

Remarks to the National Urban League Conference in Pittsburgh,
Pennsylvania
July 28, 2003

Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for your kind invitation. But most importantly, thanks for your service to your fellow Americans. The Urban League has always stood for justice and hope and healing. It's stood for opportunity for all our citizens. I'm honored to be at such an organization.

I appreciate the chance as well to come to Pittsburgh. It's a city that's rich in civil rights, the history of civil rights. In the 1800s, the Underground Railroad here delivered thousands out of slavery and into freedom. In the 1930s and 1940s, Pittsburgh's Urban League led successful protests against schools and department stores that refused to hire African Americans. And today in this city, community leaders are showing what good people can accomplish by working together. I now know why they call it the Renaissance City, and I want to thank you for your hospitality.

The work of the National Urban League represents one of the basic commitments of this country. See, we believe in opportunity for all, a society where every person can dream and work and realize his or her potential. We're dedicated to bringing economic hope to every neighborhood, a good education to every child, and comfort and compassion to the afflicted. And our Nation has come a long way, and we have a long way to go. And we will not stop, we will not tire until we extend the great promise of America to every neighborhood in America. And that's what I want to talk about today.

I want to thank Mr. President, President Marc Morial, for his kind invitation and his willingness to lead this important American institution. He replaces a good man in Hugh Price, who has ably led the Urban League for nearly a decade. And there's no doubt in my mind that Marc Morial

will do a great job on behalf of America. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. As he said, we grew up right around the corner from each other. And I know what he was—what New Orleans was like when he was the mayor of that important city. Bourbon Street was never more alive when—[laughter]—never mind. [Laughter]

I'm honored that the Secretary of Education is with us today, Rod Paige. He is a good friend and a good man.

I appreciate so very much Michael Critelli, who is the chairman of the board of the National Urban League, a businessman that understands corporate responsibility. It means you've got to help somebody else as well as watching the bottom line. Mike, thank you for being here.

I'm honored that members from the Pennsylvania congressional delegation are with us today, Senators Specter and Santorum and Congressman Tim Murphy. I appreciate them coming. A couple of them jumped on Air Force One. [Laughter] I'm not suggesting that's why they came. [Laughter] There's not a lot of air raids on Air Force One. [Laughter] But I'm glad to have them.

I see Reverend Jackson is with us today. Jesse Jackson, it's good to see you. Congressman Cummings—I'm honored to see you, Congressman. Thank you for being here. I appreciate so very much my friend Mayor Jim Garner, who's the president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, who is with us today. Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming.

I know that Mike Fisher, the State attorney general, is with us today. And the Allegheny County chief executive, Jim Roddey, is with us today. And I'm honored that they have come. I want to thank all the elected officials. I want to thank the board of the National Urban League. And I want

to thank the delegates for giving me a chance to come by and say hello.

Today I had the honor, when I landed at the airport, of meeting a board member of the Urban League of Pittsburgh, a fellow named Xavier Williams. He came to see me because one of the things I try to do is herald the great strength of the country, which happens to be the heart and soul of our citizens. You see, Xavier works for a—it's called INROADS. It's a nonprofit organization which matches minority youth with successful businesses and corporations to try to help them have the skills necessary to realize the entrepreneurial spirit of America. Xavier knows what I know, that the best way to serve your country is to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. And I appreciate the example that Xavier Williams sets for not only the good folks here in Pittsburgh but for people all around the country. Thank you, Xavier, for your service to our country.

Every generation of Americans must rise to its own challenges, and this generation is rising to meet ours. We will never forget the lessons of September the 11th, 2001. Great oceans no longer protect us from dangers that gather far from home. And the other lesson is that there are people who can't stand what America stands for and desire to conflict great harm on the American people. In the 22 months since that day, we have put those who hate America on notice: Wherever they plot, wherever they plan, they will find no place to hide from American justice.

The Al Qaida terrorists still threaten our country, but they're on the run. The regime in Afghanistan, the Taliban regime, inflicted great harm on the citizens of that country and protected the terrorists. But that regime is no more. Afghanistan is now free.

And our current mission in Iraq is essential to the broader war on terror; it's essential to the security of the American people. You see, a free, democratic, peaceful Iraq will not threaten America or our friends with weapons. A free Iraq will not be a

training ground for terrorists or a funnel of money to terrorists or provide weapons to terrorists who would willingly use them to strike our country. A free Iraq will not destabilize the Middle East. A free Iraq can set a hopeful example to the entire region and lead other nations to choose freedom. And as the pursuits of freedom replace hatred and resentment and terror in the Middle East, the American people will be more secure.

Our men and women in uniform are serving our Nation and the cause of security and peace. We're proud of them. We appreciate their progress. We appreciate their dedication to the country called America.

