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are going around acting on their impulses in the moment.

And the law can still be your friend if you're willing to work and have discipline and take time with it. Nobody gets everything they want just when they want it. You have to pay the price of time and be willing to take the kind of disciplined risks that Ernie Green did. And that, I think, is one of the things we really have got to somehow hammer home to everybody in your generation.

You've been great. The teacher's telling me it's time to stop. The principal is. Thank you all very much. You were terrific. Thank you, gentlemen.

[*At this point, the President was presented with several gifts.*]

The President. The great thing about the United States, the great thing about the United States is that all the history of our country lives in the present and helps to pave the way for the future.

I had Senator Byrd in my office last night, who is the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. They have to approve all the money that gets spent, like if we send any money to your school, it comes through that committee. And he had just finished reading "The Federalist Papers" written by Madison and Hamilton, just read them all again, because he said they have relevance to today.

Brown is important today. It's living in your life today. And what you have to do is to make the most of this experience and make the most of your own life, so that 40 years from now young people will be sitting in this school and other schools around the country, and they will be living the accumulated history of America.

That's the only way this works. That's the brilliant thing about our country. That's why we wanted to come here and talk about it, because we know the spirit and the meaning of that decision is alive in your lives today. And as long as you believe that and you do your part, then this country is going to be around a long, long time.

Thank you.

NOTE: The question-and-answer session began at 11:35 a.m. at Martin Luther King, Jr., Middle School. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on the 40th Anniversary of *Brown* v. *Board of Education* in Beltsville

May 17, 1994

Thank you. Thank you very much. My good friend Ernie Green; Secretary Riley; Attorney General Reno; your principal, Bette Lewis. I'd also like to recognize in the audience today two of my partners in trying to make America a better place, two of your distinguished Representatives in Congress, Senator Paul Sarbanes and Congressman Steny Hoyer. Thank you for being here.

I have a number of people here who work in the White House, but I want to recognize one in particular. We just finished teaching a class here on *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. I was joined in that class by Secretary Riley, who as a young man was involved along with his father with the integration of public schools in South Carolina; and with Ernest Green, whose background you know; also with Thurgood Marshall, Jr., now a member of the Vice President's staff in the White House, whose father argued the *Brown* v. *Board of Education* case before the Supreme Court and later became the first African-American ever to sit on the United States Supreme Court. Thurgood Marshall, Jr., I'd like him to stand up and be recognized.

I'd like to thank Robin Wiltison and the students who were in her class today. They certainly showed us why Martin Luther King Middle School is a blue-ribbon school. I was deeply impressed with the students. And they asked good questions, and they were very well-informed. And I think it's fair to say that those of us who came here to participate may have enjoyed the class even more than they did.

We are here today because, as all of you know by now, 40 years ago on this day the United States Supreme Court handed down the decision called *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. The Supreme Court has been in the news a lot lately because I've just announced the appointment of a distinguished judge, Judge Stephen Breyer, from Boston, to be the new Justice to the Supreme Court to fill

the vacancy created by the resignation of Justice Blackmun.

Many Americans don't think about the Supreme Court very much and only hear about it when it issues a great decision. I can tell you that every American thought about the Supreme Court when *Brown* v. *Board of Education* was decided. Forty years ago, in some parts of this great country, African-Americans couldn't vote, couldn't be served in certain restaurants or stay in certain hotels, couldn't even get medical care in certain hospitals. Before a brave woman named Rosa Parks refused to budge off a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, and a brave minister named Martin Luther King helped her fight back, African-Americans were told they had to sit in the back of the bus and give up their seats to white people. They were told many other things that deprived them of the freedom today we all take for granted.

Forty years ago, a school like this one, with white and Hispanic and African-American and Asian-American students, a real kaleidoscope of America's great diversity, it was unthinkable, it wouldn't even have existed in major parts of the United States. The decision in *Brown* v. *Board of Education* helped to change all that.

We have to remember two things about this: First of all, the change didn't happen overnight. And secondly, the people who helped to bring that change didn't wait around for anybody to do the hard work for them; they did it for themselves. They knew that the future is not something you inherit; it's something you have to earn by your own efforts.

