

Statement on the Death of David S. Broder

March 9, 2011

Like so many here in Washington and across the country, Michelle and I were deeply saddened to hear about the passing of a true giant of journalism, David Broder. David filed his first story from our Nation's Capital before starting as a junior political writer on the 1960 Presidential election. In the decades that followed, he built a well-deserved reputation as the most respected and incisive po-

litical commentator of his generation, winning a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of Watergate and earning the affectionate title of "Dean" of the Washington press corps. Through all his success, David remained an eminently kind and gracious person, and someone we will dearly miss. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends in this difficult time.

Statement on the Situation in Cote d'Ivoire

March 9, 2011

I strongly condemn the abhorrent violence against unarmed civilians in Cote d'Ivoire. I am particularly appalled by the indiscriminate killing of unarmed civilians during peaceful rallies, many of them women, including those who were gunned down as they marched in support of the legitimately elected President Alassane Ouattara. Reports indicate that the women were shot to death by security forces loyal to former President Laurent Gbagbo. On March 8, the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day, we saw pictures of women peacefully rallying with signs that said, "Don't Shoot Us," a strong testament to the bravery of women exercising their right of peaceful assembly.

The United States remains deeply concerned about escalating violence, including the deepening humanitarian and economic crisis and its impact in Cote d'Ivoire and neighboring countries. All armed parties in Cote d'Ivoire must make every effort to protect ci-

vilians from being targeted, harmed, or killed. The United States reiterates its commitment to work with the international community to ensure that perpetrators of such atrocities be identified and held individually accountable for their actions.

As we have said since the election results in Cote d'Ivoire were certified, the people of Cote d'Ivoire elected Alassane Ouattara as their President, and Laurent Gbagbo lost the election. Former President Gbagbo's efforts to hold on to power at the expense of his own country are an assault on the universal rights of his people and the democracy that the Cote d'Ivoire deserves. The people of Cote d'Ivoire have extraordinary talent and potential, and they deserve leadership that is responsive to their hopes and aspirations. It is time for former President Gbagbo to heed the will of his people and to complete a peaceful transition of power to President Ouattara.

Remarks at the White House Conference on Bullying Prevention

March 10, 2011

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Well, welcome to the White House. I want to thank Michelle for her introduction and for marrying me—[laughter]—and for putting up with me.

I want to reiterate what Michelle said: Preventing bullying isn't just important to us as

President and First Lady, it's important for us as parents. It's something we care deeply about.

We're joined here by several Members of Congress who've shown real leadership in taking up this cause. We've got a number of

members of my administration with us today who are going to help us head up the efforts that come out of the White House on this issue. And I want to point out Judge Catherine O'Malley, the First Lady of Maryland. She is right here. Catherine, thank you for being here. Thank you all for being here. You have a chance to make an enormous difference, and you already have.

Now, bullying isn't a problem that makes headlines every day. But every day it touches the lives of young people all across this country. I want to thank all of you for participating in this conference. But more importantly, I want to thank you for being part of what's a growing movement—led by young people themselves—to put a stop to bullying, whether it takes place in school or it's taking place online.

And that's why we're here today. If there's one goal of this conference, it's to dispel the myth that bullying is just a harmless rite of passage or an inevitable part of growing up. It's not. Bullying can have destructive consequences for our young people, and it's not something we have to accept. As parents and students, as teachers and members of the community, we can take steps—all of us—to help prevent bullying and create a climate in our schools in which all of our children can feel safe, a climate in which they all can feel like they belong.

As adults, we all remember what it was like to see kids picked on in the hallways or in the schoolyard. And I have to say, with big ears and the name that I have, I wasn't immune. [Laughter] I didn't emerge unscathed. But because it's something that happens a lot and it's something that's always been around, sometimes we've turned our blind eye to the problem. We've said, "Kids will be kids." And so sometimes, we overlook the real damage that bullying can do, especially when young people face harassment day after day, week after week.

