

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

the Congressional Black Caucus; Congressman and Reverend Floyd Flake, my longtime friend and one of my earliest supporters; our campaign cochairs, Alma Brown and Congressman John Lewis, who was just with me at this rally in Atlanta. And I understand that Reverend Henry Lyons, the president of the National Baptist Convention, is on the phone, and I want to thank you, Reverend Lyons, for your efforts to restore calm in the aftermath of last night's unfortunate events in St. Petersburg. We all have a responsibility to foster a climate of reconciliation and peace and to address the underlying causes of this outbreak of violence as well, and I thank you for what you're doing there in St. Petersburg; it's important to all of us in America.

And I want to say a word of recognition to Bishop Chandler Owens of the Church of God in Christ and to others in that congregation. Let me say one of the oldest and most distinguished pastors of the Church of God in Christ, from my home State of Arkansas, passed away the day before yesterday, Elder Famous Smith, and I want to extend my sympathies to all of you who knew him.

We just have a few days to go in this election. We just had a great rally in Atlanta. We had several thousand people there, and we focused on young people and their future. I talked about my plans to open the doors of college education to all Americans. I also challenged these young people to take some time to serve in their communities, especially to teach young children to read.

And I guess that I'd like to begin by saying I ran for President not only to enact certain policies that I think are important for the 21st century—to give us a strong economy, a clean environment, the world's best educational system, a way of dealing with the problems abroad to make America safer and more secure, and a way of driving down the crime rate and the violence rate here at home—I had certain policies I wanted to implement, but I also wanted to change the way our country was working.

Politics for so long in America has been about dividing people, and at the national level especially, the whole rhetoric, the language that you use, the labels that are put on people, always about dividing us one from another, whereas that's not the way we run anything else. Those of you that are listening to me, you couldn't run a church that way. Atlanta couldn't have

put on the Olympics that way. We're having a brilliant Major League World Series; if all of a sudden one of the teams starts calling their own team members names in public, they're not going to win. I tell you, whichever team does that, the other team is going to win. And so our national politics had gotten to the point where we were running it the way we wouldn't run our families, our businesses, our churches, our common community endeavors.

Yesterday I was in the town of Lake Charles, Louisiana—has a very dynamic young woman mayor named Willie Mount. And she got the community, which is a very biracial and increasingly multiethnic community, to adopt the slogan of "moving forward together." Atlanta now, I think, is one of the, literally, the urban centers of the world because 40 years ago it became the city too busy to hate. And yet, national politics was dominated essentially by negative political ads and name-calling. And we changed all that.

I wanted to have an administration that looked like America and an administration that worked more like the other things that work in America. And one of the reasons I spend so much time on community colleges and one reason I try to open the doors of college to every American, to make sure every person would be guaranteed at least 2 years of education after high school is that I think our country ought to work more the way these community colleges do. If you go to one, they're not bureaucratic; they're flexible; they're changing all the time. They have to meet high standards of performance or they go broke. Everybody that graduates from them gets hired. And they're open to everybody, and everybody is treated the same. That's what I'm trying to do for America.

So I'm proud of the results we've achieved. It's not only true that the overall economy is better, but we have, according to the Government statistics from the Census Bureau just last month, the biggest decline in inequality among working people in 27 years, the biggest drop in child poverty in 20 years, the biggest drop in poverty among female head of households in 30 years, and the lowest overall poverty rate among African-Americans and American senior citizens ever recorded.

Now, African-Americans have had a higher increase in their average earnings in the last 2 years, even in the overall economy. And things

like homeownership, which is at a 15-year high overall, are much up among African-Americans. The Small Business Administration has doubled its loans overall and tripled its loans to women and minorities. And we haven't been making loans that violate our standards of quality. We're just outreaching, working hard, trying to move this country together and move this country forward.

I'm sure most of you on this phone call know we have appointed more African-Americans to important positions in the Cabinet and the White House, in the administration, on the Federal bench than any other administration in history by a good long ways. And yet, I'm proud of the fact that my Federal judges, even though there have been more women and minority appointments by far than any previous administration, the American Bar Association has given higher ratings to my Federal judges than any other President since the rating system began, which proves we can have excellence and diversity, which proves you can have affirmative action and equal opportunity and high standards.

When we were fighting for the battle over affirmative action, the battle which still rages in our country, and it became all the rage to just say, "Let's get rid of it," I said, "No, we ought to mend it, not end it." And I believe my view is beginning to prevail in the world and in the United States.