When I say it didn't happen overnight, let me explain exactly what I mean. We talked about this somewhat in the class today. The Supreme Court can hand down a decision and say schools that are separated solely on the basis of the race of the students are unconstitutional; stop it. Then millions of people had to figure out, well, what does that mean? Where do the teachers go? Where do the students go? Whose schoolbooks do you use? What do you do? What are the mechanics of integrating the schools? But then there was another *Brown* decision in which people said, ''How fast do we have to do this?'' And the Supreme Court said, ''With all deliberate speed.'' And in every school district in the country where they were working it out, somebody had to say, ''What does 'all deliberate speed' mean?'' There were still millions of Americans who were against it. They thought ''all deliberate speed'' meant several years. Then the millions who were for it thought ''all deliberate speed'' means tomorrow.

So these things took a long time. It took, at least, I'd say, 15 years after the *Brown* decision before the public schools in this country were basically integrated through the system. It did not happen overnight. There were a lot of people who had to keep working. And that's an important lesson for you today: Nothing worth doing happens immediately. You have to make efforts that take time.

Brown laid a foundation—you heard Ernest Green talking about the connection between the *Brown* case and the ultimate liberation and reconciliation of South Africa. We had a Civil Rights Act in 1964. We had a Voting Rights Act in 1965. The struggles for freedom in this country were seen as a symbol of what could be done by people all over the world. There are always going to be people who fight for these kinds of changes and, frankly, always going to be people who resist them. The *Brown* decision gave courage to people like Ernest Green. It also gave moral backbone to our Nation's leaders. When Ernest Green—for those of you who have seen the movie about his life story, you know that when he attempted to integrate Little Rock Central High School just a few years after *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, the Governor of my State then tried to stop him by calling out the National Guard, on the theory that people were too upset about it. But the President, under the authority of the Supreme Court decision, instead turned the National Guard into a United States force and enforced the integration order.

That's the kind of thing that a Supreme Court decision can do if there are people like Ernest Green who are willing to pay the price to carry out the promise of equality and opportunity in America, even if it takes years to do. Thurgood Marshall, the man who brought the *Brown* v. *Board of Education*

case to the Supreme Court and who later served on the Supreme Court, literally spent his life fighting for these principles and these opportunities.

Now, I say this to make the second point. There have been a lot of—you may see this if you watch these sort of things on the evening news, you'll see a lot of people your parents' and grandparents' age talking, or even younger than that, talking in very cynical terms saying, ''Well, this is still a society with a lot of segregation,'' or ''Well, this is still a society with a lot of racial discrimination,'' or ''Well, this is still a society where racial minorities don't have the same economic opportunities others do,'' or ''Well, we're still more violent than we were 40 years ago.'' And all those people will be saying that sort of as an excuse. They'll be saying, ''Therefore, maybe this decision didn't count for so much.'' Well, I want to tell you that's flat wrong. This is a much better country today because of *Brown* v. *Board of Education* and because there were people who came before all of you who were literally willing to put their lives on the line to see you got an equal education, to see that you had a chance to make something of your lives. The world and this country are markedly better because of this decision and these principles. It is better today. And just because not all the problems of this country have been solved, that's no excuse for people to say that this *Brown* v. *Board of Education* decision didn't make a huge difference.

You heard the Attorney General and the students in the class heard the Secretary of Education and me say all three of us grew up in the South in segregated societies. And we suffered, too. We were deprived of the right to play and go places with and know and live with people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. And we paid a terrible price for it. And when it began to go away, our lives were also very, very much enriched. I do not believe I would be here as President today if it hadn't been for *Brown* v. *Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act that gave all the people of my State a chance to come together as one people.

What I do want to say to you today is that this generation faces a whole lot of challenges that are part of the unfinished business of helping us to live together as one people. And we need some more miracles like *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. And they have to begin, however, the same way *Brown* did, by individual Americans making choices.

You look at what the problems are today. Is there still racism in America today? Of course there is. Is there too much violence today, especially among young people? Of course. Are there still too many people who don't think they're going to get a fair shake in life and don't think they have much of a future to look forward to? Of course there are. So what are you going to do about it? And what am I going to do about it?

