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Remarks to the UNITY: Journalists of Color Convention
Friday, August 6, 2004
Draft #6

- Thank you very much. It's an honor to welcome so many distinguished American journalists to the nation's capital. We have representatives from the worlds of radio, television, print, and online journalism. And I'm proud to be with members of the Asian American Journalists Association ... the National Association of Black Journalists ... the National Association of Hispanic Journalists ... and the Native American Journalists Association.
- I know all of you share an important goal: You believe there ought to be diversity in the newsroom, and on the editorial page, and behind the managing editor's desk, because America benefits from diverse perspectives. I have a goal as well: I believe there ought to be diversity in both political parties, because my party is better and stronger when different backgrounds are represented at the table. So in this campaign, I am asking minority Americans to look at my agenda and not let anyone take them for granted.

Acknowledgments

- [TK]
- I am the candidate of one party, but I am the President of all the people. The day I took the oath, I pledged to build a single nation of justice and opportunity. And I have taken that promise seriously. Unlike some Republicans, I believe government must take an active role in helping to improve the lives of citizens. Unlike some Democrats, I don't put my faith in bureaucracies that are distant and cold and unresponsive. I believe government should help individuals gain the tools and skills to improve their own lives, and to make the best of their abilities. And I believe the final measure of compassion is not intentions – it is results. And we have achieved solid results for Americans from all backgrounds.

Elementary Education

- America is a better nation when every child of every background learns the basics of reading and math that will give them a fair shot at success.
- People had talked about education reform for years. We have acted:
 - No Child Left Behind Act – higher standards and accountability

- Funding to meet these standards
- 2005 budget:
 - K-12 funding up 49 percent over 2001 levels
 - Title One funding up 52 percent over 2001 levels
 - 1.1 billion dollars for Indian school construction and repairs since 2001 – more than double spending in previous four year period
- New choices for low-income parents. I was proud to sign into law the bill creating taxpayer-sponsored scholarships for students in Washington, D.C. If school choice is good for the wealthy and the middle class, it's good for the disadvantaged children of America.
- We are seeing the results:
 - The achievement gap in both reading and math is closing for African-American and Latino school children across America.
 - In about 73 percent of urban schools, African American fourth graders narrowed the reading achievement gap with white students.
 - In about 60 percent of urban schools, Hispanic fourth graders narrowed the reading achievement gap with white students
 - In Maryland, the percentage of African American third graders reading proficiently increased 16 percentage points last year alone – and Hispanic fifth graders improved their performance in math by nearly 10 percentage points in a year.
 - This spring I signed an Executive Order to help spread the gains under No Child Left Behind to American Indian and Alaska Native children.

Higher Education

- We have increased the number of men and women who will be receiving Pell Grants by nearly a million.
- Under my budget, funding for historically black colleges is at an all-time high.

Tax Relief

- America is a better nation when our economy is growing fast enough to create opportunity for everyone.
- We have acted:
 - Tax relief for families – marriage penalty, child tax credit.
 - Tax relief for entrepreneurs.

- Tax code is now more progressive – high income taxpayers pay a larger share of the overall tax burden than they used to.
- We are seeing the results:
 - About 111 million Americans pay lower taxes.
 - After-tax income is growing.
 - With tax relief, we've created [TK] million jobs since last August, and brought the unemployment rate down to [TK] percent – below the average rate of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.
 - A family of four with an income of 40,000 dollars now pays almost 2,000 dollars less in taxes.

Progress for Minority Entrepreneurs

- We increased the number of Small Business Administration loans to minorities by 40 percent last year alone.
- We requested a 21 percent increase in funding for the Minority Business Development Agency – the largest increase in more than a decade.
- Earlier this year, I established a presidential commission to expand business opportunities for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.
- And two weeks ago at the National Urban League Conference, I announced a new initiative uniting government, private sector, non-profit, and faith-based organizations behind a great goal – expanding minority business ownership and entrepreneurship.
- The entrepreneurial spirit in America is strong, and we can proudly say that more minorities are business owners than ever before.

