

character: hard work, commitment, leadership, faith in yourself, and service to others. You represent the best of your generation, and I'm confident you'll do great things for our great Nation.

You've earned your place here today, but you did not do it alone. First, we want to thank the parents and family members who worked side by side with you. I want to thank you for your commitment to your kids and to their excellence.

And I want to thank the teachers who join us here today. A good teacher is a model and a mentor, a source of praise and a source of challenge. A good teacher can change a life. A generation of good teachers can change a nation. Our Nation deeply respects your important work, and thank you for being here.

You all have come to Washington in an historic time: The Congress is about to pass the most important education reform in nearly 40 years. Every school, with students of every income, will be expected to meet high standards of learning and literacy. Every school will get the flexibility and help it needs to meet those standards. And every student will be tested to make sure those standards are actually achieved.

The longer it takes Congress to pass these important reforms, the less time State policymakers, school boards, principals, and teachers will have to act on them. I urge the Congress to act now, before it is too late.

Thirty-seven years ago, when President Johnson honored the first Presidential Scholars, Congress was debating the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964. Now, as you receive your awards, Congress is debating the next frontier of civil rights: solid education—because I believe the better we educate all our children the more united our society will be, the more equal we'll become in hope and opportunity and in achievement.

Excellence in education is a matter of standards and talent, and it is also a matter of character. We all need high ambitions. But it is strong values that give dignity and direction to our lives. And here, as in other areas, the young folks in this room excel.

Marco Ramirez of Florida—say hello to the Governor for me—[laughter]—is being honored for his talents as a playwright. Yet,

Marco also found a way to translate his love of theater into service. He gave a Halloween party for 200 children in a crime-ridden neighborhood, allowing them to enjoy the holiday in the safety of a school.

Or another honoree, Dean Spears of Oklahoma, shared his love of learning with residents of a local nursing home, out of concern that they did not have enough ways to exercise their minds. After securing a space at the nursing home for a library, Dean advertised his project to the community. The library now has over 1,600 books, each labeled and catalogued by Dean, himself.

Our society needs your contributions. During my lifetime I've seen the culture change from one that emphasized the difference between right and wrong to one that says, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you have a problem, blame somebody else." But I believe culture can change, and it changes as a result of leadership. And the young folks on this stage today are leaders by, first and foremost, taking responsibility of their own lives and listening to that universal call to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves.

Sometimes it's said that this generation is self-absorbed and apathetic. Your achievements and good works and generous spirit, especially at such a young age, make your friends and family proud. I want to thank you for your contribution you make to our Nation today and urge you on, because the contributions you'll make tomorrow will be just as important.

Welcome to Washington. Congratulations, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:33 p.m. at Constitution Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Bruno V. Manno, chairman, White House Commission on Presidential Scholars, and Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida.

Remarks Honoring the 2001 NCAA Women's Hockey Champion University of Minnesota Duluth Bulldogs

June 25, 2001

Please be seated. Well, thank you very much. Welcome to the White House.

Kathryn, thank you for coming and bringing this group of champs with you. It's good to welcome the coach, the captain of the team, who I understand is the only senior on the team. I'd hate to be the opposition for the University of Minnesota Duluth next year. [Laughter]

It is my honor to welcome to the White House the Senators from the State of Minnesota: Senator Wellstone, welcome; and Senator Mark Dayton—many of you don't know this, that he was a fine goalie when he played at Yale University. I know because I witnessed him in the nets. However, having seen some of the replays of the champions' games, Mark, I'm afraid you couldn't have stopped many of the shots coming from these champs. [Laughter]

It's good to have the Members of the United States Congress here, too: Jim Oberstar, thank you for coming; and Jim Ramstad, thank you, sir. I appreciate you all being here.

It is my honor to welcome the first-ever team from the University of Minnesota Duluth to the White House. The mighty Bulldogs accomplished an extraordinary feat by winning the first NCAA women hockey championship in only the second season of their existence. That's pretty darn good.

What makes this team special is its international character. Players from Europe, Canada, and the United States all worked together to become champs. As Coach Miller said, it took a perfect mix of players from all over to win the title. But I know something about sports; it also takes a great coach to win a title, too, and this team has got an extraordinary coach. She's had great success with the Canadian national team, before our great Nation borrowed her to lead the Bulldogs. [Laughter] Her name is associated with a spectacular rise in women's hockey. And she served as a role model for all the champs.

Coach Miller, congratulations.

I want to thank some of the girls from the Washington, DC, area who are here, as well. I see members of the Best Friends, Brownies, and Girl Scouts. Thank you for coming. It reminds me of what a true champ is. A champ is somebody who wins not only in the ice but who, when off the ice, sets a good example for youngsters to follow. What

champs do is, they set high standards, and they work hard, and they make the right choices to achieve those standards and goals. And that's exactly what the University of Minnesota Duluth did. You set the highest of standards.

I know you worked hard. I bet you made sure they worked hard. [Laughter] Your team made the right choices off the ice, and that's why they're champs. And so I want to congratulate you all for setting the right example.

For those of you who aren't from the United States, hang around; it's a pretty special place. [Laughter] But we welcome you here. We welcome you to the greatest house in our country, the people's house, and congratulate you from the bottom of our hearts.

Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:45 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Kathryn A. Martin, chancellor, Shannon Miller, women's hockey coach, and Brittney Ralph, women's hockey team captain, University of Minnesota Duluth.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and an Exchange With Reporters

June 26, 2001

President Bush. It is my honor to welcome the President, Mbeki, to the Oval Office. It's good to see you again, sir. The last time we visited was in the Governor's Mansion in Texas. We had a great discussion about our country's relations. I look forward to furthering that discussion.

We have a lot of interests that—to discuss. We have the interest of trade and prosperity. My administration has made a commitment to work with leaders like President Mbeki on the continent of Africa to provide hope for people. And we look forward to a great relationship with you, sir. You've provided imaginative, real leadership that a lot of people in this Nation admire, and our relationship is only going to grow stronger as a result of your visit here.

So we welcome you to the United States. We welcome the dialog we'll have here in