

something about ethnic cleansing. And America has come a very long way. And we think we should stand with you.”

And then another young tribal leader asked if he could speak. And he stood up; he had a beautiful Indian silver necklace on. And with great dignity he said, “Mr. President, I had two uncles. One of them was on the beach at Normandy; the other was the first Native American fighter pilot in the United States military. My great-great grandfather was slaughtered by the 7th Cavalry at Wounded Knee. I now am the father of a young son. We have come a long way from my great-great grandfather to my uncles to my son. I love my son more than anything. But because of the distance we have come, I would gladly have him serve to save the people of Kosovo from having their culture and their lives destroyed.”

And there was not—you couldn’t breathe in this room because we knew that this dignified man representing people with all kinds of problems was the living embodiment of everything that this country ought to be. And his people were here first. All the rest of us are latecomers.

So I say to you: The best politics for our party is to do what is right for our children and our country for the new century.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:35 p.m. in the Kirtland Cutter Room at the Rainier Club. In his remarks, he referred to event chair Jack J. Spitzer; Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, and Wayne C. Marshall, regional finance director, Democratic National Committee; Gov. Gary Locke of Washington; Mayor Paul Schell of Seattle; Paul Berendt, chair, Washington State Democratic Party; former Mayor Norman B. Rice of Seattle and his wife, Constance; King County Executive Ron Sims; event cochairs Ted Johnson and Ben Waldman; Pamela Eakes, founder and president, Mothers Against Violence in America; Renee Mullins, daughter of murder victim James Byrd, Jr.; President Jiang Zemin of China; Tex Hall, chairman of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation (the Three Affiliated Tribes); and Gregg Bourland, chairman, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

Statement on Senate Action on Gun Control Legislation

May 14, 1999

I am deeply disappointed that, by the narrowest of margins, the Senate has refused to close the gun show loophole while creating other dangerous loopholes to our gun laws. If the Senate’s decision is left to stand, it will be easier for criminals to get guns and harder for law enforcement to do its job. Criminals will be able to get guns at gun shows and pawn shops,

no questions asked, and Federal law enforcement won’t be able to ensure gun sellers’ compliance with laws or to trace firearms later used in crimes. If the Senate wants to do right by the American people, it will once again bring up the Lautenberg amendment, when all Members are present, and close the gun show loophole once and for all.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Portola Valley, California

May 14, 1999

Walter, I’d like to say something that I think a lot of us who’ve known you for many years could have been thinking. We laughed about how you’ve always been for losers and now you’ve had a few winners. But one of the rea-

sons that we love you and admire you is that you stuck by the people with whom you agreed, whether they won or lost. A lot of people don’t do that anymore; we appreciate that.

Let me say I'm delighted to be here with Governor Davis and with Sharon, Attorney General Lockyer, Mayor Brown—he's funny, isn't he? *[Laughter]* I would have come all the way out here tonight just to hear Willie do that little shtick he did, you know? *[Laughter]* When I start to get bored with politics and kind of tired I—and you know, it's 12:30 on my body clock, so I needed a little jolt. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank Walter and Martin and Tom, Victoria, all the rest of you who put this dinner together tonight. I want to thank our Democratic Party officers for coming with me, Joe Andrew, Andy Tobias, and Beth Dozoretz.

You know, today we were in Seattle before we came here. And we had all these exciting young people at this fundraiser we did, and a lot of them were kind of high-tech folks. And Joe Andrew got up and said, "In 2000 we're going to win every election, from President to dogcatcher"—as if that were a great distance. *[Laughter]* I was sort of hoping we would have a wider range than that myself. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank Willie Mays for being here again. I want to thank Walter—one of the greatest things Walter ever did for me was arrange for me to meet Willie Mays. And a lot of you know I am a big sports fan, and I collect memorabilia. I've got 100-year-old golf clubs and all kinds of things, but the things that I treasure the most are the baseballs that Willie has autographed for me and my wife and my daughter.

