

**PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION**

Good Morning America  
School Violence Special  
June 4, 1999

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

June 4, 1999

ABC GOOD MORNING AMERICA  
SPECIAL ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE

The Cabinet Room

7:05 A.M. EDT

Q We are here to talk about a subject which really is on everybody's mind and has been the topic of conversation ever since the Littleton shootings at Columbine High. But I can't ignore the fact, obviously, that there were events yesterday involving perhaps peace in Yugoslavia and Serbia with the Serbs. Does your gut tell you we have peace?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'm encouraged. I think that, first of all, President Ahtisaari of Finland, and Mr. Chernomyrdin did a very good job. They got our positions very close together and then presented it to Mr. Milosevic, and they have accepted it.

But over the last six and a half years I've had a number of agreements with Mr. Milosevic and the only one that has been kept is the Dayton Agreement where we had forces on the ground. So I will feel much better about this when we have evidence that there is a real withdrawal of Serb forces and when we're moving in.

Q But the word is that they've accepted the terms that we sent in, so why keep bombing them in the interim? When a bully cries "uncle," you let him up, let him go home, you don't keep hitting on him.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you have been reporting about the nature of the continuing campaign. I think it's important that we continue the military action against the military targets until we have some evidence that there are more than words here. For six and a half years, we've had various agreements, but until we had the agreement ending the war in Bosnia at Dayton, the others weren't kept. And so I think that—and we've had the same problem in Kosovo. We want to know that the military forces are withdrawing, and we want to have the timetable for our people going in.

Q So what is the evidence that would bring about a pause in the bombing? Is it the beginning of the withdrawal of the troops, once you see x number out?

THE PRESIDENT: We want to see—we want to have a militarily verifiable withdrawal of the troops and an agreement about the introduction of the international force. That should come—or could come quite soon. The paper that Mr. Ahtisaari gave to the Serbs provided for military-to-military contacts; those contacts are to occur very soon, in the next several hours, probably early tomorrow their time. And then we could proceed pretty quickly.

So, believe me, I'm anxious to end the bombing, but I want to know that our objectives have been achieved.

Q A couple of very quick questions. Were war crimes the war crimes against Mr. Milosevic discussed at all in the talks?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe they were.

Q His staying in office, were they discussed—was that discussed?

THE PRESIDENT: That's not part of the terms that NATO set out in the beginning.

Q So that question is simply left—

THE PRESIDENT: That question is left open. Now, he is subject to the jurisdiction of the International War Crimes Tribunal, which means that if he comes within the jurisdiction of any country that is cooperating with the United Nations, they would have an obligation to turn him over. But that was not a part of the terms necessary to secure return of the Kosovars and, therefore, we have to proceed with the conditions we set out—

Q And very quickly, will the troops, the peacekeeping forces, once they go in, be under unified command?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. They have to be. We have to have an organized, unified way of dealing with this, because their lives will be at stake, too.

Q All right. Let me turn to the situation of kids and guns. The House, in the next few weeks, is going to start debating a bill that includes some gun control measures that were passed by the Senate. And political points will be scored by both sides in that debate.

But you and I know, don't we, really, that it's not going to make a damn bit of difference—only on the margins—in the way kids get guns.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, I don't necessarily agree with that. I think the Brady Bill has made a real difference; having the background checks matters. We know that 250,000 people, from the time I signed the Brady Bill in '94 until last year, were unable to get handguns. We know just since the Insta-Check went in last year, another 36,000 people have been denied the right to get handguns. So closing the gun show loophole matters. Doing a background check for some other things I recommended, a background check for explosives as well—very important in the Littleton case—these things will matter.

Now, does more need to be done? I think so. I think that more does need to be done. The Speaker of the House agreed that we ought to make it unlawful for people under 21 to have handguns, and I was encouraged by that. And that's, of course, something I'm supporting.

Q But even with the checks—what you can't get in the front door, so many people go around and get in the back door. Forty percent of the gun sales in this country are unregulated; nobody checks them. There are a group of kids that you're going to meet in the next half-hour who are going to tell you, if I want to get a gun, I can go get one, and nobody's going to know about it, and I'll have it within a week.

THE PRESIDENT: That's true, but the more we move to make such transactions, and possession unlawful. And the more we move against people who perpetrate them, the more success we will have.

You know, it's funny—even the NRA says, well, we ought to prosecute crimes. Well, we ought to make the right things crimes, and we ought to make it unlawful for children to possess these weapons; we ought to make it unlawful for people to sell them to them or to transfer to them; and we ought to close the loopholes in the law. And as we do that, we will make a difference.

Also, keep in mind that the Littleton example is not the only example that we have to be mindful of. There are 13 children a day who are shot in America, who lose their lives, in ones and twos on the streets.

Q There's a Littleton every day.

THE PRESIDENT: So we have to make—anything we can do to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and kids, we ought to do.

Q But when you went to Littleton, a friend of yours who supports you on gun control said to me in the last 48 hours, the President, because, as he said, Littleton has seared the national conscience—the President had a chance to roar on gun control and he meowed—and that was a friend of yours. There are very basic measures that could be taken that people agree on. We register every automobile in America—

THE PRESIDENT: Absolutely.

Q -- we don't register guns. That's a step that would make a difference.

