

which makes a mockery of our assault weapons ban.

I think the Million Mom March is already a success, before anyone takes the first step. These people are helping to lead a grassroots effort that has already put stronger laws in place in States like California, Massachusetts, and Maryland. They're letting the gun lobby know it is no match for America's moms. But our nationwide fight won't be over tomorrow, no matter how many march. We have so much work still to do.

Throughout our entire history as a nation every movement for social progress, every step toward safety and justice for all has been fueled by the energy and effort of ordinary citizens. The Million Mom March is the latest successor to that great American tradition. If the moms stick with it, they will succeed. They will make America a safer, more humane nation. Helping to keep guns out of the wrong hands is a Mother's Day gift we can all be proud of.

Happy Mother's Day, and thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:25 a.m. on May 12 in the Ohio Army/National Guard Facility in Akron, Ohio, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 12 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

### **Remarks at a Rally for the Million Mom March**

*May 14, 2000*

Well, thank you very much, and good morning. First of all, I think we ought to give Christine O'Brien another hand. [*Applause*] She gave such a good speech, I was wishing she were running for Congress against some of those anti-gun registration—[*laughter*].

I want to thank Donna Dees-Thomases and all the organizers and all the regions and all the States and all the communities, now over 60 of them—I think about 70 now in the country where there will be marches today.

I want to thank my long-time friend Mike Barnes of Handgun Control. And I want to thank the many, many Members of Congress

who are here to march with you today, many of them over here.

I would also like to welcome you on behalf of not only Hillary and me but also Al and Tipper Gore, who have embraced this challenge with us and believe so strongly in what you are trying to do. Our families care about it.

I want to say that—I've put my notes away here—I've just one or two things I want to say. First of all, you may have noticed that when I was walking up here, this lovely Native American woman behind me started crying. That's because her child was killed on Mother's Day. She is the second mother I have met in the last 72 hours who lost a child on Mother's Day. There are so many—there's another one.

One of the things your mothers teach you—I want to cut to the chase here; let's get down to what this is all about. One of the things your mothers teach you when you're growing up is that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Right? How many of us had our mothers tell us, "Look both ways before you cross the street. Tie your shoes before you start running. I don't want to get my shots, but an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"—in every single way.

Now, what the argument in Washington, DC, has been, the dominant argument for the last 30 years, since we first began to discuss this, is that an ounce of prevention is totally unacceptable, and we'll try to throw 100 pounds of cure at it and hope it works out. That's the first thing I want to say. This is about prevention.

The second thing I want to say is, when I became President there were a lot of people, I think, who wondered whether the crime rate would ever go down. But for a combination of factors and a lot of people's efforts around the country but certainly because of the Brady bill, the assault weapons ban, and other related efforts, we now have the lowest crime rate in a quarter century, and gun violence is down 35 percent. Now, that's the good news.

It's still the most violent civilized country in the world, with the highest murder rate. But at least we know we can make a difference now, and we know what works. So

nobody has an excuse anymore. It's not like we don't know that prevention works. We know it does work. One of the things mothers learn to do real early is not let their kids make excuses when they shouldn't. We don't have an excuse anymore.

Now, the third thing I want to—the point I want to make is, the other side wins this argument on, basically, power, money, and fear, and using labels. You know, there was a story this week saying, well, they have reduced support for these measures because white males—not mothers, I might add—are shying away from gun control. I want to tell you something, folks, this is their labels against our facts.

Now, they talk about the second amendment. Well, the Supreme Court says there is a constitutional right to travel. But we license car owners, and we register cars, and we have speed limits, and we have child safety restraint laws, and we have seat belt laws, and you don't hear people talk about car control. When is the last time you heard somebody stand up and give a speech about the imminent evils of car control threatening our constitutional right to travel—car control?

Now, if somebody came to take all our cars and put them in somebody else's garage and we couldn't get around, we could talk about car control. Meanwhile, we are thankful for highway safety measures that keep our children alive. We believe an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure when it comes to exercising the constitutional right to travel.

And when people talk about—as Christine said, and Hillary mentioned this—they say guns don't kill people; people do. Well, even our adversaries fly around on airplanes a lot. Suppose I gave you the following speech tomorrow. Suppose I said, "I'm really worried about how crowded airports are, and almost everybody who goes into an airport is honest, and after all, bombs don't kill people; people do. I'm going to take the metal detectors out of the airport, and the next time a plane blows up, we'll throw the book at them." [*Laughter*]

Folks, remember this. The facts are your friends. Don't let people get everybody all upset and thrown into a turmoil here and start screaming and yelling names and labels. We have not been responsible parents for

our children because we have, in this one area of our national life, said we're not going to live on prevention; we're going to live on punishment alone.

