

the richest community in the United States or anyplace else in the world. They deserve that.

So a long time from today, I want you to remember more than that the President finally came to your hometown. *[Laughter]* I want you to remember why we came here: Because of your Governor and Erskine Bowles and these other leaders, we have a chance to collapse time and distance and to give you your chance to live your dreams.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:15 p.m. at the Whiteville train depot. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Ann W. Jones of Whiteville; W. Craig Turner, corporate secretary, board of directors, Remote Data Systems; Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr., of North Carolina; former White House Chief of Staff Erskine B. Bowles; Irwin Jacobs, chairman and chief executive officer, Qualcomm, Inc.; and White House Associate Director for Business Outreach Jackson Dunn.

Remarks at a Memorial Service for Daisy Bates in Little Rock, Arkansas April 27, 2000

Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary, for those wonderful words and for doing a wonderful job in Washington. Governor, Mayor, Senator Lincoln, Representatives Snyder and Berry and Hutchinson, Lieutenant Governor Rockefeller, and Attorney General Pryor and Senator Pryor, we're glad to see you here today. Thank you.

To Larry Ross and all of the committee; and Carlotta, thank you for your words; and Ernie, Minnijean, Jeff, and Elizabeth, thank you for being here. I thank all the people who provided our magnificent music, and I thank Janis and Diane and my longtime friend John Walker for what they had to say about Daisy. And I want to thank the Gaston and Bates families for inviting me here today. I've had a good time. *[Laughter]* And I'm glad I came. And I think Daisy's getting a good kick out of us making such a fuss about her today. *[Laughter]*

On the day of Daisy's funeral, I would like to have been here, but I was in Washington because that was the day long assigned to present the Congressional Gold Medal to her Little Rock Nine. I remember the last time I saw her was here, in 1997, on the day we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the integration of Little Rock Central High. And though her body was weaker and her voice was gone, she was still plainly happy to be there as the Governor and the mayor and I held open the doors for the students who were once kept out by the law, to walk in to the cheers of their fellow citizens—thanks to her.

I think that my old friend Reverend Young said about all that needed to be said about—*[laughter]*—about nearly everything. I am still in one piece, although it's a slightly grayer—*[laughter]*—jagged, more beaten up piece. But Reverend Young, I just figured if all of you were doing better, I could sure get by. And I'm glad to be here with you.

I was trying to think—you know, one thing I'd like to say to you is that there is always a danger when somebody does something that is really great that defines his or her life, that somehow you miss everything else. You know, we could put flowers at the shrine of what Daisy Bates did, at Little Rock Central High School, and for those nine young people, from now until the end of this country, and we never could do enough to say thank you.

But what I'd like to say to you at the end of this very moving and long and inspiring program is that I really liked Daisy Bates. I liked her for who she was. I liked her because she was a brave woman who fought the civil rights battle. But I liked her also because she was a brave woman who kept her spirits up and found joy in life as her body began to fail, who learned to speak through her eyes when her voice would no longer make a sound, and who never lost the ability to laugh.

I never will forget when I was wheeling Daisy through the Civil Rights Memorial at Memphis, when they put up the section on Little Rock Central High School, and they had the wonderful statue to her on one side and a pretty good likeness of Governor Faubus on the other side.

[*Laughter*] So I wheeled Daisy in, you know, and then she was looking at herself, and I said, "You look pretty good, Daisy." She said, "Yeah." And I said, "Old Orval looks pretty good, too, doesn't he?" And she said, "Yeah, he does." [*Laughter*] She was laughing about it.

She always—she had a dignity that comes from having lived a life well and a peace of mind that comes from faith and strength that allows you to let go of those things that time is going to take away sooner or later from all of us, anyway. But not very many people can do that. A lot of people would have been feeling sorry for themselves, saying, "Well, after I did all this stuff in my life, why doesn't my body work anymore?"

I liked Daisy Bates not only because of what she did at Little Rock but because of the way she lived right to the end. And when she lost things that are painful for any person to lose, somehow what was left became more pure, more strong, almost like a diamond that was chipped away and formed and shines more brightly. And I am grateful for that.

You know, I'm also grateful for the fact that she overcame the adversities of her childhood. I was glad John Walker said what he did. This was an orphan child who found her way to a great truth. She was, in addition to what the film said about her, the only woman pilot in the Arkansas Civil Air Patrol in World War II and the only woman who spoke on that magnificent day at The Mall in August of 1963 when Martin Luther King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech.

She endured emotional and physical attacks, ostracism, violence, and harassment. Her newspaper was boycotted by local businesses who closed the door of it for three decades, because they wanted neither her nor it to speak the truth to their deaf ears. In spite of it all, maybe because of it all, Daisy Bates continued to fight the good fight.

There's something else I think is worth saying. When you come to the end of a person's life and an end of an era, and you look at all these little children here and you look at this beautiful choir back behind us, there is a certain tendency to believe that, oh, this is a great country with a great history, and somehow this was all inevitable it was going to turn out this way. That is not true. That is not true. And I want the young people to know that it is not true.