And I hope he won't be embarrassed by this, but I went to Atlanta the other day—oh, a couple months ago—to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the night Hank Aaron broke Babe Ruth's record. And Hank and Billye are friends of Hillary's and mine, and we like them very much. So I went down there, and Hank Aaron had 12 Hall of Fame baseball players there—Reggie Jackson and Frank Robinson, just a slew of great players.

And we were sitting there, and I meet all of Hank's family and his in-laws and all these—there were thousands of people there. And I just, sort of off the top of my head, I said, "Hank, who's the greatest baseball player you ever played with?" He said, "Oh, that's an easy answer; it's not even close: Willie Mays." He said, "Not even close!"

And I personally would like to thank Willie and his wonderful wife for the work they have done since leaving baseball and for their concern for our children. And I'm delighted to see them.

I just talked to Hillary not long before I came here. She's on an airplane coming back—you may have seen on the news today, she was in Macedonia visiting the refugees there. And I wanted to mention her, in particular, since we're all making jokes at Gray's expense—including himself making jokes at his expense. The very first person who ever told me he would be elected Governor when he had been written off by all of the experts was my wife, who came to California. And she said, "Man, I've been out there and," she said, "I think he's going to win. He knows why he wants the job; he's done a good job, and he inspires confidence." She said, "He inspires confidence in me, and I believe he would inspire confidence in other people." And sure enough, you have, and we're grateful to you, and we thank you.

I would also like to thank Laura Tyson, who was the Chairman of my Council of Economic Advisers and head of my Economic Council, for being here. And she's now an academic, which means that sooner or later, she will have to criticize something I'm doing on the economy. *[Laughter]* So I'll give her advance dispensation.

Ladies and gentlemen, the hour's late and most of you have heard me give this speech before. *[Laughter]* I'll tell you a story, one more story. One night in the mid-1980's—I can't remember exactly when it was—Tina Turner came to Little Rock, Arkansas, to do a concert. And you all remember, you know, she sort of faded from the scene, and then she made this huge recovery with an album called "Private Dancer." I remember because she had a saxophone player in her band who was a weight lifter. Remember that guy, the guy with the great big arms? He had arms as big as my neck, and he wore chains and stuff—it was a weird deal. *[Laughter]* But the guy could play.

So she comes to make this concert and she was playing at the Arkansas Fairgrounds and, I forget, Hillary had to go some place that night. So I had six tickets, and I took all these friends of ours and we went. And usually the guy who ran the concert put me sort of 15 rows back in the middle, so I had a real good seat but I wasn't conspicuous—because I was the Governor, after all. But he knew I loved Tina Turner. So this night he completely embarrassed me by putting all six of us on the front row in the middle. And behind us there was a lady I later found out was a hairdresser in a small

town about 50 miles away, dressed in a tiger outfit—[laughter]—complete with ears and tail and everything. It was an interesting night, all right. [Laughter]

But anyway, here's the point I made about the speech—you all laughed when I said you'd all heard the speech. Tina Turner sang all of her new songs, and everybody loved them. Then at the end of the concert the band started playing the introduction to her first hit, "Proud Mary." And as she walked up to the microphone, with all that energy packed into her, the crowd just went crazy before she ever said anything. So she backed off, and then she walked up again. The crowd went crazy again.

And she looked at the crowd, and she said, "You know, I have been singing this song for 25 years, and it gets better every time I do it." So I thought, that's something I'll try to remember as I rock along through life. [Laughter]

I want to make a case tonight that I hope you can remember. We were talking at our table, and I was looking at all of you, and I remembered little conversations we shared when you came by and we took the pictures. I always am interested as to what motivates people to get involved in politics, to make their contributions, to come to events like this. And when you go home tonight, I want you to think about why you came and what you're going to do tomorrow and in the days ahead.

