

with the absence of domestic crisis or foreign threat to our existence. Are there problems out there at home? Yes. Are there real problems out there, potential and real, around the world? Of course. But this is a very good time.

And we get to imagine the future we want to have for our children and our grandchildren, and then make a decision to build it. And the only concern I've ever had—I know I sound like a broken record because I've been saying this for a year and a half—the only concern I have ever had is that 100 percent of the people understand, first, what a unique moment this is. Younger voters, a lot of them don't even remember what it was like 8 years ago and take all this for granted, which is something that shouldn't happen; and, secondly, that they understand what the real differences are between the candidates for President and Senate and House, and what the consequences are, and they just make a choice, and everybody should be happy about it.

But I think that the closeness of the race indicates, among other things, some uncertainty in the electorate about exactly what is at stake and what the differences are, which means all of us have an opportunity in the last 6 days to try to help bring some clarity to that.

The last point I want to make is on the issue of inclusion. It's been an honor for Hillary and me to have done what we have done, but I think it is a matter of indisputable historical fact that the Vice President supported everything I did for this community and made it clear, was unambiguous, would stand up and never once, ever, took a pass when time came to do that.

So I hope that, for whatever it's worth, 100 percent of your community will know that on election day.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:29 p.m. in the Colonial Room at the Mayflower Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to dinner chair Terry Watanabe; and Andrew Tobias, treasurer, Democratic National Committee.

Interview With April Ryan of American Urban Radio

November 1, 2000

Ms. Ryan. We're in the Oval Office, sitting with President William Jefferson Clinton on this historic occasion. We're sitting at the desk that John Kennedy, Jr., used to run through or crawl through as a child.

Mr. President, thank you so much for this time, for this post-election interview.

The President. I'm glad to do it, April. Thank you.

African-American Voter Turnout

Ms. Ryan. There is a get-out-to-vote effort, a major effort right now. African-Americans, in particular, are said not to be as energized about going to the polls, particularly for your second in charge. Why is it so important that African-Americans go to the polls this time, especially since they came out in big numbers for you, and there's such a difference right now?

The President. I think, first of all, it's important because the election is terribly close. You know, President Carter won by one percent. President Kennedy won by less than one-half of one percent. This promises to be that kind of election, so every vote will count.

Secondly, it's important because the differences between the two candidates for President and the two parties are so great. If you think about where we were 8 years ago, we had an economy in trouble; we had a society that was divided; we had a political system that was paralyzed and generally thought not to be very favorable to African-Americans and other minorities in our country.

Now, 8 years later, we've got the strongest economy we've ever had; we've got a lower crime rate, a cleaner environment, and the number of people without health insurance is going down; the number of people doing well in school and going on to college is going up. Things are moving in the right direction. And the American people are being given a chance to keep building on that progress or to embrace a completely different approach that would reverse it.

So I think if you care about health care, education, a strong economy, if you care about civil rights, human rights, and all these appointments to the Supreme Court and the other courts that are going to come up, there's more than enough reason to vote in this election.

And Al Gore has a lifetime record of support for civil rights and for policies—economic, education, health care, environmental policies—that help ordinary citizens. So I think it's a clear choice. And I think that, frankly, his role in this administration in the last 8 years and the ideas he's put before the American people should command the support of the African-American community and, I believe, the majority of the American people.

President's Support for Al Gore

Ms. Ryan. But many African-Americans I've talked to often wondered, why have you not stood next to him on many occasions prior to the week before, and not only that, why had you not gone to the churches and things like that before this last week? And many are concerned that they don't see you standing by him as much physically to promote him, and they're really wondering if your support is there for Al Gore.

The President. My support is there. I have done over 150 events this year to help him and the Democratic Party and to help our candidates for Senate and the House—literally over 150 events. I think, frankly, it would have been inappropriate for me to be out there campaigning with him. I think it would have hurt him with some people, because as he said in his convention speech, he has to run for President as his own man. He has to be elected on his own.

And I've done what I could to be supportive. I continue to do a lot of events, and I'm going out to California in a day or so. I'm going to go home the last weekend to Arkansas, which is a small State, but these small States could determine the outcome of the election. I'm going to make another stop in New York trying to help my wife and also help the congressional candidates and help him, and I may do another stop or so. I'm doing everything I can. And as you pointed out, I went out in the churches last weekend.

But when a President campaigns, it's very important not to do it too soon, and it's very important to do it in a way that you're being supportive of the people that are running. So it's kind of a delicate thing.

