

of thing that all of us should be doing and certainly there should be more of in the Middle East.

He was particularly gracious to Hillary and other members of our family. And after she went to see him recently, Morocco once again manifested its friendship to the United States by standing with us on human rights issues in ways that had not been the case before.

So I feel very, very grateful that the United States had a partner and friend like King Hassan, and I considered him a personal friend. And I am grateful for the many kindnesses he extended to me and to our family. And so I'm looking forward to going to Morocco for the funeral and to seeing the new King. I talked with him on the phone; I wished him well. We had met before, and I have high hopes for our continuing successful endeavors for both his partners and for the peace process.

President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria

Q. Do you expect to meet with King Asad while you're there?

The President. With President Asad from Syria?

Q. President Asad, yes, I'm sorry.

The President. No, it's okay. I don't know yet whether he is coming; I don't know who all is coming. But I will be on the ground for a few hours, as all of you know. We'll have to stay, I think, 5 hours after the service is over, and so I'll have an opportunity to see a number of people, and I'll do what I can to make the best use of the time. And as soon as I know with whom I'll be meeting, I'll let you know. I just don't know yet.

Morocco and the Middle East Peace Process

Q. Is this part of a changing of the guard, sir, in the Middle East, between King Hussein and the elections?

The President. Well, there is some change. You know, some of it is the rhythm of politics, and some of it is the rhythm of life. King Hussein and King Hassan both had health problems and had had long and distinguished tenures. And that happens, you know. Everybody's time runs out. Mine does, too.

But I think the important thing is that Morocco has been a model of reconciliation within the country and a model of partnership and friendship for peace in the Middle East. And I think that direction will continue. That's the really important thing for me, that this change be a positive thing for the people of Morocco and for the people of the region. And I'm going to do everything I can to be a good friend to the new King and to the country.

Press Secretary Joe Lockhart. Thank you very much.

The President. Thank you.

Michael Jordan

Q. Who told you you were Michael Jordan?

The President. One of my Republican friends was being crude. That's what I said to him. I said no one in their right mind could compare me to Michael Jordan. Well, he said, "I meant it only in the political context." [Laughter] I said, "I can't jump 4 inches. I have a vertical jump of about 4 inches."

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to King Mohammed VI, successor to King Hassan II; and former NBA Chicago Bull Michael Jordan. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Luncheon in Aspen
July 24, 1999

Thank you. Thank you very much. Well, first of all, I'm sorry that there's some people out there under umbrellas. I'm tempted to say, thank you very much; we're right; they're wrong; thanks for the money; go out and work hard;

goodbye. [Laughter] But what the heck. [Laughter]

I'd like to thank all the Members of Congress and the members of the administration who are here, and all the people from the DNC. I'd

like to thank the people who served our food, and I'd like to thank these young people who provided such wonderful music for us. Thank you very much.

But I would especially like to thank Mel and Bren for making the extraordinary effort, first of all, to have this event, and secondly, to change it around. And it's been perfectly beautiful. Thank you so much. I'm grateful to you.

I appreciate very much the support that so many of you have given us over the years, to me and to Hillary, to the Vice President and Tipper, to all of our administration, the chance you've given us to make this a better country. I will try to be as brief as I can here, but I want you to think about this question: What will you say tomorrow if someone asks you why you were here today? And will it be a good reason for them to join you politically? And is it something that will sustain your efforts as you talk to your friends and neighbors over the next year and a half? That's really important to me.

You know, yesterday, when Hillary and I had the privilege to go as friends and as representatives of the United States to the memorial service for John Kennedy, Jr., and Carolyn Bessette, I, like everyone, was profoundly moved by the eulogy that Senator Kennedy gave, the last sentence of which was, "Like his father, he had every gift but length of life." I say that not to be morbid, but to remind us all that life is fleeting and fragile.