And when we did finally take some preventive action with the Brady bill, the assault weapons ban, the cop-killer bullet bans—all of which were opposed, I might add, by the same people who say these measures are wrong—they made a difference to the lives of Americans. They helped to make us safer.

Let me just say this. I respect so much those of you who are here today who lost loved ones, who are here to redeem the lives of the loved ones you lost by saving the lives of other people's children. I am grateful to you. America is grateful to you. You could be sitting home today burying your heartbreak and anger, and you undertook this journey. I know how painful it must be for you.

But just remember, you're being good mothers today. You're reminding all those people out there who have listened to these crazy excuses that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, that your little babies didn't have advantage of it, and you're just trying to give it to the other children in this country. This day is especially for you. Don't be deterred by the intimidation. Don't be deterred by the screaming. Don't be deterred by the political mountain you have to climb.

You just remember this: There are more people who think like you in America. What we have to do is to get them to think. The facts are your friends. You have to get them to think. And then you have to get them to make it clear that as they think, they will vote. When that happens, when everybody thinks about this and once they think about it they decide to vote on what they think, you will have changed America. In the great tradition that runs from Seneca Falls to Selma, you will have redeemed the promise of freedom. You will have strengthened the bonds of community. You will have proved that the American Constitution works because decent people can stand against mountains of power and move those mountains for the betterment of their children. That's what you're doing.

God bless you, and thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Christine O'Brien, New Jersey organizer, who introduced the President, and Donna Dees-Thomases, founder, Million Mom March; and Michael D. Barnes, president, Handgun Control, Inc. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

### **Statement on the Death of Former Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi of Japan**

*May 14, 2000*

Hillary and I are deeply saddened by the death of former Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi. I want to extend our deepest condolences to his wife, Chizuko, his family, and his nation.

Japan has lost a strong and vibrant leader. The United States has lost one of our closest friends.

I had the honor of meeting with Prime Minister Obuchi several times after he became Prime Minister in 1998. I visited him in Tokyo that fall, and he came to Washington for a memorable visit in May 1999. In all our meetings, I was impressed by his effective statesmanship and his personal warmth. He believed ardently, as I do, in a U.S.-Japanese partnership built upon shared values and mutual respect. The personal friendship he and I forged helped us act on that belief and strengthened our desire to address all the issues affecting our two countries in a spirit of true friendship. The bonsai tree he gave me, and which he tended himself, is a living symbol of our alliance.

The job of Prime Minister is never easy, but Keizo Obuchi met every challenge with courage and confidence. He embodied before the world the famous Japanese virtues of honor, loyalty, and determination. He became known for imitating the art and skill of an orchestra conductor in finding harmony among people of different views. From his first days in office, he took swift steps to meet the economic challenges facing Japan, and he also gave strong support to the cause of peace—from Kosovo to East Timor. Prime Minister Obuchi worked hard in countless ways to strengthen our alliance and to place

it on a new foundation for the 21st century. The friendship between our peoples remains the cornerstone of stability in east Asia and was greatly strengthened by his lifetime of building bridges between us.

Prime Minister Obuchi touched the hearts of Americans in simple, human ways: when he threw out what he called an unhittable pitch to Sammy Sosa; when he reminded us of the honor he felt meeting Robert Kennedy as young man; when he told us how he drew from that meeting new inspiration for the noble privilege of serving a great people.

On behalf of all Americans, I am grateful for Prime Minister Obuchi's dedicated, principled public service and for all he did to build for us a brighter future. I will work closely with Prime Minister Mori to continue our close cooperation with Japan.

### **Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Situation in Sierra Leone**

*May 12, 2000*

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)*

Military forces of the Government of Sierra Leone and Military Observer Group (ECOMOG) forces provided by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) were engaged in military operations in Sierra Leone against the insurgent Revolutionary United Front (RUF) until mid-1999. At that time, the Government of Sierra Leone and the RUF signed the Lome Peace Agreement, which provides for an end to hostilities and the disarmament, demobilization, and resettlement of the insurgent RUF forces. The United Nations Security Council in U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1270 and 1289 established the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) to facilitate implementation of the Lome Agreement and provide security at key locations and government buildings and at all sites of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program, among other tasks.

Recently, as UNAMSIL expanded its efforts to establish monitoring and disarmament sites in or near RUF-controlled territory, RUF forces initiated military activity