

2006-0502-F

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**Clinton Presidential Records  
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Capps, Laura

Boys Nation

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

July 18, 1996

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
AT CEREMONY FOR BOYS AND GIRLS NATION

The East Room

1:33 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very, very much. I want to welcome all of you here. And before I begin the program let me say I'm sorry I'm little late today, but we have been working, as I'm sure you understand, all day long on the plane crash last night. I want to talk to you about your future, but before I do I'd like to say just a word about the people that were on that plane.

I'm determined that we will find out what happened, but I want to urge all the American people not to jump to any unwarranted conclusions about the tragedy. We should focus today, our thoughts and our prayers, on the families of the victims of that terrible, terrible tragedy last night. And you should know that everybody in our country that we believe can make a contribution to finding out what happened is on the job, working overtime.

I want you to know if you if you haven't heard that there were 16 high school students from Pennsylvania on that flight. Any tragedy like this is made deeper if young people's lives are lost, people who haven't yet had their chance to live up to their God-given promise. These young people were from the Montoursville High School French Club in Pennsylvania. They were young, committed, filled with excitement about the prospect of visiting France. Our country will be poorer for their absence. And the rest of you will have to work a little harder to live up to your promise and to theirs, as well.

The Mayor of that small community was just on television, and I had a visit with him a few moments ago. And he said, you know, this is a big hurt that's going to last a while. I'm sure that's true. So I'd like to ask you before we begin the formal program today to join me in a moment of silent prayer for those students, for the other victims and for their families. (A moment of silence is observed.) Amen.

I would like to welcome our leaders here from the American Legion -- Joe Caouette, Lawrence Sperry, Judge Pete Johnson, a member of my Boys Nation class back in the Dark Ages.

and maybe even kill each other because of their racial, ethnic or religious differences. That is at the heart of what is going on in the Middle East. That is at the heart of what is going on in Northern Ireland. That is at the heart of what is going on in Bosnia.

We have the most vigorous, vibrant, multiethnic democracy in human history, but that is at the heart of what is going on in these church burnings and that is at the heart of what led some mean-spirited people to paint swastikas on the doors of African American Special Forces personnel at Ft. Bragg in the last couple of days. The most patriotic members of a minority you could imagine still being subject to that.

Why is that? Because all throughout human history you see people being told that they should evaluate themselves not based on who they are, what they stand for and what their values are, what's in the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, but on who they're not, what color they're not, what religion they aren't.

So you have to fight all that. Your generation will have more opportunities than any generation in human history. You will have more chances to live out your dreams in more different ways than any group of people who have ever lived. We have a chance to extend opportunities to people who would have automatically been left in the backwater of history without a second thought, just a few decades ago, because of their gender or their race or because of their disabilities. Things that now we wouldn't think of doing used to be the ordinary run-of-the-mill thing just a few decades ago.

So, on balance, as I look to the 21st century, I think this is going to be a great time for you. It is going to be a great time for America if we meet our challenges and protect our basic values. No country in history has ever lasted so long as a free country, a free people, with so many different kinds of people in it. And the world is coming our way. But there are still these dark forces of destruction that we have to stand against. And you have to speak against it when you see it in a big horrible way, in a manifestation of terrorism. But you also have to stand and speak against it when you see it in subtle ways -- in your neighborhoods, on your street, in your schools. We've got to be able to treat each other with respect based on our shared values, not our essentially superficial differences.

Very interesting, don't you think, that this movie, Independence Day, is becoming the most successful movie ever? Some say it's because they blew up the White House and the Congress -- (laughter) -- and that may be. But, you know, you see story after story after story about how the movie audiences leap up and cheer at the end of the movie when we vanquish the alien invaders, right? I mean, what happened? The country was flat on its back, the rest of the world was threatened, and you see all over the world all these people have all of a sudden put aside the differences that seem so trivial once their existence was threatened, and they're working together all over the world to defeat a common adversary.

Why can't we work together to achieve common dreams? What is it about people that they

### **Lincoln quotes on service / national unity**

I hold that while man exists it is his duty to improve not only his own condition, but to assist in ameliorating mankind. ... I am for those means which will give the greatest good to the greatest number.

-Abraham Lincoln  
Address in Cincinnati, OH  
February 12, 1861

Let us at all times remember that all American citizens are brothers of a common country, and should dwell together in the bonds of fraternal feeling.

-Abraham Lincoln  
Address in Springfield, IL  
November 20, 1860

### **General quotes that may be helpful**

There is a debt of service due from every man to his country, proportioned to the bounties which nature & fortune have measured to him.

-Thomas Jefferson

The only limit of our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today.

-Franklin D. Roosevelt

Get action. Do things; be sane, don't fritter away your time; create, act, take a place wherever you are and be somebody; get action.

-Theodore Roosevelt

As Americans, what we ultimately share is each other.

-Rabbi Daniel Zemel  
*Convocation at 1995 DLC Convention*

The genius of America lies in its capacity to forge a single nation from peoples of remarkably diverse racial, religious, and ethnic origins. It has done so because democratic principles provide both the philosophical bond of union and practical experience in civic participation.

-Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.  
*The Disuniting of America*

It is not our affluence, or our plumbing, or our clogged highways that grip the imagination of others. Rather, it is the values on which our system is built. These values imply our adherence not only to liberty and individual freedom, but also to international peace, law and order, and constructive social purpose.

-Senator J. William Fulbright

For the ethical person, duty has the force of an eternal command which awakens the subject's sense of his or her own eternal validity as a self.

-Thomas E. McCollough  
*The Moral Imagination and Public Life*

Don't be afraid to challenge the pros, even in their own backyard. Just as important, never neglect details, even to the point of being a pest. Moments of stress, confusion, and fatigue are exactly when mistakes happen. And when everyone else's mind is dulled or distracted the leader must be doubly vigilant.

-Colin L. Powell  
*My American Journey*

We will prevail over our present trials. We will come through because our founders bequeathed us a political system of genius, a system flexible enough for all ages and inspiring noble aspirations for all time. We will continue to flourish because our diverse American society has the strength, hardiness, and resilience of the hybrid plant we are. We will make it because we know that we are blessed, and we will not throw away God's gift to us.

-Colin L. Powell  
*My American Journey*

Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.

-Theodore Roosevelt  
*The Strenuous Life*

Whether we like it or not, we are one nation, one family, indivisible, and for us, divorce or separation are not options.

-James Carville  
*We're Right, They're Wrong*

We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately.

-Benjamin Franklin

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**Clinton Presidential Records  
Speechwriting**

ShIPLEY, David  
Boys & Girls Nation [1]  
[OAID 10706]

To

**Clinton Presidential Records  
Automated Records  
Management System (Email)**

WHO

[07/09/1996-08/05/1996]

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