When I was a boy growing up, I was obsessed with the fact that my own father had died at 29, before I was born. These things don't affect families evenly; there is no rhyme or reason to it. But they serve as a reminder to those of us who are privileged to get up for yet another day of life that there are responsibilities associated with good fortune, and the way we can honor our loved ones who aren't here and honor those who have given so much to our country whose time was cut short is to be good citizens and to be visionaries and to remember that even the oldest people on Earth last a very short time in the grand scheme of things. So it always pays to think about tomorrow.

When I ran for President, I did so because—not because I had any hostility of the kind we had become so used to in politics to the then administration. I actually like President Bush very much personally. I had a lot of friends in the administration. I often represented the

Democratic Governors in negotiations with them. I did it because I thought the ideas that were driving the policies were wrong and because there was no animating vision to get this country into the 21st century.

And I hope very much that all that we're seeing now is some indication that we are about to return to that sort of politics, that we can actually have an honest debate about whether—not whether somebody is a good or a bad person, but whether they have good or bad ideas and what the consequences will be.

But I would like to say, if someone asks you why you were here, the first thing you ought to say is that the Clinton-Gore administration came to power with certain ideas that were different from the ideas that had been put forward in the past: that Government was neither the enemy, nor the solution, but should be a partner in creating the conditions and giving people the tools empowering them to make the most of their own lives; that we had to reduce the deficit and we could do it and still increase our investment in critical areas like education; that we could grow the economy and improve the environment; that it was not necessary for people to choose between being successful as workers and being successful as parents. Those are just some of the things that we said we believed.

And what you can say is, "Hey, they came in; they put their ideas into action, and they worked. So the first reason I showed up is it worked, and it was different."

I said before, I will say again, I'm so gratified whenever someone comes up and says they think I've done a good job as President and they think I've been able to involve the American people in this; I'm grateful. But I want you to understand, I could be the greatest speaker since Cicero, and if our ideas were wrong, the country would still be in the wrong place. The most important thing is to have the right ideas, the right vision, and a good team implementing it.

I could not have done anything that I have achieved if I hadn't had Al Gore as Vice President, because he's plainly the best Vice President with the largest amount of responsibility in the history of the Republic. It is plainly not even close. And I couldn't have done it without the help of our friends in Congress. Even when we've been in the minority in Congress, as long as they stayed with me, I knew in the end we could prevail on all of the great issues. I

couldn't have done it without those of you who have helped us.

So, first say, "They had some ideas; they put them into effect; and they worked." It's not just that we have the longest peacetime expansion in history, the lowest minority unemployment in history, the highest homeownership in history. We also have a 30-year low on welfare rolls, a 26-year low in the crime rate. Teen pregnancy, teen smoking, teen drug use is down. Test scores are up in our schools for the first time in years in the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades, in both reading and math, which is a big deal because every single year we have more and more of our kids whose first language is not English. So this country is moving in the right direction. The air is cleaner; the water is cleaner; the food is purer than it was before. We set aside more land, protected it or preserved it, than any administration except those of the two Roosevelts. We've had a hundred—that's big in Colorado—we had over 100,000 young people serve this country through AmeriCorps, our national service program, in communities all over America, earning money to go to college. That happened in 4 years. It took the Peace Corps 20 years to reach 100,000. Ninety percent of our children immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time ever. We've had a more active Government, but we now have the smallest Government in terms of employment we've had since 1962, when John Kennedy was President. So we had these ideas; we put them into effect; and they worked. So I hope you will say that to people.

The second thing is I hope you will say you were here because you agree with what we should do now, because we can't just sit on our lead. The question now is, we've spent 6 years trying to get this country to work again, just trying to have it work, knowing that we could work together; that the economy could sustain growth; that we could bring the crime rate down, something a lot of people didn't believe we could do anymore; that we could get rid of the deficit. So what are we going to do now? What are we going to do?

