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would win the cold war just in the ordinary course of things; and we thought we would solve our civil rights problems in the Congress and the courts, and we would become a just and decent society in the course of things.

So I finished high school. It wasn't too long that we had riots in Watts. It wasn't too long after that we had demonstrations in every city in America against the Vietnam war. By the time I graduated from college on June 8th, 1968, it was—the Republicans got hold of the mike. [*Laughter*] Listen to this. I want you to listen to this. I graduated from college. In '64, everybody thought things were just going to be on automatic.

In 1968, I graduated from college; 2 days after Robert Kennedy was killed; 2 months after Martin Luther King was killed; 9 weeks after Lyndon Johnson, who won with the biggest majority in modern history, couldn't run for reelection. The country was split right down the middle over the Vietnam war, and we had an election for President that was determined on a slogan called the Silent Majority. Do you remember that? And if you weren't in the Silent Majority, you were in the loud minority. That was me. [*Laughter*] And there was something wrong with the loud minority. It was like "us" and "them." And we've been having those "us" and "them" elections ever since. We've been "using" and "them-ing" ourselves to death.

And I tried to end that. But I haven't entirely succeeded, not when these Jewish kids get shot going to their school in Los Angeles just because they're Jewish, or Matthew Shepard gets stretched out on a rack and killed just because he's gay, or James Byrd gets dragged to death in Texas because he's black, or a white supremacist in the middle of the country kills a Korean Christian coming out of a church, and the black former basketball coach at Northwestern, and he says he belongs to a church that doesn't believe in God but does believe in white supremacy. We haven't gotten rid of all that.

What I want to tell you is, I say this as a person, not a President. I have waited for 35 long years for my country to be in a place to build the future of our dreams again. And it's easier for us now, because we don't have the civil rights crisis at home. It's easier for us now because the cold war is behind us now. It's easier for us now because we're a nation of many, many nations growing more diverse every day, with California leading the way.

But the stakes are still very high. And we should be humbled, as well as happy, by this good fortune. And we should feel responsible, not entitled, as a result of this prosperity. I'm telling you, I lived through it before. It can go away in the flash of a moment. We should cherish this. And you should understand—and I want you to think about it tomorrow when they walk in Selma. People died for the right to vote. You've got to go vote. You've got to go get your friends to participate. But you've got to make the right decisions about what is this about.

And I'm telling you, we've got a second chance as a country in my lifetime. Most of us have gotten second chances as people. Most of us are darn grateful for it. That's the way we ought to feel as citizens. And if we do, everything will turn out just fine.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 p.m. at the Cafe des Artistes. In his remarks, he referred to Edward G. Rendell, general chair, Democratic National Committee; Chuck and Elizabeth Meyer and Richard and Daphna Zimon, dinner hosts; Marc Nathanson, chair, Mapleton Investment Corp., and his wife, Jane; singer Kenneth Edmonds, popularly known as Babyface, and his wife, Tracey; actor Gregory Peck and his wife, Veronique; singers Mac Davis and Olivia Newton John; and Gov. Gray Davis of California. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on the 35th Anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights March in Selma, Alabama

March 5, 2000

Thank you. This is a day the Lord has made for this very purpose. Congressman Lewis, Mrs. King, Reverend Jackson, Reverend Harris, Congressman Houghton, and Congressman Hilliard, and all the Members of the Congress who are here. I thank all the members of my administration who are here, especially Harris Wofford, the head of our AmeriCorps program who was here with

you 35 years ago today. I thank young Antar Breaux. Didn't he give a fine speech? When he was speaking, John leaned over to me and he said, "You know, I used to give a speech like that when I was young." [*Laughter*]

I thank Senator Sanders and Rose Sanders for the work they are doing with this magnificent Voting Rights Museum. I thank Joe Lowrey and Andy Young and Julian Bond and all the others who have come here to be with us. And I thank you, Hosea Williams and Mrs. Boynton and Mrs. Foster and Mrs. Brown and Mr. Doyle and Reverend Hunter, all the heroes of the movement from that day, those here on this platform and those in the audience.

I bring you greetings from three of my partners, the First Lady, Hillary, and the Vice President and Mrs. Gore, who wish they could be here today. I thank Ambassador Sisulu for joining us. I thank Governor Siegelman for making us feel welcome. And I thank Mayor Smitherman for the long road he, too, has traveled in these last 35 years.

