

if he were President, that some of these killings would have occurred. But it is undoubtedly true that many would not. And that is what we have to think about.

And when we go into this political season, where everybody will turn up the rhetoric, you ought to have your antennae working real good, and ask yourself, are these people looking for a way to assume responsibility, or to duck it? And when I say that, I mean no disrespect to anyone.

Of course, it is because something horrible had happened to that man's heart that he walked into that church in Texas and killed those people, of course it is. And the same things that happened to the children in Los Angeles and the Filipino postalworker, and the same thing that happened to all those people in Illinois and Indiana, of course it is. But we cannot use that as an excuse not to ask ourselves, what's the difference between our setup here and everybody else's setup? And is it worth the price we're paying, or is there something we can do collectively to make America a safer place and make it clear that more of our children are going to grow up safe and sound and healthy? That's what we ought to be doing. Make this election year about assuming responsibility, not ducking it, for America's future. You can do it, and we need you to do it.

Finally, let me just say for the record and for the press here, most of the things the Congressional Black Caucus has really worked for in the nearly 7 years I've been privileged to be President have not benefited African-Americans exclusively, sometimes not even primarily. Most of the things that you have fought for were designed to give all Americans a chance to live up to the fullest of their God-given capacity, designed to give all Americans a chance to live on safe streets, designed to give all Americans a chance to come together.

And in that sense, it may be that, in the end, the efforts we have made—now manifested in our office for One America in the White House, that Ben Johnson leads—to bring this country together as we move forward may be the most important of all. You know, no one can foresee the future. I have loved doing this job, and I'm going to do it to the best of my ability every day that I have left on my term. I am going to do it to the best of my ability. I am going to be a good citizen for the rest of my life and tell people exactly what I think.

But no one can see the future, and no one has all the answers. But I know this, and you do, too. If every American really believed that we were one nation under God, if every person really believed that we are all created equal, if every person really believed that we have an obligation to try to draw closer together and to be better neighbors with others throughout the world, then all the rest of our problems would more easily melt away.

And so I ask you, as we go through the last difficult and exhilarating challenges of this year, as you head into the political season next year, keep in your mind—especially those of you in this Congressional Black Caucus—the enormous potential you have to reach the heart and soul of America, to remind them that we must be one.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 10 p.m. in the ballroom at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Representatives James Clyburn, chair, Eddie Bernice Johnson, first vice chair, and Eva M. Clayton, John Conyers, Jr., William (Bill) Clay, Corrine Brown, Elijah E. Cummings, and Shelia Jackson Lee, members, Congressional Black Caucus; Tom Joyner's son Oscar; and actor Chris Tucker. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 20.

## Remarks to the Community in Tarboro, North Carolina *September 20, 1999*

Thank you very much. Well, let me begin, ladies and gentlemen, by thanking Mayor Morris for welcoming me. And I thank Mayor Perkins

from Princeville. I flew over there and saw all the houses still buried underwater. I want to thank all the city officials, all the county officials,

all the State officials for the magnificent job that they have done, the lives they've saved, and all the things they've done to try to ease your way.

I'd like to thank the Members of Congress who came with me today. Your Congresswoman, Eva Clayton, when she was speaking, I started to call her "Reverend Clayton," she did such a good job. *[Laughter]* She talks to me just like that in Washington all the time. If she wants something for you, she comes in the White House and talks to me just like she did today. And Congressman David Price, Congressman Bob Etheridge, I want to thank them, too.

I want to thank the members of my administration who came here, and I'd like to introduce them to you. This is Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater; Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera. They did a lot of work for us; he's back here behind me. I want to thank the military, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration—they'll be doing a lot of work up and down this street—Aida Alvarez. And I want to thank the people who have spoken before for their praise of the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, James Lee Witt. Thank you.

I also want to thank my good friend Governor Jim Hunt. You know—I know all of you know this anyway, but he is in the process of completing a term, after which he will have served 16 years as Governor of North Carolina. And I served 12 years as Governor of my State—would have made 2 more if you hadn't been good enough to send me to Washington. *[Laughter]* And I can tell you, it will be—next January will be 21 years since I started working with Jim Hunt—21 years. We didn't have so much gray hair back then. *[Laughter]* He is the finest Governor in this country and a ferocious advocate. So I will do my best to do what he wants so that I will not have to put up with him camping out on the White House lawn to get help for you.