And there are these two competing visions. I'll give you the Republican vision in the argument most favorable to them. If one of them were here, they'd say something like this: "Look, we agree with the President; we'll take the surplus that's attributable to Social Security taxes, and we won't spend it anymore. And so that

can be used to pay down the debt some. But we think we ought to give you the rest of the money because it's your money; it's your tax money; and if we leave it in Washington"—I heard this, I heard them on the floor the other day. I watched them on C-SPAN, and one of their young leaders said, "If we give them the money, they will spend it on their friends." "Their friends."

Now, that's their argument. Our argument is, we have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to deal with the long-term challenges of the country. And if we have a tax cut as big as they want, we'll never do it. We've got to deal with the aging of America, the doubling of the number of people over 65 in 30 years. And therefore, we ought to use a lot of this surplus not only to set it aside, but to pay down—to extend the life of Social Security, extend the life of Medicare, provide more preventive screenings for older people so they don't get sick in the first place, and provide for a modest prescription drug benefit, because three-quarters of the seniors in this country don't have it. And if you set aside the surplus and you do it in the right way for both Social Security and Medicare, you can then deal with another big challenge which is the long-term health of the economy, because we could make America debt-free for the first time since 1835 in just 15 years, guaranteeing long-term stability, lower interest rates, higher investment, a stronger economy—debt-free.

If I had told you in 1992, when I was running for President, "Elect me, and 6½ years later I'll come back, and we'll talk about what to do with the surplus and how to make America debt-free," you would have said, "He's a nice young man, but that's hopeless. The kid, he is clueless. He doesn't have any idea what's going on." But it is before us now, and we have to decide what we're going to do.

We also have to realize that if their tax cut passes, it will require huge cuts in education, in the environment, in biomedical research, even in national defense, which they say they support—massive cuts.

And we have a tax cut that's smaller, that helps families to save, to deal with long-term care and child care, primarily. Also helps us to build modern schools and gives people like you incentive to invest in the poorest areas of America by giving you the same tax incentives through tax credits and other mechanisms to invest in Indian reservations, the Mississippi

Delta, Appalachia, and the inner city that you have right now if you want to invest in the Caribbean, in Africa, and Latin America or Asia, which I think is very important.

So they'll say, "Well, our tax is bigger than your tax cut." You ever heard those arguments when you were a kid, you know, the sixth grade? [Laughter] "My daddy drives a bigger car than your daddy does." And if that's the argument, we don't do very well. If that's the argument, why are you here? Most of you should be over there with them.

But you know life is fleeting. This is the opportunity of a lifetime. We have never had an opportunity like this, none of us in our political lifetime. And we have these big, looming challenges: how to keep the economy going, how to deal with the aging of America, how to deal with the needs of all of our children for a world-class education. And we've got a way to deal with them now. And we have proved that if we deal with them, the economy will be stronger, and we'll all do better.

So I hope you'll say, "The second reason I'm there is they're having a big debate in Washington about what to do with this prosperity, and I agree with the Democrats. I think we ought to deal with the long-term challenges of this country."

And the final thing is, I think the real difference between us is how we define community in America. Some Republicans obviously are very harsh and negative; some are very soothing and nice, and they like to get everybody together. There are all kinds of reasons. I don't like this personal attack business, but the question is, do you believe that each and every person in this country is important to our common success, and do you believe that each and every person in this country should have a right to be treated with dignity? And how do you define that?

Is the American community all those people who say they believe in the same things, or is it all of us who are responsible citizens who are entitled to be treated in a certain way and have a certain set of opportunities? I'll just give you two or three examples where there is almost a complete difference of opinion in the modern parties today, from the left to the right in the Democratic Party and from the left to the right in the Republican Party.

Almost all of us are for the Patients' Bill of Rights. Almost all of them supported killing it

in the Congress. Why? The health insurance companies say it will raise your health insurance premiums if your doctor says you need to see a specialist, and they can't stop it; if you get to go to the nearest emergency room; if you get to keep your doctor during the course of treatment even if you change your HMO provider. I think we're right and they're wrong. Even they say it only raises your insurance premiums \$2 a month. I think it's worth \$2 a month to give people the security of a decent health care system.

