

Appointment of Deputy Assistant to the President for Speechwriting and Research

March 9, 1994

The President today named Donald A. Baer, assistant managing editor of U.S. News & World Report and a reporter and former lawyer, to serve as Deputy Assistant to the President for Speechwriting and Research.

"Don Baer is a writer of depth and talent who understands, both from the experience of his life and from his career as a reporter and editor, the challenges that face Americans all

across the country in their daily lives," the President said. "I look forward to Don's able assistance as we work to communicate my administration's vision of hope and opportunity to the American people."

NOTE: A biography of the appointee was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Nomination for United States District Court Judges

March 9, 1994

The President today nominated six individuals to serve on the U.S. District Court. They are: Richard A. Paez for the Central District of California; Clarence Cooper for the Northern District of Georgia; Denise Page Hood for the Eastern District of Michigan; Solomon Oliver, Jr. for the Northern District of Ohio; Terry C. Kern for the Northern District of Oklahoma; and B. Michael Burrage for the Northern, Eastern, and Western Districts of Oklahoma.

"These six individuals have impressive records of achievement in both the law and public service," the President said today. "I am confident that they will serve with excellence and distinction as members of the Federal judiciary."

NOTE: Biographies of the nominees were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Remarks at the AmeriCorps Public Safety Forum in New York City

March 10, 1994

The President. Thank you very much, President Lattin, and my good friend Congressman Chuck Schumer. And in a moment you'll hear from Eli Segal, who is the head of our national service effort, so I won't introduce him more now. I want to thank all of the members of all the service groups who are here from not only from New York but many from other States, and recognize the chair of the board of the corporation of national service, Mr. Jim Josephs, who came. Thank you for being here, sir. I also want to thank three distinguished New Yorkers for their presence in the audience: your new attorney general, Oliver Koppell; New York City's public advocate and my longtime friend,

Mr. Mark Green; and the man who first introduced me to the local government of the city of Brooklyn, the Brooklyn borough president, Howard Golden. Thank you.

Before Chuck Schumer sits down, I want to ask him to come back up here to show you: This man has a broken arm, as you can see, and he's slightly incapacitated. So I asked him if I could join his two children and sign his cast. I do this to make a point I try to make at every speech, which is that government cannot solve all the problems of America. That's why we need all of you in service. And government cannot solve all these problems, either, because he is not the victim of a crime but

his own awkwardness; he fell. This is a problem I can't solve, so I'm just putting my stamp of approval on the treatment of it. [Laughter]

Representative Charles Schumer. Mr. President, what I wanted to say is, you saw our Senator wearing a cast, but he broke his arm the Republican way, skiing in Vail. [Laughter] I broke my arm slipping on the ice 11 o'clock Saturday night to go to a community event at the Good Shepherd School in Sheepshead Bay.

The President. That wasn't on the program. But it was pretty funny. [Laughter]

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the first of a national series of programs on our national service program which we called AmeriCorps. The topic we are here to discuss today is how to bring people together and communities together to encourage them to assume some responsibility for dealing with the violence that has become all too common in most American communities.

It's appropriate that we begin here in New York City, that we begin in Brooklyn in the congressional district of Chuck Schumer, because he has been the architect and the strategist behind almost every major anticrime initiative that the Congress dealt with in recent years.

It took 7 years and a change of administrations, but we finally got the Brady bill to become the Brady law. There were skeptics who said this will not make any difference, but you ought to see the results in the first couple of weeks of the Brady bill becoming a law. All over America, in little communities and big, people who had criminal records were actually buying guns formally, legally in gun stores; they were found out; illegal guns were collected; criminals were apprehended. This law is going to make a difference.

Chuck Schumer has also worked for community policing and for safe schools and for the ban on assault weapons that he talked about so strongly. That ban on assault weapons is in the crime bill that has already passed the United States Senate. And tomorrow Mr. Schumer goes back to Washington to work with his subcommittee to begin to mark up the crime bill that also will put another 100,000 police officers on the street, ban 28 kinds of assault weapons, and give us the chance to give people like you the chance to do some things to prevent crime from happening, and give our young people something to say yes to, as well as to say no to.

