to say you're coming up with this; you're making this whole thing up.

The President. Well, these reports were quite specific. So they can easily show that they're all wrong, factually. And if they are, then I will say, "Good, we've got both parties now in favor of everybody voting." Listen, nothing would please me more than to say, this is something that the Republicans have renounced, and we're going to both be together from now on forever for everybody voting. I would love to say that. I don't take any pleasure in saying what I'm saying here.

NOTE: The interview began at 3:25 p.m. in the Pastor's Parlor at the New Psalmist Baptist Church. In his remarks, the President referred to Rev. Walter Scott Thomas, pastor, New Psalmist Baptist Church; author Toni Morrison; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Telephone Interview With Tom Joyner, Sybil Wilkes, and Myra J. of the Tom Joyner Morning Show

November 2, 1998

Mr. Joyner. We go to Washington, DC, and on the line right now is the President of the United States, President Bill Clinton. Good morning, sir.

The President. Good morning, Tom.

Mr. Joyner. How are you this morning?

The President. I'm great. It's a beautiful day here, a little fall coolness in the air, but it's a beautiful day.

Ms. Wilkes. It's a great day before getting out the vote.

Myra J. Yes.

The President. It is. I hope tomorrow will be as good as today is—with the weather.

African-American Vote

Mr. Joyner. Now, we've been talking all along about how important it is for African-Americans to get out and vote. I want to go back, first of all, and let's talk about the times when black Americans didn't have the right to vote. Because I know that you came up in an era where—you can remember the Little Rock Nine; you can remember Medgar Evans; you can remember the four little girls in Birmingham, where a lot of us only know about these events from recent movies.

The President. Absolutely.

Mr. Joyner. But you remember those times.

The President. I lived through all that. I lived through the churches being bombed and people being driven away from the polls. And then I lived through the poll tax era where people would buy the poll taxes by the roll, and black people had to agree to vote the way they wanted and they—if they could get a certificate for the poll tax. I remember all that——

Mr. Joyner. ——from Arkansas. And you probably heard a lot of hatred growing up in Arkansas, too.

The President. I did. Of course, I did. To me, the passage of the Civil Rights Act,