Daisy Bates did not know she was going to win. But she fought anyway. That's where the real courage is. If you know you're going to win in the end, it doesn't take a lot of courage to fight. And the pain of the wounds is not so great if you know you're going to win anyway.

Listen to this. She said recently, "When we took on segregation in the Little Rock schools, I don't think we had any big idea we were going to win it, but they were going to know they had a fight." [*Laughter*] In the words of a woman she knew and admired, Eleanor Roosevelt, she believed, and I quote, that, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." [*Laughter*] Well, she never gave her consent, and she never gave her consent later when she began to break physically.

During the whole time I was honored to be your Governor here, I was inspired by her confidence and spurred by her conscience. I love what she said about our State, because she loved Arkansas, warts and all. Listen to this. She said, "Arkansas is the home of my birth, my growth, my identity as a woman in this world. It has claimed me from birth, and I have claimed it for life."

Daisy is now in a place where earthly rewards don't mean all that much and certainly aren't needed. But we who are still here, we need our earthly reminders of the values she lived and fought for, the work she did, and the work still to be done. So today, in honor of Daisy Bates, I want to make two announcements.

First, I have asked that her home at 1207 West 28th be approved as a national historic landmark as soon as possible. [*Applause*] Thank you. Second, on behalf of Hillary and myself, I am glad to designate Little Rock Central High School an official project of the White House Millennium Council's Save America's Treasures program, to make it eligible for funds that we're putting out across this country to help to renovate, restore, and enshrine the great places in our history. [*Applause*] Thank you.

I close with this. Little Rock Central High School embodies for me, in these lives of the children behind me and the rich history it has, the motto that Hillary and I had for celebrating this year 2000, that we would honor the past and imagine the future. So that's the last thing I want to leave with you.

I don't know if I can remember the Governor's exact words—you know he's a better preacher than I am. [*Laughter*] But I thought

it was great when he—I can't remember—he said, “There's some people that, because of face or place, race or grace, think they're better than other people.” That was really good; I wish I'd thought of that. [Laughter] Wasn't that good? [Applause] That was really good.

But I will just leave you with this. If you really want to honor Daisy Bates and you want to remember the fire in her eyes, even as she had to sit down instead of stand up, you need to think about the future. Even in this most modern of worlds, where we're imagining how wonderful it will be when every one of our kids is connected to the Internet, and when we're about to unlock the mysteries of the humane genome, and in a few years we'll know what's in those black holes in outer space, the biggest problem we got in this whole world today is the oldest problem of humankind, which we learned about in our own way in Little Rock: People are still scared of people who are different from them.

And when they are—and everybody's scared of something. [Laughter] And some people think that it's scary just getting up every day, and everybody's scared of something. So a lot of people have always thought, throughout all of human history, that the only way they can deal with their fears is to find somebody different from them they can look down on and think, “At least I am not that.” And there's not a person in this room hadn't done that—not a one. “I may be bad; at least I'm not a hypocrite.” [Laughter] “I may be a thief; at least I'm not cheap.” [Laughter] “I may be this; at least I'm not that.”

But the biggest demon is in race and religion. All over the world today, it is still eating people alive. So we want to celebrate the modern world and all the wonders it's bringing, and we're being dragged down because we still can't let

go of what every one of us in the room at least should have learned better than to do at Little Rock.

So I ask you to think about that. If God came down to me today and said, “I'm sorry, you've survived a lot, but I'm not going to let you finish your term. You're headed out of here today, and I'll give you one wish. I'm not a genie; you can't have three—one”—[laughter]—I would not wish for continued prosperity. I would not wish for some new weapon system to protect us forever. I would wish that somehow we would find it in our hearts to be one America and to lead the world toward that.

So I say this. If you liked and admired Daisy Bates and you really want to do something to memorialize her, promise yourself you will spend the rest of your life in every way you can bringing us closer to that wonderful idea.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. in the auditorium at the Robinson Center. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Transportation Rodney E. Slater; Gov. Mike Huckabee and Lt. Gov. Winthrop P. Rockefeller of Arkansas; Mayor Jim Dailey of Little Rock; State Attorney General Mark Pryor; former Senator David Pryor; Larry Ross, executive director for external affairs, Southwestern Bell Arkansas, and chair, Daisy Bates Memorial Committee; Little Rock Nine members Carlotta Walls Lanier, Ernest Green, Minnijean Brown Trickey, Jefferson Thomas, and Elizabeth Eckford; Rev. Rufus K. Young, pastor, Bethel AME Church; Diane Davis-Charles, State chapter representative, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; civil rights lawyer John Walker; and Special Assistant to the President and Special Advisor for Presidential History Janis Kearney, who formerly ran the newspaper founded by Ms. Bates.

Remarks at the William H. Bowen Law School Dedication Ceremony in Little Rock

April 27, 2000

Thank you very much, Derrick, and thank you for your great speech. Mack, thank you for being here. I must say, when Mack was speaking, he was laying it on so thick, I had to lean

over and pinch Bill to make sure he was still breathing. [Laughter] I said, “Bowen, are you still alive? Is this is a eulogy?” And he said,