THE PRESIDENT: Look, let's join the real world here. You want to have an honest conversation? Let's have an honest conversation. I am the first President who ever took on the NRA. I got my party in Congress to stand with me on the Brady Bill, which has made a difference, on the assault weapons ban. We are now in the process of closing loopholes in the assault weapons ban.

What happened to them when they did that? In 1994, we lost between 12 and 20 members of the House of Representatives because they were targeted by the NRA for standing up for the lives of our children. Now, wait a minute. You talk about roaring and meowing—then I came forward with this legislation. Did this roar through the Senate? No. We passed a bill causing the gun show loophole by 51-50 because of the Vice President of the United States. Did the House of Representatives make a priority out of what was passed in the Senate and pass it right through? No. They went home before taking action. Why? To give the NRA time to lobby them, to water down what was passed.

Now, I have made it perfectly clear that I want to get what was passed in the Senate, passed in the House. Then we will come back and try to pass some more things, because Littleton did sear the conscience of the nation. The question is not whether we have seared the conscience of the nation; the question is whether, on gun issues, whether the people who now constitute the House and the Senate will pass what is sensible.

And I intend to do that. But for you to say that I shouldn't take what I can get because—and instead I should ask for things that I am absolutely positive will be defeated in the Congress, is quite wrong. And to ignore the fact—and whoever you talked about that you don't want to out here—to ignore the fact that my administration and my party took on this issue when no one else would and paid a huge price for it—and lost control of the House of Representatives in all probability because of it—and to pretend that this is an easy thing now because Littleton happened, is wrong. We are working very hard to pass sensible measures that will make a difference, that will save children's lives.

You say they won't save all lives. You say there are stronger measures that could be taken. You are absolutely right. You have no evidence that they could pass in this Congress.

Now, I will do my best to advocate more, but I am doing it—and I've made it clear. I want to do this in sequence. I want to pass what we've passed in the Senate in the House. Then I want us to come back with a second set of recommendations. I intend to keep working on this. I think this is going to take years. We have—the Congress is out of touch with the American people.

Q But let me come back to you on that. The polls—

I believe—really, the polls have shown that this country would accept registration of firearms. And yet we don't do that, and we're not fighting about regulation of guns—

THE PRESIDENT: That's because --

Q -- you regulate every other consumer product in America.

THE PRESIDENT: But you want to have a candid conversation. The reason is, this Congress came to power after the 1994 elections because in critical races the people who voted for more modest things, like the Brady Bill—which the polls showed the voters support—got beat. They got beat, Charlie.

Q But hasn't the NRA won the debate at that point?

Once we say—

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q -- it's politically impossible—

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q -- we can't do it—

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't say it was—

Q -- we won't propose it, hasn't the NRA—

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q -- basically framed the debate at that point?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I didn't say it was politically impossible. You say I should be recommending more; I ask you to look at the vote in the Senate, which historically has been more willing to deal with this than the House, and look at what we passed. We passed closing the gun show loophole—which, I don't care what you say, or my friend says these kids say, is a big deal—we passed it by one vote. One vote.

And you're saying, well, why didn't you recommend something more sweeping? And I told you that I intend to recommend further measures, but I'd like to pass what we have passed to the Senate, because it makes a difference. The things that we passed in the Senate will make a difference.

Should we do more? Should people ought to have to register guns like they register their cars? Do I think that? Of course, I do. Of course, I do. Now—but I tell you, the American people may have one opinion, but they elected the Congress and the Congress doesn't have that opinion. I'm going to do my best to move the Congress and the people can move them, but we can only—how foolish would it be for me to be debating this issue when these things are before the Congress, they can save children's lives, and I should blow by them because they're not enough? I don't think so.

Q I want to take you to the other room. There are some young kids in there who want to ask you about other things, about the glamorization of violence in the media, those kinds of things—about parental responsibility. We'll get to all of that. Come on in the other room, we'll do that.

THE PRESIDENT: Good.

Q Let's go to Diane in the Roosevelt Room.

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Q Good morning, America. I'm Charles Gibson.

Q And I'm Diane Sawyer.

And we continue our special two-hour broadcast on kids and guns from the White House. We have come into the Roosevelt Room, the President has accompanied us and we have been joined by the First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton. And for the next 30 to 35 minutes or so, we're going to broadcast without commercial interruption,

talking with a group of high school students that we have gathered from around the country about this subject.

Q And they are experts in some of the themes that we have all been talking about: accessibility of kids to guns, parenting, and whether this is a culture that glamorizes violence and whether that's what we want or not. So Charlie and I are going to take our seats in the Roosevelt Room bleachers here, and I'm going to start with Albert Smith, because I know you wanted to say something or ask something.

I should tell you, Mr. President and Mrs. Clinton, that Albert's sister was wounded in gunfire in Evanston, Illinois. She's all right now, but he has some pretty passionate feelings about all of this.

So, Albert, you begin.

ALBERT: Well, Mr. President, I listened to your interview and I couldn't help—well, I'm encouraged by the fact that you're working hard to pass some gun legislation, but how can I be sure that that legislation will prevent accidents like my sister being shot and various friends of mine? How can I be sure of that? And how spectacular is this legislation and what makes it different?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think, first of all, we can't say that any one law will make a difference. But I think if you look at the school shootings—and I think all of you know this, but we ought to say this to America—this is not just about school shootings, although they're very important, but 13 children are killed every day by guns on the streets, in the neighborhoods and various circumstances.

