

And let me say to all of you, the most important people here today are not the Presidents or the generals or the Governors or the Senators. The most important people are those who teach the student to read, who save the health of the infant, who give help to families when all help seems gone. The most important title today is not Senator, Vice President, general, Governor, or President; it is—as Harry Truman reminded us so long ago, the most important title any of us will ever hold in this country is the title of citizen. This is our Republic. Let us keep it. [Applause] Thank you.

And now, I would like to call upon Mrs. Reagan and my fellow Presidents to join me in signing this summit declaration, “A Call to Citizen Service To Fulfill the Promise of Amer-

ica.” We do this in the hope that in the weeks and months to come, millions and millions and millions of you will join us in putting your names to the declaration, devoting your lives to the mission, and beginning the era of big citizenship for the United States.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 10:30 a.m. at Independence National Historical Park. In his remarks, he referred to Henry Cisneros and Lynda Robb, vice chairs, Presidents’ Summit for America’s Future; Mayor Edward Rendell of Philadelphia; Gov. Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania; Raymond G. Chambers, cofounder, Points of Light Foundation; and David Hornbeck, Philadelphia superintendent of schools.

Remarks at the Presidents’ Summit for America’s Future Luncheon in Philadelphia

April 28, 1997

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I’ve had a great time here, and I want to thank all of you for being so patient while I lumber around with my temporary disability. Can you imagine how bad I would look if I had actually jumped out of an airplane? [Laughter] I’m looking forward to not being President. You know, if I can jump out of an airplane and look like Jerry Ford does in 30 years, I’ll be one happy guy. That’s a great thing.

I want to thank President Bush for all of the people that he mentioned and thanking them—I join with that—and especially Ray Chambers and Stuart Shapiro and General Powell for their extraordinary efforts. I’d also like to thank the leaders of the corporate and non-profit sector who are here today, including my longtime friend Millard Fuller, Bob Allen, Doug Watson, and Gerry Greenwald and so many others. We’ve all been washed in the warm glow of lots of words and music and the powerful examples. And I must say, I will live with the stories that the young people told last night at that event for the rest of my life.

I would just like to make two points here, because I really want this to make a difference. I think there are two keys to whether, when people look back on this moment 10 years from

now, they say, “These people really did something special; they changed America.” The first is what General Powell and Ray Chambers and others are doing with the followup on America’s Promise. And everything you can do to support that, you should, making those promises. We’re going to try to do our part.

I said yesterday that the Department of Defense will tutor or teach a million children in the next 4 years. The Department of Transportation and the contractors with whom it works have committed to reach another million kids with tutoring or teaching. We are going to go from 1,500 to 2,000 schools we’ve adopted. Going back to what Eli said—we’ll have more to say about that later—we’re going to hire 10,000 people to move from welfare to work so they can support their children better. We’re going to try to extend health insurance to 5 million kids and try to at least make the first 2 years of college as available as a high school education is today. We’ll try to do our part, and we’ll try to do it in very personal ways.

The last Christmas and the last birthday I had were some of the best I ever had in my life because my gift from the White House staff was a notebook of personal pledges for community service. My Secret Service detail adopted

a junior high school in Washington, DC, where those young people are getting the role models that they need. We'll try to do our part.

And the followup—one reason I wanted to do this summit so badly was that I thought we could find a completely nonpartisan way to embrace this issue, and then I knew I could trust Colin Powell and Ray Chambers and the others to do good followup. That's the first thing.

Here's the second thing. Let me just tell you a brief story. Before I came to Philadelphia, I asked a man in Washington, DC, named Kent Amos, a lot of you know, to come in and see me. I met him when my friend Ron Brown died in a plane crash, and he was Ron's next-door neighbor. And a lot of you know he and his wife, Carmen, kind of got into this volunteer work by just taking in kids that their children went to school with who came from dysfunctional backgrounds. And they wound up having 20 or more at a time that were, in effect, living with them. And now he's tried to take the model that he—I thought he perfected in his own home and kind of took it into neighborhoods and communities.

But I asked him to come see me. And I said, "What do you want me to do now? What can I do to help you, and what do we have to do now?" He said, "Go to that summit and tell them the breakout sessions are the most important thing that's going to occur, because unless every community gets organized, community by community, we will not have the maximum benefit of this, because essentially the problem is we have an unacceptably high percentage of people living in dysfunctional environments. And you can do a number of good things for them sporadically, but until you completely change the environment, we won't have the success rate we need."

That's essentially what General Powell said in our last conversation before he took his uni-

form off, that all the troubled young people that he knew who came into the military had gone from whatever dysfunctional environment they had into a completely functional environment. Now, you can't guarantee that, any of you individually. But collectively, community by community, we can. So, in that sense, the Governors and the mayors who are here are profoundly important people. And the people who run community-based nonprofits are important people.

But the only other thing I would say is, let's really pay attention to these breakout sessions, and let's promise ourselves that in addition to running up the numbers that we all promised—and since I've got a big organization, I can promise big numbers—but we're, honest to goodness, going to promise ourselves that we will try to change the culture in these communities from dysfunctional environments to functional ones. You saw these kids. They're great. They're going to make it. They're going to do just fine if we just give them what they need in a systematic way, place by place.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. in the Ballroom at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Raymond G. Chambers, cofounder, Points of Light Foundation; Stuart Shapiro, president and chief executive officer, Presidents' Summit for America's Future; Gen. Colin L. Powell, USA (ret.), chairman, America's Promise—the Alliance for Youth; Eli Segal, Board of Directors member, Corporation for National and Community Service; Millard Fuller, founder, Habitat for Humanity; Robert E. Allen, chairman and chief executive officer, AT&T Corp.; Douglas Watson, president and chief executive officer, Novartis Corp.; and Gerald Greenwald, chief executive officer, United Airlines.

Remarks to Students, Teachers, Parents, and AmeriCorps Volunteers in Philadelphia

April 28, 1997

Thank you. Thank you very much. I am so pleased to be here. Thank you for making me

feel so welcome. I want to say to all of you, I have looked forward to coming to this school