I am gratified by what has already been said, what the Governor said, what Walter said. I've loved being President. I love working with people like Mayor Brown, because we think we're supposed to actually enjoy what we're doing. And Gray is actually beginning to enjoy what he's doing. [Laughter] I hope it doesn't destroy his whole sort of persona, you know. [Laughter] But it is a great privilege to be in public service. You know, everybody talks about what a great burden it is. Well, nobody made us do this. It is a great privilege. It's an honor.

And I am so gratified that the economy is in the shape it's in. I saw the pain in the faces of the people in California when I was running for President in 1992. And I wanted people here to believe that California was the cutting edge of tomorrow again. I wanted them to be full of optimism and hope and taking all these initiatives to meet the challenges of our country.

And I'm grateful for the progress we've made in crime and welfare and education and so many

other things. I'm glad that 90 percent of our kids are immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time ever. I'm glad that we've got 100,000 young people in AmeriCorps. Many of them have served in northern California. It took the Peace Corps 20 years to get 100,000 volunteers. We got that many in the domestic national service program in 4½ years. I'm proud of that. And I'm grateful for the chance to serve.

But I want to make this point: Whatever role I had in this was not as important as the fact that in 1992, our party united behind a vision and a set of ideas that we have then all worked like crazy for 6 years to make real in the life of America.

And the reason you should be here tonight—because I'm not running for anything—the reason you should be here is not because you're glad I was President and you feel good about what's happened in California but because you understand that—that there is no indispensable person, but there are indispensable ideas and indispensable attitudes.

I ran for President, and I was happy as a clam at home with Hillary and Chelsea and the life we had. But I was very concerned that our country had no driving vision of what we were going to be like in the 21st century and no strategy to get us there. And I didn't like what I saw in Washington. Everybody was having the same old political debate over and over, sounded like a broken record every day. And if I was bored with it, I can only imagine how people who aren't addicted to politics, like I am, felt.

And we tried to change all that. I really do want our children to live in a world in the next century where everybody has a chance to live out their dreams, where everybody is expected to be a responsible citizen, where we join together across all the lines that divide us—celebrating the differences but appreciating even more our common humanity, and where America is trusted enough and strong enough to continue to lead the world to greater peace and freedom and prosperity. That's what I want. It's pretty simple.

And I believed in 1992, and I believe more strongly today, that to have that kind of world, we had to have a different approach to politics. First, we had to believe we could grow the economy and preserve the environment at the same time. Second, we had to believe we could

grow the economy in a way that had more entrepreneurs like you have in this part of our world, and at the same time make life better for ordinary middle class people and give more poor people a chance to work their way into the middle class.

I believed there was a way you could lower the crime rate not just by prosecuting crime but by preventing it. I believed that we ought to put more money in education, but we had to raise standards, and I was tired of seeing poor people patronized, because I believe all of our children can learn. And lots of other things like that.

I think a lot of times, the debates we have in Washington, they don't resonate very well with the real-world experience people have in California or Arkansas or anywhere else in the country. And the story of this administration has been the story of a relentless effort for over 6 years now to take these basic ideas and that vision and turn them into real, concrete actions and results for the American people.

Now, we still have a lot to do. I'm doing my best to get the Congress to address the challenges of the aging of America, to reform Social Security and Medicare and help people with long-term care, and help people save for their own retirement. I'm asking the Congress to do it in a way that pays down the Government's debt. Did you ever think a politician could even talk about that? Because I believe that we can get the Government debt down in 15 years to its lowest point since before World War I. And if we do, interest rates will be lower; investment will be higher; there will be more businesses, more jobs, and higher incomes. And we will be relatively less dependent on the vagaries of the world financial markets.

I believe that we have to do more to help people balance their work life and their family life. So when I talk about child care or family leave or the Patients' Bill of Rights, what I'm really saying is, most parents are working, and I think it's important for people to succeed at home and at work because the most important work in America is raising good children. And if it doesn't work out, as we often see, there is a grievous price to be paid.

