

May 16 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1994

give our kids a safe and decent and well-educated childhood to put things back together again. There is no alternative for us if we want to keep this country together and we want, 100 years from now, people to celebrate the 140th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* in the greatest country the world has ever known, fully diverse, where everybody, all God's children, can live up to the fullest of their God-given potential.

And in order to do it, we all have to overcome a fair measure not only of fear but of resignation. There are so many of us today, and all of us in some ways at some times, who just don't believe we can tackle the big things and make a difference. But I tell you, the only thing for us to do to honor those whom we honor tonight is to tackle the big things and make a difference.

I'm proud that Elaine Jones and all the rest of you are trying to deal forthrightly with the problem of violence and the fear it produces and what it's doing to drive our people apart. I want you to think about what we can do to honor the sacrifices of those whose shoulders we stand on tonight. They did not do all this work to preside over the collapse of American society, to give people an equal opportunity to get an inferior education, to give people an equal opportunity to be unemployed, to give people an equal opportunity to stand on the street corner and be gunned down by some kid that nobody ever loved enough or disciplined enough or cared enough about to give a different way of living to.

We cannot stand chaos and destruction, but we must not embrace hatred and division. We have only one choice.

Let me read this to you in closing. It seems to me to capture the spirit of *Brown* and the spirit of America and what we have to do today, starting with what is in our heart. These are lines from Langston Hughes' wonderful poem "Let America Be America Again": "Oh yes, I say it plain, America never was America to me. And yet I swear this oath, America will be." Let that be our oath on this 40th anniversary celebration.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:15 p.m. in the International Ballroom at the Washington Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to Elaine R. Jones, director counsel, LDEF; Rabbi David Saperstein, director, Religious Action Center, Union of American Hebrew Congregations; Vernon Jordan, dinner chairman; Dan Rather, dinner host; Cecelia Marshall, widow of Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall; William T. Coleman, former Secretary of Transportation; Jack Greenberg, Columbia University law professor; Julius L. Chambers, chancellor of North Carolina Central University; Robert Bennett and Chester Davenport, dinner corporate cochairs; Ernest Green, one of the Little Rock Nine who integrated the public school system in Little Rock, AR; Thurgood Marshall, Jr., Deputy Counsel and Director of Legislative Affairs for the Vice President; and Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam.

## Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway

May 17, 1994

### Interest Rates

Q. Mr. President, the Federal Reserve seems likely to increase interest rates today. How is that going to affect economic growth and your calculations for deficit reduction if you have to spend more to service a \$4 trillion debt?

The President. Well, first of all, if it happens, it will be because we have growth. I mean, now let's get the fundamental facts out here. We have more jobs, lower inflation, and a lower

deficit and expectations for high growth this year, good growth.

And so—I make it a practice generally not to comment on what the Fed does. There is clearly some room for short-term interest rates over the rate of inflation that won't slow down our economic growth. And I have every confidence that we're still going to have another good year this year and that we will be able to offset any modest increase in interest rates

with increased growth. And so far—I talked to Mr. Panetta yesterday—we’re well within our projections on deficit reduction.

#### Norway

Q. Mr. President, have you ruled out the possibility of sanctions against Norway because of whaling?

*The President.* We are working on this whaling issue. You know, the United States has taken a position opposed to commercial whaling, and we’re working through this with Norway. The Vice President and I had a conversation about it this morning. We are working through the issue, and we feel comfortable about what we’re doing. We think we’re doing the right thing.

Q. [Inaudible]—environmental groups say you—

*The President.* Some environmental groups do. The most mainstream environmental groups have not joined these rather extreme claims that have been made against our country. Give us a chance to work through this. I think we’ll come out in the right place.

Q. Madam Prime Minister, do you agree with the Commerce Department’s opinion that your country’s resumption of whaling goes against efforts to save the whale, so to speak?

*Prime Minister Brundtland.* No, I certainly don’t. We would never have a policy which is not in accordance with international law. We would never have a policy which is not long-term sustainable development, not on this issue, not on any other.

[At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.]

Q. [Inaudible]—whaling, Mr. President?

*The President.* We are working—we’ll work through that. I have confidence that we will be able to work through it.

Q. Mr. President, in that letter to Congress last October, you said that you’re going to work with Norway to create an inspection regime for commercial whaling within scientific limits. Is that still the U.S. position?

*The President.* What were you going to say, Mr. Vice President?

*The Vice President.* I was going to say, we’re opposed to commercial whaling. We have always been committed to good, sound science. And as the President said, we’re working with Norway to work through this issue. We’re opposed to commercial whaling. We hope that we’ll also, incidentally, be able to establish a sanctuary in Antarctica. We hope Norway will support that. But we’re just going to work through the issue.

Q. Are you going to visit Norway, Mr. President?

*The President.* I hope I’ll be able to go back. I went to Norway once when I was a young man. I loved it. I’d love to be able to go back someday; one of the best trips I ever made in my life.

NOTE: The exchange began at 10:07 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

## Question-and-Answer Session on the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court Decision in Beltsville, Maryland May 17, 1994

*The President.* Good morning. Do you know why we’re here? Why are we here, somebody?

Q. To talk about the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and how it affects us today.

*The President.* That’s right, we are. What was the ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*? What did the Supreme Court say?

Q. That “separate but equal” was unjust and unconstitutional.

*The President.* And what were the facts in the case? What gave rise to the case? What was the case about?

Q. Unsegregating schools in the South.

*The President.* In the South and in Topeka, Kansas. It was about a little schoolgirl named Linda Brown whose parents thought she should not be sent to a segregated school. The United States Supreme Court made that decision in 1954, 40 years ago today. Before that, the Su-