I'd also like to say a special word of appreciation for the work that has been done by New York Senator Daniel Moynihan on this issue. He asked me to say to you how sorry he was he couldn't be here today. He had originally planned to come with me but had an obligation in Washington which prevented him from leaving. But for 28 years he's been warning us about the fragile state of families and communities, the social institutions that hold us all together.

About a year ago, he gave a speech at the 50th anniversary of his own high school graduation from Benjamin Franklin High School in East Harlem. In that speech he talked about how much New York had changed in 50 years. In 1943, he said, there were exactly 44 homicides by gunshot in the entire city of New York, when the population then was only 150,000 more than it is now, but was more. In 1992, instead of 44, there were 1,499. He sent me a chart that tracked the murder rate in New York since the turn of the century, and it was only a generation ago that the murder rate began to explode.

About that time, on a New York night 30 years ago this very Sunday, a 28-year-old woman known to the neighborhood as Kitty Genovese parked her car outside her home, as she always did. She was coming home after a long day working as the manager of a nearby bar. She had come to New York to work, to make a life for herself in this great city, drawn like so many before and since by the power of opportunity and enthusiasm that I see in this room. As she walked to her building, a man grabbed her and stabbed her. She cried for help. She screamed for help so loudly that it woke people up in the middle of the night. Lights came on in the apartment building; a window opened; the attacker got nervous and left. Now, this was 30 years ago, not 30 days ago. But not a single person came to the aid of the woman as she tried to get herself to safety. So the man came back and stabbed her again. As 38 witnesses watched or listened from the safety of their own homes, Kitty Genovese screamed that she was dying. So the attacker fled again, but still no one came to the rescue. No one even called the police at a time when the average response time was 2 minutes. So the attacker came back a third time, stabbed Kitty Genovese again and killed her, over 20 minutes after she first cried for help. A call to the police would have brought

a patrol car in 2 minutes. But as one man told investigators, "I don't want to get involved."

Well, that story shocked us all 30 years ago, not just because of what happened to that woman, as tragic as it was, but also because of what had happened to her neighbors. It sent a chilling message about what had happened at that time in a society, suggesting that we were each of us not simply in danger but fundamentally alone. It was a message that was both resonant and at odds with the times. I still remember it as if it were yesterday, even though I was much younger then than almost all of you are now.

Modern technology was connecting everyone even then with the television set, a telephone, and an automobile. New highways let us reach out to each other faster than ever before. Rockets were already taking astronauts into space; even the moon was getting closer. These new inventions made the world a smaller place. We were becoming more aware of the great diversity of America, of people who lived beyond the borders of our neighborhoods or past the railroad tracks at the quiet end of town. More Americans of more race and backgrounds than ever before even then could chase the promise that lay before them. Young families left their streets or their farms in search of better jobs in the cities; factories hummed; industries then, as now again, were the envy of the world. But the unintended result of all this chasing around is that we became uprooted. The more folks moved around, the more they became strangers to their neighbors. More doors were shut; more locks were bought and turned; more curtains were drawn as they were on the night that Kitty Genovese was killed. On that night, it was as if the value of responsibility had already come to mean only responsibility for yourself.

Four years after that incident, a young United States Senator from New York, running for the office I now hold, said this, "The real threat of crime is what it does to ourselves and our communities. No nation hiding behind locked doors is free, for it is imprisoned by its own fear. A nation which surrenders to crime is a society which has resigned itself to failure. Thus, the fight against crime is, in the last analysis, the same as the fight for equal opportunity or the battle against hunger and deprivation or the struggle to prevent the pollution of our air and water. It is a fight to preserve the quality of community, which is at the root of our great-

ness, a fight to reserve confidence in ourselves and our fellow citizens, a battle for the quality of our lives."

Two months later the man who spoke those words, Senator Robert Kennedy, himself lay slain. And a line of mourners more than a mile long wrapped around St. Patrick's Cathedral, tied to his coffin in their common grief but still too far apart from one another.