So I think there are basically three problems. You have more kids that are kind of at risk of violence. You have a culture that desensitizes and glorifies violence, and desensitizes people to it. And it's way too easy to get guns.

And so what I think we have to do is to work on all three things. And we've got to pass as much legislation as we can that makes it—keeps guns out of the wrong hands, and basically makes it harder for kids and harder for criminals to get guns. And this legislation will do that. It will help us close some of the loopholes; it will help us strengthen the background checks. It will also do something that was very important at Littleton and will become increasingly important with the Internet giving so much information to kids—it will put a lot of our background requirements for guns into explosives, too, which I think are very important. After the Littleton thing, I think we can all see that.

But I can't guarantee that. There are over 200 million guns in American society now, in a country of about 260-plus billion people. But we can make it a lot harder, and we can dramatically reduce the chances that such things will occur.

Q If I could, Mr. President, I would like to play a short clip here, because I want to ask the students about something, and I'd love to have Mrs. Clinton talk to this as well.

We keep talking about legislation, but what about you in schools? Reading through the notes, I was so surprised how many of you have known that a kid, a friend sometimes, had a gun in school, but you said you weren't sure you'd tell anybody about it.

Let me just show you a young man—he's a freshman, and he travels around the country showing how easy it is to walk into school carrying not gun, but guns. I want to play this clip.

(A video is shown.)

Q Twelve total guns. He does it as a warning to students and to teachers that it can be done without you being able to spot it, which raises this question I want to ask all of you. It's called

snitching, as we know, but how do you feel—will you all be willing to take responsibility if you hear someone threatening something, if you see somebody with a gun, telling an adult? And then, Mrs. Clinton, I'd love to know what you'd like to say to them about that.

Q If you saw a friend with a gun in school, how many of you would tell an authority?

STUDENT: Now I would.

Q Really, truly, truly, truly. Would you have two months ago, three months ago?

STUDENT: Yes.

Q Fewer.

Q They faced this, as you'll find out in just a few moments.

Mrs. Clinton?

MRS. CLINTON: I think that's a very important question, because when we talk about dealing with this issue we're really asking everybody to take responsibility. And I know that it's hard. I've been in lots of settings with lots of kids, talking to them. You know, sometimes you don't know whether to take somebody seriously. Somebody says that they're really mad or they're going to kill themselves or kill somebody else—it's sometimes hard to know whether they're just blowing off steam or whether there's something more there. But I think we ought to err on the side of caution.

And I was glad to see all your hands go up and I was glad you were honest enough to say that a couple of months ago that might not have been the way you would have felt. Because we're really going to have to look to young people also, not just adults and not just people in government positions, but everybody to figure out what we're going to do about this and to be more thoughtful and really try to respond.

And, more than that, if somebody is doing this, that person needs some help and needs some intervention or some supervision, or needs somebody to try to give them some guidance that they may not have otherwise.

Q Anybody here disagree and think you shouldn't be doing it? Go ahead.

CHRISSEY: My name is Chrissy and I'm from Kennedy High School. I'm a leadership training institute student. I was wondering what actions you think as a student that we can take in our community to help gun control further?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think there are a lot of things that you can do. On Mother's Day we took a pledge that I hope everybody would take, and I hope that a lot of parents listening would take it, too. I think that young people, especially teenagers, not to give any child unsupervised access to a firearm; not to go into homes, or let your younger siblings go into homes where you know guns are and are not safely stored and taken care of.

And I know this sounds like, you know, the nosey mother routine, but I think every parent—and I would suggest older teenagers, like yourselves, you need to find out what's in the homes you're going to. You guys are going to a party, make sure there are no guns around; make sure that the parents there keep them under lock and key if they have them. If you own a gun or you know people who do, make sure it's locked up and stored without the ammunition. In fact, make it stored where the ammunition is stored separately.

And then I believe that there is a lot of work that young people can do in schools through peer mediation and counseling to try to help solve problems, but I also think your voices need to be heard on this gun legislation debate.

You know, we've made some progress in the last several years with the Brady Bill and some of the bans on assault weapons, but we have a lot of work to do. And there's no reason why a lot of you who are about to be or already are 18 can't make sure your voices are heard on that, too.

THE PRESIDENT: If I could just say one thing, to go back to put the two questions together, there are some schools, some high schools, which have hotlines which young people can call if other students bring guns to school, and they know two things if they call. They know, number one, that the children will not be outed, their identities won't be disclosed if they call, and, number two, that some authority will check on the presence of the gun in the school that day. So I think that's really important. If it's a problem in schools throughout the country, it's a specific thing that some schools have used with great success.

Q Mr. President, if I could ask you, members of gun organizations say that the ability is there to do something about kids -- 6,000 kids in the last two years in schools found to have guns, but, in fact, only 13 were prosecuted for it. Do you think there should be more prosecutions, and do you agree?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. You know, I don't think all those kids, the reason they know that and the only reason they know that is that since I've been President, we instituted a zero tolerance for guns in schools, so the kids were sent home if they had the guns.

Now, it's up to the local prosecutors to decide whether to prosecute them. But you should know that the general argument that prosecutions are down is simply not true. And federal prosecutions are up by 30 percent of serious crimes, and overall gun prosecutions, state and federal, are up. And gun-related crimes are down.

