

I think all these are important because we have to find ways to unify the American people around this agenda in ways that actually change the future outcomes for people. And so I appreciate that. I think that's very good.

Who wants to go next? Go ahead.

[Alfred Rotondaro, executive director, National Italian-American Foundation, stated that it would be a tragedy if the work of the racial commission stops this year and suggested it should enlist the Nation's opinion leaders, including white ethnic organizations, in an effort to continue the fight against social injustice and racism. He also stated that the problem involved elements of class and stressed the importance of changing the attitudes of urban minority children toward academic excellence. Nan Rich, president, National Council of Jewish Women, stated that her suggestions should be advanced in the context of public-private-nonprofit partnerships. She then emphasized increasing economic opportunity for women and minority groups and corporate training to increase cultural diversity awareness. She also suggested that early childhood programs focus on diversity. Mayor Joseph Serna, Jr., of Sacramento, CA, stated that California faced the dilemma of scapegoating immigrants and cited California's Proposition 187 and Proposition 209 as wedge issues which divide people along racial lines. He suggested encouraging citizenship in the Latino and Asian communities and directing the Immigration and Naturalization Service to move more quickly in the process of naturalization.]

*The President.* You know, when I came here, it was taking an unconscionably long time for people to get through the system, and we tried to accelerate it. And the Congress had such a negative reaction to it, the Republican majority did, they tried to investigate the whole INS because we took the position that you shouldn't have to wait years and years and years, after you had already been here 5 years, to have the Government decide whether you could become a citizen or not. I still think that's the right thing to do. I think it's entirely too bureaucratic, and I think we should do better.

*Karen Narasaki.* Mr. President, I'm very glad to hear you say that, because the backlog persists. It's already 2 million individuals, and it's 2 years long. That's how many would-be citizens we would have—

*The President.* But we were taking it down—to be fair—until we were viciously and unfairly attacked for making the law work the way it's supposed to.

[Ms. Narasaki, executive director, National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, thanked the President for including more funding for food stamps in the budget, saying it would help the most vulnerable in society. She also thanked him for appointing Acting Assistant Attorney General Bill Lann Lee and thereby putting a face on the affirmative action debate. She urged the President to help narrow the race discussion by homing in on such topics as bilingual education and affirmative action. She advocated challenging religious leaders, including the Christian Coalition, and the entertainment and housing industries to participate in the discussion. Representative John Lewis of Georgia stated that the President should address the question of race in his State of the Union Address, making it a moral issue, and that he should not back off on the affirmative action debate. Stewart Kwoh, president and executive director, Asia Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California, said that the appointment of Acting Assistant Attorney General Lee built the best multiracial coalition in decades. He then suggested the President request direct action from local leaders to improve race relations, as well as incorporating race relations improvement into Federal programs at the local level, such as AmeriCorps.]

*The President.* That's interesting because I've been just—sort of in support of what you said, we have—one of the most clearly successful things we've done, even though it's not—we don't have it on prime-time television in ads or anything, because we don't have that kind of money, but we put up this Internet homepage with promising practices in communities around the country. And substantial numbers of people have tapped into it to see what's being done someplace else, and can they apply it in their own community, and is there some way to build on it? It's been very, very impressive.

The other thing you said about recruiting leadership I think is—the one thing that we did was we wrote several thousand young people and asked them to take some initiative, and hundreds of them wrote us back with very specific things, saying what they were going to do. So that's some indication that if we identify a given