This Nation has got another great challenge. While we stand for freedom and opportunity abroad, we must make those same values real in the lives of all Americans. This Nation has got work to do. There are citizens who can't find jobs. There are citizens looking for homes for their families. There are students who go to school that are letting them down every day and don't seem to improve. There are children who need mentors in their lives, people struggling with addiction who need to know they don't face that struggle alone.

To make the promise of America real for everyone, we need active citizens who help their neighbors; we need active churches and active communities; and we need active government. We can make a difference in people's lives with creative, innovative policies that focus on results.

Greater opportunity and hope begins with a growing economy. The stock market started to decline in March of 2000. And then we had recession in the first quarter of 2001. So we acted. We provided historic tax relief for families. And then as the economy was beginning to come back, we found out some of our citizens, corporate CEOs, forgot what it means to be a responsible citizen, and they did not tell the truth to shareholder and employee alike. So we

acted, and we're now holding corporate criminals to account.

Last year, we saw too many Americans were still struggling to find a job, so we acted again. We brought the marriage penalty down. It doesn't make any sense, by the way, to penalize marriage in the Tax Code. It seems like the Tax Code ought to encourage marriage, not penalize it. We reduced income tax rates. We expanded the child credit from \$600 to \$1,000 per child, and we made the change retroactive to January 1st of this year, so the checks are in the mail. And as a matter of fairness, Congress should make the child credit refundable—low-income families need help as well during these economic slow times.

To add more jobs to the economy, we're also focusing a lot on small businesses, because small businesses create the most new jobs in an economy. Most small businesses are sole proprietorships or Subchapter S's, so when you reduce the income tax rates, you help small businesses. They pay tax at the individual rates. We're also allowing higher expense deduction for small businesses, which will make it easier for small businesses to buy new equipment and to hire new people. We're working through the Small Business Administration and Minority Business Development Agency to ensure that minority businesses get access to Federal contracting and financing and technical assistance for startups, because we understand small businesses are the path to the American Dream, and this path must be more open to all our citizens.

You hear a lot of talk about tax relief. Let me tell you my belief. When a person has got more money in his or her pocket, he or she is likely to demand an additional good or a service. And when somebody demands a good or a service in our society, somebody is going to produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces that good or a service, it means somebody is more likely find a job. The tax relief we packaged is good for helping people find work in America.

Now, we've been through a lot: recession, war, emergencies, and corporate scandals. But I'm optimistic about the future. I'm optimistic about the future, because I see hopeful signs. Home sales are strong, and people are refinancing their mortgages to put more money in their pockets. Inflation is low. Retail sales have begun to show growth. Productivity is high. And the good news is, a lot of the economists are beginning to forecast a better tomorrow, which is important for making sure that people have hope in our society.

No, we're dealing with the economy. We saw a problem, and we dealt with it straight up.

And as the economy expands, we've got to help Americans who find the greatest difficulty finding work. So I proposed what we call reemployment accounts. The job-seeker would have an account up to \$3,000 for job training or child care or transportation or relocating to get a new job in a new city. If a worker finds a new job quickly, within 13 weeks, he or she gets to keep the balance of the cash as a reemployment account. Congress needs to put this plan in effect. Congress needs to help those who are having trouble finding work.

Congress also needs to understand, we need a sound energy policy in America. We need to cut down on frivolous litigation, which inhibits economic growth. We need a trade policy that opens up new markets for American products.

We also need good housing policy. A good way to make sure this economy remains strong is a housing policy which closes the minority homeownership gap in America. We need greater tax incentives for people to build homes in inner cities. I believe our Government should provide downpayment assistance to people who want to buy a home but need a little extra help. I understand there's a lot of fine print when it comes to mortgages, so we need to help people understand what's in the fine print. We need grant programs to help counsel low- and moderate-income folks

across our country, to teach them what it means to buy a home and to make sure that the fine print is understood by all. No, we've got a goal in America of helping 5½ million more minority citizens become homeowners by the end of this decade.

The truth of the matter is, the future of our economy and our country depend upon good schools in all our neighborhoods. Equal education is one of the most pressing civil rights of our day. Nearly half a century after *Brown v. Board of Education*, there's still an achievement gap in America. On the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress, on the reading test, 41 percent of white fourth graders were proficient and better readers, but only 12 percent of African Americans met that standard. That means we've got a problem. Both numbers are too low. I think too many of our schools are leaving too many of our children unprepared.

And so we acted. I worked with Congress to pass what we call the No Child Left Behind Act. It says every child can learn; we must have high standards for every child; and we must hold people to account to make sure children do learn. We must challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations, and you know what I'm talking about. And as Rod Paige will brief you, States are beginning to respond. We said, "In return for record levels of education spending at the Federal level, we expect results."

