

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.