

is very good. And that is that a lot of people in public life have taken to trying to show how good they are by showing how bad the people who disagree with them are, and I don't think that's a very good thing. And I have my mother to thank for that attitude, because she taught me never to resent anyone else's success, never to look down on anybody else, and never, ever to think I was better than anybody else, that it was a hard enough job in life just to be a good person yourself without trying to lift yourself up in putting somebody else down. And I'd like to see more of that in our country. I think it would be more civil and a better place.

The second thing I'd like to leave you with is the image of those children that were up here behind us. You know, we have debates from time to time—were they right or am I right about the welfare reform issue. And I disagree with my opponent, Senator Dole, on so many things. But let me ask you this: Just think about your own life here and ask yourself, why are we doing this? Why are we here? The purpose of politics is nothing more or less than to enable more kids like those kids that just sang on the stage to live their dreams the way I got to live mine. There is no other purpose here.

And I thank God for everybody I've ever been able to work with, those of you who are here. A lot of them are gone too, now. I miss my friend and brother, Ron Brown. He would have liked this tonight, and what a wonderful job he would have done.

I started out my Presidency with one of the greatest men I ever met in my life, the late Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin. I miss him so much. There are a lot of people I miss, and I'm sorry they had to leave this Earth before I did. But you know, all of us left ahead, because we got to live out our dreams. And most of us here, truth were known, we'd have to say we've done better than we deserved. And I would like for every child in this country and every child in this world to be able to say that more than they can say it now when our time here is done.

We have to get this country ready for the next century. It will be the time of greatest possibility in all of human history. More of our kids, without regard to their race, their gender, their station in life, will have a chance to live their dreams if we do our job. That is really what we're here about.

I've been luckier than most people because I had family who loved me, friends who took care of me, folks who worked with me and made me look better than I deserved, and a chance to do work I loved. But in the end, all that matters is whether, when we finish, we have made it possible for more people to be what God meant them to be. And you have helped to give me that chance, and that is the best birthday present of all.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 p.m. at Radio City Music Hall. In his remarks, he referred to comedienne Whoopi Goldberg and the late Ronald H. Brown, former Secretary of Commerce.

Remarks at the Democratic National Committee 50th Birthday Dinner for the President in New York City

August 18, 1996

Let's give Jessye Norman a hand. That was about the best "Happy Birthday" I ever saw. [Applause] I often thought—please sit down—I often thought my birthday might resemble a soap opera, but never a real one. [Laughter] So I am deeply honored that Jessye is here tonight.

Let me say very briefly—I said what I had to say at Radio City—but I want to thank all

of you from the bottom of my heart for making this night possible. I thank our hardworking Democratic chairman, Don Fowler, and Marvin Rosen, our finance director, and all the people at DNC. They work so hard.

The chairs of this event, Jay and Maryanne Alex, Noah Dear, Beth Dozoretz, Larry Harris, Susan and Alan Patricof, Stan Shuman, Paul

Verrochi, Harvey Weinstein—let's give them all a big hand. They've been great. *[Applause]*

I want to thank my good friend, the former Governor of Mississippi, Ray Mabus, who put together all the satellite events around the country, 89 of them. Thank you, Ray.

I'd like to thank the distinguished political leaders from New York who are here: former Mayor Dinkins; Congressman Rangel; Congressman Lowey; Senator Lautenberg; the minority leader of the Senate, Senator Martin Conner; and Speaker Shelly Silver; and the New York State Democratic cochair, Judith Hope and John Sullivan.

I think that there are a lot of other—I want to thank all of the entertainers who are still here, those who performed tonight. You were magnificent. It was a great event at Radio City Music Hall.

In addition to Jessye, there is one very great American artist here who just came in from Europe, could not be here earlier for the performance, but I think is one of the most gifted musicians of my lifetime. Mr. Wynton Marsalis is here. Thank you very much, Wynton, for being here.

Let me say finally that what Vernon said about the birthday present coming on November 5th is not entirely true. This is a deeply personal night for me and a great joy. I know that a lot of you worked very, very hard on this evening. You know who you are; I know who you are. I know what an enormous effort it was, and I don't know where you got some of the home movies and the pictures. If I knew where, the people who gave it to you would be in trouble—*[laughter]*—but I thought it was fabulous, and I thank you for that.

In terms of the election, I ask you only to remember that we really are going to make a decision which I think is even more important than the one we made in 1992. We have to validate the direction this country is going in. We cannot permit it to be reversed, and we cannot permit people to turn away from the fact that we are in better shape as a nation than we were 4 years ago. The choice is clear about the competing visions for the future, and it's very important for us to build on the progress that has been made, not to sit on it but not to reverse it, either.

