

Saddam Hussein of Iraq and an allied peace plan that required Iraq to begin withdrawing its forces from Kuwait by noon, e.s.t.

Address to the Nation Announcing Allied Military Ground Action in the Persian Gulf

February 23, 1991

Good evening. Yesterday, after conferring with my senior national security advisers, and following extensive consultations with our coalition partners, Saddam Hussein was given one last chance—set forth in very explicit terms—to do what he should have done more than 6 months ago: withdraw from Kuwait without condition or further delay, and comply fully with the resolutions passed by the United Nations Security Council.

Regrettably, the noon deadline passed without the agreement of the Government of Iraq to meet demands of United Nations Security Council Resolution 660, as set forth in the specific terms spelled out by the coalition to withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait. To the contrary, what we have seen is a redoubling of Saddam Hussein's efforts to destroy completely Kuwait and its people.

I have therefore directed General Norman Schwarzkopf, in conjunction with coalition forces, to use all forces available including ground forces to eject the Iraqi army from Kuwait. Once again, this was a deci-

sion made only after extensive consultations within our coalition partnership.

The liberation of Kuwait has now entered a final phase. I have complete confidence in the ability of the coalition forces swiftly and decisively to accomplish their mission.

Tonight, as this coalition of countries seeks to do that which is right and just, I ask only that all of you stop what you are doing and say a prayer for all the coalition forces, and especially for our men and women in uniform who this very moment are risking their lives for their country and for all of us.

May God bless and protect each and every one of them. And may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.

Note: President Bush spoke at 10 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House. In his address, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq and Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of the U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf. The address was broadcast live on nationwide radio and television.

Remarks on the Observance of National Afro-American (Black) History Month

February 25, 1991

Thank you very much. It is a great, great pleasure for Barbara and me to welcome you all to the White House. It's good to see so many friends here today, including so many members of our administration: our Vice President, of course; and Lou Sullivan; Jack Kemp; Lynn Martin; of course, the Chairman of our Joint Chiefs, General Powell; Connie Newman; Art Fletcher; and

so many more. I salute our red-coated special guests. You bring honor to this place, and we're delighted to have you here.

I know that the issue on all of our minds is the war in the Gulf. And I'm glad to report, after consultation a few minutes ago with Chairman Powell, General Powell, that the news is good. Coalition air and ground forces are advancing on their objectives.

Enemy prisoners are surrendering in large numbers, large numbers. And thus far, thank God, U.S. and coalition casualties are few.

The liberation of Kuwait is on course and on schedule. We have the initiative. We intend to keep it. We must guard against euphoria; there are battles yet to come and casualties to be borne. But make no mistake, we will prevail. Kuwait will soon be free, and America's men and women in uniform will return home to the thanks and respect of a grateful nation.

This was a war thrust upon us, not a war that we sought. But naked aggression, such as we have seen, must be resisted if it is not to become a pattern. Our success in the Gulf will bring with it not just a new opportunity for peace and stability in a critical part of the world but a chance to build a new world order based upon the principles of collective security and the rule of law.

But today, we're here to celebrate the proud spectrum of black achievement. For we recognize that black history, this rich tale of roots and purpose and pride, is really everyone's history.

And something else, too: You know, in the midst of war we find ourselves thinking about heroes. Well, this is the time to especially think of black heroes, those who by their fierce conviction showed no race has a monopoly on idealism or excellence. And we must tell stories of black successes to every child in our country because we need heroes. We need them as much as we need our dreams. And black Americans have always provided both.

A few nights ago, General Tony McPeak, the Chief of Staff of our Air Force, and an old friend many of you know, Ben Payton, president of the Tuskegee University, and Judge Souter of the Supreme Court and I, the four of us—men's night out on the town—[laughter]—went over to Ford's Theatre to see a play called the "Black Eagles." And for those who aren't aware of that, it's a play about the Tuskegee Airmen of World War II, who were led by the legendary General Benjamin Davis. An incredible story of men who took their places among a very special group of heroes—black Americans who have fought for

this country for over 200 years.