Many, many times in the years since, in this city and in others, we have honored memories of the fallen. But we have failed to heed their warnings or finish their work. Time after time, we hear the lonesome sound of pipes at the funeral of a police officer killed in the line of duty. We hear the soft sobs of a mother burying another child gunned down on another city playground or in another school. We read the tragic news of the young student shot while simply riding a van across the Brooklyn Bridge.

This very morning back in Washington, people are reading about how one student shot another student four times yesterday in an argument arising out of the fact that they bumped into each other in a school hallway in what we all thought was perhaps our safest public high school in Washington.

Too often our reaction to the violence is to simply hunker down and turn our backs, raise the drawbridge, buy a better lock, and leave the problem to others: the thin line of blue or the gray mass of government.

Justice Edwin Torres who grew up in the barrio and is now a justice of the New York supreme court, sees this problem in his courtroom every day, and he wrote a stunning letter to Senator Moynihan not too long ago in which he described people so beaten down by the daily barrage of violence that they almost apologize for being the victims—as if you were smart enough or strong enough, no matter how bad things got, you could just figure out a way not to be a victim.

No citizen of this great Nation should ever have to apologize for that. And no American should live in fear. No one should surrender to any of this for a moment. And so I come to you to ask for your help and those like you all across America to take back our neighborhoods, to take back our future, to take back the basic quality of our lives.

Thirty years ago, if Kitty Genovese's murder taught us that we can't look away, the years since surely teach us that we cannot look to

others. Thirty years ago, her life might have been saved if she had simply called—or had someone, who was looking at the whole thing unfold, called the local police. Today even that is not enough. We have to help, each and every one of us, to reclaim our streets, our schools, our communities, and our lives.

This is not a call for blind heroics but practical action if we want to save our own citizenship. I have met some heroes who deserve our praise. I met, when I came to New York a few weeks ago, the three men who subdued the gunman on the Long Island Railroad. I met in Ohio just 3 weeks ago Anne Ross from Dayton, who organized a neighborhood group to sweep drugs off their streets. They've taken down the numbers of license plates of drug dealers. They've shared photographs of dealers with the police. They've shut down crack houses and turned them over to families who don't deal drugs or use them, all the while having their lives threatened, she, her husband, and the others who she's mobilized.

Two weeks ago in Chicago, I met a woman named Carol Ridley, whose own son was shot by someone who said he was his son's best friend, when the boy was only 22, in a foolish argument. But instead of withdrawing into her own grief, she's gone outward, working in Save the Children seminars to try to stop children from killing other children, to try to end the madness of all these weapons being in the hands of people who shouldn't have them, and to try to teach young people that there are other ways in which they can deal with their anger and frustration.

These ordinary people have done extraordinary things. The first is to prove that there can be something more powerful than fear, and that is our will and our collective ability to change the way things are. We have reached a time when we have to change not only our laws—not only the Brady bill and the crime bill and put more police on the street—we're got to change the basic attitudes of this country, not only about crime and violence but about how we think about ourselves and one another.

None of us any longer can pretend not to hear these cries for help, and each of us has a serious personal responsibility to do our part. Government cannot do this job alone; neither can the police forces themselves. But together there are things we can do, and one of the

best is this new national service program, AmeriCorps.

It represents the best of our country. It will give Americans, especially the young, a chance to serve our Nation by helping their communities, helping to make our schools and streets safer, immunizing our babies and turning our children into better students, cleaning up our parks, and caring for the elderly.

Today we'll hear from Americans from all walks of life who are as different in background, age, and experiences as the AmeriCorps can possibly be. Some will have had the fabric of their lives ripped by crime. But what makes them alike, and what makes me so hopeful, is that out of their tragedies they each made a choice to make a difference.

As extraordinary as their stories are, keep this in mind: There are thousands, indeed tens of thousands, legions more like them everywhere in this country, in every community: ordinary Americans doing extraordinary things, Americans reconnecting others in their communities. That's what AmeriCorps is all about. For all the miracles of mankind's technology and discovery, nothing, still, nothing connects us to one another like an outstretched hand, an open heart, and the certainty that each of us has made a difference.

We will make a difference if we can give our people something to say yes to, introduce them to people they can look up to, give them a chance to live and learn the meaning of responsibility and opportunity and community.

