

of our country. And at the beginnings of the 21st century, the wound is not fully healed and whole communities—[applause]. To heal this wound for good, we must continue to work for a new founding that redeems the promise of our Declaration and guarantees the birthright of every citizen.

For many African Americans this new founding began with the civil rights movement and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. A generation of Americans that has grown up in the last few decades may not appreciate what this act has meant. Condi Rice understands what this act has meant. See, she tells me of her father's long struggle to register to vote, and the pride that came when he finally claimed his full rights as an American citizen to cast his first ballot. She shared that story with me. Yet that right was not fully guaranteed until President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law. President Johnson called the right to vote the lifeblood of our democracy. That was true then, and it remains true today.

I thank the Members of the House of Representatives for reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act. Soon the Senate will take

up the legislation. I look forward to the Senate passing this bill promptly, without amendment, so I can sign it into law.

There's an old Methodist hymn that speaks of God guiding us with a hand of power and a heart of love. We cannot know God's plans, but we trust in his purposes, because we know that the Creator who wrote the desire for liberty in our hearts also gives us the strength and wisdom to fulfill it. And the God who has brought us thus far on the way will give us the strength to finish the journey.

Thank you for having me. May God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 a.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Bruce S. Gordon, president and chief executive officer, and Benjamin L. Hooks, former executive director, NAACP; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; civil rights activist Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., founder and president Rainbow/PUSH Coalition; and Donna Brazile, chair, Democratic National Committee's Voting Rights Institute.

## Statement on Legislation To Reauthorize the Voting Rights Act *July 20, 2006*

Last week, the House of Representatives passed legislation to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act. This morning, in celebration of the heroism of the civil rights movement, I spoke to members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People at their 97th annual convention, here in Washington, DC. At the NAACP convention, I said that I looked forward to the Senate promptly passing the House bill without amendment. Today the Senate acted and voted to reauthorize this historic legislation.

The Voting Rights Act is one of the most important pieces of legislation in our Nation's history. It has been vital to guaranteeing the right to vote for generations of Americans and has helped millions of our citizens enjoy the full promise of freedom.

I will be pleased to sign the Voting Rights Act into law, and I will continue to work with Congress to ensure that our country lives up to our guiding principle that all men and women are created equal.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 9.

Remarks Following Discussions With First Vice President of the  
Government of National Unity of Sudan and President of Southern Sudan  
Salva Kiir Mayardit

July 20, 2006

*President Bush.* It's been my honor to welcome a man who wears two hats to the Oval Office: Vice President of all Sudan, as well as the President of Southern Sudan. We've had a fascinating discussion. Welcome, Mr. Vice President, I'm glad you're here. Thank you for coming.

I assured our friend that the United States is committed to helping the Sudanese people; we're committed to making sure that the peace agreement that we helped you negotiate is implemented. We're also committed to helping the people in Darfur.

I want to thank you for spending time with me to strategize about what we can do to save lives in Darfur. Our strategy is that we want AU forces to be complemented and blue-helmeted; in other words, the United Nations should be invited in. We talked about how best to get that done in order to save lives. Obviously, there is still a lot of work to be done.

But I want to thank you for coming to our country and sharing with me some of your thoughts and your vision for the people you represent. So welcome to the Oval Office.

*First Vice President Kiir.* Thank you very much, Your Excellency, President. Well, we are delighted to be in this office at the invitation of His Excellency, the President of the United States of America. It is a

very rare opportunity for the people of southern Sudan, in particular, to come to this office and to voice our—their concerns about whatever is happening in our country.

It is true we have been working together during the negotiations with the people of the United States and the Government of the United States of America to bring peace to Sudan. And that peace has taken a toll of our people. This dream has been achieved, and we are now together in the implementation.

There are so many other crises in Sudan—that is the problem of Darfur—that people have been talking about. And we are sure that we are going to solve the problem so that we don't hear about rapes and killings in Darfur—and all other parts of our country, like the eastern Sudan. We are now also negotiating in that province so that peace is also achieved all over the Sudan.

So we thank the President for all the efforts that he has been exerting and the concerns that he has about the people of Sudan.

*President Bush.* Thank you, sir, appreciate you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.