

10/16/93
David Dinkins Fundraiser

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
AT NEW YORK CITY MAYOR DAVID N. DINKINS FUND-RAISER,
GRAND HYATT, NEW YORK CITY

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I would openly amend Matilda Cuomo's beautiful description of the Mayor as "a man with harmony in his heart" by adding "and fire in his belly."

(Applause)

If you don't know why you should vote for David Dinkins now --

(Laughter)

-- after hearing that, I think we had better repeat it, because it had all of the reasons that any of us, men, women, children, can possibly care about as we face this important decision in this election.

You know, I wouldn't be here on a personal basis because I like David and Joyce Dinkins.

(Applause)

I met them before he was mayor, when my husband and I were living in Arkansas and had time to spend with him and were struck then by what a gentleman he was, what a committed public servant he was. I'd be here for political reasons, because I'm a Democrat, and I want to see the Democrats hold onto the mayor's job in New York City.

(Applause)

I don't think I can overemphasize the importance of what Mrs. Cuomo said earlier. This is the first time that

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the City and the State of New York have now a President in a long period who really cared about New York, who wanted to help New York --

(Applause)

-- and New York City, and who wanted this old-fashioned idea that the cities and States and our national government were partners in trying to make this country what it ought to be.

So it is my fervent hope that we will continue the administration of Mayor Dinkins just when he finally has an opportunity to have an open door and an open ear in Washington, D.C.

(Applause)

But I guess the real reason I am here is because I care so much about the quality of our public life. I care about what kind of people we are, what our options are, what direction we are headed together.

And if one takes a step back from the immediacy of this time and this election in this great city, I think that it's fair to say we truly are at a crossroads in our country. We have two very clear paths before us.

We can continue the path that we started down in 1980, a path that really put us all at risk, because we elevated self-interest and greed, we pushed people aside, we ignored our problems, thinking, I guess, if we ignored them, they would somehow go away. And we are reaping in a whirlwind because of that.

Or we can take this new direction that leaders like the President and your Governor and your Mayor have been pushing us toward, against great odds, because we have created in our land such insecurity among our people.

You know, it is very difficult, when people are insecure, whether it is on a personal level or on a broader community basis, to summon them to take care of themselves, to watch out for each other, to lead productive lives, to have faith in the future. And all around us now, we have

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millions of our fellow citizens who have been rendered insecure by conditions over which they have little or no control.

What do we say to the men and women who went to work years, maybe decades ago for companies and put their time in, day after day, only to find they no longer have a job, they are considered redundant, they're reorganized out of existence? They never thought that would happen. They tried to do their best, and now they don't see that job waiting for them. They don't know if that layoff will ever end.

The American Dream is to assume that if a young man like David Dinkins, being raised by his mother and other women, got an education and worked hard, there was a future for him. Too many of our young people today, the kind that young people in Matilda Cuomo's mentoring program tries to reach, don't know if they have a future, don't know whether they should even stay in school because there may not be a job available for them.

We have turned the whole economy of our country upside-down as we have tried to make accommodations with the changes in the global economy. And for long, those human problems resulting from those economic changes were not considered to be important. Well, we were willing to extend unemployment, but we weren't willing to roll our sleeves up to help people be reemployed and to regain the dignity that comes through work.

So it's essential that we have an administration at the city and the State and the national level who understands that economic development and economic change can be a wonderful challenge, but we have to help people become secure enough to take advantage of those changes. We have to create jobs. We have to retrain workers. We have to care about each other in our workplaces.

(Applause)

And if we do that, we can begin again to look straight into the eyes of the young men and women, the kind that Clare Shulman (phonetic) saw together at one of the colleges in Queens during the campaign, who come in and

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worked hard for their education, often taking care of a family, often working one or two jobs. We can look them in the eyes and say, "There is future for you. Keep doing what you're doing."

And how can we expect our people to feel secure if they don't have health insurance, or if the health insurance they have is not adequate, or they are eliminated from coverage because they get sick? How can we expect them to be secure if there are no providers or facilities in the neighborhoods in which they live?

The right of every American to have access to secure health care and a benefits package that includes preventive care must be addressed and must be passed this year before the Congress (inaudible).

(Applause)

But again, we have heard the rurals' commitment to health care, particularly to women and children and their needs. When we leave here, the Mayor and I will go to one of the clinics that his Communicare Program has established, to see first-hand how it works, to visit with the doctors and the nurses and the patients who are there, because this Mayor sees health care not as some abstraction to be talked about, but as a service to be delivered to real people.

