

**Remarks Welcoming Returning  
Astronaut Shannon Lucid in  
Houston, Texas**

*September 27, 1996*

Thank you very much. Thank you. I want to say first how very much I appreciate the work that is done here by all of you at NASA. Thank you, George Abbey. Thank you, Dan Goldin. Thank you, every one of you who worked for America's space program for a job well done. This is all of your triumph here today, and America is very proud of you. Thank you very much.

Of course, like all of you, I'm here to say welcome home to Shannon Lucid. There's so many things to say about the incredible skill and stamina and dedication it takes to be in space for 6 months. Her achievements: the longest single flight by an American in space; the longest duration for any woman in space; five shuttle missions now for her. It's a monument to the human spirit. One of the wits on my airplane remarked as we were coming down, he said, "You know, Mr. President, you're always talking about bringing the deficit down for 4 years in a row; it's a good thing you haven't been giving her frequent-flier miles or we'd be in debt again." [Laughter] It's an amazing, amazing achievement.

And I know I speak for all Americans when I say I think we all feel at least that we've gotten to know Dr. Lucid, watching her grin and bear it as the mission was extended, hearing her eagerness to see her family, her yearning for what she called the wind and the sun. Perhaps more than she knows, she has also set a remarkable example for a new generation of young Americans and especially young girls all across this country who look up to her and now see new possibilities for themselves. And we thank her for that as well.

Let me also salute Bill Readdy and the crew of the *Atlantis*. What seems to me remarkable about their launch and return is that they make it now seem easy, and we know it's not. But we know that their bravery and their professionalism make possible for all of us regular space travel with all of the scientific, military, and commercial benefits

it brings. Now it's a part of our lives thanks to this crew and others like them.

The mission from which Dr. Lucid returns continues to cement the close and growing bonds of cooperation between the United States and the Russian space programs—something that we have worked very hard for—not only the cooperation between our Nation and Russia but between our Nation and other nations as well in the space station project.

We are committed to continuing the strong United States space program. We have to keep the space shuttle flying; work toward the international space station with all of its promise and challenges; develop the X-33, which will replace the shuttle; and help to create a revolution in global communications; and continue robotic exploration of Mars and the solar system.

I was told, in preparing these remarks, that when Dr. Lucid was in the eighth grade, she wrote an essay saying she wanted to be a rocket scientist. She was told by her teacher there is no such thing as a rocket scientist and if there were, it wouldn't be a woman. Well, how lucky we are that not everyone can foresee the future.

I say that today to make this point: The children here, whether when they grow up they have anything to do with the space program or not, many of these children will be doing work that has not been invented yet, many of these children will be doing work that has not been imagined yet. And we owe it to them, their future, and their children's future to continue in the American tradition of pushing back the frontiers of knowledge, exploring the frontiers that we don't yet understand.

Our space pioneers reflect the very best of America's spirit of exploration, our never-ending search for new horizons. And Dr. Shannon Lucid today stands tall among them all. We are grateful for her. We welcome her home.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:30 p.m. at Ellington Field. In his remarks, he referred to space shuttle *Atlantis* commander William Readdy. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Remarks in Houston***September 27, 1996*

**The President.** Thank you. Thank you so much. Hello, Houston. I'm glad to be here. Thank you for being here. I want to thank all those who have spoken before and all those who are here with us. I thank Congressman Gene Green and Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee—how well they have represented you. I am proud to work with them. I want to thank Nick Lampson, who's running for Congress in the 9th District, and I hope you'll help him get elected.

Thank you, Senator Rodney Ellis, Mario Gallegos. Thank you, State Representative Al Edwards. Thank you, Texas Democratic Chairman Bill White, my long-time friend, for your service in the Energy Department in our administration and now for leading our party here. Thank you, Garry Mauro. Thank you, Victoria Baldwin. And thank you, Mayor Bob Lanier and Elyse Lanier for your great leadership.

*[At this point, there was a disturbance in the audience.]*

**Audience members.** Boo-o-o!

**The President.** Hey, folks, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. I'm glad—wait a minute, wait, wait. I'm glad we've got some people from the other camp here. They need to hear this.

And you know, when all you do—wait a minute. And you know, it's hard to hear when all you're doing is name calling. And so, I want you to do what I said at the Democratic Convention. I want us to be respectful and polite and positive and issue-oriented, because there are some things I want everybody in Texas to hear today. And I want you to help me say it.

You know, I came right here to this park almost 4 years ago, right at the end of the election. And I said that I wanted to give this country back and its future back to ordinary Americans. I said that I wanted us to go into the 21st century with opportunity alive for everybody, with every citizen being responsible, and this country coming together, not being driven apart by our differences. We should respect our differences, build on them, and understand it's our meal

ticket to the future. Just like the mayor said, if we can learn to live and work together, there is no stopping America and our best days are still ahead.

Now, 4 years ago I had a tough time in Texas. I mean the Democrats hadn't been winning the White House in a long time, and then I looked up and both my opponents were from Texas. *[Laughter]* It hardly seemed fair. And here you were, the biggest State in—the second biggest State in the country, representing so much of the future, and I know I'd spent more time in Texas than anybody else running over the last 40 years. And I had to run against two people from Texas. *[Laughter]* Well, that's not a handicap anymore, and I don't have any excuse. But neither do you.

So why don't we just think about where we've come from and where we're going? Four years ago, this country had high unemployment, 20 years of stagnant wages, increasing inequality among working people. The crime rate was going up. The welfare rolls were going up. Public cynicism was going up because we despaired that we could make any difference, that what our leaders in Washington did would make any difference to people here at home, wherever home was in America.

Well, 4 years can make a lot of difference. And I appreciate what Congressman Green and Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee said. I especially appreciate what the mayor said about the work we've done together. But let me tell you what happened to me when I was in Longview this morning. We had 13,000 people in Longview this morning. It was great, unbelievable. And I ran into three people, just walking down the line like I always do. After I talked, I went down the line and shook hands with people. And I ran into three people; they weren't holding my signs or the other party's signs. They weren't holding—they were just people there. But I want to tell you who they were.

I met a man who was a Vietnam veteran, with his wife and his child. And his child has spina bifida, has had 12 operations. That man and his child at long last, because of a bill I signed yesterday, are finally going to get the medical attention and the disability support they need.