You see, if you believe every child can learn, then you ought to be asking the question to those who are spending our money, "Are you teaching the child?" That's what we ought to be asking all across America. And now there's accountability plans being put in place in 50 States plus Puerto Rico and the District. I know people are concerned about testing. I've heard this debate a lot. They say it's discriminatory to measure and compare results. I say it is discriminatory not to measure. I think it's important to know whether or not our schools are succeeding. We simply have got to stop shuffling our children from grade

to grade without asking the question, have they been taught to learn to read and write and add and subtract?

I believe it is those who believe certain children can't learn that are willing to shuffle them through. And the No Child Left Behind Act ends that. In return for record levels of money, you've got to show us whether or not the children can read and write and add and subtract. And when schools don't measure up, parents must have more options. It's one thing to measure, but there has to be consequences for failing schools. So in that act, parents are able to send their children to a different public school or a charter school or get special tutorial help.

I also believe it makes sense to explore private school choices, so I'm working with the leadership in Washington, DC. This isn't a Democrat issue or Republican issue. This is an issue that focuses on children.

I know setting high standards works. I know measuring and using the measurement system as a way to diagnose problems so you can focus on the problems works. In my State, 73 percent of the white students passed the math test in 1994, while only 38 percent of the African American students passed it. So we made that the point of reference. We had people focused on the results for the first time—not process but results. And because teachers rose to the challenge, because the problem became clear, that gap has now closed to 10 points. Because every child can learn, you've just got to focus the attention and the resources when necessary. Accountability tells you what's going right, and it tells you what's going wrong, and it shows you where the emphasis needs to be. We're having the same results in North Carolina. In States that measure, you'll find that the achievement gap is closing dramatically.

Our opportunity society must also be a compassionate society. As Americans, when we see hopelessness and suffering and injustice, we will not turn our backs. And one of the best ways to build hope is to

recognize where some of the great works of compassion are done. You see, Government can hand out money—sometimes we do a pretty good job of it—but what it can't do is put hope in people's hearts or a sense of purpose in people's lives. That happens when people who have been called to love a neighbor interface with a neighbor in need.

See, every day across America, faith-based and community groups are touching people's lives in profound ways—give shelter to the homeless and provide safety for battered women; they bring compassion to lonely seniors. America's neighborhood healers have long experience and deep understanding of the problems that many face, and many of them have something extra besides experience. They have inspiration, as they carry God's love to people in need. I like to call the neighborhood healers America's social entrepreneurs. And they need the support of foundation America and corporate America. They need the support of individuals and, of course, congregations. And when appropriate, they deserve the support of the Government.

Government has no business endorsing a religious creed or directly funding religious worship. But for too long, Government treated people of faith like second-class citizens in the grantmaking process. Government can and should support effective social services provided by religious people, as long as those services go to anyone in need. And when Government gives that support, faith-based institutions should not be forced to change the character of their service or compromise their principles.

Neighborhood healers have not been treated well by the Federal Government, so I signed an Executive order banning discrimination against faith-based charities by Federal agencies. I created special offices in my key Cabinet departments to speak up for faith-based groups and to help them access Government funding. I've asked the departments to report to me on a regular

basis to make sure the old days are gone, to make sure we challenge and harness the great strength of the country, the heart and soul of our citizens. We're changing the focus of Government from process to results. Instead of asking the question, "Is this a faith-based program," we're now asking the question, "Does the program work," and if so, it deserves our support.

And the support is making a difference. Here in Pittsburgh, the North Hills Community Outreach, an interfaith human services agency, uses about \$76,000 from the Department of Health and Human Services to help people get through tough times. In other words, we're using taxpayers' money to help support programs that use the faith component to help change lives and save lives.

A fellow named Royal Patterson went to this program. He was a painter for 27 years, and then he was unable to climb up a ladder. So he goes to North Hills. They gave him food. They gave him bus passes. They helped him to get a new job. But what he said was—most important—he said, "It was so uplifting. You figure nobody cares, but they care."

There's a lot of programs around based on faith that care for people, and our Government must recognize their potential in our society if we want to heal lives all across America.

I've asked Congress to fund \$100 million for the Compassionate Capital Fund. That's a fancy word for providing money for organizations like the Urban League to teach some of these small faith programs how to apply for grants, how to help manage and train their staffs. In other words, I fully recognize that some of the programs in some of the neighborhoods need management help. They need guidance. And I would hope that Marc would take advantage of this program to help some faith programs all around the country be fully prepared to do what they're called to do, which is love somebody in need.

