

But we haven't gotten into Mitchell yet, and we can't get into Mitchell until violence stops.

But our administration—I talked to Condi this morning, we're in touch with—constantly in touch, you know, our Ambassador went to see Prime Minister Sharon yesterday. And we'll be having—we'll continue with high-level contacts with both sides. I spoke to—I've written a letter to Prime Minister Mubarak today—President Mubarak today, and—

Q. What did you tell him?

The President. Well, I told him we're still very much engaged in the process, obviously, that we take violence very serious in the Middle East. The Middle East is one of our top foreign policy—peace in the Middle East is a top foreign policy priority and that we need to work together

to convince both sides to break the cycle of violence.

See you all.

NOTE: The exchange began at 7:17 a.m. at Ridgewood Country Club, prior to a round of golf. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vicente Fox of Mexico; authors Nathaniel Philbrick and David McCullough; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; King Abdullah II of Jordan; Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice; and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. The President also referred to the Report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, chaired by former Senator George J. Mitchell, issued April 30. A reporter referred to Italian fertility doctor Severino Antinori. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks to Participants in Habitat for Humanity's "World Leaders Build" in Waco

August 8, 2001

Thank you, all. Please be seated, before you melt. [*Laughter*]

Mel, thank you very much. Laura and I had the honor of welcoming Mel and Kitty to our little slice of heaven last night in Crawford, Texas. He's doing a fabulous job. I don't know if you know the story about Mel Martinez, but as a young boy, his parents put him on a boat from Cuba, hoping that he could find freedom—and did, and now is a Cabinet Secretary in the Cabinet of the 43d President, and he is doing a fabulous job on behalf of America. And Mel, it's a lot cooler here in Texas than it is in Tampa, Florida. [*Laughter*]

I'm honored to be here with Laura. She is—I know most of my Texas friends know this was going to be the case, but she is a great First Lady.

I want to thank the Gowan family for your hospitality. I asked him about that New York Yankee hat. [*Laughter*] He said it was the only one he could find. [*Laughter*] Either that or he was showing off for the national press corps. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank, as well, the Evans family, Bubba and Destini and Gladys. I told Bubba, if he wanted some advice, it's always to listen to his mother, something I understand quite well. [*Laughter*] But Bubba and Destini promised Laura and me that they're going to go to college. They're going to use that home as a place to study. You're now on record, Bubba. [*Laughter*]

Tom, it's good to see you again, sir. Thank you for coming down from Washington today. I had the honor of welcoming Jimmy Carter to the Oval Office the other

day, and he asked me about the international home build, and I said I was going to participate—in God’s country. [Laughter] He said, “I didn’t realize you were going to be in Georgia.” [Laughter] I said, “No, Texas.” [Laughter] And so it’s an honor to be participating today along with President Carter, who is in South Korea, and other world leaders all around the globe.

I want to thank my fellow Texans who are here, as well. I particularly want to thank David Ward, and I want to thank the Baylor University Habitat for Humanity crowd. It’s one of the oldest in the country. I think it’s the first Habitat for Humanity college building program, and I want to thank the Baylor students who are here today and those who have kept the tradition alive up to now.

I’m glad to welcome the Governor. It’s good to see you, Gov; I’m glad you’re here. I played golf with my State senator, David Sibley. You’re supposed to play “President wins.” [Laughter] I guess you know me too well. I know you better now. [Laughter] It’s good to see you and Pam. It’s good to see Kip and Dianne; thank you all for both coming over. I miss you. I miss the—they’re both members of the State House. Sibley is in the Senate.

Dealing with the United States Congress is an interesting experience compared to dealing with our legislature. It seems like people there want to harden their positions pretty quickly because they’re a lot of times more interested in politics than they are in good policy. I want to assure you all I’m working hard to change that attitude. I’m trying to erode the old bias, the old prejudice of putting politics ahead of what’s right for America. I think we’re making good progress. I do miss the days when Democrat and Republican could sit down together here in Texas and work things out.

I was telling David yesterday that we’re making some pretty good progress on the Patients’ Bill of Rights by focusing with people to find common ground. It’s an experience he and I had together. I gave

him some pretty good lessons on how to get positive things done.