And there will be too many times in the next year, as we debate health care, when the faces are lost in a blur of debate over what we should or shouldn't do. And I want all of us to remember that behind this debate are millions and millions of Americans -- maybe some in this room -- who are not secure because their most basic needs are not met.

And this President needs a mayor, as we move to implement health care reform, who cares about the people of New York and their health care problems.

(Applause)

And a third source of insecurity that I would mention is the one that has been widely displayed through the this election ever since the beginning, physical security.

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You know, as women, we may feel that more strongly than our male friends and family members.

There's a wonderful exercise that a woman law professor I know does at the beginning of her classes each semester, when she says, at the beginning of her criminal law course, "I want you all in the class to take a few minutes and write down the things that you do every day to avoid being the victim of a crime."

And the male students all kind of look at each other, like "What is this?" And the women -- you know, they all start, everything from you get your keys to your car out so they're ready. You know, you run faster. You park under lights. All of the things that we do that we take for granted. You add another deadbolt to the door. All the stuff that we do. And that very starkly makes the case that physical security is an issue that touches all Americans, all New Yorkers, and that has particular importance for women.

Well, if all we do is to continue the policies of the last 12 years, I don't think any of us will feel any more secure.

(Applause)

We right now, in our country, incarcerate a higher proportion of our citizens than any other country on earth, and we still have more violent crime than any other country on earth.

(Applause)

We cannot possibly our horrendous crime problem by building more prisons --

(Applause)

-- incarcerating more people, mandating longer sentences that have not worked and will not alone work.

(Applause)

Now, does that mean, because I say to you, look at the evidence, how many more people can we incarcerate? And

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to know that it has not worked, does that mean that somehow I think we should let people go free? Well, I'm sure that you'll hear some folks say that, but my remarks are recorded.

(Laughter)

So let me go on the record right now. I have been mugged in my life. I have been the victim of crime. I think there are lots of people in our society who should be put away and, frankly, never let out. And I'd like to see it happen sooner instead of later.

(Applause)

But I also think there are some practical things we should be doing right now to solve this problem that your Mayor has begun to do. We need more police on our streets --

(Applause)

-- and we need them in community-policing operations, and we need we move to faster on it.

(Applause)

And for all the rhetoric about crime that we have heard for the last years, which president -- this is a little quiz.

(Laughter)

Which president has actually proposed a crime bill that will put more police on the streets in cities like New York?

AUDIENCE: Bill Clinton.

MRS. CLINTON: Bill Clinton. That's right.

(Applause)

You know, the Clinton administration crime plan calls for more police officers, because my husband made this rather remarkable discovery a few years ago as a Governor, which was that because of the burdens imposed on the States

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and cities by the federal government under Reagan and Bush, they have had to spend more money on what Washington told them to and less money on what they wanted to, including law enforcement.

(Applause)

And, you know, we hear a lot about what cities have to do and what States have to do. The burdens that been placed on New York can be directly laid at the feet of those who ran the national government during the 1980s who said, "Do more, and we're going to give you less to do it."

(Applause)

Well, they lost, left the government basically bankrupt, and headed out to wherever they head out to after they leave town --

(Applause)

-- telling the new administration, "The deficit is your problem. The crime problem is your problem. All of these things are your problems."

Well, unlike some previous officeholders, this President, this Governor, this Mayor are willing to say, "We will handle the problems. Thank you very much. It's not going to be easy, but we will take responsibility for the real problems --"

(Applause)

Having thought about this problem of crime and violence for a long time, my husband wants to spend some money to put more police on the streets.

You know, we have fewer police per capita on our streets today than we did at the end of the 1950s. There used to be three police officers for every felony committed. Now there are three felonies for every police officer.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out you need more police on the streets in order to deal with what is going on on the streets, but not in the way we had

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become to accustomed to using police officers. They need to be routed again in their communities. They need to walk the streets so that they know what --"

(Applause)

Title I of the crime bill the President has presented will authorize \$3.4 billion over the next six years to put 50,000 more police on the street in community-oriented policing.

In addition to that, he will use the Police Corps, National Service, the Safe Schools Programs, Empowerment Zones, Truce to Cops, and other programs to try to get more police on the streets and to have them trained so that they can really be useful, productive members of a community effort to turn back crime.

