

left behind. And if we can't bring economic opportunity to poor people now we will never get around to doing it. That ought to be one of our highest priorities.

We need somebody who can resist the lure of the moment of the election and say, "We're going to keep paying down this debt so we get out of debt for the first time since 1835—we can do it in 15 years if we stay at it." We need somebody that will think about the aging of America. You know, my generation is plagued with this—the idea that we'll retire and hurt our children and our grandchildren.

What I want you to know about Hillary is, from the first minute I met her, she was thinking about the things that are important today. And one of the reasons that she looks so much younger than she is—[*laughter*]—apart from the highly interesting and stimulating life—[*laughter*]—and how good the American people have been to us, is that all of her life—all of her life—she has cared about the things that America needs to focus on now, that we dare not pass up the opportunity, literally, of a lifetime. I hope.

Never in my life, not even once, has our country been in the position that we are now in to shape the future of our children and grandchildren and the future of the world. The only time in my life when the times were remotely this good was in the early 1960's, and we had to deal with the civil rights challenge and the war in Vietnam and the cold war. This has never happened in my life.

And you need people in the Senate who are genuine visionaries and practical doer. She is a genuine visionary, a practical doer, and a wonderful human being.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately noon at the Capitol Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to actress Marisa Tomei; and musician B.B. King. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at VH1's Concert of the Century

October 23, 1999

The President. Well, I don't know how much longer we have on the commercial

break, and I don't own this network, so I could really get the hook. [*Laughter*]

But let me thank you and thank all the artists. And I've got all this stuff to say on the teleprompter at the end, but I just want to tell you why I did this. I still remember Miss Lucille Rutherford, who taught me to sing, and George Grey, who taught me to play the clarinet and the saxophone; my two junior high school band directors; and my wonderful high school band director, Virgil Spurlin. And I don't think I would have become President if it hadn't been for school music. And that's why I did this. And I thank you. Thank you.

[*At this point, the program continued.*]

The President. Thank you, Robert De Niro, for the introduction, for your friendship, for your fabulous movies. [*Laughter*]

Let me thank all of the wonderful performers who have graced this stage today; they have blessed our lives and all of America who has heard them. Let's give them all a big hand one more time. [*Applause*] We respect and honor them for their talents and their knowledge of music. But we also respect what they have given us tonight. I respect them so much, I left my saxophone up in the White House. [*Laughter*]

But we have had another wonderful lesson this afternoon, thanks to the National Endowment for the Arts, which is supporting our country's living cultural heritage; and VH1, the Save The Music Foundation, preserving our musical traditions. The most important lesson we've had is that what we've seen in stunning brilliance tonight should at least be a possibility in the lives and the minds of all of our children.

Music education is very important to me. When I was a young boy, as a school musician, I started at 9 with Ms. Lillian Rutherford and George Grey learning to sing and play. I learned that music was more than scales or keys or how to make sure I was always in tune. Music taught me how to mix practice and patience with creativity. Music taught me how to be both an individual performer and a good member of a team. It taught me how to work, always to bring mind and body and spirit together, and the beauty of music.

And so for all my teachers, for the ones I mentioned, for my junior high school band directors, Carol Powell and Joel Duskin, for my wonderful friend Virgil Spurlin, who taught me in high school, some are still with me, some have gone on to their reward, I want to say again, I don't think I would be President if it hadn't been for school music.

And I am very grateful to John Sykes, to VH1, to all the wonderful stars and performers who are here tonight, because they want to give all our young people that same opportunity to learn, to achieve, to express themselves—and to develop their math brain cells. [*Laughter*]

This century has been called the American Century. It gave rise to democracy around the world. For the first time in history, more than half the world's people are living under governments of their own choosing. So we gave that to the world. But at the same time, we mustn't forget that America brought the world the rhythm of jazz, the consolation of country, the hard truth of the blues, the excitement of rock and roll. And the diversity of our music and our musicians—which we have seen tonight—mirrors the diversity of our people and reminds us of the greatest lesson we have always to teach and always to learn, that we are stronger when we're playing in harmony, based on our common humanity.

A stunning example of that is the great American songwriter George Gershwin, a Jewish boy from New York who wrote the magnificent black opera, "Porgy and Bess." He listened to others. And he once said, "True music must repeat the thought and inspirations of the people and the time. My people are Americans and my time is today."

Let us promise that we Americans will keep American music and the spirit it represents, inspiring our children and their children as we enter the new millennium.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 5:30 p.m. in a tent on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John Sykes, president, VH1, who presented the President with a guitar signed by the artists who performed in the program entitled, "Concert of the Century for VH1 Save The Music." The transcript released

by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Message on the Observance of Make A Difference Day, 1999

October 23, 1999

Warm greetings to everyone throughout the nation participating in Make A Difference Day. I am delighted that so many Americans are joining together with their neighbors on this day of helping to create a better world for us all.

It is a very American idea that we meet our challenges not through big government or as isolated individuals, but as members of a true community, with all of us working together. Upholding this fine tradition, citizens young and old are working on this special day to raise awareness of the power of citizen service not only to give hope and help to individuals in need, but also to renew the strength, vitality, and character of communities across our nation.

As you clean up parks and neighborhoods, read stories to young people, collect clothing and other necessities for families recovering from Hurricane Floyd, and participate in numerous other community efforts, I thank each of you for devoting your time, talents, and energy to fulfill America's bright promise for all our people.

Earlier this week, we celebrated the fifth anniversary of AmeriCorps, our national service initiative that engages thousands of citizens in projects that are changing lives and changing America. AmeriCorps members are living up to the highest obligations of American citizenship—creating opportunities for others, taking responsibility for themselves, and fostering a community of all Americans. I commend everyone participating in Make A Difference Day for adding your own contribution to the tradition of citizen service that has always been a hallmark of our democracy.

Hillary joins me in sending best wishes for a productive and meaningful day.

Bill Clinton