I am concerned in the aftermath of what happened at Littleton, but I am also hopeful because we had all these school shootings last year and people wanted to do things, and a lot of things were done. But I think for the first time,

the whole country now believes that what happened with those children could happen in any community. And I believe the whole country wants to do better and also recognizes that many of our children fall victim every year, not in stunning, tragic, big ways but in quiet alleys or in drive-by shootings or in other ways where they can almost die anonymously. And I want us to have a national campaign to make our children's lives less violent.

And I'd like to close with just a reflection on that and what we're doing in Kosovo and point out what I think is—in addition to economic opportunity for all and educational opportunity for all and the sense of general community—I think the most important thing about the Democratic Party on the eve of the 21st century is our vision of what community means at home and our relationship to the rest of the world. And if you take these two difficult events and break them down, maybe I can make some sense of that.

What I honestly believe about the Littleton situation—and I've spent a lot of time thinking about it. I have been overwhelmingly impressed by almost all of the people I've seen from that community talking on television and going to the townhall meetings, some of the brave parents actually already—who lost their children—already able to try to make some contribution to a safer future for the rest of us. One father who lost his child was with Hillary last week, the day before Mother's Day, to be part of this whole antiviolence movement.

But what I think is that we now understand—I hope we do, as a people—that if we're going to make America a safer place for our children, we have to stop pointing the fingers at one another and start assuming responsibility. We have to—instead of saying, "I wish someone else would do something," we have to say, "Okay, I've shown up for duty. What am I supposed to do?"

Because this is an exceedingly complex thing—Willie and I could have an argument. I could take—you know, we have the—is it the entertainment culture or is it the gun culture? And he could take one side and I could take the other, and then 5 minutes later we could switch roles. We all know how to point fingers—we're good at that—and shift the blame.

Let's start with the facts of life today. For whatever reason, there are more children in the

United States, of all races and in all socioeconomic groups, that are at risk of being victims of violence. You would all accept that, I presume; that is a fact, for whatever reason. And there are also children, therefore, at risk of being victims of violence from other young people. Therefore, there are a higher percentage of children in the United States than in most other advanced countries who are themselves vulnerable to violent conduct.

Now, if we start with that, and we say, "Shouldn't we all be doing something," I think we can move to "yes" very quickly. One of the things that you see in all these tragic stories—it's heartbreaking—is how easy it is for children as they come of age and naturally seek their own independence to be strangers in their own homes and not to have people in their schools or their communities that are so connected to them that they can't drift off into the darkness.

So the fundamental thing is, we have to still do a better job trying to help parents understand what it means for children to move into adolescence and to drift away, and to be given both independence and still be held accountable and be involved with their parents and their lives. And we have to help the schools do a better job of connecting and telling kids how they can find nonviolent ways to deal with their conflicts and how they can count no matter what group they're in and how they can be treated with respect no matter what group they're in.

I don't see how anybody can dispute the fact that it's crazy to have a country where, you know, criminals can buy guns at gun shows they can't buy at gun stores. I mean, I think that's a pretty hard case to defend.

I think it's a hard case to defend to say we've abolished assault weapons—thanks in no small measure, by the way, to a citizen from San Francisco named Steve Sposato, who lost his wife in a shooting, a man who happened to be a Republican. I met him and his daughter. So we abolished assault weapons, but we let people keep bringing in these big ammunition clips and selling them legally as long as they were imported, as opposed to homegrown. How come these things are in the law? These things don't happen by accident, folks. I did the best I could back in 1994. I pushed that thing as hard as I could push. So now we have a sense all over the country we should close the loopholes.

Florida, not normally known as a raving liberal State, voted 72 percent in a public ref-

erendum to close the gun show loophole, and we're having trouble getting it done in Washington. That's not good. It's not going to kill the NRA to change its position. The gun manufacturers did, and I applaud them. They deserve a lot of credit. There have been—one of the most outstanding groups in this whole debate are the gun manufacturers, coming and saying, "Okay, let's clean up this business. Let's have responsible, commonsense controls. We want people to be able to hunt; we want to support the rights of sportsmen; but we don't need that. We need to deal with this."

