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The President. For more than 50 years, Arthur Schlesinger has been at the vital center of our public life. He has not only chronicled the American history, he has helped to define it, as the fighting intellectual of the Americans for Democratic Action, adviser to Adlai Stevenson, special assistant to President Kennedy. A renowned historian, like his father, Schlesinger has steered Americans on a straight and sensible course through the changing tides of history, from the age of Jackson to the multicultural Nation in which we live today.

As he has written of the leaders he served, Professor Schlesinger, throughout his life, has taken ''the Promethean responsibility to affirm human freedom against the supposed inevitabilities of history.'' What a remarkable life he has lived; what wonderful books he has written.

Ladies and gentlemen, Arthur Schlesinger.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. Schlesinger.*]

The President. I want to choose my words rather carefully now before honoring one of America's leading students of Presidential rhetoric. [*Laughter*] ''Lincoln,'' Garry Wills has written, ''knew the power of words to win a war, to change history, to shape a nation.'' Garry Wills, too, understands the power of words. And his own books and essays have given eloquent voice to our past and to our present.

In the Pulitzer Prize-winning ''Lincoln at Gettysburg,'' he offered new perspectives on the most important speech in American history—the way it redefined our Constitution in the minds of our people and rededicated our Nation to our revolutionary ideals. Whatever his subject, politics or popular culture, the classics or even boxing, his insight is unsurpassed. I find that difficult to acknowledge from time to time. [*Laughter*] Like his students at Northwestern, Hillary and I, and indeed, all America are grateful for his brilliant and iconoclastic scholarship.

Ladies and gentlemen, Garry Wills.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. Wills.*]

The President. The late Dizzy Gillespie once said of his fellow jazz trumpeter, Louis Armstrong, who had blazed musical and professional trails before him, ''No him, no me.''

Today, a grateful nation says to the 21 medalists in this room, ''No you, no we.'' Thank you for opening doors of hope. Thank you for opening doors of artistic and intellectual possibility. Thank you for opening them for all Americans and lighting the way to our common future.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:18 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Patricia Engel, wife of Representative Eliot L. Engel; Ann Riley, wife of Secretary of Education, Richard W. Riley; and actor/playwrite, Sam Shepard. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Statement Announcing a Presidential Mission to Central America To Assist in the Aftermath of Hurricane Mitch

November 5, 1998

The United States has close and longstanding ties with the people and governments of Central America, and many Americans have close family and cultural ties to these countries. In light of the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch, I have asked Tipper Gore to lead a Presidential mission to Honduras and Nicaragua. Mrs. Gore will travel to the region November 10–11, 1998, to demonstrate our commitment to assist the people of Central America as they recover from this catastrophe.

Mrs. Gore will deliver supplies and participate in disaster relief efforts. She will be joined by U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Brian Atwood and Members of Congress on the mission. I believe that this trip will expand awareness throughout the U.S. and the world of the devastation faced by the people of Central America in order to encourage a global relief effort.

Statement on Iraq's Noncompliance With United Nations Resolutions

November 5, 1998

Iraq's latest attempt to block the vital work of the international weapons inspectors is totally unacceptable. That is not just my belief or America's belief; it is the demand of the international community. A short while ago, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution condemning Iraq's intransigence and insisting it immediately resume full cooperation with the weapons inspectors—no ifs, no ands, no buts about it.

It is long past time for Iraq to meet its obligations to the world. After the Gulf war, the international community demanded and Iraq agreed to declare and destroy all of its chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons capability and the missiles to deliver them, and to meet other U.N. Security Council resolutions. We imposed these conditions to ensure that Iraq would no longer threaten the region or the world. We kept sanctions in place—exempting food, medicine, and other humanitarian supplies—to make sure that Iraq made good on its commitments.

Now, the better part of a decade later, Iraq continues to shirk its clear obligations. Iraq has no one to blame but itself—and the people of Iraq have no one to blame but Saddam Hussein—for the position Iraq finds itself in today. Iraq could have ended its isolation long ago by simply complying with the will of the world. The burden is on Iraq to get back in compliance and meet its obligations—immediately.

Remarks at the Arts and Humanities Awards Dinner

November 5, 1998

Ladies and gentlemen, good evening. The good news is this is the only speech you have to listen to tonight. And I want to, first of all, welcome all of you back to the White House. To all of our honorees and their families and friends who are here today, let me say, for Hillary and me this is a day we look forward to every year, but today was an especially wonderful day. And as each of our honorees came through the line tonight, they all commented on how they felt that they were in quite good company today, being honored, and I agree with that.

As I see so often when it comes to maintaining stability in the global economy or working for peace in Bosnia or Kosovo or Northern Ireland or the Middle East, perhaps more than any other time in our over 220-year history, the entire world now looks to the United States to exert responsible leadership in technological innovation, preventing war, promoting peace, promoting prosperity and freedom and democracy.

I think it is worth asking ourselves tonight, when the historians and novelists, the poets and painters, look back on America in the last years of the 20th century, on the verge of a new millennium, what will they say of that kind of work and that kind of leadership. For clearly the world does look to us for cultural leadership. The influence of our books, our movies, our music, our plays have never stopped at our borders. But now, thanks to technology, they reach more rapidly into even the remotest corners of the world. For example, in Bhutan, a Himalayan country so isolated just 5,000 people actually visit it every year, you can still find some of this year's most popular Hollywood blockbusters, for better or worse. [*Laughter*]

Hillary's book, ''It Takes a Village,'' has been translated into a myriad of languages, not just French or Spanish or German but Bulgarian, even Kazakh. More than ever before, the world is listening to what America has to say. As our leading artists and intellectuals, you will have to answer. It is a tremendous opportunity and an enormous responsibility.

So tonight I challenge you to rise to this task and to relish it and, through your art, your music, your ideas, to make this time not simply a Golden Age for the United States, but a time of greater understanding, enlightenment, and, yes, enjoyment for the entire world.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.