When I was a young man, I read a book by a fellow southerner named James Agee, called "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men". It was the story of desperately, desperately poor people in my region of the country, the South, during the Great Depression. It remains a book as powerful today as it was the day it was written. You cannot imagine, I don't think, what it was like to live in times when whole States had half the people living below the poverty line, when there were massive stretches of communities where more than half the people were out of work, where people could only eat because they were able to grow a little food in the ground that they held on to.

And in that time, James Agee wrote this, and I think it is something that we ought to remember as we drive up and down Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn. Listen to this: "In every child who is born, under no matter what circumstances

and no matter what parents, the potentiality of the whole human race is born again. And in him, too, once more, and of each of us, our terrific responsibility toward human life, toward the utmost idea of goodness, of the horror of error, and of God."

It is not enough for any of us ever to say again what was said here 30 years ago, "I don't want to get involved." We must not only want to get involved; we must be involved. We must be good neighbors again. And in being good neighbors, we will reclaim for ourselves the promise of this great Nation.

Thank you all, and God bless you.

[At this point, an audience member asked why the President had not publicly supported AIDS legislation introduced by Representative Jerrold Nadler.]

The President. I'll be glad to talk to Mr. Nadler about that. Every time—

Audience member. Have you—[inaudible]?

The President. No. Nobody has ever mentioned it to me before. But let me say this—

Audience member. [Inaudible]—about this plan.

The President. I've listened to you. Will you listen to me? Will you listen to me? I've listened to you. It is always convenient to me, when you interrupt my meetings, how often you ignore what has been done: the first AIDS czar, the first time we have ever had a really national strategy, dramatic increases in funding in research, dramatic increases in funding in funds to care for people with AIDS, dramatic increases in efforts to prevent AIDS from occurring. We are doing far more than has ever been done before.

I will be happy—

Audience member. Why haven't—[inaudible]?

The President. Listen to me. I've listened to you. I let you interrupt this meeting, and I let you talk. And you have taken up all the time of all the people that are in here.

Audience member. I let you speak.

The President. No, you haven't. You're trying to interrupt me. They let me speak. They invited me here, not you. I have told you, I will be glad to discuss this—[inaudible]—no, leave him alone. Don't hurt him. Don't hurt him. He's got a right to be here.

Audience member. [Inaudible]—is in Congress—[inaudible]—why aren't you supporting this? It is a crime.

Audience member. Welcome to Brooklyn. [Laughter]

The President. What did he say? I didn't hear.

Audience member. Welcome to Brooklyn.

The President. Let me ask you this: Wouldn't you rather have him in here asking me to do something than standing outside convinced I wouldn't do anything, no matter what? [Applause] It's America.

Go on, Eli.

[Eli J. Segal, Assistant to the President for National Service, discussed public safety concerns and then introduced Chicago police chief Matt L. Rodriguez and San Diego police officer Andy Mill, who discussed community policing. Mr. Segal then asked if the President had questions or comments.]

The President. Well, I wanted to say, first of all, how much I appreciate your being here and how much I appreciate hearing from police officers that there's something for the community to do with the police, and specifically, the details that you recommended.

I don't think I can overstate the importance of having a presence on the streets and in the neighborhoods and the communities, either by having volunteers do what Chief Rodriguez said and go behind the scenes so more police officers can be out there, or having senior volunteers or others walking the streets. We have a lot of evidence that this helps prevent crime in the first place. We're not talking about just catching criminals; we're talking about recreating a sense of order, reminding people of what the rules of society are, just sort of physically being there. There's a lot of evidence that that reduces crime.

And you mentioned that I had the New York City police officer, Kevin Jett, down to the State of the Union Address, recognized him. And we brought him back to the White House afterward and had a nice talk with him. And he talked a lot about that, about how he saw a big part of his job as stopping crime in the first place by just being there and know what was going on.

The second thing I want to say is, it's easy to underestimate, I think, how much ordinary citizens can do. In Chicago, I have actually been in some of your housing projects where welfare mothers got their first jobs in the projects, patrolling the stairs, and getting discounts on their rent, among other things, in return for working,

patrolling the stairs. But it all worked together to make these housing projects crime-free instead of places of fear.