This is a special problem—problems of violence against children by guns is a special problem that, in my view, you can make the prosecution argument. We ought to make it harder to get guns, we ought to deal with the culture and we ought to deal with the schools and the communities and help the parents and the kids do more.

Q I want to call on Leeanne Dews if I can, because you had your hand up. And, first of all, Leeanne, can I just tell the President and Mrs. Clinton that your sister was killed in Pearl, Mississippi.

LEEANNE: Yes. You had said something about zero tolerance in the schools—then why isn't it mandatory for metal detectors and police security at all schools?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think—let me say, generally we have not had a federal law that requires schools to do metal detectors, but what we do is we provide funds every year to help schools buy the security equipment. And I believe—when I saw that young man there take the 12 guns out of his clothing, I thought maybe we should do more in that regard.

A lot of schools are, for obvious reasons, reluctant to have metal detectors. But I think that the schools that have them have not had these instances, basically because you can't get in—at least inside the school.

Q I'm interested to know what percentage of you, since you all live with this problem every day, what percentage of you would be willing to accept metal detectors at your schools. And I'm going to take this a step further in a minute.

There is a county—we've got a little piece and I want you to take a look at it. It's a piece about a county, Bibb County, Georgia. And in Bibb County, it's the largest county in Georgia—it's never had a gun incident in schools. But they have police walking into classrooms. Take a look at this piece of videotape and you tell me what you think of it.

(A video is shown.)

Q Now, they're willing to sacrifice that. There's pictures of police walking and interrupting classes, checking students during class. Are you willing to go that far?

KATHRYN: My name is Kathryn Long, I'm from Kensington, Maryland. I know that at my school, after the Littleton incident, I was very interested in what my principal would do about it, and he was very calm about it. He focused on communication in how he talked to us, and that communication was important. And that made me feel safer.

I know that at my school, we don't have anything close to that much security. They've never had a gun at their school, but neither have we. And I know that at my middle school, there's a lot of security and I felt kind of really trapped in, and that was when I rebelled against it. And I'm not quite sure if making all teenagers feel like villains because there are a couple that brought guns, that that's a quick fix to the solution.

And maybe in the meantime, that would be important. But I don't think that you can lock down with police force. I think this is more of a societal issue. I mean, for years, kids have been teased and for ages kids have gone to school, but it's now in 1999 and the '90s that they're killing each other for it. I know that my parents' generation, to rebel, they made love.

(Laughter.) But we are rebelling by harming other people. I believe the media has a large part in it. And I disagree with things like metal detectors. There are ways to get around it.

Q Let me turn to Sarah McCarthy, who is here from McLean, Virginia. Do you have a comment on that?

SARAH: You, especially, Mrs. Clinton, have always encouraged "It takes a village to raise a child," and that whole idea, and bringing that into the school system and having everybody involved. But especially watching that piece, how do you draw the line between bringing in security, which I think is definitely needed, such as metal detectors, searches, things like that—drawing the lines, and then crossing over a line where students start to feel violated, their personal rights?

And I know there were threats at my school and, you know, there was extra security that day and everybody did pull together, but at the same time, having the policemen walking down the halls, in a way that brought in a fear that wasn't there before. And how do you draw the line between the two, between higher security and being safer and just personal rights?

MRS. CLINTON: I think that's a really important question, Sarah. And I think that we've got to go at this from so many different directions. The metal detector is much less intrusive than having random searches and the like. And I think each community has to do a very careful analysis of what they think is really going on with their kids. In places where metal detectors have been used, I think people feel that after a while it didn't become much of an intrusion—it's like getting on an airplane, we all do it these days.

But that's not the real problem. And so I think we have to both do what we can to protect kids, but we've got to do a better job of—going back to your point about creating a climate in which kids feel free to seek out help, kids feel that they've got support if they've got problems. Those guns are like a symbol of the problems they're bringing to school. So we need to do more to try to go on many different fronts to deal with this problem.

Q I want to turn to the issue, if I can, of glamorization of violence in the American culture, because I know we have a war going on here about video games and the extent to which they contribute and don't. But before we do, as a footnote, I'd like to ask Trey Carver, sitting next to me, just to tell for all the school officials out there, what happened when he says he went in to say he knew Thomas Solomon in Conyers, Georgia, and he felt there was trouble brewing.

TREY: I went in there at school, and at lunchtime we went outside to go use the pay phone and he took me in a corner and showed me a gun that he had in his book bag.

Q This is how long before the incident?

TRAY: I can't recall.

Q Weeks?

TREY: Yes, it was like a couple of weeks, probably.

And he showed it to me and said he was going to sell it after school. So later on that day, I was thinking—I thought to myself I needed to do the right thing, so I went to the office and said something about it. And then went and looked for him, but he had left school early. And the next day, they searched him, but they didn't find it on him. And a couple weeks later, he ended up shooting six people.

THE PRESIDENT: What do you think they should have done?

TREY: I think they should have done a lot more than they did. I think at least if they didn't, they should have called his parents and maybe had them maybe even look for it. I was going to ask you what more could be done than what's already done about a suspected gun at school.