I've asked Congress for \$600 million over 3 years to extend drug and alcohol treatment to 300,000 Americans and that faith-based providers must be allowed to compete for these funds. Sometimes when a person changes their heart, they change their habits. And our Congress must recognize that and provide opportunity for faith-based programs such as the Sojourner House, named after Sojourner Truth, right here in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

This is a program which helps mothers with drug and alcohol problems. A child can live in a loving environment while a mom works to break free from addiction. They help the people get on their feet. They help people see themselves as a worthy child of God. That may not sound like your average Government program. But we're no longer asking, "Is it a faith-based program?" We're asking, "Does it work?" The Sojourner House works, and this country of ours ought to support programs like the Sojourner House.

It's important for our Nation to recognize that too many young people are growing up without enough caring adults in their lives. Too many people wonder whether anybody loves them. We need more mentors, committed adults to serve as role models to help shepherd children through the early years of their life.

Congress—I called upon Congress to spend 450 million over 3 years to bring more mentors to more than a million disadvantaged children. We've got a goal, mentors for a million children—junior high children who are making life decisions, as well as the children of prisoners who face so many problems through no fault of their own, and they need somebody to surround them with some love.

Faith communities are a great source for mentors, and we must make sure that faith-based groups have a chance to participate in this program as well. More Americans volunteer through their houses of worship than any other organization, and Congress must recognize that. Our Government

should not fear faith; we ought to welcome it as an equal partner in helping people who need help.

Now, we believe in the value and possibility of every life. And we'll help those who need help here at home, and we must help those who need help abroad as well.

I have recently seen for myself the great possibilities of Africa and the great needs of Africa. That continent's economic future depends upon trade. We'll continue to help African countries become full partners in trade and prosperity. Many African people struggle with hunger. You need to know your Government and your country is the most generous country in the world for providing aid and help for those who are hungry.

America's progress—Africa's progress is threatened by terrorism and civil wars, and so we're working with African governments to rid that continent of regional conflict and terrorist violence.

They're suffering in Liberia today. I directed the Secretary of Defense to position appropriate military capabilities off the coast of Liberia in order to support the deployment of an ECOWAS force. We're committed to working with ECOWAS to create the conditions in which lives can be saved and aid can be delivered.

We're also helping Africa overcome one of the deadliest enemies it has ever faced, the spread of HIV/AIDS. Over the next 5 years, the United States has pledged \$15 billion to fight AIDS around the world, with special focus on nations in Africa and the Caribbean. We are working with governments and private groups and faith-based organizations to help with prevention and to provide much needed antiretroviral drugs for treatment. We are determined to turn the tide against AIDS in Africa.

Recently, on my trip to Africa, I visited Goree Island in Senegal, where for centuries men and women were delivered and sorted and branded and shipped. It's a haunting place, a reminder of mankind's capacity for cruelty and injustice.

Yet Goree Island is also a reminder of the strength of the human spirit and the capacity for good to overcome evil. The men and women who boarded slave ships on that island and wound up in America endured the separation of their families, the brutality of their oppressors, and the indifference of laws that regarded them only as articles of commerce. Still, the spirit of Africans in America did not break. All the generations of oppression under the laws of man could not crush the hope of freedom. And by a plan only known to providence, the stolen sons and daughters of Africa helped to awake the conscience of America. The very people traded into slavery helped to set America free.

The moral vision of African Americans and of groups like the Urban League caused Americans to examine our hearts, to correct our Constitution, and to teach our children the dignity and equality of every person of every race.

Our journey toward justice has not been easy, and it is not over. Yet I am confident that we will reach our destination. We have been called to great work in our time, and we will answer that call. We will defend our freedom, and we will lead the world toward peace. And we will unite America behind the great goals of opportunity for all and for compassion for those in need.

I want to thank each of you for serving this cause in your own lives. May God bless your work, may God bless the Urban League, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:17 a.m. at the David Lawrence Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., founder and president, Rainbow/PUSH Coalition; and Mayor James A. Garner of Hempstead, NY.

Statement on the International Initiative To Help Developing Countries Stop Illegal Logging *July 28, 2003*

Today my administration has announced a new international initiative to help developing countries stop illegal logging. Illegal logging destroys biodiversity and hundreds of thousands of acres of forest habitat annually. It releases millions of tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Last year, I directed Secretary Powell to develop a plan to address this serious issue. I thank him for his efforts in establishing this initiative. Working with the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and other na-

tions, the United States will help identify and reduce threats to protected forest areas and other high-value conservation forests. These efforts will serve as a foundation for future actions to eliminate illegal logging, corruption in the forest sector, and the sale—including for export—of illegally harvested timber products. They will also help us protect forests and the livelihoods that depend upon them.