

and if they're not careful, they will make arrogant decisions, unheeding of the most fundamental desire of people: to have life and liberty and to enjoy the blessings of normal life.

The President. We will look back at the development of the atomic bomb in some ways as one of the most humbling events in all of human history, because we finally had to come face-to-face with the fact that we could take it all away. You know? Beyond the gas chambers, be-

yond the pogroms, beyond the killing fields of the Somme and the Marne in World War I, we could actually make it all go away. And I think it sobered the world up in a way that was oddly reassuring.

NOTE: The interview began at approximately 10 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 18. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these excerpts.

The President's Radio Address December 18, 1999

Good morning. The holiday season is a time when America's remarkable religious diversity shines brightest in so many homes and different places of worship and schools. Today I want to talk to you about the role of faith in our lives, in all of our religious diversity, and, particularly, in the education of our children.

America's Founders were men and women of faith, many of whom fled oppression overseas to find freedom on our shores. They believed the best way to protect religious liberty was to guarantee, first of all, the right to practice religion by the dictates of their own conscience; and second, to forbid our Government from imposing or establishing any religious belief. In their wisdom, they enshrined these two principles in our Constitution.

But of course, reconciling these principles has not always been easy, especially when it comes to our education system. Finding the proper place for faith in our schools is a complex and emotional matter for many Americans. But I have never believed the Constitution required our schools to be religion-free zones or that our children must check their faiths at the schoolhouse door.

Americans expect our schools to teach our children the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life. We also trust our schools to strengthen the moral foundation of our society, to reinforce the values taught at home and in our communities.

Studies show that children involved in religious activities are less likely to use drugs. Expe-

rience tells us they're more likely to stay out of trouble. Common sense says that faith and faith-based organizations from all religious backgrounds can play an important role in helping children to reach their fullest potential. That's why I've always supported individual students' rights to voluntarily practice religious beliefs, including prayer in school or to engage in religious activities on school grounds, but not to have any kind of enforced such activities.

Now, in 1995 our administration released a set of principles for protecting religious freedom in our public schools. We did so in response to parents and educators who asked for help in knowing what kinds of religious activities are permissible in public schools and what is not permissible. They asked for help in respecting the rights and beliefs of all students, from the most observant from all religious backgrounds to those who choose freely, as is their right, to completely abstain from any religious activity.

Those guidelines we issued make it clear that students do have the right to pray privately and individually in school, the right to say grace at lunch, the right to meet in religious groups on school grounds and to use school facilities just like any other groups do. They have the right to read the Bible or other religious books during study hall or free class time and the right to be free from coercion to participate in religious activity of any kind. Now, since we first issued those guidelines, appropriate religious activity has flourished in our schools and continuing in our country. Today I'm announcing the release

of expanded guidelines, more practical help for teachers and principals, for parents and students, for the whole community. Guidelines like this will help teachers better understand how to teach about religions and help faith-based organizations join the effort to improve public education.

Across America, schools and faith-based organizations are telling us they want to build new and effective partnerships, like the large number of faith-based groups involved in America Reads or the Shiloh Baptist-Seaton Elementary School partnership, which offers after-school activities here in Washington, DC. Faith-based organizations in schools, though different in many ways, do often share important goals: expanding opportunities to learn, lifting children's lives. Our new guidelines will help them work together on common ground to meet constitutional muster, to avoid making students uncomfortable because they come from different religious tradi-

tions, while helping students make the most of their God-given talents. These guidelines also tell us that a consensus is emerging among educators and religious leaders and among defenders of the first amendment. So many of them have endorsed our efforts. Their voices echo the words of George Washington who said that Americans have, and I quote, "abundant reason to rejoice, that in this land every person may worship God according to the dictates of his own heart."

Today, as we count the days down to the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, we know that this fundamental and precious liberty is still strong. We are determined that it will remain so, not just for our own children but for generations yet to come.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on the Death of Grover Washington, Jr. *December 18, 1999*

Hillary and I were saddened to learn of the death of Grover Washington, Jr., one of America's greatest musicians. I will always be grateful for the honor of playing saxophone with Grover back in 1993, after a White House jazz concert, and for the wonderful music he performed at my Inaugural celebrations and my 50th birthday celebration. Grover Washington was as versatile as any jazz musician in America, moving with

ease and fluency from vintage jazz to funk, and from gospel to blues to pop. "I want to be able to visit any genre," he once said, "and converse there with my horn." Grover Washington did exactly that, and beautifully. I will miss both the man and his music. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Christine, and their two children, Grover III and Shana.

Statement on the Death of C. Vann Woodward *December 19, 1999*

Hillary and I are deeply saddened by the passing of C. Vann Woodward, one of the most important and influential historians of our time. A native of Arkansas, Woodward not only wrote about history; he helped shape it. From living through and witnessing the era of Jim Crow to marching on Selma for racial justice, he brought a unique perspective to the teaching and analysis of Southern history. While in the

eyes of most he will best be remembered for his many books, his Pulitzer prize, and his long and distinguished teaching career, I believe his greatest gift was his tenacious pursuit of the truth and his warm and generous spirit. Dr. King once called one of Woodward's books the historical bible of the civil rights movement. His work influenced generations of Southern historians and social activists and had a major impact