

Week Ending Friday, April 28, 1995

**Remarks by the President and
Hillary Clinton to Children on the
Oklahoma City Bombing**

April 22, 1995

The President. Today, I've been joined by the First Lady and by children of people who work for our Federal Government, because we are especially concerned about how the children of America are reacting to the terrible events in Oklahoma City. Our family has been struggling to make sense of this tragedy, and I know that families all over America have as well.

We know that what happened in Oklahoma is very frightening, and we want children to know that it's okay to be frightened by something as bad as this. Your parents understand it. Your teachers understand it. And we're all there for you, and we're working hard to make sure that this makes sense to you and that you can overcome your fears and go on with your lives.

The First Lady has been very worried about all the children of our country in the aftermath of this tragedy, and she wants to talk with you, too, today.

Mrs. Clinton. I'm very happy to have this chance to talk with children here in the White House and children who maybe have been watching cartoons or just getting up around the country and turning on the television set. I know that many children around the country have been very frightened by what they have seen and heard, particularly on television in the last few days. And I'm sure that you, like many of the children I've already talked to, are really concerned because they don't know how something so terrible could have happened here in our country.

But you know, whenever you feel scared or worried, I want you to remember that your parents and your friends and your family members all love you and are going to do everything they can to take care of you and

to protect you. That's really important for each of you to know.

I also want you to know that there are many more good people in the world than bad and evil people. Just think of what we have seen in the last few days. Think of all the police officers and the firefighters, the doctors and the nurses, all of the neighbors and the rescue workers, all of the people who have come to help all of those who were hurt in Oklahoma. Think about the people around the country who are sending presents and writing letters. Good people live everywhere in our country, in every town and every city, and there are many, many of them.

Like many of the families in America, our family has spent a lot of time in the last few days talking about what happened in Oklahoma, sharing our own feelings, our anger, our tears, our sorrow. All of that has been very good for us. And I hope you are doing it at home as well.

I want all of the children to talk to people. Talk to your parents. Talk to your grandparents. Talk to your teachers. Talk to those grownups who are around about how you are feeling inside, how this makes you feel about yourself, so that they can give you the kind of reassurance, the hugs, the other ways of showing you that you can feel better about this because they love you and care about you very much.

And finally, I want children to think about ways that all of you can help. Sometimes writing a letter or drawing a picture when you're sad or unhappy can make you feel better. Perhaps you could even send those pictures and letters to children in Oklahoma City. Maybe you could send a toy or a present. Maybe you can also just be nicer to your own friends at school and to help take care of each other better. I think that's one thing that all of us can do.

Thankfully, we're going to be able to help the people there, and we're going to pray very hard for everybody who was injured and

everyone who died. But let's also try to help each other. And there are many ways we can do that. And if we remember that, then I think all of us can get over being afraid and scared.

The President. I'd like to take a moment to say a few words about this whole thing to the parents of America. I know it always—or, at least, it's often difficult to talk to children about things that are this painful. But at times like this, nothing is more important for parents to do than to simply explain what has happened to the children and then to reassure your own children about their future.

Experts agree on a number of steps. First of all, you should encourage your children to talk about what they're feeling. If your children are watching news about the bombing, watch it with them. If they have questions, first listen carefully to what they're asking, and then answer the questions honestly and forthrightly. But then reassure them. Tell them there are a lot of people in this country in law enforcement who are working hard to protect them and to keep things like this from happening. Tell them that they are safe, that their own school or day care center is a safe place, and that it has been checked and that you know it's safe.

And make sure to tell them without any hesitation that the evil people who committed this crime are going to be found and punished. Tell them that I have promised every child, every parent, every person in America that when we catch the people who did this, we will make sure that they can never hurt another child again, ever.

Finally, and most important of all, in the next several days, go out of your way to tell your children how much you love them. Tell them how much you care about them. Be extra sensitive to whether they need a hug or just to be held. This is a frightening and troubling time.

But we cannot let the terrible actions of a few terrible people frighten us any more than they already have. So reach out to one another and come together. We will triumph over those who would divide us. And we will overcome them by doing it together, putting our children first.

God bless you all, and thanks for listening.

[At this point, the address ended and the President and Hillary Clinton answered children's questions.]

The President. What about all of you, how do you feel about this? You got anything you want to say about what happened at the bombing? What?

Q. It was mean.

The President. It was mean, wasn't it? What did you think when you heard about it the first time?

Q. I didn't like it.

Mrs. Clinton. It was very mean.

Q. I thought the—those people that did it should be punished very badly—to hurt the children.

Mrs. Clinton. That's right, and they will be.

The President. They should be punished, and they will be.

Q. I feel sorry for the people that died.

The President. You feel sorry for the people that died. Good for you.

Q. When I first heard about it, I thought, who would want to do that to kids who had never done anything to them?

Mrs. Clinton. It's hard to imagine, isn't it?

The President. That's very hard to imagine. There are some people who get this idea in their minds that there are people who have done something to them when they haven't done anything to them and who are told over and over again that it's okay to hate, it's okay to hate, it's okay to lash out, even at people they don't even know. And that's a wrong idea.

That's the other thing I want to say to you. We need to—we need to all respect each other and treat each other with respect and be tolerant of our differences so that we don't have other people developing this crazy attitude that it's okay to hurt people you never even knew.

Good for you.

Q. I feel really bad for the people that died and the people that are in the hospital, especially for the parents because it's really hard to lose a child.

The President. It's so hard.

Mrs. Clinton. And I think all of us have to do everything we can to help the people who were hurt and to make sure they get

everything they need, not only in the hospital but after that because they'll need people to talk to as well. And we have to be everything we can be to help the people who lost family members, like you said. It's going to take a very long time.