And when we go to our convention in Chicago and we're going into this campaign, I want all of you to help me elevate this campaign. I want this to be a campaign in which the American people have an honest, civil discussion with one another about how we ought to go forward into the 21st century. I don't want you to check your passion, I want you to turn it up. I don't want you to decline to say that you disagree with our opponents when you do and why you do, but I do not want it to be personally demeaning or negative.

You know, this is not the world's oldest democracy because every single election has been decided between a saint and a scoundrel; that is not what has happened. Our political system has worked and we're still around here after 220 years because we had a lot of people who loved their country who had different views, and more than half the time the American people, the majority, have made the right decision and kept us moving into the future. And that's how we ought to look at this. We don't have to demean anybody. We don't have to put anybody down. We have to lift the country up, put people together, and move into the future. And I want you to lead that. And I want you to have no amount of overconfidence. I want you to be intense, focused, and committed, because a lot is riding on it.

Finally, let me say—I want to thank a man I've known a long time and I really admire on many, many levels, but tonight we heard his great music and the music of his orchestra. Thank you, Peter Duchin, for what you've done. Thank you. Thank you for being a good Democrat.

And lastly, Vernon, I was sitting there listening to you speak, and you about had me convinced I was a great man. *[Laughter]* I believe you could talk an owl out of a tree. And I want you to know that we did not ignore your birthday. Even though I was away aching from that—as I called it—that death march of dehydration that I took the press on when we climbed down from Mount Washburn in Wyoming, having been there a day and a half, we were still thinking about you. And I'd like to present you with your own birthday cake since you gave me mine. Where is it? *[Laughter]* Happy birthday, Vernon. I love you.

Thank you, and God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at midnight in the Grand Ballroom at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to soprano Jessye Norman; David Dinkins, former New York City

mayor; and Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., dinner emcee. These remarks were released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 19.

Remarks at the Salem Missionary Baptist Church in Fruitland, Tennessee August 19, 1996

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you very, very much. Reverend Donaldson, before the Sun went underneath that cloud for a minute, I was beginning to wonder how a place so close to heaven could be so hot. [*Laughter*]

But I am very glad to be here. Hillary and I are delighted to be here with Reverend and Mrs. Donaldson, and Reverend and Mrs. Vaughan, and our good friend John Tanner, Governor McWherter, and the other folks from Tennessee public life. I also wanted to say Reverend Donaldson gave you a big plug, Mr. Barnett. He said if it hadn't been for you and the leaders of the church, you all wouldn't be here today. And I thank you, too, for what you've done. [*Applause*] Thank you.

I want to begin my remarks by presenting to Reverend Donaldson and Reverend Vaughan a plaque with a statement I made about this whole issue not very long ago that says, "We must come together as one America to rebuild our churches, restore hope, and show the forces of hatred they cannot win." And I wanted you both to have these plaques when you reopen your church so that people all over this part of the country could see that what you have done is a symbol of the best in our faith and the best in our country. So if you would come up, Reverend Donaldson and Reverend Vaughan, I'd like to give you these plaques.

[*At this point, the President presented the plaques to Rev. Daniel Donaldson, pastor, Salem Missionary Baptist Church, and Rev. Bill Vaughan, pastor, New Shiloh United Methodist Church.*]

The President. You know, I think I'll start my brief remarks here just by picking up on something that Reverend Donaldson said about politics and differences and how he was sure that every President had done something that somebody disagreed with. After 4 years, I'm sure

that every President has done something that everybody disagreed with. [*Laughter*] But part of what we're dealing with today, folks, is not only how we live our faith but how we manage our differences.

And as your President—I want you to think about this—as your President, an enormous percentage of my time in dealing with America's relationship to the rest of the world is required of people who refuse to get along with each other because of their religious, their racial, their ethnic, or their tribal differences. That is what has convulsed the Holy Land for decades now. That is what brought the people in Bosnia, after decades and decades of peace, to slaughtering each other as if they were animals for 4 years. In Northern Ireland, the part of Ireland which ought to be the most prosperous and successful, it's what keeps Protestants and Catholics apart. They're still refighting 600-year-old battles when the kids want them to join hands and march into the future together. In Rwanda and Burundi, tribal differences have kept two small countries convulsed with mass slaughter when they ought to be trying to figure out how to feed their children.

I see this everywhere. And I thank God for the wisdom of our Founding Fathers who said, first, that people are created equal, and second, that the right to the freedom of religion is the first amendment, the first and most important right we have. And so I ask you to think about that.

I said the other day that I hoped that we could get out of the point in our politics where we trade in insults and go back to fighting over ideas, when we realize that not every election is a race between a saint and a scoundrel but instead a contest to find out what the best truth is for our country to move forward together.

I might say in that context, I noticed one of your neighbors here who is running for the