Let me say, if there's one thing I've learned visiting so many natural disasters, as the President and, before that, for a dozen years as a Governor, is that no matter how much television there is, it doesn't do it justice. Because it can't show what it feels like inside for people to lose a business they've put everything into; to people who lose their home when they have to take their kids to a shelter and not know where they're going to spend the night next week; for

farmers to have labored for 4 years and see a crop totally destroyed by water or the Sun and not know whether they can keep their land or wonder if they can ever buy seed again.

And that's why we have organized all these emergency measures, because—Jim Hunt and I were laughing; you know, we worked so hard to build the economy and to improve education and to protect the environment and take care of the health care needs and all of that, but as all the pastors out here in the audience know, every once in a while something happens that proves to you no matter how hard you work, you are never completely in control. And we are not completely in control.

So that when things like this happen to some of us, we know they could happen to all of us. And our country—first of all, our thoughts and prayers are with you. And secondly, we know we have a responsibility as members of the American family to help you get back on your feet again, and we intend to do it.

Now, the Federal Government has already worked very hard with the Coast Guard and others. We've been involved with your local people. I believe we think we saved almost a thousand lives. Too many people have died here, and not everyone is accounted for. And Governor Hunt told me today, you're still rescuing people that have been accounted for. But there are a lot of people alive today; and with all the loss, we can thank God that there are people who are alive who might not otherwise have been because of the efforts people have made.

So we're going to do what we can to help. And I want to tell you some things we can do in the very short run. We have already authorized FEMA to provide for direct Federal assistance to clean up the 66 counties in North Carolina that have been hurt. Today the Department of Agriculture will approve a disaster food stamp program to help people who need help to get food for their families. And people who need it ought to take it. There's nothing to be ashamed of here; people who need it ought to take it.

Today the Department of Agriculture—all they can do for the farmers, and that's what—is to offer the low-interest loans. Some of the bigger farmers, that'll be enough. Some of the family farmers will be ruined, not just here but in other places. And I'm going to do what I can to see that the emergency farm bill, which was drawn up to deal with the drought and

historic low grain prices overseas, includes the victims of the horrible drought and then the floods on the east coast, from North Carolina all the way up the east coast, where our farmers are.

The Department of Labor has authorized \$12 million for temporary jobs and to assist in clean-up and restoration activity. People who need them ought to try to get them. The money is designed not only to help you clean up but to help people who are out of work and need some immediate income to get it. And if there's more needed, we'll try to get more down here.

The Small Business Administration has authorized disaster loans for homeowners to repair or replace damaged property and loans for businesses to repair property, equipment, and inventory and provide companies—this is important—and provide companies with adequate capital until they can resume normal operations. And that's very, very important, so you all need to take advantage of these things.

FEMA has set up an 800 number for victims of the flood. And people who are eligible for the individual relief programs should call the hotline, the FEMA hotline, which is 800-462-9029. For the reporters in the audience, please put this in the paper; that's 800-462-9029.

Now, the next thing that we've got to do is to deal with the housing problem, which is a huge, huge problem. Some people are insured against the floods; and we just learned today apparently, because of blanket policies, but most people who have been flooded out, as has already been said, were not in any flood plain. Some of you are in a 500-year flood plain; nobody gets insured for that. Many people beyond the 500-year flood plain—which means if you got flooded out, it shouldn't happen again for another 600 or 700 years—we know you'll be prepared. *[Laughter]*

Now, for you, there are—and a lot of people here are low income people that don't have much money. Now, the people that can't repay any kind of loan can qualify for cash assistance, and everybody can qualify. We're going to try to do what we did in North Dakota, which is to get as many trailers as possible available for people to live in that can be taken to their property and plugged in, so people can supervise either getting another trailer if they were living in a trailer, or rebuilding their homes while they're onsite.

