

important—the most important thing we can do is to reach these kids while they're young enough to learn. Somebody is going to be trying to teach them to hate. We want to teach them a different way. And in the end, if we all do our part for that, we can make America one nation under God.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:20 p.m. in the Dorothy Betts Marvin Theater at George Washington University. In his remarks, he referred to Cheunee Sampson, Duke University student who introduced the President, and Stephen J. Trachtenberg, president, George Washington University.

Remarks During the White House Conference on Hate Crimes *November 10, 1997*

[The panel discussion is joined in progress.]

The President. Reverend Kyles said this is a dynamite panel. *[Laughter]* I think they were very good. Thank you all very much.

Even though we tried to put the Republican on after the kid, he did pretty well, didn't he? *[Laughter]* That was so funny. *[Laughter]* You know, as good as Arizona was to me, I would never do anything like that. *[Laughter]* But you made the best of a difficult situation, because you did a good job, Raymond.

Let me ask you all something. We've heard from people who work in enforcement, whether it's an attorney general or a police chief. We've heard from people who work in writing the laws. We've heard from an educator who's trying to systematically keep these things from happening in the first place and deal with it. We've heard from a minister who has given his whole life dealing with these matters. We've heard from a remarkable citizen here who changed the whole psychology of a community. We've heard from a young man who had an opportunity to have a remarkable experience, and he made, I thought, a very interesting point, which he deftly went by, but I don't think we should miss it. He said that he went to a very diverse school where there was a lot of continuing social segregation. And he had an opportunity to escape that on his project where he went to Israel.

In various aspects, I guess most of us who have lived any length of time have been dealing with one or another of these issues our whole lives. It's been my experience, when I see some form of bigotry or hatred manifest in a particular person, that there's usually one of three reasons that this person has done something bad. One is just ignorance and the fear it breeds: I don't

know this person who is different from me, I'm afraid, and I manifest this fear in bigotry or violence or something. We see that a lot with the gay and lesbian issues now, you know, where people are at least unaware that they have ever had a family member or a friend or someone who was homosexual, and they are literally terrified.

Then there are some people—and I saw this a lot when Secretary Riley and I were kids growing up in the South—there are some people who really have an almost pathological need to look down on somebody else because they don't have enough regard for themselves, and so they think somehow they can salvage self-regard by finding somebody that at least they think is lower down than they are.

And then there are people who have been brutalized themselves and who have no way of dealing with it, no way of coming out of it, and they return brutality with brutality. There may be others, but that's been my experience.

Anyway, I ask you that to make this point—I announced a series of measures that we would take in my opening remarks, but you're in all these things. What advice do you have for me, for the Attorney General, for the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Secretary of Agriculture—who deals, interestingly enough, with some important aspects of this—and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and Transportation—I think I've mentioned them all—and the Members of Congress; what is the most important thing the Nation can do through the National Government? What should we be focusing on? If you could give me advice—you've

been very good to talk about your own experience and what you're trying to do—if you could give me advice in a sentence about what you think we ought to do to move the ball down the road to help deal with this, what advice would you give us? What advice would you give to Senator Kennedy and the House Members that are here? What should we be doing at the national level?

Sheila, you want to go first? *[Laughter]* You're good at this, so I think—everybody else deserves a chance to think. You're good at this; you have to go first. *[Laughter]*

[Sheila James Kuehl, California State Assembly speaker pro tempore, emphasized the power of laws to express morality and the strength of a coalition of diverse people. She then identified assembly majority floor leader and conference participant Antonio R. Villaraigosa as a confirmed heterosexual.]

The President. There's a man who wants to be identified. *[Laughter]*

[Ms. Kuehl praised Mr. Villaraigosa for associating himself with the gay and lesbian community in supporting California's employment nondiscrimination legislation.]

The President. Anybody else want to answer that question?

[Education Secretary Richard Riley asked about preventing hate through character education, the arts, and sports. Peter Berendt, principal, Mamaronck Avenue Elementary School, Mamaronck, NY, responded that educators should encourage artistic expression as an opportunity to celebrate diversity.]

The President. Raymond, talk a little more about this whole issue of having an integrated school that's socially segregated. What bothers you about it, and what do you think we can do about it?

[Raymond Delos Reyes, student at Franklin High School, Seattle, WA, noted that outside the classroom, students tended to associate with people of their own race. He then suggested that this issue should be addressed by group rather than individual efforts.]

The President. Don't you think you almost have to have an organized effort to do it? There would almost have to be some sort of club or organization at the school, because if you think

about it, your parents are still pretty well separated. Now, we all work together more than we ever have before, just like you go to school together. But most neighborhoods are still fairly segregated. Most houses of worship are still fairly segregated. We're making more progress on it, but I think you almost have to organize your way out of this.