Now, let me say to you a few things. I come today as your President and also as a child of the South. The only thing that John Lewis said I disagree with is that I could have chosen not to come. That is not true. I had to be here in Selma today.

Thirty-five years ago, a single day in Selma became a seminal moment in the history of our country. On this bridge, America's long march to freedom met a roadblock of violent resistance. But the marchers, thank God, would not take a detour on the road to freedom.

By 1965, their will had already been steeled by triumph and tragedy, by the breaking of the color line at Ole Miss, the historic March on Washington, the assassinations of Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and President Kennedy, the bombing deaths of four little black girls at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, the Mississippi Freedom Summer, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

On this Bloody Sunday, about 600 foot soldiers, some of whom, thankfully, remain with us today, absorbed with uncommon dignity the unbridled force of racism, putting their lives on the line for that most basic American right: the simple right to vote, a right which already had been long guaranteed and long denied.

Here in Dallas County, there were no black elected officials because only one percent of voting-age blacks, about 250 people, were registered. They were kept from the polls, not by their own indifference or alienation but by systematic exclusion, by the poll tax, by intimidation, by literacy testing that even the testers, themselves, could not pass. And they were kept away from the polls by violence.

It must be hard for the young people in this audience to believe, but just 35 years ago, Americans, both black and white, lost their lives in the voting rights crusade. Some died in Selma and Marion. One of the reasons I came here today is to say to the families and those who remember—Jimmy Lee Jackson, Reverend James Reeb, Viola Liuzzo, and others whose names we may never know—we honor them for the patriots they were.

They did not die in vain. Just one week after Bloody Sunday, President Johnson spoke to the Nation in stirring words. He said, "At times, history and fate meet in a single time and a single place to shape a turning point in man's unending search for freedom. So it was at Lexington and Concord. So it was a century ago at Appomattox. So it was last week in Selma, Alabama. Their cause must be our cause."

Two weeks after Bloody Sunday, emboldened by their faith in God and the support of a white southerner in the Oval Office, Dr. King led 4,000 people across the Pettus Bridge on the 54-mile trek to Montgomery. And 6 months later, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, proclaiming that the vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men. It has been said that the Voting Rights Act was signed in ink in Washington, but it first was signed in blood in Selma.

Those who walked by faith across this bridge led us all to a better tomorrow. In 1964, there were only 300 black elected officials nationwide and just 3 African-Americans in the Congress. Today, those numbers

have swelled to nearly 9,000 black elected officials and 39 members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Today, African-Americans hold the majority in the Selma City Council and school board, because the number of African-American registered voters in Dallas County has risen from 250 to more than 20,000.

There's another point I want to make today. Just as Dr. King predicted, the rise of black southerners to full citizenship also lifted their white neighbors. "It is history's wry paradox," he said, "that when Negroes win their struggle to be free, those who have held them down will themselves be free for the first time."

After Selma, free white and black southerners crossed the bridge to the new South, leaving hatred and isolation on the far side—building vibrant cities, thriving economies, and great universities. A new South still enriched by the old-time religion and rhythms and rituals we all love, now open to all things modern and people of all races and faiths from all over the world. A new South in which whites have gained at least as much as blacks from the march to freedom. Without Selma, Atlanta would never have had the Super Bowl or the Olympics. And without Selma, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton would never have been elected President of the United States.

The advance of freedom and opportunity has taken our entire Nation a mighty long way. We begin the new millennium with great prosperity and the lowest levels of African-American and Hispanic unemployment ever recorded, with greater diversity in all walks of life and a cherished role in helping those beyond our borders to overcome their own racial and ethnic and tribal and religious conflicts. We have built the bridge to the 21st century we can all walk across.

We come here today to say, we could not have done it if brave Americans had not first walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Yes, we have come a mighty long way. But our journey is not over, for despite our unprecedented prosperity and real social progress, there are still wide and disturbing disparities that fall along the color line in health and income, in educational achievement and perceptions of justice. My fellow Americans, there are still bridges yet to cross.

As long as there are people in places, including neighborhoods here in Selma, that have not participated in our economic prosperity, we have a bridge to cross. As long as African-American income hovers at nearly half that of whites, we have another bridge to cross. As long as African-American and Hispanic children are more likely than white children to live in poverty and less likely to attend or graduate from college, we have another bridge to cross. As long as African-Americans and other minorities suffer 2, 3, even 4 times the rates of heart disease, AIDS, diabetes, and cancer, we have another bridge to cross.