But all of them, from top to bottom, were against it, just about. We got a handful of votes.

I believe we ought to control—close the gun show loophole. We did the Brady bill—I remember when we did pass the Brady bill, they said, oh, this was the end of the world. They beat a bunch of our House Members in '94 over the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban, and they said, oh, the hunters were going to all lose their weapons. And I remember going back to New Hampshire in '96—now, by the way, 400,000 people with criminal backgrounds have not gotten a handgun because of the Brady bill. And I remember talking to all of these hunters in New Hampshire, saying, "You beat a Congressman in '94 here because he voted for the Brady bill. And he did that because I asked him to. So if there is a single hunter here that has been inconvenienced in your hunting, I want you to vote against me, too. But if you haven't, they didn't tell you the truth, and you need to get even." Our victory margin in New Hampshire went from one to 13.

People knew they were being sold a bill of goods, once they saw it. So now we come along and say, but there are still a lot of criminals buying guns at these gun shows and urban flea markets, and let's do a background check there. And well, you would think it was the most burdensome thing that we had ever come up with. So our crowd said, "Let's do it," and their crowd said, "Let's don't."

How do you define community? What does it really mean to say, "I think it's worth a lot to keep every kid we can keep alive, a lot." You don't see—I told somebody—you never hear anybody anymore complain about going through an airport metal detector, saying, "I

really resent this; my constitutional right to travel is being infringed.” [Laughter] You’re laughing, but you know, there was a lot of apprehension when we started this. All you had to do was think about your plane being hijacked.

But we ought to think—we ought to support this because we should think about not just ourselves being the victims; we should think about our neighbors being the victims.

We’re in Colorado. Our hearts were broken by Columbine. I was elated by those 90 kids from Colorado who came, Republicans, Democrats, Christians, Jews, Asians, Hispanics, African-Americans—all kinds of people—90 kids from Colorado descended on the Congress last week, asking them, what in the living heck had happened to them? Had they forgotten about Columbine? Where was their gun safety legislation? It was fabulous. It was fabulous.

But what I want to say to you is, what we forget is 13 kids get gunned down in this country every day. It’s worth to us—we should go to a little trouble to try to keep more of them alive. That’s what community means to me. We should go to a little trouble to try to keep more of them alive.

So I just give you those examples. There are a lot more. The hates crime legislation—from top to bottom on their side, there’s not a handful of them who want us to pass the hates crime bill that explicitly protects gays. Well, I think we should. I think about that Matthew Shepard out in Wyoming and his fine family; I think about the friends that we all have. Haven’t we learned that we have nothing to fear from law-abiding citizens who are different from ourselves, as long as we treat them with dignity and respect, whatever their differences are, whether they’re religious or whatever? I think this is a big deal. It’s part of the way we define community.

I never will forget the first conversation I ever had about this with one of Evan’s colleagues, Senator Chuck Robb from Virginia, represents a very conservative State, President Johnson’s son-in-law. I believe he saw more combat than any Vietnam veteran in the United States Congress. Distinguished Marine combat veteran in Vietnam. He looked at me without blinking an eye, and he said, “I am for this.” And he said, “I am for anything.” He said, “I served with people who risked their life for this country, who were gay, and we ought to give

them the protections every other citizen gets.” And to me, that’s part of community.

Let me just close with this story. Some of you have heard this before, but I was on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota recently, with the chairman of the Oglala Sioux, the tribe of Crazy Horse. And the new chairman’s name is Harold Salway. He was in the White House with 19 of the tribal chieftains from the high plains to talk about their terrible economic and social problems, which are a stain on this country, I might add, that we have to do something about.

