

young men they've helped is Demarco Howard.

Demarco's dad had been in prison since he was a baby. His mom was addicted to drugs and was unable to raise him, so his aunt took on the responsibility, and she did the very best job she could possibly do. But life was tough. Demarco was shot when he was 6 and spent a year in the hospital recovering. He was often in trouble, and at the age of 14, was arrested and sent to a juvenile detention facility. At that facility, Demarco met someone on the staff of Rosedale Park Baptist Church. Demarco began attending Bible study classes, and his life began to change in dramatic ways.

He goes to school; he does his homework; he goes to church; and he volunteers to help other kids in trouble. I had a chance to look Demarco in the eye and thank him for his leadership, and asked him how life was. And he said, "It's getting a lot better, Mr. President." Thank you for coming, Demarco.

America can be saved, one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time. The pastor of Rosedale, Dennis Talbert, is fond of quoting a passage from the Book of Romans: "When I want to do good, evil is right there with me." That accurately describes the situation of many of our children in America. Evil is what his church is fighting against, with impressive results. And it's worth noting that Rosedale's outreach programs are financially supported by the Department of Justice and Michigan's Family Independence Agency, among others, and it shows what is possible.

Stories like these are being written all across America, and it's the goal of this administration to praise them at every chance and to replicate them where we can. I hope you continue your good works as mayors. You're on the frontline. At least in Washington, we don't have to worry about how the garbage gets emptied. [Laughter] But at least in Washington, we can work in Washington to make sure the garbage gets changed. We can make sure that we think differently about the problems that confront us. We can make sure we ask the question, "What are the results?" not, "What is the process?" And together, we can rally the great compassion and faith and hope of America.

Thank you for what you do, and thank you for giving me the chance to come by and say hello. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:19 p.m. in the Columbus Ballroom at the Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Victor Ashe of Knoxville, TN, past president, U.S. Conference of Mayors; Gov. John Engler of Michigan; Michelle Engler, wife of Governor Engler; Mayor Ronald Kirk of Dallas, TX; Mayor Kenneth L. Barr of Fort Worth, TX; Mayor Lee P. Brown of Houston, TX; and Mayor Dennis W. Archer of Detroit, MI.

Remarks at a Ceremony Honoring Presidential Scholars

June 25, 2001

Thank you very much. Okay, sit down. [Laughter] Except for you all. [Laughter] Mr. Secretary, thank you. The good folks from Houston know what I'm about to tell you is true. First of all, behave yourself. [Laughter] And secondly, I picked a true leader to run the Department of Education when I picked Rod Paige. He did a great job as the superintendent in Houston. He's a no-nonsense kind of guy, you know, and he's getting a lot done. And I'm honored to have you here.

And Bruno, thank you very much. As the Chairman, I appreciate your leadership. And I want to thank all the members on the Commission. Thank you for taking time out of your private lives to herald the best of America. I want to thank the Members of the United States Congress who are here. I understand John Hostettler is here from Indiana and George Nethercutt from Washington and Bernie Sanders from the State of Vermont. I think they're here. Thank you all for coming.

It's an honor for me to be here to honor some of America's finest students. You all should be proud of this award, and you should know your country is proud of you. Congratulations.

Out of an applicant pool of over 2,700 exceptional students, 141 were chosen. While your excellence ranges from science to the arts, all of you share some common traits of

character: hard work, commitment, leadership, faith in yourself, and service to others. You represent the best of your generation, and I'm confident you'll do great things for our great Nation.

You've earned your place here today, but you did not do it alone. First, we want to thank the parents and family members who worked side by side with you. I want to thank you for your commitment to your kids and to their excellence.

And I want to thank the teachers who join us here today. A good teacher is a model and a mentor, a source of praise and a source of challenge. A good teacher can change a life. A generation of good teachers can change a nation. Our Nation deeply respects your important work, and thank you for being here.

You all have come to Washington in an historic time: The Congress is about to pass the most important education reform in nearly 40 years. Every school, with students of every income, will be expected to meet high standards of learning and literacy. Every school will get the flexibility and help it needs to meet those standards. And every student will be tested to make sure those standards are actually achieved.

The longer it takes Congress to pass these important reforms, the less time State policymakers, school boards, principals, and teachers will have to act on them. I urge the Congress to act now, before it is too late.

Thirty-seven years ago, when President Johnson honored the first Presidential Scholars, Congress was debating the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964. Now, as you receive your awards, Congress is debating the next frontier of civil rights: solid education—because I believe the better we educate all our children the more united our society will be, the more equal we'll become in hope and opportunity and in achievement.

Excellence in education is a matter of standards and talent, and it is also a matter of character. We all need high ambitions. But it is strong values that give dignity and direction to our lives. And here, as in other areas, the young folks in this room excel.

Marco Ramirez of Florida—say hello to the Governor for me—[laughter]—is being honored for his talents as a playwright. Yet,

Marco also found a way to translate his love of theater into service. He gave a Halloween party for 200 children in a crime-ridden neighborhood, allowing them to enjoy the holiday in the safety of a school.

Or another honoree, Dean Spears of Oklahoma, shared his love of learning with residents of a local nursing home, out of concern that they did not have enough ways to exercise their minds. After securing a space at the nursing home for a library, Dean advertised his project to the community. The library now has over 1,600 books, each labeled and catalogued by Dean, himself.

Our society needs your contributions. During my lifetime I've seen the culture change from one that emphasized the difference between right and wrong to one that says, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you have a problem, blame somebody else." But I believe culture can change, and it changes as a result of leadership. And the young folks on this stage today are leaders by, first and foremost, taking responsibility of their own lives and listening to that universal call to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves.

Sometimes it's said that this generation is self-absorbed and apathetic. Your achievements and good works and generous spirit, especially at such a young age, make your friends and family proud. I want to thank you for your contribution you make to our Nation today and urge you on, because the contributions you'll make tomorrow will be just as important.

Welcome to Washington. Congratulations, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:33 p.m. at Constitution Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Bruno V. Manno, chairman, White House Commission on Presidential Scholars, and Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida.

Remarks Honoring the 2001 NCAA Women's Hockey Champion University of Minnesota Duluth Bulldogs

June 25, 2001

Please be seated. Well, thank you very much. Welcome to the White House.