

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:33 p.m. at the Marrero Action Playground. In his remarks, he referred to community activist Yvonne McPherson,

who introduced the President; and Lt. Renee Washington, director, Project STAR, and Harry Lee, sheriff, Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office.

Remarks to the Community in Atlanta, Georgia

October 25, 1996

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much. Hello, Atlanta! Are you feeling good? You made the Sun come out.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be in Atlanta and in Georgia. I thank all of you for being here, but I want to say a special word of thanks to those who have helped this be a great youth day for our campaign all across America. We're talking to young Americans about their future.

So let's give this great band Cracker another hand. Didn't they do a good job? [*Applause*] And I thank my longtime supporter Michael Stipe from R.E.M. for coming here. Thank you, Michael. Thank you, Kathleen Bertrand, for singing the national anthem so beautifully. And thank you, Becky Ahmann, for giving us an example of the future we are trying to build in your own life. She gave a good speech, didn't she? She ought to do this for a living.

I thank all the distinguished Georgians who are here, but one especially. Thank you, Coretta Scott King, for coming today to be with us. Thank you. Mayor Campbell, thank you for your indefatigable enthusiasm and for your positive leadership of this great city. Billy Payne, thank you for your support and for making the Atlanta games the greatest games in the history of the Olympics. You did a brilliant job.

To all the political leaders who are here, the State elected officials, Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney and the others who are here—she's still fighting, and she's going to be rewarded on election day—I thank you all.

Georgia has given many great leaders to America: Martin Luther King; President Jimmy Carter; my great friend of many years John Lewis, who talked about building his own bridges today; Zell Miller, who has given the Nation an idea with the HOPE scholarships in Georgia. But when the history of this era is written, there will be few people who have made the contribution to our security and our

future that Senator Sam Nunn has, and we are all in his debt. Sam Nunn was one of the first people who convinced me that we ought to have a national service program to give young people a chance to serve in their communities and earn their way through college, and 60,000 young Americans have been part of AmeriCorps. Thank you, Sam Nunn, for that. Sam Nunn led the fight to get Congress to appropriate funds to help the Russians pay to tear up their nuclear missiles and their nuclear missile sites. And he's one of the big reasons that there are no Russian missiles targeted at the young people of the United States of America today. Thank you, Senator Sam Nunn.

And Georgia is about to be given a chance to add another person to the list of distinguished nationally significant servants of the people of this great State and our country. And I hope you will send Max Cleland to the United States Senate. You know, every time we have an election, someone stands up and starts talking about sacrifice and serving your country. I think we all know that Max Cleland knows something about sacrifice and serving our country. And yet, he just kept on giving. He never quit giving to America. And——

[*At this point, there was a disturbance in the audience.*]

The President. You all relax. When people don't have a side of their own to make, they try to shout their opponents down. Just relax. Just relax.

Let me tell you, Max Cleland has kept on giving for a lifetime, with a smile on his face and a song in his heart, always reaching out his hand to other people. Now, the other side, their idea of sacrifice is to take Head Start away from 5-year-olds, college loans away from students, to take the environment away from all of our people, and to weaken our future economy for short-term promises. I think Max Cleland's idea of service to America is the right

one, and I believe Georgians will agree. [Applause] Thank you.

Now, you know, I want to talk most, if anything, to the young people today. This is your election, and we need you. You have most of your tomorrows in front of you, you have your future out there ahead of you, and you have to decide about that. I appreciate what Senator Nunn said about the last 4 years. It is true that we're better off than we were. It is true that we have more jobs, that the other side talked about being conservative but our administration is the first one to take the deficit down in each of our 4 years in the 20th century. It is true that the other guys talked about how bad the big old Federal Government was, but it's our administration working with our allies in Congress who has cut the size of the Federal Government, the number of regulations, the number of Government programs, and we have privatized more Government operations than the last two Republican administrations did in 12 years combined. That's the truth.

But there is a difference. We still believe that we have responsibilities to move forward together. And that's what you have to decide, all you young people, whether you want a future in which you're told, "You're on your own, and we hope you have a nice life," or whether you believe it does take a village to raise a child, protect the environment, and build a future. You have to decide. You have to decide.