I guess that's why I asked you the question I did earlier, because every time this issue is confronted, we can point to Billings and the stirring story of a menorah in every window. But somehow we have to find a disciplined, organized way out of this, so that we reach every child in an affirmative way before something bad happens and so that at least—I don't think there is anything bad with people hanging around with members of their own ethnic group in a lot of different ways. I think that's a good thing. I just think that people also really, really need systematic opportunities to relate to people across racial and ethnic and other lines. And my own opinion is that—just from my own experience, is that unless there is an organized effort in your school to do it, it's not going to happen, because if you just wait for people spontaneously to go out at recess, lunch, or after school, it's just not going to happen. It's too much trouble. There's too much psychic risk in it.

And I hope you'll be able to do something about it, because I really respected you for raising it. It's a big problem in every school that I have ever been to in this country.

[Grant Woods, Arizona's Republican attorney general, said that law enforcement provided justice but did not address the underlying cause of hate crimes. He suggested that leaders and schools must educate children to provide a counterbalance to the negativity often presented by popular culture.]

The President. Tammie, you told your story about the brick coming through the window at your child's bed. Were there similar manifestations of bigotry among the children in the schools, or was it mostly older people? And is there anything going on now in the Billings schools to try to offset this?

[Tammie Schnitzer, of the Billings, MT, Coalition for Human Rights Foundation, responded that the attitudes of not only children but of adults, institutions, and the media need to be

changed. Police Chief Arturo Venegas of Sacramento, CA, stated that leaders must present a united front and that recent progress should not be taken for granted. Rev. Samuel Billy Kyles, pastor of the Monumental Baptist Church, Memphis, TN, praised efforts of the religious community and the President's visit to a rebuilt Tennessee church for focusing attention on the problem of church burnings. Ms. Kuehl emphasized that legislation concerning hate crimes should not exclude hatred based on sexual orientation or gender.]

The President. Once we cross the great sort of intellectual and emotional hurdle that might be presented to some with Senator Kennedy and Senator Specter's bill, I frankly think the next big problem will be a practical one, Sheila—you talk about ranking the categories—I think there is a practical question, which you can help with because you've written the law, which Grant can help with because Arizona has a law. But the Attorney General and I, we will have to answer a lot of questions about this law, about not whether or not rape is motivated by hate or not, but whether or not if we include all these categories in the law, we will in effect be lumping into Federal law enforcement a lot of crimes that are actually being prosecuted now at the State and local level through the existing criminal justice system in a way that will clog the system because we're trying to be politically sensitive, instead of actually going out now and covering offenses where people are getting away with murder by abusing people because they're gay or they're disabled or whatever they're doing.

That, I think—it's a practical question, but we need your help in getting through that. You have a law like that in Arizona. You wrote a law like that in California. And that's what we're going to be asked when we go up there to defend Senator Kennedy's bill; that's where

we're going to be hit—"Aren't you just creating a whole new category of Federal crimes that are being prosecuted anyway at the State level?" and all that sort of stuff. And if you will help us, I think that will be very good.

General Reno, do you want to say anything before we wrap up?

[Attorney General Janet Reno stressed the need to improve cooperation between Federal and local authorities to report, investigate, and prosecute hate crimes. Police Chief Venegas advocated bringing the resources of the Federal Government to bear on the issue.]

The President. Thank you.

Secretary Riley, do you want to wrap up for us?

[Education Secretary Riley concluded the panel and thanked the participants.]

The President. Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you know, we're going to break for lunch now, and then the whole conference will resume. Again, I want to thank President Trachtenberg and George Washington, but I mostly want to thank all of you, because the real answer to our success in this endeavor is obviously that we all have to work together. And all of you can strike new energy into this entire endeavor around the country. We will take our initiatives that we outlined today—we urge you to give us more ideas—but you are actually the heart and soul of this endeavor, and a lot of you have stories that I wish all the rest of us could sit and hear today.

Thank you for being here, and thank you for being a part of the conference.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. in the Dorothy Betts Marvin Theater at George Washington University.

Remarks at a Screening of Ken Burns' "Lewis and Clark" November 10, 1997

Thank you very much. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House. To Ken and to his daughters; Dayton Duncan and his family; Harry Pierce, the vice chair of GM; Elizabeth Camp-

bell, founder of WETA; Michael Jandreau, the chairman of the Lower Brule Sioux tribe; and of course, a special word of welcome to Stephen Ambrose, whose magnificent book inspired this