THE PRESIDENT: These are questions that have also been asked in Colorado because of what was in the website, the kid's website and other places. And I think it's important that people like you, as I said, have a way to make these reports and then you know they're going to be systematically followed up on, either by the school or the law enforcement.

I also think it's important that when a young person like that is obviously in trouble, you not only try to get the gun away, but you try to figure out what the real problem is and what kind of help the kids need. And then it's provided in some sort of systematic way. A lot of these kids, I am convinced, could be turned away from this before it's too late if they could have been identified early enough.

And so I think we need a combination of, you know, go after the source of the—go after the guns and all that, and trying to deal with the kids. And I think—again I would say, I've been amazed in how many of these cases—I don't know what the facts are in Pearl or in Paducah—I do know in Springfield, Oregon, because I went out there to talk to the people there, that there are a lot of people who were really concerned about that young man before this happened.

So I think—we're going to have a mental health conference with Mrs. Gore and the Vice President, Hillary and I are, in a few days, and we're going to talk about what more can be done when the kids know that somebody is in trouble, to go really help them before this happens. Just like you knew. There should have been someplace else you could go where you would know not only would they try to get the gun, but there would be somebody all over that kid, in a positive way, trying to figure out what the deal was and how to help him move away from it.

NAOMI: I'm Naomi, from Fairfax, Virginia. And when people were talking about, like the metal detectors, we don't have that in our school. But I think it's just—I think kids are kind of being—it makes them uncomfortable. But when you think about it, what else are we supposed to do? I mean, it is happening and the Littleton stuff, I mean, so many people were killed. I mean, you'd think that we'd be able to trust kids and that wouldn't be happening in schools where you're supposed to be getting an education, but it is. And I don't think there's anything else we can do. I mean, there is, but I think that's one of the precautions we have to take—is, yeah, we're taking away some people's sense of security, but, I mean, that might also be taken away when somebody gets killed, you know?

Q Can we tackle this issue of video games, "Mortal Kombat," "Doom"—violence in the media? If somebody came to you and said tomorrow, we're just going to stop the violent video games, we're just going to cut them out and not do them in this country, what would you all say?

BRANDI: I agree, because if you look at it, I mean, Andy Griffith, for instance, was on for 30 years, you know, and there was nothing wrong with that, with a cop without a gun. You know, there was no violence. But now you've got the Roadrunner who dies every episode, bounces back 30 times. (Laughter.) And then you've got Mario who jumps off the cliff. Okay, he's dead, then he come back. Our child is violent because of that. And then you've got Barney, you've got Teletubbies, Sesame Street.

Society says, okay, they're homosexual so we can't show that to our young children. (Laughter.) Like they're going to know. (Laughter.) Come on, people. (Laughter) -- the shows that are teaching children good morals, but then you got shows up there like Mortal Kombat and something that says, if you want to kill your best friend, here's your chance. You know, hello, where's the people who—

Q Do you all think those games desensitize people?

ALBERT: I think they do. I think they definitely do. I mean, when—I have a nephew at home, and my nephew watches cartoons, and now, I look at those cartoons and I'm like, gosh, these are pretty graphic.

Q I'm going to come back at you about that point in a minute. Go ahead.

MISSY: I'm Missy Jenkins from Paducah. And I've noticed like when I watch something like that, something that's like with—you know, it doesn't affect me in any way. But there are some people that are a lot more sensitive. It makes it so much more of a reality to them, that they kind of use that as a way to take care of their problems.

Q Other countries—you know, Japan has maybe more violent video games than we do, more violent videos, and yet, a handful of killings every year by guns. The difference is guns.

THE PRESIDENT: But let's go back to what Missy said. I'm amazed that any of you said you were concerned about the video games, because most of the young people I've talked to, there's a lot of support for tougher gun control and for better security and for more support services, but a lot of young people I've talked to say—they say I'm an old fogey when I talk about the movies and the video games.

But here's the point I want to make. I want to make the point Missy did. Most of the kids are fine and will be fine under any culture. It's true, they show them in Japan and Europe and they don't have the killings. But what do we know about America? We know that in America, number one, we know more and do more of it in the aggregate. The average 18-year-old has seen 40,000 murders, and 200,000 violent instances over the media, number one—more of it. Number two, in our country our folks work harder, they travel more, they spend less time at home—on average, 22 hours a week—than they did 30 years ago. That's two years by the time you turn 18. Number three, it's easier to get guns.

So if you have vulnerable kids, where the line between reality and fantasy blurs, they are more likely to be influenced by this. And that's something I'd ask the rest of you to be sensitive to, because way over 90 percent of the kids are going to be fine, but it doesn't take many to change people's lives forever in a bad way.

Q I'm going to get a response here from Scott, because I happen to know that Scott is a "Doom" website master.

SCOTT: The problem I feel with basing all this on the violent video games and such, on these few incidents that have happened so far, is I know "Doom" alone has had—almost a quarter of

the country has played the game, pretty much. And there's—something like three or four of the people involved in shootings so far have been known to play the game, such as Eric Harris from Littleton, which they've been making a big deal out of that, of him having the website based on "Doom" and making his own add-on levels and such.

And it's just hard, I know, for, like, the entire rest of the people that play computer games—because I've spent the entire portion of this week on line talking to everyone else that I know of to get, like, what their reactions are for all this, and basically everyone just feels that because of these few people it's all, like, we've all become bad guys in the entire situation because of us playing the violent video games and things like that.