I was in Houston the other day, which is hardly a bastion of strength for the Democratic Party. And the mayor there, who is a very talented mayor, explicitly, forthrightly, and aggressively defended the city's affirmative action policy and still won support for reelection from over 80 percent of the people in his city. And so I think our "mend it, not end it" policy in the end will prevail.

I believe that the economic efforts we have made are important. You know, our campaign became the first campaign ever to invest some of the money that we have to save—that we get from the taxpayers and we have to save to pay bills and make up for any mistakes that have been made and make sure all the accounting is right—Peter Knight, our campaign chairman, announced that we were going to deposit millions of dollars in four leading minority banks in America. No campaign had ever done this—two African-American banks, including the Citizens Trust here in Atlanta, and two Hispanic banks—and I'm proud of that.

The empowerment zones that we created and the enterprise communities we created, and the community development banks that we created, including one worth almost \$500 million in Los Angeles, these are beginning to loan money to people and to create jobs. In Detroit, under the leadership of Mayor Archer—when I took office, the Detroit unemployment rate was nearly 9 percent. Today, the unemployment rate in Detroit is 4½ percent. The empowerment zone has generated \$2 billion in private sector capital.

So we can turn our cities around. In virtually every city in the country there has been a big drop in the violent crime rate as we put more police officers on the street and adopt strategies to prevent crime from happening in the first place.

So I believe we're moving in the right direction there. We still have a lot of challenges in the future, and I'd just like to mention two or three, if I might, that you can play a particular role in.

Our young people are still faced with a lot of challenges. And you know that as well as I do. If anyone had told me 4 years ago we could bring the violent crime rate in America down 4 years in a row to a 10-year low, but we just barely make a dent in crime among young people, people under 18, I would have had a hard time believing that. If anyone had told me 4 years ago our efforts would stem a lot of the flow of drugs into America, we'd have a 30 percent decline in cocaine use and a 13 percent decline in overall casual drug use among adults, especially young adults, but drug use would go up among children under 18, I would have had a hard time believing that. So we've got some challenges to meet there, and let me just make some suggestions.

First of all, we should do no harm; we should keep doing what we've been doing, getting that message out in our churches and in our schools that drugs are illegal and wrong and can kill you. We definitely should not do what the other side wants to do, which is to cut the safe and drug-free schools program. We need more things for our children to say yes to. We shouldn't cut our school programs that—we're giving funds now to schools to stay open after school so kids will have something else to do. We're trying to help our cities start things like sports leagues to give kids positive things to be involved in, to increase recreational opportunities.

And so the fight I had with folks in the other party when they wanted to cut out the summer job program or cut back on the safe and drug-free schools program and undermine that is that I just don't think you can punish these children into obedience. I think we have to lead them into a good, harmonious, positive life. If somebody does something terrible and they need to be punished and put in jail, fine, let's do that. But first we have to try to give them a chance to have a better life.

And let me just say one other thing. Last week, I asked our young people to make a little sacrifice to serve our country, and I hope you will help me sell it, because I know a lot of them won't like it. But it's important to point out that 90 percent of our children are still drug-free. Ninety percent of these kids are out there doing the right thing, trying to be good citizens. But still, to have 10 percent, or nearly 11 now, having experimented with drugs is too many, when we had it down to about 5½ or 6 percent just a few years ago.

And so I think that we ought to make a drug test a part, a regular part, of getting a driver's license. Now, we know that for 90 percent of the kids, they don't need it, but if they'll do that and be responsible and help us, how many of these other children are we going to be able to find and save before they get in serious trouble and before it's too late? I think this is very important.

And the last point I'd like to make is this: We have to keep growing the economy, and we have to keep moving people into work, and we have to do it in the right way. In the last 4 years, I'm very proud of the fact that we've moved about 2 million people from welfare to work and we've increased child support collections by almost 50 percent, right at \$4 billion a year.

The welfare reform bill poses a special challenge to all of us, but it also give us a terrific opportunity. Because what it says is, we'll keep paying for the health care and the food for poor families as a national guarantee for all poor families. If someone moves from welfare to work we will spend more on child care than ever before. But that portion of the Federal Government's money that used to go to the welfare check will now go to States and by extension, the local communities. And everybody will have 2 years to figure out how to turn that welfare check into a paycheck.

Now, this is a terrific opportunity for us. And let me give you an example—Mayor Cleaver is on the phone here—in Kansas City 2 years ago we gave them the chance to do something I've been begging every State in America to do. We gave them all the welfare funds, and we said that you could have permission to give employers a welfare check as a wage supplement for up to 4 years if they will hire people off welfare in creating new jobs, not replacing people. And we'll guarantee that they'll be able to keep their Medicaid for several years if they go to work in a business that doesn't give health insurance.