What we should say is we are going to build on the things which have gone before that are good. You have to make choices. If you look at what's wrong with our country today—too much violence, too many guns in the hands of young people that are too willing to use them, too many people victimized by the breakdown of family life and community life, too many people victimized by the fact that they don't have a good job or a good education, too many young people who are willing to make decisions in the flash of a moment that may ruin their entire lives, too many schools that still don't work as well as this one does—it all begins with personal choices. I ran for President because I made a personal choice that I did not want my daughter to grow up in a country that was coming apart instead of coming together, and I didn't want you to be the first generation of Americans to do worse than your parents, and I thought there were things we could do about it. And we're working hard to do those things, to create more jobs, to improve our schools, to deal with our health care problems, to make our streets safer and our schools safer and take on some of these tough law enforcement issues that relate to crime and drugs.

The Congress voted last week to ban assault weapons. It's high time to put more police officers on the street, to give young people more programs that will help to prevent them from getting involved in a violent life. We have made some personal decisions. But you have to make some personal decisions, too. The magic of education starts in every

school, in every classroom. You have to decide that you will not drop out of school and that you will stay in and that you will do well. You have to decide that you will not use alcohol or drugs or take up guns. You have to decide that you will not become a mother or a father before you're old enough to understand and take responsibility and do the job right, instead of wrecking your life with it. You have to decide that you are going to have the discipline and commitment necessary to continue your education and to tone down the frustration and anger that every person feels.

A lot of these kids getting killed today are getting killed with the same sort of anger and frustration that people have always felt when they were fighting over things, except now they can go pick up a gun and do something about it. You have to take the lead, every one of you, in dealing with your own lives and your own schools to try to stop this. This is crazy, all this violence among young people. And a lot of these kids that are killing their lives by shooting other people are people who don't even have prior criminal records. You've got to get together and talk about what makes people mad, and what do you do when you get mad and when you get frustrated, and how do you walk away from that. And that's something that the President and the Congress and all the people in the world can't do for you if you won't do for yourselves.

We are very fortunate in this country today that 40 years ago the people did what was necessary to bring that case to the Supreme Court and that every Justice on the Supreme Court said separate but unequal educational facilities are wrong. And if they are separated by race by law, they are by definition unequal, and they are unconstitutional. We are all a better people because of that. And you all wouldn't be here together, doing what you're doing in this school today, if that hadn't happened.

But what you have to do now is to say, "That didn't solve all the problems, but it got me to the starting line. It gave me a chance to live in an America that was more honest in living up to its creed that we are all equal under God. And now I have a chance, and I'm going to make the most of it." The whole future of America is riding on whether we can have young people who are well-educated, well-disciplined, hopeful about the future, and more interested in helping each other than hurting each other, more interested in books than guns, more interested in 5 years from now than 5 seconds from now. You have to do that. Your country is counting on you.

I will do everything I can as President. And all these people will do everything they can to make sure that you have a good country to grow up in, that you can succeed, that you can have a good life. But a lot of it is in your hands. I urge you, on this 40th anniversary of one of the greatest decisions for freedom ever made, to stand up for your own freedom and make the most of it.

God bless you, and good luck. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:45 p.m. at Martin Luther King, Jr., Middle School.

Statement on the Report of the Federal Interagency Council on the Homeless

May 17, 1994

Last year, I directed the Federal Interagency Council on the Homeless to forge a single, coordinated plan to break the cycle of homelessness and prevent future homelessness.

Today, the Interagency Council released their report, which recognizes the magnitude of the problem of homelessness for the first time and proposes a comprehensive, innovative approach, the continuum of care, to move millions of Americans off our streets and back into our communities and our families. The 17 member agency, under the leadership of the Secretaries of HUD, HHS, and VA, and with the unprecedented consultation of thousands of people across the country, deserves credit for a thorough and honest examination of this complex problem.

"Priority Home: The Federal Plan to Break the Cycle of Homelessness" is part of a larger strategy of health care reform and welfare reform which will give every American the opportunity to break the cycle of dependence, become self-sufficient, and