

I'm going to do what I can to get our country to reach across party lines to deal with the aging of America, to reform Social Security and Medicare and do something about making long-term care more available, and helping people save for their own retirement more. I'm going to do what I can to make sure that we finish our work of modernizing our schools, help to modernize facilities; make sure we hook all the classrooms up to the Internet; provide more opportunities for more charter schools, like you have in this school district; and other things that will raise standards; and dramatically increase the resources we provide to local schools for after-school programs, summer school programs, mentoring programs, the kind of things that will help our kids, so that we can have more uniform standards of excellence in education. And there are many other things that I intend to do.

The Vice President has a livability agenda we worked very hard on that we're going to try to pass to try to help all of our communities deal more with traffic problems, with having the need for more green space, as well as setting aside more land in reserve.

I'm very—by the way, just parenthesis—I'm very proud of the fact that our administration has protected more land in perpetuity than any administration in the history of the Republic except those of Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt. And I think 50 years from now people will be very grateful—even the people in the red rocks area of Utah, who are still kind of mad at me about it, I think they will be grateful.

So there are a lot of things that still have to be done. But I have to tell you, if you ask me to describe in a sentence what I think is the most important outstanding work of the country, I would say it is an attempt to get people to define community in terms of our common humanity instead of our evident differences, both at home and abroad.

And if you look at what happened in Littleton, there are many tragedies and doubtless, a lot of the elements, as it's all unpacked, will turn out to be highly peculiar to the two young men in question, and the whole psychology of murder-suicide. But there is also, clearly, an element of—part of what drove them over the brink was the fact that they

were in a group that was disrespected, and they developed a grievance against those they thought were disrespecting them. And then since they thought they were disrespected, they looked around and they found another group—the minority students in the schools, in this case—that they could then look down on.

I was just in Texas with the daughter of James Byrd, Jr., the African-American who was dragged to death and virtually dismembered by people who killed him because he was black—you remember, about a year ago. I was, the other night in Washington, at the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights dinner with the mother of Matthew Shepard, the young man who was killed in Wyoming not so very long ago because he was gay.

And I say this to point out, if America wants to do good around the world—I appreciate what Congressman Filner said about Kosovo, and I want to come back to that—but if you want to do good around the world, we've first got to try to be good at home. And we have to recognize that there is something deep within all of us that represents the oldest curse of human society, which is the propensity to hate the other people who are different from us.

And if you look, isn't it ironic—here we are, you and I were talking about how we had to break everybody's mindset of believing that in order to grow the economy, you had to have industrial age energy use patterns. We had to modernize energy use. But if you look at what they're fighting about in Kosovo or what they fought about in Bosnia or what they slaughtered over in Rwanda or what the continuing turmoil of the Middle East is about or Northern Ireland, they're not arguing about who is going to get the franchise to sell solar panels or who gets to represent Microsoft.

Interesting, isn't it? We're thinking—look at all the high-tech activity in this room. We're thinking about a 21st century in which we want our kids to have pen pals in every conceivable country of the world, travel around, you know, do unimaginable things because of all these technological wonders. We all expect to live to be 125 because by—within the next couple of years the human genome will be totally unpacked and the

intersection of computer technology and biomedical discoveries will doubtless lead to breathtaking and, at present, unimaginable discoveries that will enable us to prolong life, prevent disease, cure disease.

But the biggest problem we've got is the oldest problem of human society. First, people are scared of people that are different from them, and their fear leads them to hate them, and their hatred of them leads them to dehumanize them, and then that legitimizes killing them. And this has been a factor in human relationships since people first joined together in tribes—before there was any writing or any language or anything else. And here we are, on the edge of this great modern age, beleaguered with this.

And so I say to you, to me that is very important. One of the people at our table was telling me that she was a native of Sarajevo, and that these are old and deep differences here. That is true.

I do not believe—if I could move to Kosovo for a minute—I don't believe the United States can intervene in every ethnic conflict. I don't think we can ask people to like each other. I don't think that can be a requirement of international law or a justification for military intervention. We can't even ask people not to fight each other if one group wants to secede and the other doesn't.

But we can say that in the international arena there ought to be certain limits on this. And what is now euphemistically called "ethnic cleansing"—when you unpack it, what does that word mean? That means you look at people who are of a different—in the case of the Balkans, religious group, and therefore—and with a different ethnic history—and you say, "I'm afraid of you; I don't like you; I hate you; I dehumanize you, therefore, I can kill you; I can rape your daughters; I can blow up your mosques; I can blow up your museums; I can destroy your historical records; I can take your own property records, and I can burn them up. I can take the young people of military age and wrap them up and set fire to them while they're still alive. I can do these things because this is my land, and our greatness depends upon our ability to get rid of you."

And in the most benign form, "We'll burn all your villages and run you by the hundreds of thousands off your land, because we can't share this land with you, because you're Muslims and we're Orthodox Christians; you're Albanians, and we're not. And, oh, by the way, 600 years ago the Muslims came through here and had a big battle in Kosovo, and we've hated you all ever since."

Now, what our position ought to be in this is not that we're telling other countries how to live; not that we're telling them how—what their governmental arrangements have to be, but that in Europe—and by the way, I think, anywhere else that the United Nations or others have the power to stop it—we say we know there will be ethnic conflicts; we know there will be civil wars. There's a terrible regrettable conflict going on right now between Eritrea and Ethiopia, who once were one and then split, and now they're, in effect, having their tribal conflict over the border.

No one has suggested—10,000 people have been killed there—no one has suggested that some third party should intervene and fight both of them. That is not what is going on in Kosovo. That is not what Bosnia was about. That was about ethnic cleansing; it's a mass killing of people because of their ethnic and religious background. And if we can't stop that in the underbelly of Europe on the edge of the 21st century, then we're going to have a very difficult world ahead of us—because there will be a lot more of it, they will get aligned with organized criminals, with terrorists, with people who have access to weapons of mass destruction; they will use all this technology and all these open airports and all this other stuff, and these conflicts will not stay confined to the land on which they occur.

So this is in America's interest, but it is also morally the right thing to do. Think about these children who were here today. What do you want their children's America to be like? What do you want their children's world to be like? The 21st century can and should be the most interesting period in all of human history, in a largely, profoundly positive way. But it will not happen unless we find ways to deal with our differences which, after all, as we see in America, make