So I guess I just want to thank you and to—the one thing that I would like to ask as a practical matter is how you think we can best assure that—and I'm going to lead you, but I know you want this—one of the things that always bothers me is when we—Mr. Schumer knows this—we pass a bill through Congress, the temptation is to say exactly how the money ought to be spent that we're appropriating. And it appears to me, just from the two different cases that the two of you cited, drastically different, that we ought to make community policing money available with as much flexibility as possible, because New York's idea about how to handle this may be different from San Diego's or Chicago's.

And so maybe you should comment on that. I think it's important that we send a clear signal. We don't want to tie the hands of the local officers too much.

[Chief Rodriguez concurred with the President's statement supporting local control of resources, and Officer Mill discussed other aspects of community policing.]

The President. I just want to reemphasize what these two guys have said. Now, here are people who are spending their lives in law enforcement. And as Governor—I know I've had this conversation with Governor Cuomo before, that all the bills I have signed—I was a Governor for 12 years before I became President—I have signed bill after bill after bill building more prison space, having longer sentences for serious crimes. I watched the average amount of time served by an inmate go up rather dramatically during my term as Governor. I saw the reintroduction of capital punishment after years in which we didn't have it. I understand all about this punishment business, but if you look at it, the crime rate still keeps getting worse. What lowers the crime rate is the involvement of the community and the intelligent and adequate allocation of police resources.

And I think it is very important that you understand this is not just idle rhetoric. I mean, these people have put their lives on the line for years and years and years. They know what they are talking about. We have to reclaim our streets and lower the crime rate through people like you supporting the kinds of ideas that they

put out. This is not soft; this is hard. This is save yourself by rebuilding your community.

I thank you both very much for that.

[Mr. Segal invited the audience to ask questions.]

The President. Would you introduce yourself and say where you're from if you ask a question in the audience?

Q. Certainly. My name is Ray Owens. I'm a native of Austin, Texas, here—live now in the New York area. And I'm with Teach For America, Mr. President—

The President. Good for you. Great program.

Q. —a national teaching corps, yes. And as you well know, we're the national teaching corps that's sending talented teachers who are accepting the responsibility to teach and serve in communities and neighborhoods that some educators have refused to work in, in great part because of the crime there. So in this regard, indeed, there are a number of people who still say that community policing is really more about community relations than it is about reducing crime.

I'm wondering how we can be sure that there's real substance in our community policing efforts.

The President. I think the best way to be sure of it is, first, to give as much—to go back to what—and keep in mind, this is a very appropriate question because Mr. Schumer's congressional subcommittee, I'll say again, is going to deal with this issue tomorrow. They are marking this bill up tomorrow. So this is a timely question.

My own judgment is, the best way is to say, here are the results we want to achieve. That is, we want the community involved; we want volunteers to be able to participate; we want each city or community to be able to define that however they want, except we're going to measure the results.

I think the main way to do it is not to tell everybody on the front end how they have to do it with a whole bunch of rules and regulations, but to cite some examples that have worked and then say we're going to measure results.

There are more than one way to do this. I mean, in the city of Houston, they had a 22-percent decline in the murder rate and a 27-percent decline in the crime rate in one year when they went to a community policing situation. I mean, 15 months, in a 15-month period.

Not surprisingly, the mayor was reelected with 91 percent of the vote, because they went to a community policing strategy that worked.

So my own judgment is, give the people who are on the ground and who have the biggest stake in the success of this the power to design the program, and then reward those programs that work and don't continue those programs that don't. I think you have to measure the results, because everyplace is going to be different.

[Geoffrey Canada, director, Rheedlan Center for Children and Families, New York City; Kevin Stansberry, youth service leader for the Safe Schools and Urban Schools Service Corps, Red Bank, NJ; and Frankie Rios, youth service leader, Safe Places, the Bronx, NY, spoke about their community programs.]

The President. Let me just ask all of you a little bit—you could see how moved this audience was by the sort of personal testimony that each of you gave. One of the problems that I see with our national service program, because no program can do everything, is that we can provide volunteers to a community to support a program like yours if it's already going on. But not every community has somebody who would give up a career in corporate America, where you could make more money, and decide to do this.