For those who don't want to do that and who need help, there are cash funds that are available to help you live somewhere else and other help available to buy furniture and do things of that kind. You need to make sure, as soon as you can, if you lost your home, as soon as these centers are clearly up and open—and I know a lot of you are dying to move out of these shelters, but it has got to be safe and the water has got to go down first—but you need to make sure that you know where the application centers are; that you go in, you figure out what you're eligible for.

Now, what we have to do is go back to Washington and complete the assessment of not only how much damage was done here, the worst place, but also in Virginia, which was hit pretty hard, and all the way up to New Jersey and New York, which were hit pretty hard. And then we've got to figure out if we have enough money to deal with the present problem. We know we need extra help for the farmers, but we've got to look and see if we've got enough extra money. Secretary Slater and I saw some roads that were washed out. It costs money to fix some roads that were washed out. It costs money to fix those roads. We've got to make sure we've got the funds necessary to do what needs to be done. If we do, well, we'll flow them; if we don't, we'll go back to Congress and try to get some more.

But the American people know that no individual can handle this alone, and our community ought to be doing this together. So let me say finally, I have been—as always, but particularly today—profoundly impressed by the spirit of the people here. One of the ministers over there, who looks like a professional weight lifter, by the way—*[laughter]*—has got a shirt on that says, "Too blessed to be stressed." *[Laughter]* And I want you to keep that attitude.

Man, I can only imagine what it's like, especially for those of you with young children, spending night after night in the shelters with all these people, some of whom you know, some of whom you don't; everybody is bumping up against everybody else. You get tired of the prepared meals; you wonder where you're really going to be able to go. I know it's frustrating.

But we've got to wait until the water goes down. Then the mayor has got to be careful—both these mayors—before the water can be turned on again, to make sure that it's safe,

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that the supply hasn't been contaminated. There are just things that have to be done.

So I urge you to keep your spirits up and know we're going to be with you every step of the way. Know that you have strong advocates in your local officials, your wonderful Governor, and your very vigorous congressional delegations that are represented here. We're going to stay

with you until you get back on your feet again, as long as it takes.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:27 p.m. on Main Street. In his remarks, he referred to Mayors Donald A. Morris of Tarboro and Delia Perkins of Princeville, NC.

## Statement on the Death of Raisa Gorbacheva

*September 20, 1999*

Hillary and I were saddened to learn of the death of Raisa Maksimovna Gorbacheva, wife of former Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev. We extend our deepest condolences to her family and friends in Russia and other countries.

The example she set through her help for child victims of leukemia and through her own courageous struggle against this terrible disease was an inspiration to people everywhere.

## Statement on the Earthquake in Taiwan

*September 20, 1999*

Hillary and I were saddened by news of injuries and deaths sustained by the people on Taiwan as a result of a major earthquake today. Our thoughts are with all of those who have

suffered losses and who may still be in need of assistance. We are in touch directly with the Taiwan authorities to determine what assistance from the United States may be needed.

## Remarks on Hurricane Floyd, in New York City

*September 21, 1999*

Good morning, everyone. I'm a little hoarse. Forgive me. I want to begin my visit by expressing our concern and support for the families and the communities in this area recovering from Hurricane Floyd.

As you know, I traveled to North Carolina yesterday and saw some of the worst storm damage and flooding that I have, personally, ever seen. I know people in New Jersey and New York have also been injured. I want to thank the city, county, and State officials for all the work they have done to get help to people quickly where it's needed.

We are doing all we can at the Federal level, and I'd like to mention just three things. First,

last Saturday I issued a major disaster declaration for New Jersey. Sunday I issued a similar one for Orange, Rockland, Putnam, and Westchester Counties in New York. These actions help to speed Federal assistance for individuals and communities recovering from flood damage.

Second, FEMA officials are on the ground now responding to the challenges with clean water, housing, and restoring communication and power links. Housing inspectors, small business teams, community relations specialists are on the scene to help meet people's needs. Starting today AmeriCorps volunteers will be helping people clean up the damages to their homes and pick up the pieces of their lives.