What is this future of yours going to be like? Well, we know it will be dominated by information and technology. We know that ideas and information and money and technology will move around the world in a split second. We know that the borders that divide us will increasingly come down and we'll be drawn closer together with people all around the world. We know there will be new security threats even as the cold war fades away: terrorism, the proliferation of chemical and biological and other sophisticated weapons. We know that ethnic and racial and religious hatreds can cross national borders. We know all that.

And we know that there will be new challenges to the way we work and live and relate to each other. We know today, already, that most parents, even parents with very comfortable incomes, face repeated challenges in fulfilling their obligations to their children as parents and succeeding in the workplace. We know there will be a lot of changes.

When Becky Ahmann was up here talking, she told you how she was able to leave her business in New York, move to Georgia, and keep working for her business in New York by working at home. When I became President, there were 3 million Americans doing that; today there are over 12 million Americans like Becky Ahmann. When we start that new century just 4 years from now, there will be 30 million Americans like her. That's how fast we're changing.

We know we're pushing back the frontiers of knowledge. We have funded a project with IBM to develop a supercomputer in the next couple of years that will do more calculations in a second than you can do on your hand-held calculator in 30,000 years.

We have seen for the first time in history laboratory animals with their spines completely severed having movement in their lower limbs because of nerve transplants from other parts of their body to their spines. It's just a matter of time until we can do that for Americans and for people all over the world. We have uncovered, in the last 4 years, two of the genes which cause breast cancer. It's just a matter of time until we have the earliest possible detection and eventually prevention. Because of the space program, we have developed sophisticated imaging technology that soon we can put across human bodies and find cancers in their very incipency so that we'll be able to save more lives than ever before. We have more than doubled the life expectancy for people who have HIV and AIDS in the last 4 years; it's on the verge of becoming a chronic illness.

These things have happened. That is the world we have to prepare for. And that is the world you must decide about. And so I say to you: If you want to have a future and a world like that, like I do, where everybody has a chance to live up to their God-given capacity, where everyone who is responsible should have a chance to live out their dreams, where everybody respects everyone else's right to work and live and we come together in a community, we're not divided, race against race, man against woman, among each other, if that is the America you want, then you have some responsibilities, too.

You must decide whether you want to balance the budget to keep our economy growing while we protect our investments in education, the environment, Medicare, Medicaid, and research

or whether you want to adopt a risky scheme that will blow a hole in the deficit, require bigger cuts in those things, and take us backward. That is your decision. The young people of America must decide that.

You must decide whether you believe we can improve the environment and grow the economy. I know we can. Today, the air is cleaner, your drinking water is safer, your food is safer. We have set aside more lands for national parks. We are saving the Florida Everglades. We protected Yellowstone Park from a gold mine. But we are also making America economically healthier. And if you will help me, I'll do something I know is close to John Lewis' heart. In the next 4 years we're going to clean up 500 more toxic waste sites so our kids will be growing up next to parks, not poison.

This is an important election for young people. You will have to decide whether we are going to reform a welfare system in a way that gives poor people a real chance. It's one thing to say to people, you must go to work if you're able-bodied. It's quite another thing to go to work. There has to be a job at the end of that requirement. And I'm committed to doing that. You will have to decide.

More than anything else, you will have to decide if you really believe now that we've gotten the crime down to a 10-year low—the crime rate has gone down 4 years in a row in America. We can actually make our streets safe again if we do more to prevent our kids from getting in trouble in the first place, to finish the job of putting 100,000 police on the street, to keep the safe and drug-free schools program alive in our schools. The other side wants to cut back on all that. It is your decision. I think you want safe streets, a drug-free youth, and a safe school program. You will have to decide.

More than anything else, your decision about what kind of educational opportunities we offer to the American people will shape the future. I want an America in which we have a country where every classroom and every library and every school is hooked up to the information superhighway. Will you help us do that? [Applause]

I want an America where, for the first time in history, children in the poorest and smallest rural school districts in Georgia and Arkansas have access at the same time in the same way at the same level of quality to the same information children in the wealthiest, best funded

school districts in America have. Will you help us do that? [Applause]

And we can build an America in which for the first time every single person who is willing to work for it can go on to college. Under our plan, we propose to give people a tax credit, a dollar-for-dollar reduction on their taxes to give up to 2 years of college and make it as universal as high school is today, an American version of Georgia's HOPE scholarship. Will you help us do that? [Applause] We propose in our balanced budget plan to give people a tax deduction of up to \$10,000 a year for any kind of college tuition. Will you help us do that? [Applause]