And one of the things that I'd like to just explore with you is what you think the national service organization can do—because we are a national organization, and we have high visibility, and I do events like this all the time—what can we do to make sure that there are more programs like this out in the community so that we can steer the volunteers to them. I mean, if you don't exist, then the volunteers won't go there.

Now, there's a Boys and Girls Club nearly everywhere, and so they just need to organize themselves everywhere to take the volunteers. But there isn't necessarily a program to keep the schools safe or to keep the corridors safe going to and from school. That is a huge deal. In a lot of places where even the schools themselves are safe, the kids are very much at risk going to and from school. And I've had people talk to me about that all over the country.

So do you have any advice for me about how we can help to sort of replicate these programs so we can direct the volunteers to them?

[Messrs. Canada, Stansberry, and Rios discussed community organization and infrastructure in dealing with community issues.]

The President. I think if you've got a place, then the people will come and the programs will spring up, and they will do it. One of the things I wanted to say in support of that, because Mr. Schumer and I talked about it on the way up here, you may remember that a few weeks ago, maybe it's been a couple of months ago now, Reverend Jesse Jackson had a national meeting in Washington of the Rainbow Coalition group to talk about violence. And he called me—we've had now two conversations—we had a brief talk about it yesterday. He started kind of doing an inventory in Washington and then asked some people about it in New York, about how many schools there were that didn't have real recreational opportunities for kids, especially if they weren't on athletic teams anymore.

And he went through an inventory with me just in Washington about, for example, within the city limits how many baseball fields there were that were really functioning and how there was no equipment for kids, and how many kids there were that never had a baseball bat in their hands until they were 14 or 15 years old now, and no swimming pools, no organized basketball programs, no bowling alleys, no skating rinks; these kinds of things.

I think we have maybe underestimated that in the last 15 years that our schools and our cities have been under such enormous financial pressures to cut back, cut back, cut back, maybe without even thinking about it, since these recreational programs for kids at large—not the stars on the athletic teams, but the kids at large—have been maybe the easiest things to cut. And one of the things that we talked about is whether we could have some of this national service money directed back to support these school-based programs so that you'll have something to do with the kids and have these activities. I think it's really important.

[Clementine Barfield, president, Save Our Sons and Daughters, discussed community crisis intervention and victim assistance, and Elizabeth Mathews, VISTA volunteer, discussed shelter and support for battered women and their children.]

Mr. Segal. Mr. President, do you have any questions or concerns? I saw you scribbling down there some thoughts.

The President. No, actually, I was just scribbling what I was learning from them, not what questions I wanted to ask.

I do want to say that each of you, in very different ways, is an incredibly powerful example, and I'm just, I can't say enough about it. I was very moved by both of you for very different reasons, but you were very powerful.

I want you to know that my—that before I became President, when I was still living at home in Arkansas, my wife and I spent a lot of time, a huge—a lot of time for what we had available with a friend of ours who ran a shelter like the one in which you work. And we saw large numbers, especially around holiday times, of women and children horribly brutalized. And I just would like to say that one of the things you said, that I think we may miss in this—and another thing you said in terms of sympathy for the people who commit these crimes and then go to jail—is we've got to do something that changes the attitudes of people who think that the only way they can deal with their frustration and anger is to wreak violence on someone.

Now, if they do something really terrible, we have to punish them and send them to prison and do all that. But there are a lot of these people who can be reached before they do something really terrible. A lot of these children who knife and shoot other children are people who have never learned to deal with their anger or their anxiety in any other way. To them, the future is what happens 5 or 10 or 20 minutes from now, instead of what happens 5 or 10 or 20 years from now.

And so, I don't know what thoughts you have on that, but that's one thing I am continuously plagued by. I see people like you who come in and bravely give your lives to try to help people who are so savaged by this. And then I know that a lot of the people we're dealing with now, who perpetrate these kinds of crimes, themselves were the victims of domestic violence when they were young, themselves grew up in kind of chaotic and violent situations, and they have no other conditioned way to respond to these terrible things that happen to them. And I hope we can devote some time and attention to that.