STUDENT: I don't think you can blame the video games. I think it's the—I mean, when you get exposed to it you become numb to it but, I mean, the people that are doing it are the people at fault. I mean, they might have some psychological problems, but I don't think you can blame other things.

STUDENT: I think it starts with parenting.

Q But the parent is saying, what can we do?

STUDENTS: I have a question, actually for Mrs.

Clinton. Do you feel that it's a lack of moral values and upbringing in our family that children are lashing out and acting this way? Do you hold the parents accountable for the actions that their children have committed in the Littleton incident, the Springfield incident? Or do you hold the children responsible for their own action, because these children were older than 14 years old?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think that's a hard question. I would just answer it like this: I think that our society as a whole has to take a hard look at personal responsibility and I think everyone has to be responsible for his or her own actions, so the individuals who have committed these crimes have to be held responsible. But we have to ask ourselves, what is it that leads a young person to feel so alienated, to feel so much hatred, to have unmet needs—whether they're psychological needs or whatever they might be—that would push them over the brink to do this. So I think we have to hold people responsible. And I think that something that Bill said is really important—it is just a fact that parents are spending less time with kids—now, that's a fact—than they did 20 or 30 years ago.

STUDENT: The cost of living has gone up, you've got to work.

MRS. CLINTON: People are working harder, people are commuting more hours, people are really unable, they believe, to invest the kind of time that I think you need to invest in raising children.

So there's many social issues. And I hope that this national campaign against youth violence that we're trying to get started here out of the White House is going to give people a chance to be engaged in a real honest conversation about what our priorities are and what we should spend our time doing.

THE PRESIDENT: I'd like to ask a question. How many of you talked to your parents about this within three days of the Littleton shooting? I think that's very important, because one of the things that we don't know—you asked Hillary a hard question about the parents of the children involved—obviously, I don't know them. I've wondered so much. But I think it's important that we understand that a lot of children are strangers in their own homes, and that—including kids that will never commit crimes. And somehow, I think we've really got to do something to rekindle, to give both the kids and the parents the courage to start talking to each other again, because I think it would minimize the chances of those things occurring.

TIFFANY: I have a comment on that. I'm Tiffany from Littleton, Colorado, and I have heard from Robin Anderson that Dylan's parents that day were concerned about him and that they thought something was troubling Dylan, and they said they wanted to talk to him that day after school. They were close with this son; it is not necessarily just his parents. He also did listen to violent music and did play violent video games, but so do many teenage boys. I don't think you can just pinpoint somebody by saying that. And I think that you have to dig deeper somehow and just make affection more apparent in society and have acceptance and just love. And I don't mean to sound like some hippie or something, but really, that's—I think the root of all of this is everybody just feels so negatively and doesn't know where they have an outlet.

THE PRESIDENT: I agree. Can I ask you one question? I'd like to ask all of you a question about this. And again, all I know about this is what people like you have told me. That is, you know, Hillary and I, we watch the television, we talk to the families of the children that were killed, and some of the young people who are still hurt. But I'd like for all of you to help us with this.

All the reports say that one of the things that drove these two young guys over the edge was that they felt that they were totally disrespected in the school; that they felt that there were groups that looked down on them and badmouthed them and tried to humiliate them; and that as a consequence, they not only wanted to get back at the people they thought had dissed them, but they were looking for somebody to look down on. And that's one of the things that made the African American young man a target.

How many of these kids do you think are violent because they think their contemporaries, kids treat them in a contemptible way?

TIFFANY: I don't think that they were treated that badly. I think that's been overexaggerated in a lot of instances. I think that it was more of like an absence of reality in their mind when they did it, because I don't think they were particularly out after anyone—they randomly shot people just from the lunchroom. I mean, they weren't after anybody in specific.

Q Excuse me, Tiffany. I just want to take a break, let all of our stations know, all of you who are just joining us that we are continuing our two hours live at the White House with President Clinton, Mrs. Clinton, 40 students from around the country talking about kids and guns.

Mr. President, if I could, I've heard people say there is some one thing that people in government and people in politics can do. They can say, we will not take contributions, political contributions, from anybody who is head of a company that puts out a violent movie, a movie that has a lot of shootings in it; we will not take contributions from companies that purvey violent video games; we'll just stop tomorrow. Willing to do it?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, would it have an impact? I don't think so, because then that would increase the relative influence of other people's contributions. I don't know. I think—let me just say this: Our administration has taken on not only the gun issue, we have taken on the entertainment issue ever since '93. And I would like to point out something. Your network and others have adopted a TV rating system, supported the V-chip, which is coming in all the new televisions. The Internet people have helped us with screening technologies for parents, with closing loopholes in the rating systems for the games. I mean, I think there has been some progress here.

I think the real problem we've got in the media is that this violence sells and I think that the rating system for the movies and television is a little too porous there. Again, I think it's more the exposure of young people before the lines between fantasy and reality are fully clarified.

That's the one thing that I would say to the young man in the back that defended the "Doom" game.

Look, I like to go to action movies. I love movies. But what happens is, if you look at the aggregate amount of violence—and it's not any one movie, it's the aggregate amount that young people see, and in video games, participate in—by the time they're grown, in their younger years, when they're most vulnerable, they are desensitized to the consequences of violence. There are over 300 studies which show this. This is not a matter of debate.