Homeownership

- America is a better nation when more of our citizens achieve the great goal of home ownership.
- We have acted:
 - Two summers ago I set a bold goal to have 5.5 million new homeowners by the end of the decade.
 - We're offering down payment assistance ... good counseling to protect home buyers against predatory lenders ... and proposing tax credits to encourage the building of more affordable housing.
- We are seeing the results:
 - We learned this week that more minorities are now homeowners than ever before, and the overall homeownership rate is at an all-time high.

- We've now added more than 1.6 million new minority homeowners since I launched my homeownership initiative – and we're on pace to exceed our goal.
- Fifty-one percent of minority households – nearly 15 million in all – now own their home.
- More than half of all African Americans own their home.

Medicare

- America is a better nation when we keep our promise to care for citizens in their old age.
- For years, leaders in Washington debated Medicare reform. We have acted:
 - I signed into law the first prescription drug benefit in the history of Medicare.
- We are seeing the results:
 - Every senior citizen on Medicare is now eligible to get a drug discount card, which will immediately save them 15 to 30 percent off the retail price of most drugs.
 - Four million seniors are enrolled for a card.
 - Low-income seniors can get a 600 dollar credit right away.
 - And beginning in 2006, all seniors on Medicare will be able to choose a prescription drug coverage plan that suits their needs, and gives them the peace of mind they deserve.

Justice in our communities

- America is a better country when we uphold civil rights and equality before the law.
- During my Administration, the Department of Justice has vigorously enforced the civil rights laws.
- The Civil Rights Division has opened a federal investigation into the murder of Emmett Till.
- I am the first President of the United States to ban racial profiling in federal law enforcement.
- And to serve the cause of justice on the federal bench, I have nominated outstanding men and women to the courts – including ten superbly qualified African Americans and Hispanic Americans for the courts of appeals, and 30 African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans for the district courts.

Compassion for those in need

- America is a stronger country when we encourage the good works of faith-based groups that are saving and changing lives.
- We have acted:
 - I signed an Executive Order to end discrimination against faith-based groups.
- We are seeing the results:
 - Last year, we awarded more than 1.1 billion dollars in federal social service grants to faith-based groups.
 - Organizations receiving grants from my Administration for their good works include Associated Black Charities of Baltimore, the United Methodist Mexican American Ministries, the San Jose Cambodian Buddhist Society, the Navajo Nation, the Cherokee Nation, and the Kenaitze [kuh-NIGHT-see] Indian Tribe.
 - People of faith are transforming America one heart, one soul at a time. They deserve to know that the law will never discriminate against them again.

Vision for the Future

- This is the consistent record of three and a half years – not a series of promises for an election year.
- There is more to do.
- We've brought standards and accountability to our Nation's schools, and we should do more for high schools – because we can't give up on the teenagers heading toward graduation.
- We're creating jobs, and now we need to train more people to fill them.
- We're letting workers keep more of their paychecks, and now we need to let them keep more of their time, by passing comp time and flex time.
- We gave small business incentives to invest and expand, and now we need to give them more confidence by streamlining regulations and reforming the tort system.
- We've strengthened Medicare, and now we need to improve access and affordability in our health care system through medical liability reform and Association Health Plans, and by continuing to expand community health centers.
- More Americans own their own homes, and now we need to help more Americans own their own health care accounts and retirement accounts.
- We're implementing welfare reform, and now we need to encourage strong marriages and responsible fatherhood.

- We're protecting the rights of our minority citizens, and now we need to reform our immigration system. I have proposed reforms offering legal status to eligible temporary workers – so they can establish legal identities and come out of the shadows.
- We're making progress in the war on terror, improving our defenses at home, and spreading freedom in the world – and we need to continue all those vital missions.

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- Thank you very much for the invitation. Now I am happy to answer your questions.

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