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history of the White House, indeed, of the Untied States itself—and too long to let an injustice lie uncorrected.

The Army exonerated him in 1976, changed his discharge to honorable, and reburied him with full honors. But one thing remained to be done, and now it will be. With great pleasure and humility, I now offer a full pardon to Lieutenant Henry Ossian Flipper of the United States Army. This good man now has completely recovered his good name.

It has been a trying thing for the family to fight this long battle, to confront delays and bureaucratic indifference, but this is a day of affirmation. It teaches us that, although the wheels of justice turn slowly at times, still they turn. It teaches that time can heal old wounds and redemption comes to those who persist in a righteous cause. Most of all, it teaches us—Lieutenant Flipper's family teaches us—that we must never give up the fight to make our country live up to its highest ideals.

Outside of this room, Henry Flipper is not known to most Americans. All the more reason to remember him today. His remarkable life story is important to us, terribly important, as we continue to work—on the edge of a new century and a new millennium—on deepening the meaning of freedom at home, and working to expand democracy and freedom around the world, to give new life to the great experiment begun in 1776. This is work Henry Flipper would have been proud of.

Each of you who worked so hard for this day is a living chapter in the story of Lieutenant Flipper. I thank you for your devotion, your courage, your persistence, your unshakable commitment. I thank you for believing and proving that challenges never disappear, but in the long run, freedom comes to those who persevere.

Thank you very, very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:33 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to William C. King, Lieutenant Flipper's great-grandnephew; and former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Colin Powell, USA (Ret.). This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks at a Dinner Celebrating the 90th Anniversary of the NAACP

February 19, 1999

I have been friends with Chairman Bond a long time. We have had many interesting conversations; not all of them have been that laudatory. But Julian, I have that on film now, and I'm going to play it—[*laughter*]—whenever I need a little boost in life, I'm just going to turn that film on. [*Laughter*]

Thank you. I want to say publicly something I said to Julian Bond privately when he agreed to become the chair of the NAACP. I called him, and I thanked him. And I thank him again. And I thank all of you for what you are doing.

When Kweisi Mfume agreed to become president of the NAACP and leave the Congress, I wept. [*Laughter*] But he told me, he said, ''Now, don't worry.'' He said, ''I'll have a good replacement in Congress''—and he did—''and I need to do this. It's the right thing for my country and for my people.'' And he, too, has served well. And I'm very proud of our friendship and of the service.

I thank all of you who are helping. When Suzanne DuBose was up here talking about scientists slowing down the speed of light and the rest of us speeding up the speed of justice, I wish I had thought of that myself. [*Laughter*] That line won't rest. It will be used again and again. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Bell Atlantic and all the other companies who are standing with the NAACP. I am delighted to see Bishop Graves and the other officers here. And Bishop, thank you for your friendship.

Most of the people with our administration have been introduced, but I want to thank Secretary and Mrs. West and Secretary Slater and Bill Lann Lee for being here, and Judy Winston, who did such a good job with our initiative on race. I want to acknowledge, also, the presence in the audience of Mary Beth Cahill, our new Special Assistant to the President for Public Liaison. And I want to recognize Ben Johnson, and many of you know he is the first Director of the White House Office on our Initiative for One America, and I thank him for doing that. Since Bell is so well recognized, there's one other former member of the White House staff

here, Eric Eve, who went on for the money and the fame of Bell. I want to thank him.

Ladies and gentlemen, I came here tonight for two purposes. One is to say a simple thank you. Thank you for what you've done for America, and thank you for being my friends. I am grateful. I am very grateful. The second is to say that—as Suzanne said so eloquently—we're in a lot better shape than we used to be, but nowhere near where we ought to be. And what we have to do as a people, as a whole country—but especially you, because you know—you know things about where we are and where we need to go that not every American does, because of the life you've lived and the things you've seen and the work you do. You know that no great nation, and certainly not this one, can afford to say, well, we're a lot better off than we used to be, so let's take a vacation from progress. Let's take a vacation from our struggle for liberty and equality. Let's take a vacation from our attempt to spread the reach of prosperity and freedom to Africa, to the Caribbean, to our friends in the Americas.

You know that this is not a time to take a break; it is a time to thank God for our prosperity and our opportunities and make the best use of them. The Sun is shining, and we need to make hay. We need to work while the Sun is shining.

And to do what I would like to do in these last 2 years of my Presidency, just like the last 6, we need the help of every one of your 2,200 branches. We need to forge new coalitions across the lines of race and class and religion. We need to close America's remaining opportunity gaps.

A lot of you have lived in homes when you were younger—and not so well off and prosperous as you are now—[*laughter*]—where there were literally gaps in the walls or the windows, and you could feel the wind blowing. Well, there are a lot of people still getting blown by those kinds of winds and the opportunity gaps of America.

