

world, even in dancing in Moscow at the height of the cold war. She put an American stamp on every role she danced. Her art is preserved not only in film but in the memories of everyone who ever saw her perform. And her influence lives on now in the young dancers she teaches. Thank you, Maria Tallchief, for the radiance of your art.

Edward Albee, Benny Carter, Johnny Cash, Jack Lemmon, Maria Tallchief: five artists who have devoted their entire lives to enriching our lives. It is nearly impossible to measure the extent of their influence or the pleasure they have brought to so many millions of people. We honor them tonight for their passion, for their spirits, for the American ideal they bring to life in their work.

Thank you, thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:48 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks on Signing the Proclamation on Human Rights *December 10, 1996*

The President. This may be one of those cases where the introduction was better than the speech. [*Laughter*] Thank you, Julie, and thank all of you for being here. I'm honored to be with this distinguished group on Human Rights Day. I want to thank all of you in attendance. I think Congresswoman Connie Morella is here. Where are you, Connie? There you are, right in front of me. [*Laughter*] Our AID Administrator, Brian Atwood; Assistant Secretary John Shattuck; Assistant Secretary Phyllis Oakley; and all of you who represent organizations who have done so much to advance the cause of freedom around the world. I want to say a special word of welcome to my good friend Gerry Ferraro. Thank you for being here.

Before I begin what I want to say about human rights, I think it is appropriate on Human Rights Day that I have just gotten a report from the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, who is meeting with our NATO foreign ministers in Brussels, that, together, they agreed to hold an historic NATO summit in July in Madrid to carry forward our goal of building a Europe that is undivided,

democratic, and at peace for the first time in history; one in which we will work to forge a partnership with Russia, adapt NATO to the demands of a new era, and invite the first aspiring members from among Europe's new democracies into NATO. My goal is to see them become full members of the alliance for NATO's 50th birthday in 1999.

It's fitting that this step comes on Human Rights Day and on Bill of Rights Day and in Human Rights Week. The prospect of NATO membership and integration into the West has been a very strong incentive for Europe's new democracies to expand their political freedoms and to promote universal human rights.

Working together with our allies and our partners, we're building a world where, as Judge Learned Hand once said, rights know no boundaries and justice no frontiers.

For the first time in history, more than half the world's people now live under governments of their own choosing. Today we dedicate ourselves to the unfinished task of extending freedom's reach. Promoting democracy and human rights reflects our ideals and reinforces our interests. It's a fundamental pillar of our foreign policy.

History shows that nations where rights are respected and governments are freely chosen are more likely to be partners in peace and prosperity. That is why we've worked hard over the last 4 years to help equality and freedom take root in South Africa, to stop the reign of terror in Haiti, to promote reform in Bosnia and Russia, to bring freedom back to Bosnia, and peace, and to enable millions of suffering people all around the world to reclaim their simple human dignity. That is why we must continue to support the world's newest democracies and to keep the pressure on its remaining repressive regimes.

The First Lady and I have just had a remarkable meeting with these six women. They are courageous in promoting human rights in different ways. They are courageous in promoting democracy and empowerment by helping women to live up to their potential. You can just look at them and see that they've put the lie to the notion that human rights is some Western cultural idea that has no place in other societies.

Julie Su, who spoke so eloquently, has played a crucial role in stopping the exploitation of Thai women immigrants in sweat shops. And I am proud of the work that Secretary Reich and the Labor Department has done in that regard, and we intend to continue to do that for the next 4 years. For the last 20 years, Dawn Calabria has fought to protect women refugees and children. Nahid Toubia is a doctor from Sudan whose organization has played a pioneering role in women's health issues. Barbara Frey has promoted corporate responsibility for human rights around the world and has also promoted education of children in her native Minnesota in human rights. Wanjiru Muigai from Kenya has helped women in her country to secure their legal rights, and she made a passionate appeal to me to focus on targeting United States aid in a way that will promote the empowerment of women in nation after nation. And since coming here from El Salvador, Lillian Perdomo has worked to protect women from domestic violence right here in the District of Columbia.

Each of these women tells a story for many others. Together their experiences underscore a shared truth. As the First Lady said in Beijing and as Julie repeated, "Human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights."

I want to tell you that I am very proud of the role that Hillary, Ambassador Albright, and all the members of the United States delegation—and thank you, Marge Mezvinsky, back here—played in issuing Beijing's call to action. That was a great moment for the United States and a great moment for women around the world.