And I think the question is, what can we do to reduce the volume of violence to which our youngest people are exposed? And that's why we're doing what we can do on this, on the entertainment. But I will say this: the entertainment industry, at least in the beginning, has been more responsive to a lot of these things than the gun industry. Now the gun manufacturers are coming along, but I think the entertainment industry is going to have to do a lot more, a lot more.

Q But just a quick question. Sony makes the "Doom" game—I don't mean to pick out that one game—but Sony is a huge contributor to the Democratic Party. So you have access to the president of Sony. If you picked up the phone and were talking to him, what would you say to him?

THE PRESIDENT: I would ask him to change the game. And I think that we need to take steps to make sure that younger people don't get it. I think people get this stuff too young.

What you say, by the way, is right. Again I will say, most of the people that—you can show them things, they can play games or whatever and they're not going to be affected. But what you have to be sensitive to is if you fill a society with this and you have more kids that are more vulnerable anyway, because they have less supervision at home than in other societies and they have easier access to guns, then you have created a combustible mix which will lead you to more instances of young violence. That's the deal.

That's why—that's the argument I make to the entertainment industry all the time, that's why they should do more. And that's why the gun people should do more. And that's why parents and communities should do more. It's why you should do more to try to help identify children like this.

STUDENT: Then why have we added on to the violence by allowing the "s" word and the "a" word and the "b" word added on to now ABC, NBC, Channel 9, 7, 5? how come we added on to that with the violence on television, with "New York Undercover," "NYPD Blue," and now we allow those people to say those—language, not on just movies from Hollywood, but on our local TV stations now? So we just added on to the problem, so it's just going to keep building and building and building.

And Littleton and Springfield are now—they couldn't take any more and it just crumbled. This is kind of like—people use this as their First Amendment right that we can say this, but we just added on to it.

KATIE: My name is Katie Guthrie, and I live in Reston, Virginia. I just want to say, everybody sitting here, I've just been listening to everybody say everything. It seems like everybody is looking for someone to blame, something to blame—like the video games, the TV shows, the authorities. But nobody is looking at the kids that are doing it. Why isn't anybody saying, what was wrong with these kids, what was going on in these kids' heads? You know, you can't blame a video game and a movie that thousands of other kids play and, like, deal with every single day for one kid that went and did something. You know, I feel like everything is getting stereotyped here.

Q I think that's a good point, Katie, but I think we also have to talk about the fact that there's so many accidental shootings in this country as well, of kids. So we're not just talking about a few troubled kids.

Q I hate to do this. We're going to have to put a "to be continued" on this, because Presidents and First Ladies have schedules.

THE PRESIDENT: Why don't we stay 10 more minutes and listen to the kids? If you'll let them talk. I want to hear from the kids—

MRS. CLINTON: We could stay longer. I want to hear from them. (Applause.)

Q Okay.

JONATHAN: Mr. President, my name is Jonathan Schnerit and I'm from McLean, Virginia, and I attend Langley High School. And it does seem like it's rather hard to attack all of the people and the kids and the violence. But I talked to Senator Howell from the Virginia State Senate yesterday and she addressed gun control and research by Virginia with smart guns. And from what I understand, they're guns in which the owners are the only people who can fire them because of their fingerprints. And it seems like from all these schools that the guns were stolen from their parents or from other places. I was just curious as to how you stand on this topic.

THE PRESIDENT: First of all, I think it's very important. I think that one of the things we've been trying to do and that the gun manufacturers—and I want to say something positive about the people that are trying to help. The gun manufacturers, most of them, have agreed to work with us and now support legislation to require child trigger locks, which will be somewhat helpful. Now, older children can figure out how to undo them, but still they'll save a lot of accidental deaths, and they're important.

Pretty soon, you will have technology available which you can put into the guns that will raise the costs some in the beginning, like all technology does, but like all technology, the costs will come down quickly, which will mean that only people who have the right fingerprints can fire the gun. And that will be a huge thing.

Then, we'll have to do a lot gun buy-back programs and other things in communities that will increase safety, and it's important.

Q Let's hear from people who haven't spoken.

JEN: Well, everybody's trying to think about like try and pinpoint what is causing this, and obviously that is an impossible task. That's why there's so much debate going on here. But with all due respect, have you thought about going on this in a positive manner, such as, along with the background checks, require a safety course to be taken? I mean, hunters are required to take a safety course, so why doesn't everybody else who owns a gun have to take a safety course?

Q We should say, by the way, you have—

JEN: I'm from Bethel Park High School and I'm the co-captain of our rifle team. And I had never shot a gun when I walked into practice the first day. The first thing I learned was safety, safety, safety. And I don't see why the first time anybody else picks up a gun it should be any different. I mean, even with all these child-proof locks and these fingerprinted guns, there's still accidental deaths. So if parents are taught gun safety, they can instill it into their kids so that all these accidental shootings will not occur. I mean, a lot of—we have some positive legislation—  
THE PRESIDENT: It's one thing that I would like to see the NRA do. When I was Governor of my state, I worked with them and they did a lot of very good work on hunter education programs just like you're talking about, and nobody should have a gun that hasn't been trained to use it.

You can't get a driver's license unless you can drive a car, and I completely agree with you about that.