But we also need your help to do some things. Forty percent of the 8-year-olds in America today, 40 percent of them can still not read a book on their own. All these children I want to go to college, all these children we want to fool with the computers, if they can't read, they can't succeed. I have proposed to put together one million volunteers so that we can help the parents and the schools of this country, so that in 4 years every 8-year-old in the United States can pick up a book and say, "I can read this all by myself, all by myself." And I challenge all of you—

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. —all of you young people to help us do that. I challenge you to volunteer in this community, in communities all across Georgia to help us do that. We have 60,000 now, people serving in AmeriCorps. More of them will do it. Last month, just before the Congress adjourned, they approved my request for a huge increase in the number of students who can be in work-study programs while working their way through college. Today I propose that 100,000 of those work-study students join the America Reads initiative and make up 10 percent of those million volunteers we need. I want you to support that. I want you to tell me that you will help to teach a child to read, to help people in this community who need it, to make this community one.

You know, one of the most impressive things I know about Senator Nunn is that his daughter was one of the founders of Hands On Atlanta. And a lot of you have probably been part of that, but that's the last point I want to make to you today.

Senator Nunn brushed over it, but you think about how much time as your President I spend dealing with people around the world who are killing each other and killing each other's children because they refuse to get along, because they think they have to hate each other, because they have religious or ethnic or racial or tribal differences, people in Rwanda, in Burundi, people in Bosnia, people in Northern Ireland, people in the Middle East, people in Haiti. Why can't people get along? Why do they have to look down on each other? Why do they have to think they're good because someone else is bad?

The part of America that will carry us into the 21st century, more than scientific discovery, more than computers, more than anything else is—look around this crowd. We've got people here from everywhere. And we learned an important lesson in the civil rights struggle that we can now take into a much more diverse country than we were in the fifties and sixties.

When I was with Billy Payne and Governor Miller and Mayor Campbell and we opened the Olympics and Hillary and Chelsea came with me, there were people from 192 different racial, national, and ethnic groups here for the Olympics. Our biggest county, Los Angeles County, has people from over 150 of those places in one American county—one.

So I say to you, the most important thing is that we have to prove we're not going to be like all those other countries. That's why I stood up against those church burnings. That's why, after the terrible tragedy of Oklahoma City, I asked the American people to stop hating public servants who happen to work for their Federal Government because we have to say in

America, "Hey, we're all in this together. If you believe in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, if you're willing to show up tomorrow and do your job, you're a part of our America. We don't need to know anything else about you. We don't need to know anything else about you."

I want all of us to be able to say, "We don't need to look down on anybody else to feel good about ourselves and our families and our future." And I want all of us to say, "We believe that we have an obligation to serve as citizens to help our children to read, to deal with the other problems in our community, to save the generation of our young people who are in trouble still today because they're more vulnerable to gangs and guns and drugs and other problems that threaten their future. We're going to help them, and we're going to do it together."

That's the big question in this election. Do you believe we ought to build a bridge to the future we can all walk across? [*Applause*] Do you want that to be the future for you and your children in the 21st century? [*Applause*] Are you prepared to do what it takes to help us build that bridge? [*Applause*] You be there on November 5th, and we'll build it together.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. in Woodruff Park. In his remarks, he referred to musician Michael Stipe; Becky Ahmann, who spoke prior to the President; civil rights activist Coretta Scott King; Mayor Bill Campbell of Atlanta; William P. Payne, president and chief executive officer, Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games; Representative John Lewis; and Gov. Zell Miller of Georgia.

Teleconference Remarks to Religious and Community Leaders in Atlanta October 25, 1996

Thank you very much, my good and longtime friend Andrew Young. And I want to thank all of those who are gathered here at Paschal's in Atlanta. We have a good crowd of folks here. I know we've got about 300 ministers and 600 elected officials from across the country. We've got people in homes and churches and church conferences.

I'm glad to be joined here by two of my good friends and associates, Alexis Herman, who is the Special Assistant to the President for Public Liaison at the White House, and Carol Willis, who is with the Democratic National Committee, who helped to put this phone call together.

I know that Mayor Cleaver is on the phone; Congressman Donald Payne, the chairman of