

ideas are out there. The best days of this country are still ahead. The best days for Hispanic America are still ahead. But we have got to make the right choices.

You made a good investment coming here tonight, and I want you now to make your investment good by taking every opportunity, every day, between now and November, to make

the same arguments, in your own way, I made to you tonight.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 7:50 p.m. in the Chinese Room at the Mayflower Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard.

Remarks at a Reception for Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton June 13, 2000

Thank you. Well, if I had any sense, I wouldn't say a word. *[Laughter]* Thank you.

Let me say, first of all, I want to thank Vernon and Ann for once again proving one of their most endearing and enduring virtues: They stick with their friends. And Eleanor is their friend. We have all been friends a long time, and Hillary and I have known Vernon for a long time. When I was a 32-year-old Governor, I went to Vernon Jordan's Urban League banquet speech in Little Rock, stayed up half the night talking to him. Hillary had already known him for years. In fact, she never lets me forget. *[Laughter]*

And I would be less charitable, however, than Eleanor was. I think Ann actually saved Vernon's life. *[Laughter]* I was delighted when they got married because I needed him around for the rest of my life. *[Laughter]* And they have been so wonderful to all of us who are their friends, and I thank them for doing this.

Mr. Mayor, I'm glad to see you. And Councilwoman, I'm glad to see you. And Secretary Herman, I'm glad to see you. Secretary Herman and Eleanor and I, we sort of, in our different ways, tried to help the administration of Jimmy Carter. So we go back a long, long time.

I just want to say a few words tonight about Washington. First of all, I'm very proud of our Mayor, who was, in his previous life, a member of my administration. I have always loved Washington. You know, I've had a lot of homes in my life. I grew up in Arkansas, and I went to law school in Connecticut. Everybody knows now I've got a home in New York, which I'm very proud of. It's getting better every day. *[Laughter]* Fixing a 111-year-old farmhouse is almost as challenging as winning a Senate seat.

[Laughter] But I hope and pray we'll be successful at both.

But when I was a young man, I went to college in Washington. And I worked on the Hill every day. I lived in the District all 4 years I was in college. I love this city. I saw it burn after Dr. King was killed. I used to drive up and down those avenues, and I saw those empty storefronts. You know, I didn't know then, obviously, I would ever be President. Eleanor says she knew a long time ago. I really think when I announced for President my mother was the only person who thought I could win. *[Laughter]*

But I always promised myself, if I could ever do anything for this city I would, because it was plainly, in some ways, the most beautiful capital in the entire world. It was full of people from all over the world. It had a rich and textured history that deserved to be nourished, a lot of things people don't even know about. You know, we have a national historic site here in Anacostia that is Frederick Douglass' home, that he lived in from after the Civil War until he died, that I urge all of you to go see, if you haven't. I'll flack for the National Park Service a little.

So when I became President, before I was inaugurated, I took a walk down Georgia Avenue. And I talked to the merchants there, and I talked to the people on the street. I was always looking for things I could do. Eleanor and I were joking today—she went jogging in a campaign event for me in 1992. In the pouring rain, we were running up Pennsylvania Avenue together. I never will forget that. And because she's been where she's been, it's been possible for me, I think, to be a pretty good friend and a pretty good citizen of Washington, DC.

But if she hadn't been there, if she didn't have the enormous credibility she has in the Congress, among both Republicans and Democrats, and if she didn't have an idea a minute—[*laughter*—then all these things that I have been able to do, I could not have done. Someone could write a whole chapter on my service as President to Washington, DC, in two words: Yes, Eleanor. [*Laughter*] And if it were to be four words, it would have to be: Yes, Eleanor; yes, Eleanor. [*Laughter*]

We had a great time together, and it's been a joy. Now we've got this great Mayor who is inspiring so much confidence and broadening the base of support for the city, and there's so much more to be done. But I would hope that every American would want the United States Congress and the private sector and everybody else to do whatever we can for Washington. It ought to be the greatest city in America. It ought to be the greatest capital in the world. It's full of wonderful people and wonderful neighborhoods and wonderful possibilities, and we have really just begun to do what we ought to do.

I hope someday that she'll actually have a real vote in the Congress, too, and that we'll have representation in the other House of the Congress. I hope that will happen.

But I just want all of you to know that I'm grateful to you for helping her, but I know, I think I know that your presence here means you're also committed to helping make DC an even greater city, an even better place to live, an even more admirable National Capital. And believe me, for those of you who were here, like me, in the early and mid-sixties, it's stunning, the difference. But if you know the city, if you know all its neighborhoods, if you know all its schools, if you know every little nook and cranny of it, you know we've only scratched the surface of what we can do to make this the city it ought to be.

I keep telling the American people, as I travel around the country now, that in so many ways the election of 2000 is as important as the elections of '92 and '96, and in some ways, a sterner test of our judgment and character. Because

when I got elected, the country was against a wall, and it didn't take too much for them to take a chance on me. You remember me; President Bush referred to me as the Governor of a small southern State. [*Laughter*] And I was so dumb, I thought it was a compliment. [*Laughter*] And I still do. [*Laughter*]

But anyway, we knew we had to do some things that were different. We knew we had to take a chance. We knew we had to kind of break out of the mold of the way business was conducted in the city. But now the test is, what is it that we propose as a nation to do with this prosperity of ours? Anybody that's over 30 years old has got sense enough to know that nothing goes on forever. And anybody over 30 years old can remember at least one time in your life when you made a mistake not because things were so bad but because things were so good you thought there were no consequences to the failure to concentrate.

So I hope one of the things that we will think about—those of us in this room, at least—in this election season, is how important it is to use this moment to finish the job for Washington, DC, and to make it the greatest city of any national capital in the world. We can do this. We have the local leadership now. We have the idea machine—[*laughter*—beloved of all Members of Congress. If as many Republicans liked me as liked her, they'd repeal the 22d amendment. [*Laughter*]

We can do this. But remember, you don't want to be sitting around in somebody's living room 10 years from now and thinking, "Gosh, I wish I had done this, that, or the other thing for Washington." So let's make sure we truly honor Eleanor by having no regrets about how we use this magic moment.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:40 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts Vernon and Ann Jordan; Mayor Anthony A. Williams of Washington, DC; and Linda W. Cropp, chair, Council of the District of Columbia.