

another school shooting in Atlanta today. Thankfully, the injuries to the students don't seem to be life threatening. But there were several last year which did claim lives.

We know somehow that what happened to you has pierced the soul of America. And it gives you a chance to be heard in a way no one else can be heard, by the President and by ordinary people in every community in this country. You can help us to build a better future for all our children: a future where hatred and distrust no longer distort the mind or harden the heart; a future where what we have in common is far more important than what divides us; a future where parents and children are more fully involved in each other's lives, in which they share hopes and dreams, love and respect, a strong sense of right and wrong; a future where students respect each other even if they all belong to different groups, or come from different faiths or races or backgrounds; a future where schools and houses of worship and communities are literally connected to all our children; a future where society guards our children better against violent influences and weapons that can break the dam of decency and humanity in the most vulnerable of children.

One thing I would like to share with you that I personally believe very much: These dark forces that take over people and make them murder are the extreme manifestation of fear and rage with which every human being has to do combat. The older you get, the more you'll know that a great deal of life is the struggle against every person's own smallness and fear and anger and a continuing effort not to blame other people for our own shortcomings or our fears.

We cannot do what we need to do in America unless every person is committed to doing something better and different in every walk of life, beginning with parents and students and going all the way to the White House. For the struggle to be human is something that must be a daily source of joy to you, so you can get rid of your fears and let go of your rage and minimize the chance that something like this will happen again.

Because of what you have endured, you can help us build that kind of future, as virtually no one else can. You can reach across

all the political and religious and racial and cultural lines that divide us. You have already touched our hearts. You have provoked Hillary and me and the Vice President and Mrs. Gore to reach out across America to launch a national grassroots campaign against violence directed against young people. You can be a part of that.

You can give us a culture of values instead of a culture of violence. You can help us to keep guns out of the wrong hands. You can help us to make sure kids who are in trouble—and there will always be some—are identified early and reached and helped. You can help us do this.

Two days from now, you're going to have your commencement. It will be bittersweet. It will certainly be different for those of you who are graduating than you thought it was going to be when you were freshmen. But as I understand it, there will be some compensations. Even your archrivals at Chatfield will be cheering you on. When you hear those people cheer for you, I want you to hear the voice of America, because America will be cheering you on. And remember that a commencement is not an end. It is a beginning.

You've got to help us here. Take care of yourselves and your families first. Take care of the school next. But remember, you can help America heal, and in so doing you will speed the process of healing for yourselves.

This is a very great country. It is embodied in this very great community, in this very great school, with these wonderful teachers and children and parents. But the problem which came to the awful conclusion you faced here is a demon we have to do more to fight. And what I want to tell you is, we can—together.

I close here with this story. My wife and I and our daughter have been blessed to know many magnificent people because the American people gave us a chance to serve in the White House. But I think the person who's had the biggest influence on me is the man who is about to retire as the President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela.

He is 80 years old, he served 27 years in prison. For 14 years he never had a bed to sleep on. He spent most of his years breaking rocks every day. And he told me once about

his experience. And I asked him: "How did you let go of your hatred? How did you learn to influence other people? How did you embrace all the differences in, literally, the centuries of oppression and discord in your country and let a lot of it go away? How did you get over that in prison? Didn't you really hate them?"

And he said, "I did hate them for quite a long while. After all, look what they took from me—27 years of my life. I was abused physically and emotionally. They separated me from my wife, and it eventually destroyed my marriage. They took me away from my children, and I could not even see them grow up. And I was full of hatred and anger." And he said, "One day I was breaking rocks, and I realized they had taken so much. And they could take everything from me except my mind and my heart. Those things I would have to give away. I decided not to give them away."

I see here today that you have decided not to give your mind and your heart away. I ask you now to share it with all your fellow Americans.

We love you, and we need you.
Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:37 p.m. in the gymnasium at Dakota Ridge High School. In his remarks, he referred to Jane Hammond, superintendent, Jefferson County Schools; Frank DeAngelis, principal, Columbine High School; Jon DeStefano, president, Jefferson County School Board; State Attorney General Ken Salazar and Gov. Bill F. Owens of Colorado; and Columbine High School students Heather Dinkel, student body president, and Patrick Ireland and Sean Graves, students wounded in the April 20 attack. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

**Statement on the Shooting
at Heritage High School
in Conyers, Georgia**
May 20, 1999

Today's shooting at Heritage High School in Georgia was deeply troubling to us all. In the wake of these terrible incidents, all Americans must come together and do everything we can to protect children from vio-

lence. I applaud the Senate for today's historic vote to close the gun show loophole and keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children.

**Statement on Senate Action
Approving the 1999 Emergency
Supplemental Appropriations Act**
May 20, 1999

Today the Senate approved the emergency resources I requested to support our mission in Kosovo. Congressional support for this mission means our military forces can sustain the air campaign until we prevail. It sends a clear signal to the Milosevic regime that the Congress and the American people are committed to this mission. And the resources I requested for the Defense Department will keep our military readiness strong.

At the same time, the bill includes resources critical to helping the international community and the frontline countries of southeast Europe cope with the massive humanitarian crisis and other immediate spillover effects of the conflict and Milosevic's brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing.

This emergency funding package will also provide urgently needed resources to help Central Americans repair and rebuild after the devastation of Hurricane Mitch. With these funds, farmers can plant new crops in the final weeks of the growing season; roads, hospitals, and schools can be rebuilt; and Central Americans can look to the future with hope, knowing that America is standing with them. The legislation will support the improving prospects for peace in the Middle East by providing additional assistance to strengthen Jordan's economy and security. This emergency funding also provides resources for victims of natural disasters at home, and for our farmers in distress due to depressed crop prices.

While I am pleased that Congress has finally acted to fund our mission in the Balkans, to support the Middle East peace process, and to help American farmers and the victims of Hurricane Mitch, it is unfortunate that Members tacked unnecessary and ill-advised special projects onto essential emergency legislation. Were it not for the pressing