I remember when President Reagan used to come to Arkansas to campaign against me, and he was wildly popular in Arkansas. It never affected my standing with the people, even though we got some of the same votes. So if I want to have an impact on this election, I have to concentrate on talking to the people who will listen to the reasons I have for voting for the Vice President and our other candidates and also do it in a way that makes it clear to the American people that I am first doing my job here in Washington.

So I've tried to do it as best I could in coordination with the Gore campaign. But the people in this country should have no doubt about my strong support for him and my belief that he will be a very good President.

Veracity/Social Issues

Ms. Ryan. Well, there are several issues that have come into play, too, with Vice President Gore, one, the veracity, embellishment. And some people are even wondering, especially Christians—you know, the pro-choice stance, as well as the issue of—he is saying that gay couples can stay together. And this is something the administration, for 8 years you've dealt with, and no one really jumped up at that before, and now everyone is becoming unglued, particularly Christians.

The President. Let's talk about that. First of all, I want to talk about this veracity business. I think it's a total bum rap. Let's go back to what gave rise to it in the debate. They jumped on him after the first debate because he talked about taking a trip to Texas with the Director of our Emergency Management Agency, and it turned out the guy wasn't on the trip with him.

Now, he went, and the Regional Director of the Agency was on the trip, and he had taken 17 other trips with this Director. He went to almost as many emergencies as I did these last 8 years. And I can tell you, I don't remember who was on what flight. So that wasn't an exaggeration. He took the trip; he

went down there. And he just didn't remember that the guy wasn't on that flight. He was on 17 other flights. I think that is crazy. He never said he invented the Internet—another bum rap. He never—and all these other things they say, you know, basically, I think are wrong.

I will say this. The other day, 425 high-tech executives endorsed him, including a man named Vint Cerf. He sent the first E-mail ever sent, Mr. Cerf did. And he really was one of the fathers of the Internet. And he gave Al Gore the credit he deserved for supporting legislation in the Congress that turned the Internet from a private province of Defense Department physicists into the broad commercial network it is today. So I think the exaggeration thing is wrong.

Now, let's talk about the pro-choice issue. I still believe that *Roe v. Wade* was properly decided. And we have worked to try to reduce teen pregnancy and, therefore, to reduce the number of abortions. Teen pregnancy is at a 30-year or 40-year low in America, and the number of abortions has gone down every year I've been in office. But I do not believe the answer is to go back and criminalize a woman's decision to have an abortion. I think we should keep the pro-choice position, and I don't think that's immoral. I think it's consistent with reducing the number of abortions by reducing teen pregnancy.

Al Gore and I helped to start a national campaign against teen pregnancy, which had, I think, a very significant, positive impact on this issue. And I don't think there's anything wrong with his ethics or his morals on this issue.

In terms of the gay issue, what has he said? He has said that he believed that gay people who live together in a committed relationship ought to have access to the same sorts of legal protections that other couples have. What are they? One of you gets sick; the other one ought to be able to visit in the hospital during family visiting hours. I know this sounds like a little thing, but this is a big deal to people. One dies; the other ought to be able to leave property under the laws of the State. If one of them has health insurance on the job, they ought to be able to purchase health insurance for their partners.

I personally believe—and he believes there should be no discrimination on the job, and we should pass hate crimes legislation that covers sexual orientation as well as race. Now, I personally don't think there is anything wrong with that. I think we've got to build a society where, if you obey the law and you work hard and you pay your taxes and you do like everybody else is supposed to do in America, you ought to be treated fairly. So I agree with the Vice President's position on that. And I don't think it's anti-family.

So all I can tell you is I support him on that. He's got a great civil rights record. He's got a great record on the economy. He's got a great record on the environment. And he ran the program for me that reduced the size of Government and increased the amount of money we had left to invest in health care and other things. I just think that he has earned the right to be strongly considered for President, based on his lifetime of service and the difference between him and his opponent.

And let me just say this. You talked about the abortion and gay rights issues. Those issues may well be decided by the judges that the next President will support, but certainly civil rights issues will be decided by the judges that the next President will appoint. We already have a five-vote majority on this court for some very disturbing decisions designed to restrict the ability of the National Government to protect the rights of the American people.

And I really believe that if the Republicans win the White House, it will be more than *Roe v. Wade* that's changed. I think you'll have a Supreme Court that will drastically restrict the ability of the Federal Government to advance civil rights and human rights and to protect the public interest. You can already see it from the decisions that they made involving the Violence Against Women Act, striking down part of that, striking down part of the Brady bill that's kept handguns out of the hands of half a million felons, fugitives, and stalkers, striking down a bill that Congress passed to prevent age discrimination.