Q Chad?

CHAD: I have a question, Mr. President, I was just wondering why semiautomatic guns and automatic guns and automatic guns and semiautomatic rifles and stuff that are obviously not used for hunting purposes are sold in stores. What purpose do they serve?

THE PRESIDENT: No, but I tried to ban them all in 1994, and we were able to ban 19 kinds of assault weapons. But the people who were against what I was trying to do were able to keep some loopholes in the law, one of which we're closing now, to have these big magazines in the guns, you know, the big clips. And a lot of the imported weapons are still legal. So I spent the last five years trying to get rid of all them. I think they should all be rendered illegal. They also grandfathered in those that were in existence before '94, but I think all of them ought to be taken off the markets. That's what I think. And I'm going to try to keep making progress with Congress to do that.

ELIZABETH: Mr. President, I'm Elizabeth Sutton. I'm from Reston, Virginia, and I attend South Lakes High School. And a moment ago, you said that the technology on guns will raise the prices, and you almost sounded like it was a good thing that those prices would go down. They're raising prices on—

THE PRESIDENT: No, it's a good thing they'll go up.

ELIZABETH: I thought you said that they were—you said, of course, it will go down. I don't think they should go down. I think the price should continue to be raised, like cigarettes—they're being raised and raised and raised to encourage kids not to spend their money on something like that. And I think it's really important to raise it as high as you can, to make it almost impossible for kids to get guns, because there's no excuse for any of what's been going on.

THE PRESIDENT: I agree with you. I didn't mean to—I was just pointing out that when we try to get these things through Congress as requirements, that's one of the things that will always be said. But I think it ought to be—I think this identification thing Jonathan mentioned can make a big difference.

ROBERT: Yes, I'm Robert from Woodrow Wilson. And I was wondering about the toy guns, because I've been looking at TV, I notice that children have been accidentally grabbing actual guns that they've mistaken as a toy gun. And I've seen the actual toy gun, and it looks just like an actual gun. What are your opinions on that? Don't you think that something needs to be done about toy guns, too? They look too realistic.

MRS. CLINTON: That's a really good point. I know that toys can be regulated by the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and I'll have—we'll carry this message. I'll ask the people over there to give us a report about that, and see if there's anything further they can do.

Q I'd like to ask, if I could, Marc Kramer, to stand up over there, because you've got a story to tell about somebody in this room—

MARC: Yes I do. My name is Marc Kramer. I'm from Chicago. I attend Mount Carmel High School. I'm representing the Hands Without Guns organization in Chicago. And it's an organization for youth violence prevention.

As a factor in my story, I accidentally shot my best friend with a gun that was very easily put into my possession. And, personally, I'm wondering how you feel personally about the background checks on the purchase of guns. Do you personally believe that background checks can honestly prevent guns from falling into wrong hands?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, but it can't prevent all of them. That is, it—we have actual numbers on it. We know how many people we've prevented from getting handguns, because they had criminal records, since we've put it in. But there are so many guns, that it doesn't prevent everybody from getting it.

And one of the real problems is, when children are in places where they have easy access to guns, then you can have what happened—you're a brave guy to be here. Where's your friend? Which one's your friend? You want to say something about this?

MICHAEL: Michael Robbins. I just wanted to know, children getting guns these days and whatever, it's easy to obtain a gun now. If you go and tell an authority that someone you know has a gun in your school, how can you protect yourself from being the victim, if that person finds out you told the authorities?

MRS. CLINTON: That's where I think, Michael, the point that the President made earlier about an anonymous hotline, where you could get that information in without even having to leave your name—would that be better?

MICHAEL: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: See, I went to T.C. Williams High School, right across the river here, where I don't think they have medical—excuse me—metal detectors.

Q It's early. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: It's early. But they have this hotline, they have the student hotline. And if a student there knows that somebody has a gun who shouldn't, they know two things if they call, and both things are important. One is, they know they won't be identified, and two is, they know there will be some responsible person to actually follow up on it. So I think that is something that other schools should consider doing.

Q I've heard of one proposal that schools should be told in advance which homes have guns, so if they spot a troubled kid they know that he's in a home that has a gun. What do you think about that? How would your parents feel about that?

MIKE: My name is Mike Cullen, from Northern Virginia, Fairfax. About what she just said, do you think there's a difference between owning a hunting rifle or a handgun, or is there any way you could tell beforehand if, you know, the penalty should be more for a handgun or assault rifle? Do you think there should be a bigger punishment?

Q And Mike is a hunter.

MIKE: I'm a hunter, by the way. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, a lot of avid sports people would tell you that they do some of that with handguns, too. But generally, yes, I think there's a big difference between assault weapons and other weapons. Some people claim they use them for sporting purposes, but no one needs them. And there is a difference between handguns and other weapons, because handguns are used more, they're easier to conceal and they're more likely to be used for illegal purposes and less likely to be used for legal purposes. Therefore, I think it is legitimate to have higher standards on owning them and greater requirements on background checks and greater requirements on whether they should be registered or not. That's what I believe.

Q Mr. President, if I could, we now have the tyranny of the computer and the clock coming. And we can't thank you both enough for joining us, letting us be here this morning. (Applause.) We appreciate it.

And we'll take a break. We'll take a break. We'll be right back. (Applause.)

END

8:15 A.M. EDT