And they never received the credit, they never received the credit that they deserve for their devoted patriotism, for their vision, and their sacrifices. And America owes a long-overdue tribute to these men and women who, long before they had rights, believed in what was right.

For two centuries, black soldiers have established a record of pride in the face of incredible obstacles. For not only did they risk their lives fighting for freedom for their own and for other countries but they did it at the same time that they were being denied their own God-given freedoms at home. And think about how much they must have loved this country, how they believed in its dreams. It's an astounding devotion. It's in a league by itself.

And you can feel that love of country just as strongly out there in the Gulf today. And yes, we've made great progress in righting the wrongs of the past, but tragically, racism and bigotry, illiteracy and poverty still exist. And America, of course, is not without its problems, and black Americans serving in the Gulf understand that. And yet, they've chosen to serve because they fundamentally believe in this country. And when these Gulf heroes come home, they'll continue to fight injustice by fighting discrimination and despair with the same commitment. And we will stand with them.

So, to those who question the proportion of blacks in the armed services today, my answer is simple: the military of the United States is the greatest equal opportunity employer around. Every soldier, sailor, airman, coastguardsman, and marine have enlisted because they want to be a part of the American armed services, because they know it is a place of openness and true meritocracy, and because they know that every service man and woman receives equal training and the finest training and equal treatment every step of the way, with education funding and technical skills which will open up unlimited futures. If anyone thinks that the military is not the place for equal opportunity and advancement, then talk to General Waller, Lieutenant General Calvin Waller, our deputy commander in chief of the Central Command; or Colonel Hopper, deputy commander of

the 63d Airlift Wing; or Air Force Colonel Leonard Randolph from Langley, Langley Air Force Base.

Or listen to the man sitting over my right shoulder here, who answers those who criticize the proportion of blacks by challenging all of America. Here's what General Powell—his answer challenged the rest of this country to create the same paths of opportunity which we have in the military.

Look at those brave men and women putting their lives on the line for us. And you don't see colors or creed. All you see are Americans: good, brave, dedicated Americans; Americans who volunteered, each and every single one of them, who put their devotion to country first; Americans with dignity and pride, calling America back to her better self; Americans serving as equals, measured only by their abilities. America's heroes, the real thing. Thank God we have them, every single one.

Today we thank God for those who went before. For our new heroes are a part of a long tradition. The airmen in "Black Eagles" talk about it, for they made their own very special mark in the rollcall of generations who battled not only their country's enemy but also their countrymen's prejudice. In the play these brave warriors explain they were "paving the way, paving the way."

And it was more than two centuries ago that the first black patriots started to pave the way of freedom road. In 1774, slaves sent a plea to the royal Governor of Massachusetts, saying, "We have in common with all other men a natural right to our freedoms without being deprived of them by our fellow men."

Seems like these sentiments might have inspired the words that Thomas Jefferson wrote 2 years later: "That all men are created equal and that they are endowed with the inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

What these men sent was a message from the heart to those who would follow: Stand up for freedom; cry out for freedom; risk all for freedom.

And that's what blacks have done in every war in this nation's history. And they've done it with heroes like Crispus Attucks, the first American to die for the cause of

his country's liberty; with heroes like the 5,000 blacks who fought in the Revolutionary War, loyal, courageous men who will at long last be honored with a memorial out here on The Mall, thanks to the Patriot Foundation which I hope we'll all support.

Freedom road led nearly a quarter million newly freed slaves into the Civil War. Heroes emerged, like the men of Fort Wagner charge, so powerfully reenacted in the movie "Glory." The black regiment lost half its men—imagine that, half its men—but won the dignity and respect that it rightfully deserved.

Freedom road took black heroes up San Juan Hill with Teddy Roosevelt. And by the way, Colin Powell has a painting of them in his office. He says he likes to look up from his desk, see them, and remember the contributions of those who went before and, he says, reflect on what he must do to help those yet to come.

