

AME Church

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
TO THE AME CHURCH

Washington, D.C.

MRS. CLINTON: Thanks to you all who have gathered this evening, and thank you for inviting me to be a part of this truly extraordinary evening for citizens of this city and particularly for our children.

I want to congratulate all who have worked to this point. It is a beginning, but what an impressive beginning it is. The Washington Interface Network has brought together committed groups of people and church congregations and organizations from every neighborhood and every ward in this city. Sitting here and looking out at all of you I know you feel as I do the energy, the hope and the spirit in this sanctuary.

If we are able to maintain this energy and hope and spirit and translate the speeches and the ideas and the plans into action, then we will, starting tonight, make a profound difference in this city. And we should, because the time for sitting and worrying over news reports on the state of affairs in our city are over. (Applause.) It is time for all of us to ask ourselves and our neighbors what can we do because there are solutions to every problem which faces us in Washington. Every problem in America has been solved somewhere in America. Now, we need to bring those solutions home.

And that is especially important when it comes to the state of education. We cannot allow our parents to lower their expectations. We cannot allow our children to limit their ambitions. We have to make a decision that each of us will commit ourselves to ensuring that our schools are better, our schools are open, our parents are involved, our children are learning and growing -- (inaudible) -- (Applause.)

There are many things that can wait in this world but our children cannot. You know the bible says, "train up a child in

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the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." Well, each child presents us with an opportunity to help mold citizens who will follow a path of personal responsibility and civic duty. And, so, when we look at the plans that win, that you have worked on, we see how critical it is as we heard from the principal, the teacher and the students to do what is necessary to improve our schools, to engage our parents and to keep the doors open from 3:00 pm until 6:00 pm. Those schools should be not only a safe-haven but a learning environment. They should be busy with the sound of children and adults who are trying to learn and teach one another.

This will give our children and each of us, as an adult who wishes to participate, the chance to really make a difference. One of my predecessors, Lady Bird Johnson, once said, "children are likely to live up to what you believe of them." Tonight we are saying that we believe in our children. We believe in their future. (Applause.)

As I travel around the country it doesn't matter whether I'm in an inner city neighborhood in Philadelphia or in a small town outside of Duluth, Minnesota with a predominately Hispanic-American student body in Corpus Christi or with a poor school of African Americans and Hispanics in the San Fernando Valley, the problems are the same and the solutions are the same. Our children need our love, our attention, our discipline, our commitment, our time and our energy. (Applause.) And we can see the difference that occurs in a child's life when that happens.

I have sat across a table from elementary school children and middle school students and high school young people and they've all said the same thing: Mrs. Clinton, we are good kids. We are tired of the bad kids getting all the publicity. Somebody has to give us a chance -- (applause.)

The President and I will stand with you in WIN, we will work with you in WIN. I hope that we will meet in six months, a year and in five and 10 years from now and say this was the night that we stopped wringing our hands and instead rolled up our sleeves. (Applause.) Make a commitment to ourselves and to each other but mostly to our children.

I believe with all my heart that the time has come in Washington, as it has around America, for those of good faith, people who care about bringing each other together, people who know we will still have differences -- there aren't two people who agree with each other on everything; just stay married long enough, you'll figure that out -- (laughter) -- but on the big things that count and on the goals we should have as a society and a city we stand as one tonight.

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And if we move forward as one with the grace of God we can win on behalf of our children.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

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