Now, we know that this will work. It has worked in this city, where it has been tried, but it should not be left just to New York City. This is not just a problem of any one city. This is a national problem.

And the second part of what we need to do to increase our sense of physical security is to get the guns off the streets and --"

(Applause)

I don't know how much longer we are going to waste before we recognize that the level of violence is directly related to the number of guns in the hands of teenagers, who themselves have been rendered insecure, who do not know what it means to look forward to the future, whose lives are disorganized, even dysfunctional, who don't don't understand what it means to postpone gratification or to control impulses, and who need some structure to enable to them to lead productive lives.

But in the meantime, let's disarm them. And there are several things we can do to bring that about.

(Applause)

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This Mayor has always been for the Brady bill. This President is for the Brady bill. And we want to be able to pass the Brady bill (inaudible) as soon as possible.

(Applause)

We also want some additional laws regarding guns, because if we had been able to pass the Brady bill when the previous administration, which included the opponent of the Mayor, were in office, perhaps we would have a head start on dealing with violence. Because we were unable to do so, we need to take some additional steps. We need a national ban on assault weapons.

(Applause)

We need a national ban --

(Applause)

We need a national ban on the possession and ownership of handguns by teenagers, and we need --

(Applause)

Now, is this going to be easy, to take these guns off these streets? Of course not. Are there strong forces arrayed against it and people in political leadership who don't want to buck the gun lobby? Of course there are. But for heaven's sakes, don't let New York and anybody else enlist a public official too cowardly to stand up against the gun lobby --

(Applause)

With respect to physical security, there are some other things we need to be doing. We need different kinds of incarceration, particularly for juvenile offenders. We need a broader use of boot camps and other kinds of structured settings where young men and women --

(Applause)

-- can get drug treatment and education and other kinds of assistance.

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We need to be more innovative in how we deal with the problems in the neighborhoods that spawn the violence that we are looking at. We need to be tough. We need to be very straightforward in what we expect, but we cannot be hypocritical. We need to provide some opportunities, recreational opportunities and other kinds of opportunities, for young people.

(Applause)

The saddest thing I've seen when I go in the cities is to drive down a street late in the afternoon and not see any children playing. And why should they be? Their parents are afraid to send them out to play. They're afraid to let them go to the playgrounds. They're afraid to let them walk to and from school on their own.

I don't think you will find any people more enraged about violence than the mothers of New York City who keep their children inside --

(Applause)

But instead of just talking tough rhetoric, instead of sounding good at election time, let's reward the efforts of someone who has tried, against a lot of odds and with no help from Washington, to do the things I'm talking about, from community policing and getting guns off the street to providing opportunities for kids to get their lives better organized and to learn how to be productive citizens.

So I would come here for personal and political reasons, but I would mostly come because I think it is very important what kinds of choices we make about our future. All of these issues, getting jobs for people, getting health care for people, getting a solid community front against the violence that stalks our streets are not just separate issues to be talked about at election time. They are values about what kind of people we are, what we care about.

I grew up in a time where it was a lot easier to be a child, where the future was taken for granted, back in the 1950s and early 60s, when my mother would say to me, as I got my bike with friends in the morning, "Be back in time for

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dinner," where I was free to be out on our streets and make my mistakes and learn from them and keep on going, where the neighborhoods were filled with people who looked out for one another, where the neighbor lady across the street was looking out her kitchen window and making sure we were behaving even if my mother wasn't home. It was a life, I would imagine, that most of you can remember.

And look what we have done to the lives that our children are leading now, because the world around us changed and we refused to understand the new challenges. And we had political leadership that did not lead but pandered and followed.

So we have a lot of work ahead of us. And it will not be easy, because we have to reverse some trends and change some values and build some structures that have fallen into disrepair. But if we expect this county, this State, this city to be the kind of place that we are proud of, that makes all of us feel secure about the future so that we can go forward together, then we have to be careful about the kind of leaders we choose. We need healers and builders. We need those who bring hope and optimism. We need people whose lives speak to the struggles that millions are going through right now.

And if we are willing to make a commitment to that kind of leadership, then we also have to make a commitment to be that kind of citizen and to commit ourselves and our resources to making this city and State and country what we want it to be and what will make us proud to be a part of it. So for all those reasons, I'm proud to support the reelection bid of Mayor Dinkins.

(Applause)

(The remarks were concluded.)

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