

some reciprocal effort. But it has to be reciprocal. We can't—I don't think, after what happened to those people, I don't think that—I don't have any confidence that a unilateral gesture would have any success.

Now, I would be interested to see how the Pope's visit goes and what happens there. I'm very encouraged that he's going. I was encouraged that the Cuban people were permitted to observe Christmas. And we'll just see what happens. I've got—the Pope is a very persuasive fellow and he, after all, is the voice of God

to those of us who believe that. And we hope that he does well.

I've got to run. I'm sorry. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:18 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Alan and Susan Patricof; Greek immigrant Dimitriou Theofanis and his son, Nick; Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Pope John Paul II.

Remarks at Mission High School in Mission, Texas

January 9, 1998

Thank you. Good morning. Well, first of all, weren't you proud of Elizabeth? Did she do a great job or what? [Applause] And she looked so tall standing here. [Laughter] Thank you, Elizabeth.

You know, there's been a lot of exciting things in Mission in the last couple of weeks. The valley got its first snowfall in 40 years, and, you know, all these limousines and cars descending on the area—to get an unexpected visit from Koy Detmer.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be here. I have so many people to thank, but I want to start with Congressman Hinojosa, who has been a great friend of yours, a great Representative, and a great ally of mine to expand economic opportunity and trade and to improve education and to reduce the dropout rate especially among young Hispanic students. He represents you very, very well, and I thank him for helping me to come here today.

I'd like to thank Congressman Solomon Ortiz and Congressman Ciro Rodriguez and a native of Mission, Mission High School class of 1946, the former chairman of the Agriculture Committee in the House of Representatives, Congressman Kika de la Garza, and his wife, Mrs. de la Garza. Thank you for being here.

I'd like to thank the education commissioner, Mike Moses; the land commissioner, Garry Mauro; members of my administration who are here, including White House aides Mickey Ibarra, Janet Murguia, Cynthia Jasso-Rotunno; and the head of the Overseas Private Investment

Corporation, George Munoz. All of them came down here today to meet with community leaders before I came out here to talk about the economic future of the valley and what we could do to help to accelerate the growth of your area.

I want to thank the legislators and the mayors who are here: Senator Carlos Truan, Representative Ismael Flores, Representative Miguel Wise, Representative Roberto Gutierrez; Mayor Ricardo Perez of Mission; the McAllen mayor, Leo Montalvo; the Edinburg mayor, Joe Ochoa. I thank the chairman of the Democratic Party, Bill White, for coming here. And as an old member of the band, I'd like to thank the high school bands from Mission, Edinburg, Weslaco, and Hidalgo for playing.

I thank the college students from South Texas Community College and UT-Pan Am, high school students from Hidalgo, Willacy, Bee, Brooks, and San Patricio Counties, and I thank the other AmeriCorps volunteers for being here.

This morning I talked with some community leaders about economic opportunity. Today, to this great and happy crowd, I want to talk with you about educational opportunity. And I want America to know about this school district. The Mission school district may not be the wealthiest one in the Nation, but it is rich in results. Attendance is up; dropout rates are down. Ten years ago, only about a quarter of Mission's high school seniors went on to college. This year, thanks in part to the new opportunities at the South Texas Community College, almost two-