The President. And we have to feel bad for their parents, too. You know how much your parents love you, and can you imagine how they would feel? So we've got to feel bad for their parents, too, and give them a lot of support.

Q. I think—[inaudible]—in jail.

Mrs. Clinton. You are right. You are right. There are many, many people working hard all over the country to find out who did this. And they're actually making some progress in finding out who did it, and they will keep doing that until the people are caught—

Q. [Inaudible]—newspaper.

Mrs. Clinton. Yes, that's right. And they'll be caught, and then they'll be punished.

The President. Anybody else want to say anything?

Mrs. Clinton. What do you think you can do here, which is far away from where it happened, that could help other people and to do things that would be nice and, you know, as a way of helping?

Q. To send money to—[inaudible]—

Mrs. Clinton. That's a good idea.

Q. Send cards and presents.

The President. To Oklahoma City.

Mrs. Clinton. I think sending something—that would be good.

Q. ——send some of your old clothes and everything.

Mrs. Clinton. Whatever they need, right? If somebody needs that, we should do that.

Q. Like, we can bring them flowers sometimes.

Mrs. Clinton. Bringing flowers to somebody is a really nice thing to do. Do you ever bring flowers to your mom or to a friend just because you love them? It's a good thing to do.

Q. At my brother's day care when my school was closed, we planted trees to remember the kids that got hurt.

Mrs. Clinton. That is a wonderful idea. Did you all hear what she said, they planted trees to remember the kids who got hurt.

That's something that schools and day care centers could do all over the country.

The President. I think something should be done so that all of us remember those children in Oklahoma City, don't you? And all those people.

Q. [Inaudible]—write notes—

Q. You can pray for the family members and the rescue workers who have been helping people throughout this terrible incident and for the family members who lost their employees and children.

The President. That's right. That's something every one of you can do. You could say a prayer for them. It's a gift you can give them. It's very important. Thank you for saying that.

Q. We can write letters and notes and let them know that we understand how they're feeling.

The President. I think that's important, too.

Yes. Do you want to say something? You want to say something? Anybody else like to say anything? You got any other ideas of things we can do?

How many of you have really thought about this a lot in the last couple of days? Have you thought about it? You feel a little better now than you did a couple of days ago?

Q. Yes.

The President. Have you talked about it in your home? What about at school? Have they talked about it at school a lot? I think it's really important.

One more thing you can do is to go back to what the First Lady said earlier, is when you see people at your school, if they're getting angry or they're getting mad or they say something bad about somebody just because of—because they're different than them, you ought to speak out against that. You ought to say, "Look, we're all Americans, we're all here. We have to treat each other with respect. We're all equal in the eyes of God." And we cannot—we cannot permit people to have the kind of hatred that the evil people had who bombed that building in Oklahoma City. That is a—it's an awful thing. And every one of you, every day, can be a force against that kind of thing. You can change the coun-

try with your prayers and with your voice and by reaching out in all the ways you said.

Thank you all very much.

Mrs. Clinton. I'm so glad you could be here.

Q. Mr. President?

The President. Yes.

Q. I'd like to thank you for having us here today and speaking to all the children.

Mrs. Clinton. Thank you.

The President. Thank you, Colonel. And I want to thank all the parents who are here. And I want to thank you for your service to our country and for working for our Government and assure you that most Americans, millions of them, the huge majority, really respect all of you. And all Americans are horrified by what has happened. And we thank you for being here, and we thank you for being good parents as well as serving our country and our Government.

Goodbye.

Mrs. Clinton. Thank you all.

The President. And bless you.

Q. Mr. President? President Clinton, there have been increasing reports about these so-called militia groups. Do you feel that the general atmosphere of anti-Government statements has contributed to the growth of groups like this?

The President. Let me say that first of all, that this is coming on us in a couple of waves. When I was Governor of my State in the early eighties, we dealt with a number of these people and groups at home. That's one reason I felt such a horrible pang when I saw what happened in Oklahoma, you know, because it's just next door to Arkansas. And we had two incidences near the Oklahoma border in the early eighties.

And in—as you probably know, there was just an execution in Arkansas a couple of days ago of a man who killed a State trooper and who was a friend of mine and a businessman in southwest Arkansas, who was part of this whole movement. And there were other instances as well.

And then it went down a while, you know, the sort of the venom, the hatred, the atmosphere got better and the American people rose up against that kind of thing.

I think that we should wait until this whole matter is thoroughly investigated and until we know the facts to draw final conclusions.

But I will say that—that all of us, just as I told these children—all of us need to be more sensitive, to treat each other with tolerance, and not to demonize any group of people and certainly not these fine people who work for the Nation's Government. They are, after all, our friends and neighbors. We go to school with their children. We go to church with them. We go to civic clubs with them. This is—this is not necessary, and it is wrong.

But I will have some more to say about this whole matter as we know more facts about this case and about where we're going in the future.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. These remarks were broadcast live on radio and television.

Remarks at a Memorial Service for the Bombing Victims in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

April 23, 1995

Thank you very much. Governor Keating and Mrs. Keating, Reverend Graham, to the families of those who have been lost and wounded, to the people of Oklahoma City who have endured so much, and the people of this wonderful State, to all of you who are here as our fellow Americans.

I am honored to be here today to represent the American people. But I have to tell you that Hillary and I also come as parents, as husband and wife, as people who were your neighbors for some of the best years of our lives.

Today our Nation joins with you in grief. We mourn with you. We share your hope against hope that some may still survive. We thank all those who have worked so heroically to save lives and to solve this crime, those here in Oklahoma and those who are all across this great land and many who left their own lives to come here to work hand in hand with you.