So I think there's a lot of evidence out there that this election makes a difference.

I agree with the positions the Vice President has taken.

Republican Policies

Ms. Ryan. You're a strong Democrat, and you have some Republican leanings. But many are questioning if George W. Bush gets in here, a lot of things will change, especially how you dealt with the issue of race. Bob Dole—I'm working on a private project and I talked to Bob Dole, and he said something tremendous about you. He said you have changed the way the President will have to deal with race issues. And that was tremendous for me to hear Bob Dole say that about you. Does it scare you, listening to some of the things that George W. Bush says, and seeing the polls today—George W. Bush, 47 percent; Al Gore, 41 percent—seeing that everything you've worked for, you and Al Gore worked for, would drastically change?

The President. Yes. I actually believe that Governor Bush would be, if he were President, would be pretty good on immigration, because he's from Texas, and in Texas the Republicans and the Democrats have a relationship with the Mexican-American community that I think would translate into pretty good policies. And I think he would be perfectly nice to everyone. His rhetoric would be unifying. But I think his policies would be divisive. He wouldn't say he supported affirmative action, even as we changed it, in the debate.

Ms. Ryan. Affirmative access.

The President. Yes, that's a code word for being against action, I think. He wouldn't say that he would support hate crimes legislation, and he did refuse to see James Byrd's family. They don't support stronger enforcement of equal-pay-for-women laws. There just are lots of examples here where they have good rhetoric, but I think their policies are, in fact, divisive.

One of the things I've tried to do is to say that we can unite the American people. In these last 8 years, rich people have gotten richer, but poor and middle class people have had income gains for the first time in 20 or 30 years. We've tried to go forward together. And that's what I think Al Gore will work for and why I think it's important that he be elected.

And by the way—we're talking 6 days before the election—the real polls are basically dead-even. I keep up with them every day and this is a dead-even race. So it really—how it comes out is really going to be determined more on who votes. And a lot of these polls assume a lower turnout among African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans and other first-generation immigrants.

African-American Voter Turnout

Ms. Ryan. Two years ago the big difference came when African-American minorities went to the polls.

The President. Absolutely. Look what happened to Georgia. Let me just give you two or three examples. In Georgia we elected a Democratic Governor, who was behind in the polls, and two African-American State office holders. Why? Georgia is 25 percent black; the African-American vote was 28 percent of the vote.

In South Carolina, our side won a governorship and Senator Hollings was reelected, when most people thought we would lose both. Why? Because the first time in history, African-American turnout equaled white turnout.

In Mississippi, the Democrats won a Governor's race that the polls said they were six points behind in on Friday night before the election. Why? Because for the first time, African-Americans turned out in equal percentages as whites.

So if African-Americans say, "I want my vote to count as much as anybody else's," and they show up in the same or greater percentages of their registration as whites do, we'll win this race. It's as simple as that. African-Americans and Hispanics vote in the same percentages as white voters vote, we have enough support in the black community to win the race.

NAACP Commercial

Ms. Ryan. You said something a second ago about James Byrd. James Byrd's daughter is in an NAACP commercial. What were your thoughts about that?

The President. Well, I haven't seen the commercial. That's not quite true; I actually saw it in passing, but I didn't hear it. I think she was very hurt, properly so, about the way

she and her family were treated after her father was dragged to death. The Governor didn't want to have to deal with her.

But what was really going on in Texas—and people don't want to say it, but we need to be plain about it in the debate—Governor Bush did not want to embrace the hate crimes bill that two-thirds of the people in Texas supported, because it extended hate crimes protection to gays, as well as to racial minorities. And he was going into a Presidential primary, and he thought he had the support of the religious right and all the ultraconservative wings of the party. He was their first choice. And he didn't want to make them mad, so he didn't want to see James Byrd's family, and he didn't want to lift a finger to pass that bill.

As I said, even though Texas, which is a conservative Republican State—in Texas, two-thirds of the citizens thought there should be hate crimes legislation, and it should protect gays. Most people in America, no matter how conservative they are, do not believe that anybody should be singled out for abuse of any kind.

And so I think he made a terrible mistake, and I think she was very, very hurt by it. And I think that's what that ad is about. Now, I can't comment on the content. I haven't seen the substance of the ad or whatever. But she was hurt, and she was letting the American people know. And I think it's a relevant piece of information for the American people to know.

106th Congress

Ms. Ryan. Mr. President, thank you so much for your time, and I have one last question to ask. Today in the news, it seems that Congress is going to adjourn a couple days before the election. What is going to happen to your budget, finishing the unfinished work?

