

Remarks at the Kickoff of the Presidents' Summit for America's Future in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania April 27, 1997

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much. Good morning!

Audience members. Good morning!

The President. Are you ready to go to work?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Are you warmed up?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Have you heard all the speeches you want to hear?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I want to just say—let me say, first of all, how grateful I am to be here with all the people who have made this possible and with all of you. I thank the people of Philadelphia for being so good to me since 1992 and for being my friends and for giving me a chance to work with you to bring Philadelphia back. Thank you so much. I thank all your officials. I thank your wonderful Mayor.

General Powell told me when he retired from the United States Army as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the one thing he wanted to do more than anything else was to find a way to give every child in this country a chance at a good future, and I thank him for doing that.

I thank Colin and Alma. I thank George and Barbara Bush for their examples, Mrs. Bush with her literacy program, President Bush for A Thousand Points of Light. I thank President and Mrs. Carter for caring about the children of this country, for the work they've done with Habitat for Humanity and for going all over the world to rid the children of the world of dread diseases, to give them food to eat and a decent, humane place to grow up in. I thank all of you.

But let's face it—I want everybody to face it. Why are we here? We know that a lot of us would be doing a lot of this anyway. There are a lot of wonderful volunteers in America. Here's why we're here. This country has produced a lot of jobs in the last 4 years. The crime rate is going down; the welfare rolls are going down. But we're still losing too many kids to crime, to drugs, to not having a decent income in their home, and to not having a bright future. And we're here because we don't think

we have to put up with it, and we believe together we can change it. Isn't that right? [Applause]

I'm here because I want the young people out here to grow up in an America that is even greater than the America I grew up in. That is the eternal dream and promise, and every one of you deserves that. I'm here because, frankly, I believe that as children of God, we can never fulfill our own ambitions until we help our brothers and sisters to fulfill theirs.

I'm here because I want to redefine the meaning of citizenship in America. I want the children here, starting next week, and all over America—if you're asked in school, what does it mean to be a good citizen, I want the answer to be, "Well, to be a good citizen, you have to obey the law. You've got to go to work or be in school. You've got to pay your taxes, and, oh, yes, you have to serve in your community to help make it a better place."

And General Powell, since we're going to keep this going and we all have to make an account of ourselves, I'll go first. Here's my commitment to you and your project.

In the next 4 years, the Department of Defense will mentor, tutor, and teach one million children. In the next 4 years, the Department of Transportation and the private businesses who work with them will do that for one million more. We will adopt a total of 2,000 schools in the Federal agencies of this country. We will find one million reading tutors in the America Reads program, to make sure every child can read independently by the third grade. And our AmeriCorps volunteers will go across this country to recruit at least a dozen more volunteers for every one of them, to make sure that all of the items on your agenda succeed. That is our commitment.

Are you ready to keep your commitment?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. After today is over, do you promise to keep working tomorrow?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. And next year?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. And the year after that?

Audience members. Yes!
The President. Until the job is done?
Audience members. Yes!
The President. I promise. Say it!
Audience members. I promise!
The President. Let's go to work.
God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. at Marcus Foster Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Edward Rendell of Philadelphia; Gen. Colin L. Powell, USA (ret.), former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and his wife, Alma; and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter.

Remarks on Presenting the President's Service Awards in Philadelphia April 27, 1997

The President. Thank you. I like that version of "Hail to the Chief." Maybe the Marine Band could pick it up. *[Laughter]*

Ladies and gentlemen, these President's Service Awards are traditionally presented at the White House every year, but Hillary and I are profoundly honored to be here this evening with President and Mrs. Bush, General Powell, and all others who are part of this very important ceremony.

As all of you know, we're here along with President Ford, President and Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Reagan, here in Philadelphia where our great democracy began, for the first Presidents' Summit for America's Future, to mobilize every community and challenge every citizen, to give our young people a chance to live up to their God-given potential, and to ask our young people to become citizen servants, too.

So tonight we're going to give these awards, very appropriately, in the categories that have been set out for the challenge to America, the categories that General Powell talked about in his moving opening remarks. And I'm going to have the honor of recognizing the caring adults. I'm pleased to be joined tonight by a man who has dedicated his entire life to meeting the challenge of service, Harris Wofford.

[At this point, Harris Wofford, Chief Executive Officer, Corporation for National and Community Service, made brief remarks.]

The President. You know, you might have guessed that before he headed our Nation's citizens service effort and the corporation for national service, Harris Wofford was in politics—*[laughter]*—the Senator from Pennsylvania. But before that, he was a college president; before that, a founder of the Peace Corps; a top aide to President Kennedy; a friend and ally of Dr.

Martin Luther King. Hardly any American living today better personifies citizen service than Harris Wofford, and I thank him for that.

As I said, we begin by recognizing that every single child needs a caring adult in his or her life to teach and guide them. Every child needs to know that he or she is profoundly important to some grownup. The three Americans we honor now have devoted themselves to meeting this challenge.

Marjorie Klein knows that parents are our children's first teachers, and she's doing everything she can to help them. At 20 inner-city schools throughout the Philadelphia area, PACT, or Parents And Children Together, the organization Marjorie founded, brings parents into the classroom to read to the children and to help their children learn to read. At the same time, parents can improve their own literacy and tutoring skills, and they can even earn college credit. We salute Marjorie Klein and PACT for their tremendous commitment to families and our children.

[The President presented the award to Ms. Klein.]

The President. Earl Phelan deeply believes that mentoring is the key to young people's success. Through B.E.L.L., or Building Enterprises for Learning and Living, the organization he helped to found, he has given hundreds of African-American young adults the chance to be role models and tutors to inner-city elementary school students throughout the greater Boston area. Under their tutelage, those children are thriving, their futures are brighter, and therefore so are ours. Tonight we honor Earl Phelan for his remarkable contribution to our American community.