

4/29/97 President's Summit
on America's Future

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

As prepared

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS FOR THE CLOSING CEREMONY
OF THE PRESIDENTS' SUMMIT ON AMERICA'S FUTURE
PHILADELPHIA, PA
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General Powell, President and Mrs. Bush, and all of you who have who gathered here in Philadelphia to help renew America's spirit of citizen service:

Now is the time for the real work to begin.

As we close this historic meeting, let us also open a new chapter in our country's story. A chapter written by an engaged, active, and committed citizenry that has -- and must continue to be -- the lifeblood of American democracy.

This summit was held in Philadelphia these last few days because, as my husband said, this is the place where our country was born. Born not just of a Continental Congress or a Constitutional Convention, but born of a people -- a people who understood the essence of service and community.

For it took all kinds of Americans -- from the Founding Fathers, to the first stewards of America's young government, to local shopkeepers and merchants, to teachers in one-room school houses, to good neighbors and good citizens from New Hampshire to South Carolina and beyond, whose daily lives and activities embodied the spirit of the new democracy.

And it took all kinds of service to keep this young nation alive -- the service of government, the service of business leaders, the service of volunteers, philanthropists, advocates and activists.

Why have we survived and thrived longer than any other democracy in the history of the world? Because we are truly a stool with three legs. The first leg is a government built on the ideals of free and independent elections, a functioning legislature, an independent judiciary, and a free press. The second is a market economy that encourages entrepreneurship and innovation and provides the opportunity for individuals to seek their fortunes and reap the benefits of hard work.

Yet as vital as these two legs are, they are not enough to sustain the free and prosperous nation that America has become, and must remain.

There are many avenues to good citizenship. As Martin Luther King, Jr. once said: "Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve."

This is a particularly important message for our young people, who need to feel a stake in their own futures and in their own country. That is why the President is so proud of AmeriCorps, which encourages young people to get involved and learn the rewards of service while earning a ticket to college. That is why we have spotlighted businesses these last few days that provide internships, part-time jobs, summer training programs for young men and women. That is why it is so important for all of us to focus our efforts on the weakest and most vulnerable among us -- our children -- who need mentors, teachers, coaches, counselors, doctors, nurses, role models and, most of all, opportunities to fulfill their own God-given potential.

Our democracy, and the ideal we place on service and community, requires an enormous amount of trust. It often asks us to put our fates in the hands of people we don't even know. People who take the oath of office to serve on the city council, in the State House, in the Congress, and in the White House. People who vote in the booth next to us on Election Day. People who are entrusted to teach our children in school, coach them on the basketball court, lead their scout troops. People who police our streets and staff our hospitals. People who make decisions about everything from what is in our food to what we see on TV.

But most of all, it asks that we trust ourselves. That we trust our own capacity to serve and nurture the soil of democracy in which our country and our values are rooted. For without a commitment to service, democracy is planted in very shallow ground.

As this Summit concludes here today, let all Americans ask: "What can I do to make a difference in someone else's life? What can I do to help my community and my country?"

I guarantee that anyone who answers the call will discover what anyone who has served already knows: When we serve others, we get a lot more than we give.

Through actions large and small, public and private, we can build a stronger community, and a stronger democracy. With your help, we will do it.

Thank you.

It is the third leg of the stool -- civil society -- that has provided the real balance of power that our Founding Fathers envisioned. It is civil society -- the term that describes the countless daily associations and actions that weave together the fabric of democratic life -- which mediates between the powerful and potentially excessive forces of government and the market by tapping into a great sea of individual energy and caring that exists from coast to coast.

Civil society is the vehicle for our values, the way we convey who we are and what we stand for as Americans. And that, in essence, is what this summit is about: Renewing the spirit of citizen service that is so vital to our democracy and the model society it has become for people around the world.

In the past few years, I have traveled on behalf of the United States to every continent. In Mongolia, I saw a country where nearly a century of domination at the hands of dictatorship and communism could not suppress the popular will self-expression and self-rule.

In Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, where I spent last July 4th, I met citizens who led a peaceful Velvet Revolution, overcoming decades of Soviet-inspired rule and paving the way for a newly democratic central Europe.

Last month in Africa I visited six nations that have undergone a political, economic, and social sea change in the last decade, embracing democracy and open economies and throwing off the yoke of injustice, brutality, and oppression..

Each of these places represented extraordinary triumphs of the human spirit that depended on courageous leaders and courageous citizens.

Yet it was also clear -- from Ulan Bator, Mongolia to Kampala, Uganda and everywhere in between -- that arriving at democracy is always far easier than sustaining it. Over and over people asked me: "How did you Americans do it? How did you create a society that allowed democratic values to flourish?"

Throughout the world, as tyranny crumbles and democracy comes alive in country after country, people are looking to America and Americans for guidance and inspiration. And we have much to offer from our own experience.

Our country has shown the world that democracy is not just about the

machinery of government or the institutions of an open market. It's not just about politics or profits. It's about the internalization of democratic values in people's hearts, minds and everyday lives.

It's about joining together and giving of ourselves to promote the common good. It's about the organizations, associations and activities we engage in that Alexis de Tocqueville observed more than 150 years ago -- and which are a hallmark of American citizenship and a distinctive part of our national life.

This Summit, and the call to action being issued here, come at a crucial moment for us in America because we have seen our ideals embraced around the globe. Never before has the world been more free. And that is in large measure because of American leadership over the last century.

Yet on the horizon of a new century we also see many uncertainties. We live in an Information Age that holds out unprecedented opportunities for peace and prosperity, but also the challenges that come from living in a complex, competitive and fast-paced world. We face growing global competition; we see families under greater stress as men and women try to redefine their roles in the family and outside; we see the pressures of the mass media and the consumer culture bearing down on our children; we see new and passionate debate about the balance between individual and community rights and responsibilities.

And, we also see a decline in volunteer activity, a drop-off in voting, and other indications that Americans feel less able and less willing to participate in ways that make our democracy as stable and strong as it is.

This Summit has asked each and every one of us to look at ourselves and try to understand how we can rekindle what one writer has called the "habits of the heart" -- the spirit of service. It has asked us how we can combine our strong notions of individualism with our equally strong desire for community in ways that benefit us all.

We know that government can help create the conditions to help people help themselves. We know that the private sector can unleash the energy and capital needed to further our prosperity. But only civil society -- the service sector -- can evoke that immeasurable the spirit of giving and caring that makes our country unique in the world.