Kweisi said, as all of you know, that the NAACP was formed 90 years ago. It was founded, as all of you know, I'm sure, in direct response to a riot in Springfield, Illinois. Now, I learned something in getting ready to come here tonight that I did not know. I had always thought it was simply a cruel irony that this riot occurred in Abraham Lincoln's hometown and where he was buried. I learned that the white mob was actually, deliberately conducting the riot there, trying to make Mr. Lincoln turn over in his grave. They yelled, storming through the black neighborhoods, ''Lincoln freed you; we'll show you where you belong.''

Well, quite to the contrary, it was the NAACP that helped to show you where you belong. On any bus and any lunch counter and any voting booth, in any school, in the Armed Forces, in the highest echelons of Government and business, you belong everywhere. And so do your friends. And we will never make what Congressman John Lewis so beautifully called the ''beloved community'' until everybody who belongs can be wherever they belong.

I am very grateful for the work we have done together in these last 6 years. Previous speakers commented on all these folks from our administration, and how our crowd looks like America. What I would like history to say is, ''They had the administration that looked the most like America and that did the most for America, proving that excellence and diversity and community all go hand in hand.''

I am grateful that we have stronger communities, with a dropping crime rate; that there are only about half as many people on welfare as there were 6 years ago; that the doors of college are open to every high school student who will work for it through the HOPE scholarship and the other academic aid that we have provided; that we have the longest peacetime expansion in history and the lowest peacetime unemployment since 1957. I am grateful that the prosperity is wider, with the lowest African-American unemployment rate ever recorded, the highest African-American homeownership rate ever recorded, record numbers of new African-American businesses every year.

But it takes a long time to get it all fixed. Just before I came over here tonight, 117 years too late, I awarded a pardon, posthumously, to Lieutenant Henry Flipper, who, because of racial prejudice, was wrongfully convicted of conduct unbecoming an officer and dismissed from the Army more than

a century ago. He was born a slave. He was the first African-American graduate of West Point. He served with great distinction in the 10th Cavalry. In Fort Sill, Oklahoma, he eliminated the cause of malaria as a civil engineer by digging what is still called ''Flipper's Ditch,'' and is now a national monument. He lived to be 84. He served as an adviser to a Cabinet Secretary; he did all kinds of wonderful work throughout the world. He was cleared of wrongdoing 20 years ago, but he was never, never fully restored in his good name, until about an hour and a half ago, when, in the presence of 16 of his family members, several African-American graduates of West Point, General Colin Powell, and a number of others who are here, I signed his pardon.

Now, we don't want the rest of America to have to wait 117 years for justice. And we don't want people to have to wait until they're gone for people to say something halfway nice about them. We don't want to have America outraged, even though we honor the outrage, by another killing like the killing of James Byrd.

We know still, every day there are qualified African-Americans who are turned away from home loans or business loans; African-American drivers pulled over because they look suspicious. Some of you call it the offense of ''driving while black.'' We know every day there are African-American children who are stuck in failing schools when they're entitled to good schools.

So we've been working at it for 6 years, to try to bring a special focus to the need to build one America, and to deal not only with the problems of African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans and Native Americans but the fact that we are now becoming the most diverse democracy in the world—California, 10 percent Asian-American, soon to have no majority race. We started the initiative on race in 1997 to institutionalize the work of building one America. I appointed Ben Johnson to continue our work, in an organized, specific, and concrete way. And I want you to help us do that.

I would like it very much if, after the next Presidential election, the new President is asked repeatedly. ''Now who is going to head your One America office?'' I don't want this to be a one-shot deal. I want this to be a journey, not a destination. And I want it to be something that makes us think more and more every day, seriously, about how we're going to build unity out of our increasing diversity, get rid of our old problems, and meet our new challenges. And I want you to help me do that.

I want you to help us, also, to pass this new budget, which helps to close some of those large opportunity gaps: the disparities in education; in jobs; in economic development; in civil rights enforcement; in homeownership; and quality health care.

I came here tonight to celebrate and thank you, not to talk policy, but I want to mention just two areas. First, the economy. We all know that even though we have the lowest peacetime unemployment rate since 1957, there are places that haven't felt much of this vaunted recovery. We all know that even though we have the lowest African-American unemployment rate every recorded—and the same for Hispanic-Americans—it's still quite a bit higher than the national average. And for young, single men, it is still quite high indeed.

Now, if we can't use this moment of unprecedented prosperity to bring jobs and opportunity and enterprise to the neighborhoods and to the people who have not yet felt it, but are willing to work for it, we will never get around to doing the job. Now is the time to do that.