So consider these statistics: A third of middle school and high school students have reported being bullied during the school year; almost 3 million students have said they were pushed, shoved, tripped, even spit on. It's also more likely to affect kids that are seen as dif-

ferent, whether it's because of the color of their skin, the clothes they wear, the disability they may have, or sexual orientation.

And bullying has been shown to lead to absences and poor performance in the classroom. And that alone should give us pause, since no child should be afraid to go to school in this country.

Today, bullying doesn't even end at the school bell. It can follow our children from the hallways to their cell phones to their computer screens. And in recent months, a series of tragedies has drawn attention to just how devastating bullying can be. We have just been heartbroken by the stories of young people who endured harassment and ridicule day after day at school and who ultimately took their own lives. These were kids brimming with promise—kids like Ty Field, kids like Carl Walker-Hoover—who should have felt nothing but excitement for the future. Instead, they felt like they had nowhere to turn, as if they had no escape from taunting and bullying that made school something they feared. I want to recognize Ty's mom and dad, who are here today, Carl's mother and sister, who are here today. They've shown incredible courage as advocates against bullying in memory of the sons and the brother that they've lost. And so we're so proud of them, and we're grateful to them for being here today.

No family should have to go through what these families have gone through. No child should feel that alone. We've got to make sure our young people know that if they're in trouble, there are caring adults who can help and young adults that can help, that even if they're having a tough time, they're going to get through it, and there's a whole world full of possibility waiting for them. We also have to make sure we're doing everything we can so that no child is in that position in the first place. And this is a responsibility we all share, a responsibility we have to teach all children the Golden Rule: We should treat others the way we want to be treated.

The good news is, people are stepping up and accepting responsibility. They're refusing to turn a blind eye to this problem. The PTA is launching a new campaign to get resources and

information into the hands of parents. MTV is leading a new coalition to fight bullying online, and they're launching a series of ads to talk about the damage that's done when kids are bullied for the color of their skin or their religion or being gay or just being who they are. Others are leading their own efforts here today. And across the country, parents and students and teachers at the local level are talking—taking action as well. They're fighting not only to change rules and policies, but also to create a stronger sense of community and respect in their schools.

Joining this conference today is a young man I just had a chance to meet, Brandon Greene from Rhode Island. Brandon's 14 years old. Back in sixth grade, when he was just a kid, he did a class project on bullying. Now, 2 years later, it's a school-wide organization with 80 members. They do monthly surveys in their school to track bullying rates. And what they realized is that stopping bullying isn't just about preventing bad behavior, it's also about working together and creating a positive atmosphere. So Brandon and his fellow committee members are now also doing activities like coat drives and community service at their school. And it's making a real difference. So we're very proud of Brandon and the great work he's doing.

There are stories like this all across the country, where young people and their schools have refused to accept the status quo. And I want you all to know that you have a partner in the White House. As the former head of Chicago's public schools, nobody understands this issue better than my Education Secretary, Arne Duncan. He's going to be working on it, along with our Health Secretary, Kathleen Sebelius. Arne's going to head up our administration's efforts, which began last year with a first-of-its-kind summit on bullying.

And we're also launching a new resource called stopbullying.gov, which has more information for parents and for teachers. And as part of our education reform efforts, we're encouraging schools to ask students themselves about school safety and how we can address bullying and other related problems, because as every parent knows, sometimes the best way

to find out what's happening with our kids is to ask, even if you have to—if it's in the case of Sasha, you have to keep on asking. [*Laughter*]

Now, as adults, we can lose sight of how hard it can be sometimes to be a kid. And it's easy for us to forget what it was like to be teased or bullied. But it's also easy to forget the natural compassion and the sense of decency that our children display each and every day, when they're given a chance.

A couple other young people that I just had a chance to meet, Sarah and Emily Buder, who are here from California, they're right here next to the First Lady. And Sarah and Emily, they read a story about a girl named Olivia in a nearby town—this is a girl they didn't know—who had faced a lot of cruel taunting in school and online because she had had an epileptic seizure in class. So they decided to write Olivia a letter and asked their friends to do the same.