So they have their responsibility. But so, too, does the entertainment industry. You can say if you start from their perspective, just like you can say if you start from the gun perspective, "Guns don't kill people, people do." Right? If you start from the entertainment perspective, you can say, "Well, we show these movies and we sell these video games in Europe and you don't have this level of violence." You can say that—in other words, from anybody else's perspective, you can always say this.

But here is the thing. Start with the kids. We have more kids getting hurt and more kids hurting other kids. Start with the facts. And we now have over 300 studies that show that the volume of sustained exposure to violence through the media—and now increasingly through interactive video games—is so great that it desensitizes children dramatically to the impact of violence and the real consequences of it, and therefore makes the most vulnerable children more likely to go over the edge.

Now, having said that, we have to find some commonsense things we can do. For example, you could change the whole advertising strategy of a lot of these games and other media outlets and not have a lot of the problems you have. But lots of other things can be done. I'm trying to make a larger point here. How we respond to this and whether we take on something really big and important like this and do what the Mothers and Students Against Drunk Driving did to drive down drunk driving; or do what the 10,000 business people did to hire 400,000 people off welfare so people wouldn't be just thrown in the streets—how we respond to this and whether we respond to this as one community coming together instead of pointing the finger at each other will define in large measure what kind of country we're going to be in the 21st century.

And the same is true of Kosovo. What in the world have these two things got in common? Well, in both cases, there at least is some evidence that part of the problem was one group of people looking down on another group of people and getting to where they hated them and then getting to where they thought it was legitimate to take them out. And if you look all over the world today, from the Middle East to the Balkans, to Rwanda and Africa, to the still unresolved conflict in Northern Ireland, what is at the root of most of the world's problems on the edge of the 21st century? Is it that the Kosovar Albanians don't have as good computers as the Serbs? Are we fighting over some software secret in central Africa? Not on your life. The economics are bringing people together. That's one of the reasons we're going to get this thing done in Ireland this year.

What is dividing people on the edge of this brave new brilliant high-tech interdependent world are the oldest demons of human society, our hatred and fear of people who are different from us. First, you're scared of them; then you hate them; then you dehumanize them; then it's okay to kill them. And isn't it ironic that we're sitting here a stone's throw from Silicon Valley, dreaming about the marvels of modern technology and at risk of being held hostage to the oldest, most primitive human designs?

So you want to know why we're in Kosovo? Because it's in Europe, where we were pulled into two wars in the 20th century and the cold war; and because we had the capacity to stand against that kind of ethnic cleansing and slaughter; and because when we couldn't get it done for 4 long years in Bosnia, there was a trail of 2½ million refugees and a quarter of a million people dead, and we still had to get in and put Humpty Dumpty back together again and tell people they had to stop killing each other because of their different religious and ethnic background.

But I'm telling you, there are common threads to what is there—the hatred of those boys built up in Littleton, hatred looking up at the athletes, hatred in their minds looking down at the minorities; the hatred in what happened when that poor man, James Byrd, was murdered in Texas and his body was torn apart; hatred in what happened to Matthew Shepard in Wyoming. It's all the same thing.

We're all scared. Not anybody in the world is not scared from time to time. How many

days do you wake up in a good mood? And how many days do you wake up in not such a good mood? Every human being has got a little scale inside. It's like the scales of justice and hope and fear. And some days the scales are just perfectly in balance, some days they're just—you're crazy with hope, and some days you're gripped with fear.

And the more fearful you are, the more people who are different from you seem to present a threat. And here we are. Look at California. Look at San Francisco. Look at Seattle, where I was today. Look at the diversity of our population, racial and otherwise—religious, all the differences you can imagine—sexual orientation, the whole 9 yards. Look at all the differences in our population.