As long as our children continue to die as the victims of mindless violence, we have another bridge to cross. As long as African-Americans and Latinos anywhere in America believe they are unfairly targeted by police because of the color of their skin, and police believe they are unfairly judged by their communities because of the color of their uniforms, we have another bridge to cross.

As long as the waving symbol of one American's pride is the shameful symbol of another American's pain, we have another bridge to cross. As long as the power of America's growing diversity remains diminished by discrimination and stained by acts of violence against people just because they're black or Hispanic or Asian or gay or Jewish or Muslim—as long as that happens to any American, we have another bridge to cross. And as long as less than half our eligible voters exercise the right that so many here in Selma marched and died for, we've got a very large bridge to cross.

But the bridges are there to be crossed. They stand on the strong foundations of our Constitution. They were built by our forebears through silent tears and weary years. They are waiting to take us to higher ground.

Oh, yes, the bridges are built. We can see them clearly. But to get to the other side, we, too, will have to march. I ask you to remember Dr. King's words: "Human progress never rolls on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God."

My fellow Americans, this day has a special meaning for me, for I, too, am a son of the South, the old, segregated South. And those of you who marched 35 years ago set me free, too, on Bloody Sunday, free to know you, to work with you, to love you, to raise my child to celebrate our differences and hallow our common humanity.

I thank you all for what you did here. Thank you, Andy and Jesse and Joe, for the lives you have lived since. Thank you, Coretta, for giving up your beloved husband and the blessings of a normal life. Thank you, Ethel Kennedy, for giving up your beloved husband and the blessings of a normal life.

And thank you, John Lewis, for the beatings you took and the heart you kept wide open. Thank you for walking with the wind, hand in hand with your brothers and sisters, to hold America's trembling house down. Thank you for your vision of the beloved community, an America at peace with itself.

I tell you all, as long as Americans are willing to hold hands, we can walk with any wind; we can cross any bridge. Deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:08 p.m. on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. In his remarks, he referred to Coretta Scott King, widow of Martin Luther King, Jr.; civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson; Rev. Jerome Harris, who gave the invocation; Antar Breaux, member, 21st Youth Leadership Movement, who introduced the President; Rose Sanders, president, National Voting Rights Museum, and wife of State Senator Henry (Hank) Sanders; Joseph Lowrey, former president, Southern Christian Leadership Conference; former United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young; Julian Bond, chair, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; South African Ambassador to the U.S. Sheila Sisulu; Gov. Don Siegelman of Alabama; Mayor Joe T. Smitherman of Selma, AL; Ethel Kennedy, widow of Senator Robert F. Kennedy; and the following participants of the 1965 voting rights march: Hosea Williams, Amelia Boynton Robinson, Marie Foster, Lillie Brown, Earnest Doyle, and Rev. J.D. Hunter.

Statement on Legislation To Award the Congressional Gold Medal to John Cardinal O'Connor

March 5, 2000

The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest civilian honor bestowed by the U.S. Congress. Today I am proud to sign legislation ratifying the decision of the Congress to present this award—the first Gold Medal of the new millennium—to His Eminence John Cardinal O'Connor.

For more than 50 years, Cardinal O'Connor has served the Catholic Church and our Nation with constancy and commitment. From his early days performing parish work in his native Philadelphia, to his long service as a military chaplain in places like Korea and Vietnam, to his 16 years leading the Archdiocese of New York, Cardinal O'Connor's journey of faith has been America's blessing.

Whether it was the soldier on the battlefield or the patient battling AIDS, Cardinal O'Connor has ministered with a gentle spirit and a loving heart. Through it all, he has stood strong as an advocate for the poor, a champion for workers, and an inspiration for millions. He has worked tirelessly to bridge divides between those of different backgrounds and faiths, reminding us that the most important thing we share is our common humanity.

Cardinal O'Connor has always had the courage to speak his mind and act on the firmness of his convictions. In recent months, we have seen his courage on display once more in the face of illness. Today, as our Nation salutes Cardinal O'Connor, we thank him for dedicating his life to lifting the lives of others.

Statement on the Sale of F–16 Aircraft to the United Arab Emirates

March 5, 2000

I welcome the news that the negotiation for the sale of F–16 aircraft to the United