

May 24 / Administration of George Bush, 1991

The President. Well, I hope that India will cope. They always try to do that. There are people that feel passionately about this, but this is no time for more violence. This is a time for calm, for peaceful resolution to differences. And if anybody ever stood for that, it was Rajiv Gandhi and his family.

Q. Do you have a small message for the Indian people?

The President. No. The United States will deal with the Indian Government with respect and quality. And so, I have no worries about that at all.

Q. What did you write on the book?

Q. Any message for the Indian people?

The President. Well, I tried to express my sentiments there. And I'm sure the Ambassador will share it with you.

Thank you.

Q. Do you ever worry about the possibility of a terrorist attack against yourself?

The President. No, I never worry about that. See you all.

Note: The President spoke at 8:40 a.m. at the Indian Embassy. In his remarks, he referred to Abid Hussain, Indian Ambassador to the United States.

Remarks at the Dedication Ceremony for the Khalil Gibran Memorial Garden

May 24, 1991

Please, those who have chairs be seated, and the rest of you, thank you for the warm welcome, really. I told them to leave Millie at home over here. I don't know what the barking is. *[Laughter]* But let me first salute my old friend, my dear friend Bill Baroody, and thank him for his leadership; to Sheryl Ameen and Colonel Tannous, Adelaine Abercia, our friend Ambassador Lahoud, and, of course, our distinguished Representative, Congresswoman Oakar. To all of you I would say, without your sponsorship we wouldn't be standing here today. I want to single out Flip Wilson for his help in making this possible; it's greatly appreciated. Salute another old friend, Jamie Farr.

And ladies and gentlemen, it's an honor—I mean this from the heart—it is an honor to be asked to dedicate this garden to a man who has done so much for poetry and, through poetry, for all of us. Barbara and I were pleased when Bill asked us, and others asked us, to serve as honorary co-chairmen of the dedication committee. And now that I see—Barbara's seen it—the beauty of this place, I'm struck by the committee's dedication.

They and all who contributed to this memorial offer it as a real tribute to Gibran's legacy—his belief in brotherhood, his call for compassion, and perhaps above all, his

passion for peace.

The spot where we now stand holds a special place in my heart because, as most of you know, for 8 years I lived up the street with my family. And this memorial renders this place so much more special by honoring a man who enlivened candor with cadence and lent song to truth.

Gibran once wrote that “remembrance is a form of meeting.” So, in this garden, we meet this man again. The graceful symmetry and the slope of these grounds lead the eye in a sweep that is, indeed, poetry in motion. The cedars of Lebanon that will someday canopy the poet's memorial remind us of those which once sheltered his birth. His words carved on these benches—and they are so beautiful—echo those he has etched on our memory. And as the entrance's footbridge brings us into his garden, so his work “leads us to the thresholds of our own mind.”

Perhaps his greatest bequest was the key by which we opened our own imaginations. His was not poetry for the passive but for the participant. He wrote that the wisest teacher reveals “that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge.” And his poetry sounded that reveille with a song of beauty and truth.

When Gibran said that “work is love

made visible,” those weren’t just words that he wrote; they were words that he lived. Part poet, part philosopher, he extracted “the secret of the sea from a drop of dew.” Poetry was the language in which he explored his soul and taught us about ours. And when he spoke of the realm of the spirit, his words pressed the veil we cannot see, yet cannot see beyond. He drew us where we were unused to climb and shared what he saw—the promise of a kinder, gentler world.

And as we survey today’s world, we see progress towards Gibran’s vision, but we also see promise unfulfilled. And we see the need to renew Gibran’s message of tolerance and compassion for a world too often at odds rather than at peace. Perhaps nowhere is this more important than in the Middle East, Gibran’s homeland where peace still wanders as the region’s prodigal son.

That region gave us a symbol of peace in Gibran. It is cruel irony that those lands now suffer the strife and hatred and fear. Our administration’s efforts are premised by those words Bill just quoted, that “We are all children of the same supreme being.” And that’s why we must strive to turn this bitter cycle of demanding an eye for an eye into one of offering a hand for a hand. We shall continue our efforts to help bring peace back home to this vital and historic part of the world, so that someday “its bread

of affliction” may become “bread cast upon the waters.”

Gibran once wrote, “Love is a word of light written by a hand of light upon a page of light.” The hand is his; and the page, our hearts.

May I say to those who follow on this program, I apologize. I would like to be a full participant, but we’re scooting off to New England on a long-established event. But I salute those who are participating in the program, ask their forgiveness and yours. And thank you very much, because it is Barbara and I who are honored by what has happened here today, inviting us to be participants.

Thank you very much.

Note: The President spoke at 8:59 a.m. in the Khalil Gibran Memorial Garden. In his opening remarks, he referred to William J. Baroody, Jr., Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and president of the Khalil Gibran Centennial Foundation; Sheryl Ameen, member of the board of directors of the foundation; Peter S. Tannous and Adelaine Abercia, chairman and vice chairman of the dedication committee; Ambassador Nassib S. Lahoud of Lebanon; Representative Mary Rose Oaker; and entertainers Flip Wilson and Jamie Farr. Following his remarks, the President traveled to Boston, MA.

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the Airlift of Ethiopian Jews to Israel

May 24, 1991

We are delighted to announce that this morning at 7 a.m. Washington time, an emergency humanitarian airlift began which will transport the 18,000 Ethiopian Jews in Addis Ababa to Israel. The operation results from an agreement between the Governments of Israel and Ethiopia. We expect the airlift to last 2 days. We have been informed that the operation is proceeding smoothly.

We want to express our appreciation to

Acting President Tesfaye Gebre-Kidan of Ethiopia. We understand that the Ethiopian decision to allow the Falashas to depart the country was taken in response to a letter from President Bush on May 22. Our initiative in this humanitarian operation commenced with the visit of Senator Rudy Boschwitz to Addis Ababa as a special emissary of the President on April 26–27.

The United States will be hosting a conference in London starting on May 27 to