It’s great to have the statewide officeholders here, members of the supreme court—Phillips and Enoch, thank you all for coming. And new judge, too—thank you, Judge, for being here. We’ve got one-third of the court here. [Laughter] Almost enough for a quorum. [Laughter]

I want to thank the railroad commission for being here: Garza, Williams, and Matthews, it’s good to see all three of you. You’re looking pretty darn good, in spite of the fact that I know you’re working hard. It’s also good to see Greg Abbott and David Dewhurst. Thank you all for coming, as well; we’re honored that you’re here. I appreciate you taking time to be here.

One of the things I love to remind people around our country is that the great strength of America is not in our government. It may be in the form of government but not in the halls of government. The great strength of America is in the hearts and souls of citizens all around our country. And we have a chance to see that today here in Waco, Texas, people who have heard the universal call to help a neighbor in need and have come out in 100-degree temperature to do so, people that understand that owning a home is part of the American Dream. Owning something is what America is all about. The ability to own a piece of property, regardless of who you are or how you were raised or where you’re from, is the thing that really has made America so unique and so different.

But the thing that makes it more interesting to people from around the world is that we’ve got hundreds of citizens who are willing to help those who may not be able to afford a house to be able to move into a house. It’s the beauty of America.

You know, I’ve told the people of the Nation’s Capital there that I was coming back to the heartland to herald the values of the heartland, the values that make America so different and so unique. And one of those values is neighbors helping

neighbors. It's a value that has existed for a long period of time. But no President should ever take that value for granted. And so that's why Laura and I are so honored to thank the volunteers who are here and to remind our fellow Americans that if we're interested in a decent tomorrow for every citizen, if we want the American Dream to extend its reach in every community, that all of us must work hard in our communities to help a neighbor in need.

One of the most interesting initiatives that we have proposed is a Faith- and Community-Based Initiative. There's great debate in Washington about the process, the legalities of the initiative. What my administration talks about is the results of the initiative. If a faith-based program helps a family find a home, then we ought to welcome it and nourish it. And Secretary Martinez talked about how we're going to do that by putting more money in our budget.

If a faith-based initiative helps someone kick drugs or alcohol, we ought to welcome that initiative and welcome that program and say to the folks who are involved, "Government stands squarely on your side." In our society, we should not fear faith and the power of faith and the volunteers who are motivated by faith. We need to welcome it. And as far as I'm concerned, the Federal Government will be a welcoming agency, will put money up to allow faith-based programs to compete side by side with secular programs, all aimed at making sure America is the greatest country possible for every single citizen.

And it's going to happen in this country. I've had the honor of traveling the world for our country. I went to Europe. And we're different in a positive way; we're unique in an incredibly positive way. It's important for our Nation to never lose sight of that. And for those who worship in

houses of faith, regardless of their religion, whether it be Christian or Muslim or Jewish, and you want to help a neighbor in need and you want to access grant money, as far as I'm concerned, please come on. Please come on and hear the universal call to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.

We're making great progress in Washington changing the tone of our country. We're making great progress reminding people that the values of the heartland are the values that make America unique and different.

I want to thank all the volunteers here in Waco, Texas, and all the volunteers all across this State and all across our Nation who, on a daily basis, make this country so wonderful and so different. I also want to thank my fellow Texans for coming out to give me a warm welcome. It's great to see you all again.

May God bless Texas, and may God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 a.m. at the home of Otis and Theresa Gowan, a 1990 Habitat for Humanity project. In his remarks, he referred to Kitty Martinez, wife of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Mel R. Martinez; Gladys Evans and her children Edwinn "Bubba" and Destini, whose home the President helped build; Diana Ward, board chair, Waco Habitat for Humanity; Gov. Rick Perry of Texas; Pam Sibley, wife of State Senator David Sibley; State Representatives Kip Averitt and Dianne White Delisi; Chief Justice Thomas R. Phillips and Justices Craig T. Enoch and Wallace B. Jefferson, Texas Supreme Court; Chairman Michael L. Williams and Commissioners Tony Garza and Charles R. Matthews, Texas Railroad Commission; and Greg Abbott and David Dewhurst, candidates for Lieutenant Governor of Texas.