

And we should not either delay behind excuses or look for ways to turn what is essentially a human issue of basic decency and citizenship and opportunity into a divisive political debate. We have a stake together in getting together and moving forward on this.

Let me say, I applaud the students here at Portland State who are tutoring immigrant children to speak and read English. You are setting the kind of example I want our country to follow.

One hundred and forty years ago, in the First Lady's hometown of Chicago, immigrants outnumbered native Americans. Addressing a crowd there in 1858, Abraham Lincoln asked what connection those immigrants could possibly feel to people like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, who founded our Nation. Here was his answer: "If they, the immigrants, look back through this history to trace their connection to those days by blood, they will find they have none. But our Founders proclaimed that we are all created equal in the eyes of God. And that," Lincoln said, "is the electric cord in that declaration that links the hearts of patriotic and liberty-loving people everywhere."

Well, that electric cord, the conviction that we are all created equal in the eyes of God, still links every graduate here with every new immigrant coming to our shores and every American who ever came before us. If you carry it with conscience and courage into the new century, it will light our way to America's greatest days—your days.

So, members of the class of 1998, go out and build the future of your dreams. Do it together, for your children, for your grandchildren, for your country.

Good luck, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:25 a.m. in the Rose Garden Arena. In his remarks, he referred to Daniel O. Bernstine, president, and Michael F. Reardon, provost, Portland State University; Jim Hill, State treasurer; Hardy Myers, State attorney general; Norma Paulus, State superintendent of public instruction; Theo Hall III and Jane Rongerude, class representatives, class of 1998; and Robert G. Miller, president, Fred Meyer, Inc., and recipient of an honorary degree. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks on Departure for Springfield, Oregon, and an Exchange With Reporters in Portland *June 13, 1998*

The President. Good afternoon. Several days ago, Senator Wyden got in touch with me and told me that the principal and the superintendent of Springfield would like for me to come down and visit with the people there while I am in Oregon. And I'm going because I want to listen; I want to learn; I want to be of whatever support I can. I also want to highlight the importance to all Americans of trying to prevent tragedies like this.

I have today instructed the Secretary of Education and the Attorney General to prepare a guide for teachers, educators, parents, and others, that basically goes through the early warning signals that so many young people who are likely to take very violent destructive action often give, in the hope that it will help the schools and the families, and even other students to pick

up such signals so that we can prevent these things in the future. So, for both those reasons, I'm going down, and I'm looking forward to it. And I'd like to thank the Senators and the two Representatives for going with me. I'm very much looking forward to it.

Q. Mr. President, what will you tell the families or the victims in Springfield this afternoon?

The President. Well, I'll—first of all, I want to listen to them and not tell them too much. But I—what I will tell them is that I hope that one way they can honor their children is to work with us to try to create a country and a set of circumstances which makes it far less likely that these things will be repeated. And I would think that any parent would want to do that.

Q. How much help do you think this guide will be, sir?

The President. Well, I think it might be quite a bit. One of the things that, frankly, I must say, I was not aware of until I started studying the facts more closely, is that if you look at the Jonesboro case, the Kentucky case, the Mississippi case, the Pennsylvania case, some other cases where there were shootings but not killings, as well as the one here, in quite a number of the cases, there was some behavior on the part of the young people involved which indicated that they were—they might do something very out of the ordinary. Now, if you're not—if you can't—first of all, these kinds of things are almost unimaginable. So, unless you have some way of knowing that what kind of behavior should set off the biggest warning signal in your mind, and you have something con-

structive to do about it, you know, where you can take these children and what you can do. Normally, what happens is people are just disturbed, and then they go on with their lives until something terrible happens. So, I really believe there's a chance, if we can get this guide up, if we can get it widely discussed in our schools and people can talk about it not in a paranoid or negative way but just in an open way, that there's a good chance it will really do some good.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:24 p.m. at Portland International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Larry Bentz, principal, Thurston High School, and Jamon Kent, superintendent, Springfield Public Schools. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon

June 13, 1998

Thank you. First of all, I want to thank all of you for coming today, and I want to particularly thank the families who just met with me whose children were wounded and, in two cases, killed.

I thank Mr. Bentz and Superintendent Kent and Mr. Petersen of the school board and Mayor Morrisette. I'd like to thank the members of your congressional delegation who came down with me today, Senators Wyden and Smith and Representatives Hookey and Blumenauer who came with me, and of course Congressman DeFazio, who represents this community.

I was, frankly, glad but somewhat concerned when you—some of your leaders were kind enough to invite me to come down here today, because I didn't want to do anything to add to your burdens, and I was afraid all I could do was to tell you that your country has been thinking about you and praying for you and pulling for you. But after I had the chance to spend the time I did with the families, I'm very, very glad I came. And I thank you for giving me the chance just to meet all of you and to listen to you.

Let me say that this has been not only a horrible and traumatic experience for you; this

has been a traumatic experience for all of America. As all of you know, there have been a series of these school shootings with terrible consequences, in Paducah, Kentucky; in Pearl, Mississippi; in Edinboro, Pennsylvania; and in my home State, in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

The first thing I'd like to tell you is that I am immensely impressed and proud of you for the way you're coming back from this and going on, the way you're determined to rebuild your communities, the way the school began to function again, the way you held your commencement and started your athletic competitions again.

The second thing I would say, that I know from my own experience with the community in Arkansas, which I know very well and I know a lot of the people who were involved there, you should feel good about your community and good about your school. And you should know that these terrible acts of violence are occurring at a time when the overall juvenile crime rate is actually going down in America, where our young people on the whole are doing better and doing better at staying out of trouble, getting into more positive endeavors.