In our dreams, all people get a chance to become what God meant for them to be and we pull together. In other words, we finally got a chance to be the country our Founders said we ought to be when they knew darn well we weren't. I mean, when only white men with property could vote, they said all are created equal, and they knew what they were doing. These guys were not dummies.

Every now and then, I go over to the Jefferson Memorial and read what Thomas Jefferson said, "When I think of slavery, I tremble to think that God is just." He knew exactly what he was doing. They knew that this whole struggle would be sort of an endless effort to try to make real these ideals. And here we are about to do it. And are we going to let the whole thing go haywire because of the most primitive impulses in human society, both inside our country and beyond our borders?

That man that blew up the Federal building in Oklahoma City, he was poisoned with hatred and a sort of blind irrational notion that if you worked for the Federal Government there was something inherently bad about you. And I believe the distinguishing characteristics of our country in the 21st century has to be that we constantly, consistently reaffirm that for all the differences among us—we don't have to like each other, but we have to respect each other, we have to tolerate each other, and we have to actively affirm each other's common humanity. And if you want all this modern technology to be put at the service of your children's dreams instead of terrorists and madmen, then you have got to say this is one thing America

will stand for, overall, above all, beyond everything else.

And that is what all these incidents have in common. We must not let the great promise of the modern world be undermined by the most ancient of hatreds. We cannot fundamentally alter human nature, but we can alter the rules by which all of us let our nature play out. And we can call forth our better selves. That is what we have worked for 6½ years to do. And you know as well as I do, if the economy works better it's easier to do.

But when you go home tonight and you get up tomorrow and somebody says, "Why in the world did you write a check and go to that thing?" Tell them, "Because I believe in the vision and the ideas that the country has followed in the last 6 years. We have a lot more to do, and most important of all, I really want America to be a community and a model to the world, because I want my children to have a future more like my dreams than the worst nightmares we see in the paper."

We can do it, but not unless we work at it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner host Walter Shorenstein; Bill Lockyer, State attorney general; Gov. Gray Davis of California and his wife, Sharon; Mayor Willie Brown of San Francisco; dinner cochairs Martin Maddaloni and Tom and Victoria O'Gara; Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, Andy Tobias, treasurer, and Beth Dozoretz, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; baseball legends Willie Mays and Hank Aaron and their wives, Mae and Billye, respectively; Tom Mauser, whose son, Daniel, was killed in the Columbine High School shooting by gunmen Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold; gun control activist Steven Sposato and his daughter, Meghan; and Timothy McVeigh, who was convicted of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building bombing in Oklahoma City, OK.

The President's Radio Address *May 15, 1999*

Good morning. In the past few weeks, ever since that terrible day in Littleton, people all across America have searched their souls and searched for solutions to prevent this kind of tragedy from happening again and to reduce the level of violence to which our children are exposed.

Last Monday at our White House strategy session on children and violence, representatives of every sector of society agreed on one fundamental fact: Making progress requires taking responsibility by all of us. That begins at home. Parents have a duty to guide children as they grow and to stay involved in their lives as they grow older and more independent.

Educators have a responsibility to provide safe learning environments, to teach children how to handle conflicts without violence, and how to treat all young people, no matter how different, with respect. They also need to teach them how to get counseling or mental health services if they're needed.

Communities have a responsibility to make sure that there is a village, as the First Lady said, that supports all its children, especially those who don't get their needs met at home. And the community needs to do more to get our kids involved in working with each other and serving the community, not being isolated from it.

And here in Washington, we have a responsibility. We've got a responsibility to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children. There's a broad national consensus on that point. At the White House conference, the gun manufacturers agreed that we need common-sense approaches. Everybody agrees except the U.S. Senate. For example, everyone knows we need a real law to close the deadly gun show loophole, through which thousands, indeed, tens of thousands of guns are sold each year without background checks—even though they'd have to have a background check to be sold in a gun store.