

things that are going on around this country now, put them on our homepage, and make them widely available. And we now have a lot of them at our website, and we have huge numbers of people tapping into that and then getting in touch with others around the country to learn what they can do in their own community.

The third thing we're trying to do is to recruit leaders. I sent a letter to 25,000 student leaders and asked them to get involved in the race initiative, and we've gotten literally hundreds of replies from young people telling us exactly what they're doing. Some of them are fascinating, including a young white football player, star football player, who involved athletes in an interracial initiative in the Washington, DC, area.

And the fourth thing we're trying to do is to identify specific governmental policies that will help to not only address race problems that disproportionately affect minorities but will do it in a way that will bring people together, like the initiative we had to give scholarships to people who go teach in inner-city schools.

So we'll keep trying to turn it up. But I think it's been quite a productive thing, and I think the American people are actually quite interested in it. You know, people know—they pick up the paper every day. They see that there are tribal warfares in Africa. They know that we're still having trouble resettling the Croats and the Muslims and the Serbs in Bosnia. They know that the Irish just had another round of killings, right on the verge of breaking through the Irish peace process. They know that there's still trouble in the Middle East. And they know there's still trouble in America. In the Washington papers, we've been living through the efforts of a Muslim school that wants to expand trying to find a location in a community that feels comfortable accepting it. And a Muslim symbol was defaced on the Capitol during the Christmas season, and Jewish leaders came out and condemned it—interesting.

So we're trying to work through this stuff. I think being explicit and open about it is helping us to get it right. In some ways the most important thing—if we can prove that along with all of our economic strength and our native political system that we can figure out how to be bound together and still celebrate our differences, but say what unites us is more important, that may be the most important meal ticket to the 21st century we have.

#### *Asian Economies*

*Q.* Mr. President, how bad do you see the situation in Asia right now? What are your nightmare concerns—

*The President.* Well, I hope you will understand that because of the fact that what is going on in Asia is the function of markets and they operate on perceptions, that I should be very careful about what I say about that.

Let me tell you what I think. I think that the United States has an interest in a stable and successful Asia. I think there's an enormous amount of productive capacity in those countries. And I think if we can get the policies right, we'll get through this. And I'm working as hard as I can to try to get it right. And there are some encouraging signs and some troubling signs, and it's a complex thing; we have to work it hard. I can say this, I think we've been very well served to have Bob Rubin and Larry Summers and the other people we've got at the Treasury Department working on this. I think they're making about the best stab at it anybody could. And we have worked very long hours for some extended period of time now on it, and we're just going to keep at it and try to make it come out okay.

#### *Middle East Peace Process/Iraq*

*Q.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* Well, on the Middle East peace process, I'm going to see Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat in the next few days and try to move the thing forward a little bit. And I think it really depends upon whether the recent change in Israel, political change, is seen as a spur to action or a break on action, and whether we can find a way to keep this thing going forward.

The real problem with the Middle East peace process is it's like a living organism that gets sick if it doesn't move, you know. It's got to move. You've got to just keep something happening, even if it's not ideal—you've got to keep something happening. So we're working very hard on that, and I'm very hopeful about it.

With Iraq, keep in mind what happened. We've already achieved a not insignificant portion of our objective. Saddam Hussein's goal was to say, "I'm going to throw all these inspectors out and leave them out until you drop some or all of the sanctions." And we said, "You don't understand. We'll leave the sanctions on until