Beijing's message was as clear as it was compelling. We cannot advance our ideals and interests unless we focus more attention on the fundamental human rights and basic needs of women and girls. We must recognize that it is a violation of human rights when girls and women are sold into prostitution, when rape becomes a weapon of war, when women are denied the right to plan their own families, including through forced abortions, when young girls are brutalized by genital mutilation, when women around the world are unsafe even in their own homes. If women are free from violence, if they're

healthy and educated, if they can live and work as full and equal partners in any society, then families will flourish. And when they do, communities and nations will thrive.

We are putting our efforts to protect and advance women's rights where they belong, in the mainstream of American foreign policy. During the last 4 years, we have worked to steer more of our assistance to women and girls, to help protect their legal rights, and to give them a greater voice in their political and economic futures. These programs are making a real difference, whether by raising female voter turnout in Bangladesh, promoting equality for women in Nepal, enabling women in Bosnia to participate fully in the rebuilding of their country. But we must do more.

Today, I call upon the Senate, again, to ratify the United Nations convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. As you know, many, many, many other nations have done this. In our country where we have worked so hard against domestic violence, where we have worked so hard to empower women, it is, to say the least, an embarrassment that the United States has not done this, and there is no excuse for this situation to continue.

I'm also pleased to announce several initiatives totaling \$4 million to protect and advance women's rights, including new efforts to help Rwandan women who have been torn from their homes and to provide women refugees around the world with access to reproductive health services. They've built on the commitment I made at last year's G-7 summit to help women in Bosnia start new businesses and will help women across Africa to do the same. They strengthen our commitment to stop the trafficking of women and children for prostitution and child labor. And they will help women's groups in Asia fight violence and discrimination.

In short, these efforts will reinforce America's global leadership on behalf of human rights and democracy in perhaps the most fundamental areas at which they are at risk. They reflect our Nation's enduring commitment to the freedoms of our Bill of Rights that safeguard our own citizens. They support the values in the Universal Declaration

of Human Rights that promote freedom, justice, and peace all around the world.

We live at a time when our most deeply held ideals are ascendant, but this hopeful trend toward freedom and democracy is neither inevitable nor irreversible, nor has it extended to the real lives of hundreds of millions of people all across the globe. While we seek to engage all nations on terms of good will, we must continue to stand up for the proposition that all people, without regard to their gender, their nationality, their race, their ethnic group or their religion, should have a chance to live up to their potential.

I want to say again how gratified I am that there are people like these six women alive and well and at work in the world, people like so many of you. It is a constant source of inspiration to me. I want to say again how grateful I am to the First Lady for going across the world to raise our concerns about this and bringing back to me the knowledge of the work that has been done and what still can be done on behalf of women and girls.

As I sign this proclamation marking International Human Rights Day, I ask you all to remember not just that women's rights or human rights but that the defense and the promotion of human rights are the responsibilities of all of us.

Thank you.

[At this point, the President signed Proclamation 6964—Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week.]

The President. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Geraldine Ferraro, former Vice Presidential candidate, and Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky, Alternate Representative to the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women.

Proclamation 6964—Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week

December 10, 1996

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

When America's founders crafted the Constitution and Bill of Rights more than two centuries ago, they not only created a blueprint for the conduct of American government, but they also gave expression to a vision of human dignity that inspires people to this day the world over. Our Nation's commitment to the freedoms enumerated in the Bill of Rights—among them freedom of speech, religion, and assembly, and the right to due process and a fair trial—serves as a beacon of hope to oppressed peoples everywhere.

Americans continue to work to improve our application of equality under the law for all our own citizens, as we believe that freedom and justice are the birthright of humankind. We are also working daily to foster and promote the growth of these rights in other countries. Indeed, the championing of democracy and human rights serves as a cornerstone of my Administration's foreign policy.

As we observe Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, we can take satisfaction in our progress in advancing human rights around the world in the past decade. In fact, more than half the people in the world now live under democratic political systems. Even in countries still struggling to establish basic human rights and freedoms, we are seeing some progress. And brave reformers such as Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma continue to press their rightful demand for freedom.

It is also encouraging that, with the growth and development of the human rights movement, there has been greater awareness and appreciation that women's rights are human rights.