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**PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION**

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON  
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS FOR OHIO UNIVERSITY  
ATHENS, OHIO  
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President Glidden, Chairman Emrick, Trustees, Administrators, Faculty,  
Alumni, Guests, Friends and, most of all, the Class of 1997:

I felt a sense of involvement with you, when Josh in his very affecting personal remarks, said that it had taken some of you five years, and so in a way, my first visit here in 1992 is fittingly brought to a close with this class, by my being able to join you at graduation. It is a great privilege and honor to be once again on this campus because what you have heard from your administrators and the alumni is true. This university's reputation for excellence and commitment to higher education has grown by leaps and bounds, and those of you who support this fine institution here in this state, should be especially proud of these graduates, for they are among the best that the United States has to offer. [Applause]

To the parents and relatives in this audience, we owe special thanks. Many of you have made sacrifices to make this day possible, and you have every reason to be proud of your sons and daughters, husbands and wives, nieces and nephews, and other loved ones who are graduating. You should also feel proud of yourselves, because you have understood the importance of investing in higher education, and so this in many ways is your celebration as well.

And to the students who are graduating, and achieving higher degrees today, I know that this has been an experience that you will take with you as you do enter in into the world of work in the larger community beyond the beautiful hills of the Ohio River Valley. But you have been very fortunate to have spent your time here on this university campus.

There is no better incubator for democratic values than a university campus. For most of us, college is a practice field for the responsibilities and opportunities that come with living in a free society. Your campus is a haven of free speech and free thought, a collective meeting point for men and women of different attitudes, interests, opinions and aspirations. And it's a place where one has to learn how to strike a balance between the rights and needs of individuals and those of the larger community.

That is essential training for any democracy. But it is particularly important for America today, as we stand on the brink of a new century. Because we are, as my husband often says, the indispensable nation. The remaining great superpower. There is no one who can match us in terms of security or defense, or military, or economic power. We live at a time where we are blessed not to have any external enemies that have missiles pointed at us.

But we still face challenges. And we will need the brains and talents of everyone in this arena, but particularly of the graduates today. As we look around the globe, we can be very pleased that the ideals of America that many in this audience fought for in the Second World War, or in Korea, or in Vietnam, or in the Gulf -- those ideals are now embraced more widely than ever. For the first time in history, more than half the people in the world live in democratic governments that they have elected themselves.

Here at home we have an economy that has expanded to be the strongest in a generation and the strongest in the world. We are reducing crime and expanding educational opportunity and cleaning up the environment. We are global leaders in the fast-paced changes of science and technology.

Yet despite this progress, we cannot fully escape the tensions that arise in periods of such profound transformation. Global competition has enflamed old hatreds and burdened us with new ones. In place of a communist threat, we confront the scourge of drugs, terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction. While people from Athens, Ohio, to Athens, Greece, may wear the same jeans and eat the same fast food and listen to the same music, that doesn't mean that those of us here in the United States and others around the world aren't still looking for more meaning in our lives and aren't looking for ways that we can advance our own ideas in the face of the pressures that we confront. Think about what it means to raise children today in the consumer culture. How we balance the forces of government and the marketplace. How we overcome those divisions that have too often meant that America has not lived up to our own stated ideals.

Today in San Diego, the President is asking all Americans to join him in an unprecedented national conversation about race. Over the next year, he will conduct town meetings around the country in an effort to promote an honest dialogue about our history and future as a multiracial democracy. And he's assembled an advisory panel of seven distinguished Americans to help with a plan of action that can move all us closer to our ideals of equality.

Now the President well knows that confronting such a sensitive, painful issue is a steep challenge. Yet he is hopeful, that despite the lingering scars of the past, and despite prejudices, and stereotyping, and misunderstanding between people, we can find in our diversity new strength and unity. And he knows that it will be important for America to do so.

I know from my own experience how valuable it was for me, as a child growing up in an all-white suburb of Chicago, to be exposed to children of different backgrounds. I didn't go to school with them. I didn't play on teams with them. But through my church, I was involved in worship and service projects with black and Hispanic teenagers in the city. We discussed civil rights and other controversial issues. We opened each others' eyes and we tested our own assumptions and presumptions.

When I was 14, our youth minister took a group of us to hear Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., speak at Orchestra Hall in downtown Chicago. This was the early 1960s and there were more

than a few raised eyebrows among the adults in our congregation who wondered why any Church group should be doing that. But I remember how impressed I was to hear about racial reconciliation and tolerance. And to this day I'm grateful to my youth minister.

While race relations have improved in tangible ways during the past few decades, we do have some work ahead of us. But how do we move ahead?

Well, first, we have to talk openly and honestly with each other.

A few months ago, I had the privilege of traveling on behalf of our country to Africa. I visited six nations, including South Africa. And while I was in Capetown, I went with Archbishop Desmond Tutu to a meeting of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

That Commission, which the Archbishop chairs, was appointed by President Nelson Mandela to investigate abuses and crimes that occurred during 40 years of racial apartheid. Those who come forward to confess to acts of racial hatred or violence are given amnesty in exchange for their testimony.