[Ms. Barfield discussed creating a climate of peace, and Ms. Mathews discussed the need to prevent violence. Molly Baldwin, director, *Reach Out to Chelsea Adolescents*, Chelsea, MA, and Sherman Spears, youth service leader, Oakland, CA, then discussed conflict resolution among youth.]

The President. We don't want to let anybody off the hook here today. You know, no one has mentioned this, but one of the things that—one of the gentlemen did mention the images that come across to kids. But if you look at the cumulative, instantaneous, reactive, macho violence you see in media entertainment programs, you know, it's not that one or two programs will change a kid's attitude, but the amount of it overall, I think, has a big impact.

And I also think when people turn on television and they see their National Government, what do you inevitably see? People with words, using extreme words to characterize conduct or activity or positions. The other politicians do it, the media do it, always trying to twist it like taffy to the *n*th degree. I don't know how many people—I've had older Members of the Congress tell me just in the last week how much meaner and partisan and negative the national arena is. Mr. Schumer was commenting sadly on it on the way in here today. So I think all of us in positions of public responsibility need to think about that, need to think about what kind of message are we sending to young people when they see that kind of conduct.

Look, if he, this fine young man here, can bury his anger and desire for revenge, he ought to be an example to all the rest of us who have so much less to be angry about. Next time I want to get real mad, I'm going to think about you. And I hope everybody else in this country will. I thank you. You have no idea what a powerful example you are.

[A New York State Assemblyman asked about allocating money to States for education rather than for building prisons.]

The President. I'll say this: One big problem is, you know, that you can go into a Federal court and get an order to build a new prison and make it nice. Prisons not only have better schools than a lot of schools, they have, almost unfailingly, any prison built in the last 10 years has better recreational facilities than a public school or than a local park. The New York

Times Sunday magazine had a stunning pictorial—I don't know how many of you saw it—pictorial exhibit a couple of weeks ago showing the prison and how beautiful they were and the schools and how rundown they were. So we have to try to change that. All I can tell you is if you look at what we're trying to do with the crime bill, we're trying to give some resources to the States and to the communities to begin to turn that around.

I also think—look, let's go back to the police officers that started this. None of us want to be naive about this. Some people deserve to be punished and should be behind bars. But we do know that a very large percentage of the truly violent crimes are committed by a fairly small percentage of the criminals. So what we have to do is to try to identify the people that should be incarcerated and incarcerate them, have more community-based punishment for people that do less serious things, and try to do all the stuff you all have been here talking about today. And there ought to be some way of allocating the resources that recognizes the importance of doing all three things, instead of just that one thing. But there is no—the practical problem is that in the last 10 to 15 years, there's not only been an upsurge of violent crime, which has led us to build more prison cells, there's also been a huge spate of lawsuits, which have gotten us to build prisons nicer than our schools. And it's crazy; our priorities, therefore, have been turned upside-down. Our schools should be nicer than our prisons so people want to get into the schools. And I really think that's a problem.

Now, that's not to say I don't think there shouldn't be educational facilities in the prisons or recreational facilities. I do. I think it's crazy to turn people back out of prison when they're illiterate, when they won't have a chance to do well. I'm not campaigning against prison reform. I'm just pointing out just what you did. We haven't done enough to help the kids stay out in the first place.

[A participant discussed domestic violence. Another participant discussed gangs and asked how society should deal with gang members and gang violence.]

The President. Well, my short answer is—I mean it's something we could talk about all day long, but I've spent a good deal of time talking with former gang members, with some

present gang members. I've spent more time than Presidents usually do in inner-city areas, and I've thought about this a lot and talked to a lot of people who work on it. I mean, I think we heard a lot about it today. I think, first of all, you have to try to create the conditions for kids when they're young so they don't do that. There has to be alternative things.

Keep in mind, a lot of gangs grow up in a vacuum. Everybody that was introduced up here is a member of a gang. All these people who started organizations, that's what those organizations are, they're good gangs. Isn't that right? Isn't that right? I mean, every one of them, right? That is, we all want to be part of something that's bigger than ourselves, where we're really important because we're part of it, right? We do. This Public Allies, that's a good gang. That's what it is. It's something good that's wholesome and—[*applause*]. So if you live in a neighborhood where families have broken down, where there are no jobs and opportunities, where the school system is dysfunctional, where there's not a strong sense of community, somebody is going to organize something so people can be part of something, where they are important, and they matter.

