

in the coming months of Ramadan, they evoke a call to community.

We light this tree in Washington, but all over the world we thank God that the light of peace is glowing as never before, in Northern Ireland, in Bosnia, in the Middle East. In the coming year, let us rededicate ourselves to building the bonds of peace on Earth. Let those of us who are Americans express our appreciation to those who serve us in uniform, represented tonight by the United States Air Force Band, who help to preserve peace for us.

Now I'd like to ask Sammy and Jessica and Edgar to come up here and join me as we light the Christmas tree, our national tree. Let the spirit of the holidays, of peace and good will, be our beacon all year long. Merry Christmas. Happy New Year. May God bless you all.

Now put your hands on the switch, and I'll count down to one. Three, two, one. Light the tree!

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:50 p.m. on the Ellipse during the annual Christmas Pageant of Peace. In his remarks, he referred to John J. Betchkal, president, Christmas Pageant of Peace; and baseball player Sammy Sosa, National League Most Valuable Player, and his wife, Sonia.

### **Message on the Observance of Hanukkah, 1998**

*December 9, 1998*

Warm greetings to all those celebrating Hanukkah.

For eight consecutive nights during this twilight of the year, in Jewish homes across America and around the world, the flames of the menorah will once again brighten steadfast spirits and gladden faithful hearts. Commemorating the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem more than two millennia ago, Hanukkah is a joyous celebration of the victory of the righteous over oppression and a reaffirmation of religious freedom as a fundamental right of people everywhere. This Festival of Lights is a reminder to all of us of the many blessings that brighten our lives: the love of God, the gift of freedom, the strength of family and community, and the hope of lasting peace.

As millions of families gather to kindle the flames of the menorah and to recite the special prayers of Hanukkah, Hillary and I extend our best wishes for a memorable celebration and for happiness and peace in the coming year.

**Bill Clinton**

### **Memorandum on the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights** *December 9, 1998*

*Memorandum for the Secretary of State*

*Subject: The Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights*

This month we mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations General Assembly declaration affirming a universal standard of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In so doing, we also honor the legacy of Eleanor Roosevelt, who served as the first Chairperson of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and who was the driving force behind the Declaration.

To reaffirm our commitment to the principles of the Declaration and to honor the contributions of Eleanor Roosevelt, I hereby direct you to establish the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights. You are authorized to take all necessary steps to establish an appropriate awards program under the auspices of your Department to recognize distinguished Americans who have made especially meritorious contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights within the United States or around the world.

These awards will be presented on or about December 10 of each year as part of the commemoration of the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Prior to November 15 of each year, you shall present to me a list of nominees from which I will select up to five individuals or groups of individuals to receive this award. In preparing your list of nominees, you may consider the recommendations of appropriate individuals and groups and coordinate your nominations in consultation with other Federal agencies as appropriate. You may include recommendations for posthumous awards.

You are directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

**William J. Clinton**

**Remarks at the Presentation of the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights**

*December 10, 1998*

Thank you very much. I want to welcome all of you here, the Members of Congress, the members of our foreign policy team who have worked on this, National Security Adviser Berger, Under Secretary Loy, Assistant Secretary Koh. I welcome Ambassador Nancy Rubin, the Ambassador of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights; Theresa Loar, the Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues; members of the Roosevelt family; and other distinguished guests.

I would like to say also, before getting into my prepared remarks, that someday when I write the memoirs of these last several years, one of the proudest moments of our administration for me will be the work the First Lady has done to advance the cause of human rights. I remember the speech she gave in Beijing on a rainy day when people were struggling through the mud to get into that remote facility, the talk she gave just a few days ago at Gaston Hall at Georgetown University about Eleanor Roosevelt—I think one of the finest speeches she ever gave—but more important, the concrete work, the Vital Voices work in Northern Ireland and Latin America and all the little villages she visited in Latin America and Africa and Asia, on the Indian Subcontinent to try to advance the condition of women and children, especially young girls.

And I think that every person who has ever been the parent of a daughter could identify strongly with the remarks she just made and the brave women who were just introduced.

You know, most of us, at least who have reached a certain age, we look forward to the holidays when our daughters come home from college, and they have the human right to decide whether they want to come home or not. [*Laughter*] When our daughters are married, and they have our grandchildren,

we hope they'll find a way to come home. Imagine—I just wish there were some way for every American citizen to imagine how they would feel if the people Hillary just discussed were their daughters. I hope we can do more.

We are sponsoring these awards today and announcing them because, as all of you know so well, 50 years ago in Paris the U.N. General Assembly voted to approve the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was a watershed moment for what was then a very young United Nations; a new chapter, however, in a much, much older story, the unending striving of humanity to realize its potential in the life of every person.

For its time, the Universal Declaration was quite bold. If you look at the way the world is going today, it's still quite a bold document. Like all great breakthroughs, it was an act of imagination and courage, an opening of the heart and the mind with spare elegance. It served notice that for all our differences, we share a common birthright.

You know, it's easy for us to forget, but if you think back to 1948, it might not have been particularly easy to affirm faith in mankind's future. After all, it was just 3 years after a cataclysmic war and the Holocaust; the cold war was beginning to blight the post-war landscape; millions and millions more would die just in the Soviet Union under the terror of Stalin.

But this document did reaffirm faith in humankind. It is really the Magna Carta of our humanity. Article I states that: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

There are no commas or parentheses in this sentence, no qualifications or exceptions, just the power of affirmation.

Other articles assert the freedom to worship, to work, to assemble, to participate in a life of meaning and purpose. Those words have now been translated into every language of the United Nations. Though 50 years old, they still ring free, fresh, and powerful, don't they? They resonate today, because today human dignity is still under siege, not something that can be taken for granted anywhere.