The President. Oh, they'll come back after the election if they do that. I wish they'd stay and finish. But I think what's happened is now—every place we could make an agreement, we did. We worked with them. On the three areas that are still outstanding, they basically—the Republicans—kicked the White House and the Democratic Congress representatives out of the room and made an

agreement among themselves, that is, on one of the bills dealing with immigration and other things, and on the tax bill, on those two.

On the Education and Labor bill, we actually made an agreement with the Republicans, and then the Republican leadership shattered the agreement because they said it didn't suit their special interests on a worker safety provision.

So what I think they're going to do is call a halt to this—that's the rumor, anyway—and then come back after the election, and we'll go back to work. But it's really sad because we could have easily finished our work here. All they had to do was to honor the agreement that we made on education. We had gotten a very good education bill that really helped the children of this country. And we had gotten a proper compromise on the worker safety issue, but they didn't want us to be able to do anything to protect worker safety.

So I'm sorry about it. But this is a clear example of the kind of choice people make. That's the last point I want to make about this election. People need to think about it when they decide, "Am I going to go vote; is it worth my vote; what am I going to do with my Presidential race?" Most Americans, including members of the African-American community, have no way of knowing how many things I stopped from happening here with the veto pen, with the threat of a veto. You know, in addition to the things we got done, we stopped a lot of things from being done these last 6 years with the Republicans in the majority. And if you have a Republican in the White House and if the Republicans were to maintain their majority, however slim, in the House and the Senate, there would be nobody here to stop them.

I think Americans need to think long and hard about that before they vote in this Presidential race. Somebody needs to be here to restrain excess in conduct by the people that are in control of the Congress, because they're to the right of—the people who control the Congress are to the right of many Republicans in the Congress, and to the right of the Republicans in America, never mind the independents and Democrats. So that's

another good argument for Al Gore for President.

Ms. Ryan. Mr. President, thank you so much. And we hope to do another interview with you, an exit interview, before you leave office. [Laughter]

The President. You know, it's my job, I should probably be doing a lot of exit interviews.

Thank you, April.

NOTE: The interview began at 5:35 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Vinton G. Cerf, senior vice president of Internet architecture and technology, MCI WorldCom; and Republican Presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 2. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview on the Tom Joyner Morning Show

November 2, 2000

Q. Four more years! Four more years! [Laughter]

Morning Show Commercials

The President. What I want to know is, where did you make that ad where you walk in the White House and the house comes down?

Q. This is an ad that runs in Washington for our radio station.

The President. Do your listeners know that you actually tore the White House down? Do they know that? [Laughter] Have you concealed that from them? [Laughter]

Q. You watched that, huh?

The President. I do.

Q. We have a commercial that runs in the Washington area where—anyway. [Laughter]

The President. He walks into a mockup of the White House and it comes down. [Laughter]

Q. I'm glad you watched that. I'm glad to know that you listen to the show.

The President. I keep up with you.

Q. Thank you, sir. And we keep up with you, too, and sincerely, it would be nice if

we could get 4 more years from you. It's been a good 8 years for us.

2000 Election

The President. But you can get the next best thing. I'll tell you, we've got to win this election, and I feel very strongly that we're going to win it if our folks vote. All these polls that show it close and show Governor Bush a point or two ahead, all those polls are premised on an assumption that African-American and Hispanic voters and first-generation immigrants will not vote in the same percentages that the Republican base will vote. That's what they're premised on.

I remember in Mississippi last year, where the African-American vote equalled the white vote, for the first time ever, a Democratic candidate for Governor was elected by 6,300 votes. And he was six points behind in the polls. So that's what—the power here is with the young people and with the folks that have done well in these last 8 years.

One of the things that I want to point out that I'm proudest of is that we fought for policies—and Al Gore fought for policies—that would guarantee that when this economy came back, for the first time in 30 years, it wouldn't just be the wealthiest Americans who would do well. They would do well, but everybody else would do well, too. Average income has gone up by over \$5,000 in this country, and African-American unemployment is at the lowest point in history. And I think that alone is a good argument to stick with this economic policy, especially when the alternative is going back to deficits and underinvesting in education.

Q. And Mr. President, history has shown that with the votes that have—or with the election such as 1960 and even '68, how just one vote in maybe a ward or two would have made a difference and turned history around then, too.

The President. Oh, absolutely. John Kennedy won by four-tenths of one percent. Hubert Humphrey lost by a percent. Jimmy Carter won by a percent, one vote out of a hundred. And this race could well be that close. And I can tell you there are at least five States today that are within one percent. There are another five States that are within 2 percent. That's how close this election is.