

of Megumi Yokota, who was abducted by North Korean authorities; and Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for De-

mocracy in Burma. Prime Minister Fukuda spoke in Japanese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

## Remarks on National Adoption Day November 16, 2007

Thank you all. Nice line of work when you get introduced by your wife. *[Laughter]* Laura and I are sure glad you're here. We want to welcome Members of the Congress, Senators and Members of the House. Thank you all for coming. You're kind to take time to join our honored guests. We're really glad you're here in the White House. And we're pleased to join you on National Adoption Day. We offer a special welcome to the youngsters who have joined us. We're glad you all are here. You've just got to know this is the people's house. And I know you took time off from school to be here today. *[Laughter]* And I thank you for making such a difficult sacrifice. *[Laughter]*

I thank the members of the National Adoption Day coalition who have joined us. Few missions in life are more rewarding than uniting loving children with moms and dads for the very first time. Each of you has known this blessing. That's got to make you feel good in your soul. You've shared it with others, and in so doing, you've strengthened what is the very foundation of our country, and that is the American family. I want to thank you for being part of something that is so remarkable and so special.

It is fitting that we celebrate this day in a room honoring George Washington, or as some like to say, the original George W. *[Laughter]* There he is. He raised four children who were not his by birth. He cared for them, provided for them, and he offered them advice, even when they didn't want it. *[Laughter]* When one of his boys went off to college, Washington did what

many parents do—he checked up on him. And in 1798, he sent the young man a letter. It said, "I have, with much surprise, been informed of your devoting much time to a certain young lady." And he went on to advise that "your application to books is not [what] it ought to be." Well, some parents here today may be able to relate to this. It's probably hard to believe, but there was even a time when my dad—*[laughter]*—felt compelled to write such a letter. *[Laughter]*

Since Washington's time, this house has known many leaders who understood that not every family is defined by biology. A true family is defined by love. Around the corner, for example, is a portrait of a proud adopted son named Gerald R. Ford. A few steps away is the portrait of a proud adoptive father named Ronald Reagan. Close by is a proud grandfather of two adopted grandchildren, George H.W. Bush. And here in this room are children who have strengthened families and enriched communities and warmed hearts. You are the living reminders that adoptions are stories of celebration, stories of hope, and stories of love.

National Adoption Day also reminds us that not every child finds this happy ending. Each year, more than 100,000 foster children await adoption, and too many children will not find a permanent home. And so on this National Adoption Day, we remind our fellow citizens there's still plenty of acts of love to be done. Many people have worked with courts and foster homes and social workers to change that, and our Government has tried to help. And that's

why I'm so proud Members of Congress are here.

We have joined with community- and faith-based organizations to raise public awareness of foster children awaiting adoption. And we've worked with the Congress to assist families to overcome financial barriers to adopting children. Nothing is more vital to this country's future than helping young people find the love, stability, and support from families.

There's a man here—I told him—I warned him I was going to talk about him—and that's a fellow named Tom Wollack. I want my fellow citizens who may be listening to hear this story. Tom has much to be proud of. He served our country in Vietnam; he's a New York City firefighter. By the way, nothing finer than being a New York City firefighter. He rushed to the scene of the World Trade Center on September the 11th, 2001. While others were leaving, he's a bunch of them that went in.

Yet at the top of his list of achievements are his seven children. Three were foster children that Tom later adopted. They're here—two college and one soon-to-be college attendee. They were born to parents struggling with drug addiction. Today, they are deeply loved members of the Wollack family. He calls his family his foundation, and that foundation is here today, right here in the White House. We want to thank you for coming. I thank you for being a loving soul and truing our—showing our Nation the true meaning of family. Thank you, Tom.

Each of the families here has shown the world the depth and wonder of the human heart. And because of people like you, this Thanksgiving holiday will be particularly special for thousands of families in thousands of homes. Many children will be giving thanks for being part of a family they never thought they would have. Many parents will look across the table at children who once were strangers and who are now priceless treasures in their lives.

To the parents here today, please know how grateful we are that you have taken children in need of a hopeful start in life and made them your own. And to the young people here today, always remember that you are special not only because of what your parents have given you but because of the love and joy you have given them. So thankful that the parents and children here today have found the gift of one another. And I encourage our citizens across the land to explore adoption, look into the joys of adoption, and provide love for somebody who needs it.

I want to thank you all for coming. May God bless you and your families. May God bless our country. And now I'd ask the talented Rodney Atkins to come up here and perform some songs for us to celebrate this special day. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady. The National Adoption Day proclamation of October 31 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## **The President's Radio Address** *November 17, 2007*

Good morning. In a few days, our Nation will celebrate Thanksgiving. Like millions of Americans, Members of Congress will

travel home for the holiday. Unfortunately, as they get to work carving their turkeys, they're leaving a lot of unfinished work