And at the end of the meeting—Lynn Cutler is smiling; she was there, and she’s heard me tell the story—there was not a dry eye in the place and no one could breathe when Harold Salway stood up, and he said, “Before we go, I want to tell you that we are for your position in Kosovo.” Keep in mind, these people represent the poorest Indians in America; they come to see me; they tell me they want to say, we’re for your position in Kosovo. And he said, “You see, we know a little about ethnic cleansing.” He said, “My great-grandfather was killed at Wounded Knee.” But he said, “This is America. I had two uncles. One was on the beach at Normandy; one was the first Native American fighter pilot in the history of the U.S. military. And here today their nephew is with the President of the United States.” He said, “I only have one son. He means more to me than anything. But I would be proud to have him wear the uniform of my country to fight against ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.”

Community. Why do we fight for peace in the Middle East? Why do we work for it in Northern Ireland? Why do we ask people to stop* killing each other in Africa? Why do we try to get the American people to look at the interdependent nature of the world? Why do all of you who are quite comfortable believe that these young people who have served us today ought to all be able to go to college, so we ought to raise the minimum wage periodically to make sure people who work are not in poverty? We honestly believe that it is not only the right thing to do, but that we are better off when others are.

Senator Kennedy yesterday carried a great burden, as he has for more than 30 years now. I’d like to close with a reminder of something

* White House correction.

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he said when his brother was killed in 1968, and once before he had to give a eulogy that the world listened to. And at the end of it he said that he and his family hoped that what his brother wished for others and what he was to them would someday come to pass for all the world.

That is the dream that animates us. Tomorrow, if they ask you why you were here, give them a good answer.

Thank you. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:13 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to luncheon hosts Melvin and Bren Simon; murder victim Matthew Shepard; and Senator Evan Bayh.

Remarks to the American Embassy Community in Rabat, Morocco

July 25, 1999

Thank you very much. First, thank you for your warm welcome. To those of you who brought the children here today, thank you, especially for bringing them. I would like to thank Congressman Gilman and Congressman Martin Frost, who is with him from Texas, for joining us. I thank Secretary Christopher and Secretary Baker for dropping everything at a moment's notice to make this trip, to manifest their respect for King Hassan and the friendship between the United States and Morocco.

I'd like to say a special word of thanks to President Bush, who came here, again, on a moment's notice and had to leave early because he now has to go down to Casablanca to take a plane to Belgium to meet another appointment. But I'm very grateful to him for making this trip.

I'd like to thank all the people from the State Department and the National Security Council, represented by Mr. Berger up here, for putting this trip together in a hurry. And Ambassador Gabriel, thank you and Kathleen and the other members of our Embassy community for making us so welcome.

I'd also like to say that the First Lady would very much like to be here to thank you for making her trips to Morocco so successful. And Chelsea is here, and Hillary's mother is here, who, as I'm sure you know, has been here at least twice, maybe more, since I've been here. I think she's thinking of moving to Morocco. *[Laughter]*

We are all profoundly grateful for the friendship between Morocco and the United States and for the personal kindness and friendship that His Majesty, King Hassan, displayed to me,

to my family, to many of us on this podium, and to President Bush and to so many others over the years. So this is an important day for us. And Hillary would be here, but she and Chelsea and my mother-in-law have gone to visit with the mother and the sisters of the new King, and that is why they are not here. But they asked me to give you their best and to thank you.

Now, let me say, especially to the Moroccans who work for the American Embassy here, I know this is a difficult day for many of you. King Hassan was the only King most Moroccans ever knew, and I hope it is some measure of comfort to the people of this nation that, among the throngs, the millions of his fellow citizens who came out to honor his passing today, were leaders from every part of the world, from every political and religious background, united in their support for Morocco and their respect for the life that he lived.

King Hassan knew every American President since John Kennedy. He, himself, endured great turbulence and personal risk. The thing that always impressed me about him is he was never embittered by the dangers that he faced and, over time, he grew in wisdom, stature, and standing in the world; and as he grew, so did Morocco. I'm told he was known as the great survivor and, of course, we all know those survivor stories. We had another laugh about them on the plane over and shook our head in amazement.

But I think that, in effect, to call King Hassan a survivor is not to do justice to him. Because when we think of a survivor, we think about someone who is very clever, all right, but just—