which are good and positive be known, because we can never develop a constituency for change in this country until people imagine that it will make a difference. And the level of knowledge, frankly, is pretty low, except when something really horrible happens; then it just cuts through our heart, and it seems so overwhelming that we can’t do anything about it. And so that also gives you an excuse to walk away. You get the best of all worlds, “I really care about this, but lamentably there’s nothing I can do.”

And so I say to all of you, I will do what I can. I will never know as much as those of you who have committed your professional lives to the development of Africa, those of you who have friends and family members there, those of you who have ties of passion and history there. But I do know we need a new policy. I do know we need a policy. I do believe Africa matters to America. I do know there are a lot of good people there leading and making good things happen. I do know there are a lot of visionaries there. And I do know my child and my grandchildren’s future depends upon reconstructing the environmental and social fabric of that continent. I know that.

And so I say to you, let’s build a constituency. Let’s remind people there are things to hope about as well as things to fear. And let’s go to work and make this the beginning, just the beginning, of a new American commitment to a better future for all our peoples.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:55 p.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Wangari Muta Maathai, founder of Kenya’s Green Belt Movement; President Nelson Mandela of South Africa; and Rev. Jesse Jackson, head of the U.S. delegation to observe the South African elections. The related memorandum on assistance for South Africa is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.