It is an extraordinary undertaking. In one of the least likely places in the world -- South Africa -- blacks and whites together are confronting their past with all of its ugly brutality on both sides, and forgiving those responsible so that they can start together to heal their nation build a true multi-racial democracy. Against great odds, they have searched deep inside themselves and chosen reconciliation over retribution.

As President Mandela has said: "We are not going to forget what happened to us, but we are going to forgive. Because, after all, we are all warmed by the same summer and chilled by the same winter. And it is recognition of that common humanity that shall bind us into a nation."

Our nation represents one of civilization's great experiments. We are now the longest lasting democracy. We have drawn our people from every corner of the globe. And we have depended upon our success, year after year, for those people who have the feeling in their heart of being an American, to overcome whatever obstacle stands in their way.

So we have to have an honest dialogue, and we have to face the facts.

Most minorities in our country work. Most new immigrants learn English. Most pay taxes, obey the law, take care of their families, share the same convictions, fears and aspirations as all of the rest of us. And yet too often that is not how they are seen, because of the stereotype images that come hurdling toward us day after day across the media. We have to overcome that. And we have to create more opportunity for all Americans to fulfill their God-given potential.

We cannot afford to deprive any portion of our population of the opportunity to participate fully in the economic, social, and political life of our country. Because to deprive any

means we lose their talents, their abilities, what they can give back to us.

And as we look around this great arena, we know that there are many graduating today who come from different backgrounds, have different religions, share in different cultures. And by bringing them together here on this campus, they've not only had book-learning, they've had life-learning. And so the President in his remarks today said we need to keep our university campuses filled with the vitality that different kinds of Americans bring to the campus. We need to be looking for the benefits that we will ourselves feel because we are rubbing elbows with, sitting in classes with, working on projects with, and competing with, people from different backgrounds.

Creating one America, just as you have created a unified campus, is not only vital to our spirit as Americans, but to our place in the world as the beacon for democracy and freedom. We are unique in the diversity we represent and in the level of racial harmony we have achieved. At this moment around the world, people are killing each other because they are of different religions or tribes or ethnic backgrounds.

From the streets of Belfast, to the killing fields of Burundi, to the countryside of Bosnia, the world looks to us as an example of how people can live and work together in a free society. So as the President begins this conversation, I hope all of us will take part. It may be discomforting to some extent, for some of us. Others may think it will not be of any benefit, and there's no point in trying--people just are different, and that's the way we should view each other. But I think there is a lot we can learn from an honest conversation. And there is an example we can set.

I want just to leave you with two images, that whenever I think about America, come flooding into my own mind.

Last year, I had the chance to visit American troops who are part of the NATO peacekeeping force in Bosnia. It was an unforgettable experience, and I believe I even mentioned it when I was here in October. Because I will never forget the feeling I had as I went by helicopter from Tuzla, which was the main American base, to two outposts -- Camp Alicia and Camp Bedrock. And I wished then as I wish now that every American could have been with me, because you would have been so proud of what you saw.

As the helicopters landed and as we got out and walked toward the troops assembled, I saw our men and women in uniform. I saw whites, African-Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans. I started shaking hands and I heard the accents of every region -- from Brooklyn and Boston, Detroit and Dallas, San Juan and San Francisco. I saw every race, religion and ethnic group represented.

And I saw how our country, unlike any other nation in the world, has given opportunity to those who are willing to work hard, take responsibility, and contribute to the larger community.

As I talked with our service men and women about their mission in Bosnia -- where so many people have died because of ancient ethnic hatreds, where a whole country has been pulverized because people cannot get along -- I realized what a powerful symbol America is.

And for those young men and women, wearing the American uniform, upholding the ideals of peace, freedom, democracy, and tolerance, they were showing the Bosnian people that a multi-racial democracy can work.

And then I think about what we've just gone through as a country with the trauma of the trial of Timothy McVeigh. I remember so clearly, as I'm sure so many of you do, sitting in front of my television set, watching that terrible, terrible, evil act unfold. And seeing the faces of survivors, and then the photographs of victims. Seeing the faces of the men and women who were heroically rescuing people and tending to their wounds. And what did I see? I didn't just see one kind of American. I saw every kind of American. And the entire country was united in revulsion for the evil act and in sympathy and love for those who had suffered. Every time we have a crisis, we overcome all of the artificial divisions that keep humanity separated.

What we have an opportunity to do now in America is to take that energy that I saw in Bosnia, and the love I saw coming out of Oklahoma City and put it into action every single day.

Martin Luther King Jr once said: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hatred darkens life; love illuminates it."

Every one of us who is here today, we as citizens of this country, are guardians of our democracy. And whether we admit it or not, our actions will either lighten or darken the way to the future. For these young men and women graduating, there has never been more possibility awaiting them. There has never been greater opportunity for America to lead the way. And I hope that each of you will have a chance to bring America closer to its full promise of equality for all.

And I wish you godspeed on your adventures ahead. Thank you very much.  
[Applause].

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