They figured they'd send Olivia about 50 letters. But in the months that followed, thousands and thousands of letters poured in from every corner of the country. It really tapped in to something. A lot of the letters were from young people, and they wanted to wish Olivia well and let her know that somebody out there was talking—was thinking about her and let her know that she wasn't alone. And because those children treated Olivia with that small measure of kindness, it helped Olivia see that there was a light at the end of the tunnel.

The fact is, sometimes, kids are going to make mistakes; sometimes, they're going to make bad decisions. That's part of growing up. But it's our job to be there for them, to guide them, and to ensure that they can grow up in an environment that not only encourages their talents and intelligence, but also their sense of empathy and their regard for one another.

And that's what ultimately this conference is all about. And that's why all the issues that we're talking about really matter. And that's how we're going to prevent bullying and create an environment where every single one of our children can thrive.

So thank you for the good work that you're already doing, and I'm sure you're going to come

up with some terrific ideas during the course of this conference. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Kirk and Laura Smalley,

parents of Richard “Ty” Field Smalley; Sird-eaner L. Walker, mother of Carl J. Walker-Hoover; and Novato, CA, resident Olivia Gardner. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

The President’s News Conference March 11, 2011

The President. Good morning, everybody. Before I begin, I want to say a few words about the terrible earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan earlier today.

First and foremost, our thoughts and our prayers are with the people of Japan. This is a potentially catastrophic disaster and the images of destruction and flooding coming out of Japan are simply heartbreaking. Japan is, of course, one of our strongest and closest allies, and this morning I spoke with Prime Minister Kan. On behalf of the American people, I conveyed our deepest condolences, especially to the victims and their families, and I offered our Japanese friends whatever assistance is needed.

We currently have an aircraft carrier in Japan, and another is on its way. We also have a ship en route to the Marianas Islands to assist as needed. The Defense Department is working to account for all our military personnel in Japan. U.S. Embassy personnel in Tokyo have moved to an offsite location. And the State Department is working to account for and assist any and all American citizens who are in the country.

Tsunami warnings have been issued across the Pacific, and we’ve already seen initial waves from the tsunami come ashore on Guam and other U.S. Territories, in Alaska and Hawaii, as well as on—along the West Coast. Here in the United States, there hasn’t been any major damage so far. But we’re taking this very seriously, and we are monitoring the situation very closely. FEMA is fully activated and is coordinating with State and local officials to support these regions as necessary. And let me just stress that if people are told to evacuate, do as you are told.

Today’s events remind us of just how fragile life can be. Our hearts go out to our friends in Japan and across the region, and we’re going to stand with them as they recover and rebuild from this tragedy.

Now, before I take a few questions, let me say a few words about something that’s obviously been on the minds of many Americans here at home, and that’s the price of gasoline.

In an economy that relies on oil, gas prices affect everybody, from farmers and truck drivers to restaurant owners and workers, as well as consumers. Businesses see rising prices affect their bottom line. Families feel the pinch every time they fill up the tank. For Americans already facing tough times, it’s an added burden.

Of course, rising prices are not a new phenomenon. Three years ago, before the recession hit, a combination of factors, including rising demand from emerging economies like China, drove gas prices to more than \$4 a gallon. The worldwide recession and the decrease in demand pushed prices back down. But over the past year, as the economy has picked up steam and global demand for oil has increased, prices have increased again. Turmoil in North Africa and the Middle East has added uncertainty to the mix, and lost production in Libya has tightened supply.

Now, here’s the good news. The global community can manage supply disruptions like this. Other oil-producing nations have committed to filling any gaps, and we will continue to coordinate closely with our international partners to keep all options on the table when it comes to any supply disruptions.

Here at home, everybody should know that should the situation demand it, we are prepared to tap the significant stockpile of oil that