So the NAACP is a nonpartisan organization; you do have Republican supporters out across this country who believe in civil rights. And I want you to go get them. [*Laughter*] And haul them up here to Washington, with the Democrats, too, and say, ''Look, we want you to pass this new markets initiative. We can put $15 billion in private investment into neighborhoods in this country that have not seen new investment and new jobs and new opportunity for people by giving the right kind of incentives, the right kind of tax cuts, the right kind of loan guarantees, the right kind of support to business people. And if we don't get around to doing it now, we will never get around to it.'' We need to do it now.

I also want to tell you that a lot of farsighted business people have figured out that

it would be very good for the American economy. Why? For the first 5 years of my Presidency, 30 percent of our growth came from expanded exports, selling more to other people around the world. Last year we had a good year, but we didn't get 30 percent growth from our exports. Why? You know why, because of the financial troubles in Asia and in a lot of Latin American countries. Now, I think we ought to help our friends in Asia, Latin America, and in Africa to trade with us more so we can grow and they can grow. But in the meanwhile, we've got the most significant untapped market for the growth of the American economy right here at home, in all these neighborhoods that still are not growing as they should.

The second thing I want to ask you to do is to help me give every child in this country a world-class education. I want you to help me finish the job of hiring 100,000 more teachers. I want you to help me finish the job. I want you to help me again. I want you to bring your Republican and your Democratic friends up here and help me convince the Congress not to say no this time to our proposal to build or modernize 5,000 schools. I'm tired of going into these inner-city schools and seeing schools so old we can't even hook them up to computers, with broken windows and peeling plaster. It's wrong.

And in many other areas, you go, and the kids are all having half their classes in house trailers because the schools are bursting at the seams. We need to do that. I want you to help me continue our work to hook up every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000. I want to ask you to help me change the way we give out Federal money, to not become victim to a tyranny of low expectations.

I have said many times that I want to end the practice of social promotion, but not for the purpose of punishing the kids for a system that is failing them. And let me just give you one fact—I said this in the State of the Union, but I'm going to say it until I'm convinced every American knows it—last year, in the international test in math and science, a representative sample of American children, by race and income, scored near the top of the world in the fourth grade test. By the eighth grade, they had fallen to average. By the 12th grade, they were near the bottom. Nobody came and took brain cells out of those kids' heads. They did not get dumber. The system was failing them.

So, yes, I believe we should end social promotion, but we also are tripling funds for after-school and summer school and tutoring programs and sending more college students into the schools to mentor kids when they're in middle school and tell them they can stay in school and go to college and what they need to do to do that. We need to do that.

We are dramatically increasing our scholarship program to tell young people, ''If you'll go into inner cities or isolated rural areas and teach school for 3 or 4 years, we'll pay off your student loan. We want you to go out there and give something back to your country.''

We have got to change the way we spend the money. The teachers and the parents and the kids are telling us what works; we ought to stop funding what doesn't work and start funding what does. We ought to say that school districts should raise standards for teachers, and we put money in there. There are so many of our teachers out there having to teach courses, with the schools overcrowded, that they don't have college majors or college minors in.

That's what happens in high school. It's not that these people are not dedicated. They are, but they have not had the chance to be properly prepared. And the schools can't get enough teachers to put enough people in the classrooms with the kind of academic background. We ought to help them change that.

And there are school districts with schools that are doing great and schools that aren't doing so well. The school with the biggest—the State with the biggest gain in student performance in the last couple of years is North Carolina, because they adopted a strategy that says, ''We've got to turn around or shut down failing schools.'' When you do that, you almost never have to shut one down. They find a way to turn around.

The great English scholar Benjamin—I mean, Samuel Johnson, once said—I had Benjamin Johnson on my mind—[*laughter*]—Samuel Johnson said that it is remarkable how the prospect of one's own demise concentrates the mind. [*Laughter*] We don't

want to punish anybody; we want to turn schools around—and there's things in this budget to do that—and to help the teachers and to give the parents more information and to help more districts set up charter schools and to do things that will work, so that we don't have one size fits all.

I read a story the other day about a school district out West that organized a school just for high school dropouts. Let them come at different hours. Let them have access to computers and special tutors. And all of a sudden, almost all the dropouts came back to school. There are all kinds of different things that can be done to raise the performance level of our schools.

But I think all of you know that we'll never really have one America, and we'll never really get by discrimination, unless we create opportunity in the schools and opportunity in the economy. So I ask you to help me pass these initiatives.

Now, let me just say one last thing. I was delighted to be asked to come tonight, honored to accept. The work that I have been privileged to do as President, and before, in my life to advance the cause of equal opportunity is perhaps the thing I cherish most, of all the things that I and my wife and our administration have been able to do.

You'd be amazed how may times in my weekly lunch with the Vice President, after we get through with whatever business we have to do, we get back to talking about this subject. I guess it's because I grew up in the segregated South. Maybe it's because I met and was influenced by people like some of you here tonight, so many years ago. But part of it is, I know that it's a pure miracle that, starting out from where I did as a kid, I wound up here tonight. A pure miracle.