And I think we have to recognize that, and we have to adopt some of these strategies to deal with it. Unfortunately—I mean, there are lots of things a President can do. You know, we can pass these programs and make these opportunities available. But in the end, people get saved the same way they get lost, one by one. And that's why all of you are so important to this. And that's why the power of his example—one picture—if somebody puts his picture in some newspaper in America tomorrow, talking about your story, it will be worth more words than I can spew out in 2 weeks or 2 years. And that's why I think the genius of this national service program is having more folks like you show up in good gangs to help to decide, community by community, how to create another way of life for all these folks. And you decide how it is. It will be different for different people in different places and different circumstances. And you will make the decision. And all the Government will do is to empower more of you to be out there. That's what the whole national service thing is about.

[Mr. Segal closed the forum and asked the President to make final remarks.]

The President. Let me say first, I want to thank all the New York officials who came, including one I did not introduce, Alan Hevesi, the city comptroller. I want to thank all the people from volunteer groups who came. And especially, I want to thank my good friend Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, whose father's speech I quoted tonight, who has devoted her life to community service. Thank you for being here. And Eli, since you're giving your life to community service and you grew up in this community, I want to introduce your mother, who raised you in this neighborhood. Thank you for coming.

The one last message I want to leave all of you with is I want to thank all of you who are part of these efforts. You are conducting a quiet and sometimes not-so-quiet revolution in this country. The purpose of national service is to swell your numbers and increase your impact and give this country back to the people

who want America to go on to the next century as the greatest country in the world and want to give every child a chance to live up to his or her God-given potential. That is what this is about.

So my last word is this: We need more of you. And anybody within the sound of my voice, we want you to call, find out about national service, find out about the community groups in your community, sign up, and do something. We can change America.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:21 p.m. in the Center for Performing Arts, Brooklyn College. In his remarks, he referred to Vernon Latting, president of the college, and Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Deputy Assistant Attorney General and daughter of Robert F. Kennedy.

Remarks at the United Negro College Fund Dinner in New York City March 10, 1994

The President. Thank you very much. I want to begin by expressing my appreciation for being able to join the honorees here tonight and all the distinguished Americans who are here, the presidents of the 41 UNCF colleges. Given my roots, I couldn't help noticing that of the 41 UNCF colleges, all but Wilberforce are located in the South. And sometimes I'm not so sure about Ohio and where it is. [Laughter] For any of you who are from there, that was a compliment from me.

You know, Bill Gray once came to Arkansas to give a speech for me, and I thanked him profusely. He was then the chairman of the House Budget Committee, perhaps the most powerful Member of the House at that time, except the Speaker. And he was exhausted, and he came down there. I said, "I cannot tell you how much I appreciate it." And he said, "Well, one of these days I'll give you a chance to demonstrate it." At the time, he knew more about my future than I did, I assure you. [Laughter]

I've been terribly impressed with the people who have been recognized here tonight, Stephen Wright and Arthur Fletcher, my longtime friend Vernon Jordan. You could chronicle his demise

up there; his hair's going gray, and he's relegated to playing golf with me. [Laughter] I want to say a special word of recognition to Christopher Edley, Sr., because he has not only rendered great service to this organization but he has given me his son to be the Associate Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Now, the younger Mr. Edley was not so fortunate in his education. He was consigned to Swarthmore and Harvard. [Laughter] But he got over it, and he's doing quite nicely now in the Federal Government. I enjoyed the presentation that your distinguished alumni, Pearlina Cox and—

Audience members. Yea!

The President. Cheer again. That's all right. Don't be shy, go ahead. [Applause]

And I was very impressed with Mrs. Trent not only for representing her husband's work but for setting the record straight on the way out. If it's all the same to you, ma'am, if you don't think you're too old to undertake a new challenge, I'd like to have you come to the White House and help me set the record straight, starting Monday morning. [Laughter]