Almost immediately hundreds of people got jobs. And businesses that never thought they would even consider hiring anybody off welfare before did it and could afford to help train the people because they were getting the welfare check as a wage supplement.

Now, I want to challenge all the pastors here—you can think about that, if that option were given to you, you might be able to do such a thing as that. You might be able to add to the church staff if the local folks would give you the welfare check and say, "Here is the welfare check; this is the premium we're paying you to train folks, to see after their kids, and make sure they're all right and they're going into the future."

We can do this. This is the right way to do it. We're going to give special targeted tax credits to private sector businesses to do the same thing. This is the right way to do it. We don't have the ability to have a big Government public works job, and we want all these families to be brought into the mainstream. They need homes and neighborhoods and support systems. And we can do this.

Now, all of this depends upon this election. And that's the last thing I want to say. Your vote will decide this election. But whether you vote will also decide this election. And I can do a pretty good job of saying no if I have to. I've shown that I know how to sign that veto pen pretty good.

But we also want to say yes to America—to a new direction, to keep this economy growing, to keep preserving the environment, to clean up these toxic waste sites in our cities so our children will be growing up next to parks, not poison, to continue to expand health care coverage to people when they're unemployed for 6 months, to expand coverage to a million

more children—all this is in my balanced budget plan—to provide mammograms to women who are on Medicare, to help families care for a member who has Alzheimer's, to give them a little time off. All this is in our balanced budget plan—to open the doors of college education to all. All these things require affirmative steps to move America forward.

And you can look at these races all across America, and you can look—a lot of States in the Presidential race are very close, and the outcome will be determined by the turnout.

Don't be fooled by the polls. In the first place, the polls don't count much in Presidential elections; it's who wins the largest number of States. You know, I could win one State by two to one and Senator Dole could win two States by one vote, and I'd have lots more votes, and he'd have more electoral votes.

And let me tell you, that's not an accident. We've had two times in American history where the person with the most votes lost the White House. This turnout question is not an academic question. Twice already in American history, the President—the person that ran for President, got the most votes, actually lost the White House. The choice of the people didn't serve. The choice of the States served. We still have the system we started with.

We won Georgia in 1992 by eight-tenths of one percent. The last poll had us 6 percent ahead on Saturday night before the election. And you may remember, I came here, and Senator Nunn and Governor Miller and Hank Aaron and I did a rally in a stadium outside Atlanta. We had over 25,000 people there. But on election day—and the 6-point poll was right, but on election day they showed up in higher numbers than we did. That's what happened. We won New Jersey by one percentage point. We won Ohio by 2 percentage points. And I could go on and on and on and on.

So in the President's race, in the Senate races, in the House races, in the governorships, it's not—the choice people make for their future is not just for whom they vote, but it's whether they vote.

Now, you know what to do. You know how to do it. I think every one of you listening to

me today understands the profound historic significance of this vote.

But I just sit here—I'm in Georgia today, we just left this rally, so I'm thinking especially about Max Cleland. It's hard to imagine an American serving in public life today who sacrificed more for his country than Max Cleland, a man who nearly gave his life, gave up three of his limbs to serve America in the war in Vietnam. But he's still out there with a smile on his face, a song in his heart, trying to serve the public—being attacked as being too liberal? Is he? I don't think so.

It's just that his idea of sacrifice is not taking Head Start away from children or telling people they can't have a college loan or telling young people who live in poor inner-city neighborhoods they have to go on living by their toxic waste dumps because we're going to cut environmental enforcement and environmental protection. His idea of service is helping other people to make the most of their own lives so that the sacrifice he made so many years ago is for the America of his dreams. And that's why I so—I want Max Cleland to win. He is a remarkable man. I've known him many, many years. He's a wonderful man.

It all depends on the turnout. So I ask you all to think about that. Do what you can. You know what to do. You know how to do it. And if we all show up, we'll have a real celebration on November 5th.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:05 p.m. from Paschal's Restaurant. In his remarks, he referred to former United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young; Carol Willis, senior adviser to the chair, Democratic National Committee; Mayor Emanuel Cleaver II of Kansas City, MO; Alma Brown, national cochair, and Peter Knight, campaign manager, Clinton/Gore '96; Bishop Chandler Owens, presiding bishop, Church of God in Christ; Mayor Bob Lanier of Houston, TX; Mayor Dennis W. Archer of Detroit, MI; Gov. Zell Miller of Georgia; former Major League baseball player Hank Aaron; and Max Cleland, Georgia senatorial candidate.