I once heard a guy say every politician wants you to believe he was born in a log cabin he built himself. [*Laughter*] But the truth is, we don't build our log cabins ourselves. And not a person standing here or sitting here tonight got here on your own. And most of us get out of this life better off than we deserve, because God is good and so are the people that we get in touch with.

But it really bothers me that there are children in this country, who are certainly just as smart, full of as many dreams, with whatever abilities God gave me—that they have them—who may not be able to live out their dreams. And if all of us as citizens have one responsibility—apart from honoring our country and Constitution and laws—it ought to be to make sure that at the end of our days we have done everything we can to make sure no one we ever touched was denied the chance to live their dreams. We know we'll be better off when that's true. We know we'll all get something out.

I look at these young kids that are here tonight, these young people. I'm kind of jealous, actually. If they'd let me be 20, I think I'd let them be President. [*Laughter*] You know? I think about the life that lies before them and all that they might be. I imagine, 30 years from now, some African-American, Hispanic, Asian female standing here as President of the United States, you know?

But I know that as long as there are Native American reservations, where young American citizens live in communities where the diabetes rate is two and three and four and five times the national average; as long as there are neighborhoods where kids really don't have a chance to get a world-class education; as long as there are places where nobody's taking care of the pollution, so the health rates are not what they ought to be; as long as there is anyplace where anybody can't live out their dreams, the NAACP will have work to do, and America will have new ground to break. And together, there is no better cause for our energies and our lives.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTES: The President spoke at 9:07 p.m. in the Great Hall at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. In his remarks, he referred to Julian Bond, chairman of the board, Kweisi Mfume, president and chief executive officer, and Bishop William H. Graves, vice chairman of the board, NAACP; Suzanne DuBose, president, Bell Atlantic Foundation; Gail West, wife of Secretary of Veterans Affairs Togo D. West, Jr.; Judith A. Winston, former Executive Director, President's Advisory Board on Race; and Gen. Colin Powell, USA (Ret.), chairman, America's Promise—The Alliance For Youth. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

February 20, 1999

Good morning. This weekend, Governors from all over our country are here in Washington to talk about the long-term challenges facing our Nation as we prepare to enter the 21st century. Of those challenges, none is more important than educating our children—all our children—to world-class standards. Today I want to talk about how we must work together at every level of government and in every community, to make sure our Nation's public schools are the best in the world.

For 6 years now, improving education has been one of our highest priorities. Even as we have held fast to fiscal discipline, replacing an age of crippling budget deficits with a new era of budget surpluses, we have nearly doubled our investment in education and training.

The balanced budget I sent to Washington this month strengthens that commitment to our children's education with even more resources to help States improve accountability, to build or modernize 6,000 schools,* to reduce class size in the early grades, to start more after-school programs, to connect every classroom and library to the Internet, and to finish the job of hiring 100,000 new highly trained teachers.

This is an education agenda for the 21st century. But with more children entering school than ever before and enrollments continuing to rise, we know we must draw on every resource we possess to strengthen and improve our public schools.

As both a former Governor and a parent, I know the greatest innovations in education do not start in Washington. They start in local schools and school districts, in community councils and parent-teacher groups. They start in States like North Carolina, where Governor Hunt has led the way to improve teacher quality, with performance assessment for new teachers and incentives for veteran teachers to become even more proficient and to become board-certified master teachers.

They start in Michigan, where Governor Engler is supporting greater accountability in schools by requiring school districts to send parent report cards on how well their schools are doing. They start in Delaware, where Governor Carper is putting an end to social promotion by insisting that students pass State tests before they move to next grades. They start in Pennsylvania, where Governor Ridge is improving school safety with effective discipline codes. They're starting in States like California, where Governor Davis has called on the State legislature to turn around failing schools with a new accountability plan.

As I have said many times, every problem in education in America has been solved somewhere, by somebody, in America. The trick is helping more communities to put those proven solutions to work in their own public schools. I believe the National Government has an obligation to help them do that.

That's why, in my State of the Union Address, I proposed an ambitious new agenda to invest more of our resources in what we know is working and to stop investing in what doesn't. My plan will help every school district to take five steps that are already working in schools around the country, steps advocated by teachers and principals and parents and students themselves: ending social promotion, but investing more money to help students with summer school and after-school programs, so we don't blame students when the system fails them; adopting and enforcing reasonable discipline codes; giving parents report cards on their children's schools and giving parents and children more choice of schools, with charter schools and more public school choice; turning around or shutting down the worst performing public schools; and ensuring that all new teachers are trained in the subject they'll be teaching.

Now, these steps are all based on proven experience. They're common sense. We have to make them common practice in every school district in America.

All across our Nation, we're seeing a grassroots revolution in education, a revolution in accountability and rising expectations. This year we have a rare opportunity to use our new prosperity to help this revolution spread

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* White House correction.