Black heroes also paved freedom road on the French fields and Rhine River of World War I. But when their sons joined up 25 years later, they found there was much work left to do. And I heard a shocking story that took place right here in America in 1943, in the middle of World War II. Black soldiers stopped and tried to eat at a restaurant. Inside German prisoners, German prisoners of war, were being served a meal, but the restaurant refused to admit the black soldiers.

By the end of the war, American black soldiers had paved a victorious path, paved it in bravery and in blood. And they won battles and medals. And they won respect as men and acceptance as Americans. And at long last they won the integration of the Armed Forces.

These generations of heroes risked their lives so that their grandchildren could realize a dream: the dream of having the freedom to choose to serve their country, the dream that America would be a place where the only limits on a man would be the limits of his own vision, the dream of a nation where none would be called the first black, but rather, simply, the best. For, as Booker T. Washington said: "No greater injury can be done to any youth than to let

him feel that because he belongs to this or that race he will be advanced regardless of his own merit or efforts.”

But let’s face it, the dream is not yet fully realized, and there is today too much crime and too much crack and too much despair. And yet, there is also today too much faith and too much pride and too much human dignity to give up or to give in.

And that’s why we urgently need to turn to the tradition of black heroes today, to inspire a new generation to believe in itself and in the future. Homegrown heroes like Frederick Douglass, who fought for dignity; Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who fought for the rights of millions; Jackie Robinson, who fought just to do what he did best. Like Ralph Bunche, who won the Nobel Prize; Gwendolyn Brooks, who won the Pulitzer; Jesse Owens, who won Olympic medals and the respect of the world. Humanitarians and leaders from George Washington Carver to Rosa Parks to the late Mickey Leland. Pioneers like Dr. Charles Drew and astronaut Ron McNair. And of course, the man who has brought inspiration, strength, and true spirit of heroism to the world’s current struggle for humanity—the Chairman of our Joint Chiefs. [Applause] Exactly the way we all feel.

But they’re not the only ones. It is up to each of us. Together, we must write a new chapter in the history of civil rights, a chapter that says: Opportunity must replace despair. For opportunity means education, equipping kids with the tools they need to compete in a new century. It means freedom from drugs. Opportunity means jobs, the dignity of work. It means owning your own home, and being safe in it. Opportunity means social programs to keep families together, and health care to keep them strong. And, above all, opportunity means we must treasure and defend the value of every human life. For as Langston Hughes wrote, “There’s a dream in this land with its back against the wall; to save the dream for one, it must be saved for all.”

This is an ideal place for us to commit

ourselves to writing that chapter. For in this very room, 27 years ago, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 became law, a long overdue payment on a promissory note of equality signed two centuries before. But as long as discrimination, born of ignorance and inhumanity, still exists, our work is not yet finished. And as long as the Four Horsemen of the American night—illiteracy, inequality, indigence, and fear—threaten any of us, our work is not yet finished.

And so, we must as a nation pledge that never again will the individual be degraded and devalued, that we will remember the Black Eagles who soared from bigotry on Earth to equality in the skies.

And I am committed to civil rights and opportunity for every person in this great country. And I will simply say to all of you: I salute you. I thank you for coming here to share this very special day with all of America. And at this special time in our history, may God bless those who are serving us halfway around the world. May they be treated with respect and the dignity that they deserve when they come back home having freed another country.

Thank you all and God bless you.

Note: The President spoke at 11 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis W. Sullivan; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Jack Kemp; Secretary of Labor Lynn M. Martin; Colin L. Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Constance Berry Newman, Director of the Office of Personnel Management; Arthur A. Fletcher, Chairman of the Commission on Civil Rights; Gen. Merrill A. McPeak, Air Force Chief of Staff; Benjamin F. Payton, president of Tuskegee University; Jackie Robinson, professional baseball player; Rosa Parks, civil rights activist; Representative Mickey Leland; and Dr. Charles R. Drew, physician. The President also referred to the “Tuskegee Airmen,” a group of World War II veterans who had received their training at Tuskegee Institute.