

Department of Housing and Urban Development under the leadership of Secretary Cuomo, the Columbia National Mortgage Company will offer—listen to this—\$6.5 billion in home mortgages and extra effort to help 78,000 minority and low and moderate income families unlock the door to homeownership. This settlement was made under the Fair Housing Act, which Congress passed just 6 days—just 6 days—after Dr. King was killed. He had worked for years to outlaw discrimination in housing, and many who voted for the measure said they did it in tribute to him. So here all these years later—31 years later, to be exact—we're proud that it's happened on Dr. King's national holiday.

Now let me just say one final thing. Yesterday, in the church that Hillary and I attend, they observed Dr. King's birthday with some special music. They had a wonderful singer from the Army Chorus. They did a lot, but one of the songs they sang that I love so well was one of Martin Luther King's favorite hymns, and it embodies what we are doing here today. The first line of the hymn is, "If I can help somebody," and the last line is, "then my living will not be in vain."

All these people are here not only because they want to help you but because their lives are richer because of it. And we're all learning and growing. And besides that, as the press pointed out, it did the Vice President and me a lot of good to pick up those hammers and crowbars and tear something down. [Laughter] You know, we do this desk work all the time and we do this word work all the time, and

there's not always a beginning, a middle, and an end. There was a beginning to that wall, a middle, and it is no longer; it is over. [Laughter] So we are very grateful that you gave us the chance to be part of this today, and we thank you.

Again I want to say, I hope all across America people will hear this. Look at these young people; they're here with you. They're getting something out of this, too. Their lives will be richer and better. They will be wiser sooner. They will be more sensitive and more understanding more quickly in their lives because of the experience they've had here and the other experiences in AmeriCorps. Every American needs to serve. And remember what Dr. King said: Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve.

Thank you, and God bless you.

Now, I know we're done, but I want to say a special word of recognition to Melody Scales and Beth McCarthy of AmeriCorps who worked with me, and to Donald Stokes, who is a resident here. I'd like for them to come up and be recognized, since they worked with the Vice President and me. Come on up here. [Applause] This is our crew, and if you need a wall torn down, you couldn't do better than this.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:53 p.m. at Regency House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Anthony A. Williams and Ward 3 Councilmember Kathy Patterson of Washington, DC. The Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday proclamation of January 15 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Address on the Observance of Id al-Fitr January 19, 1999

On behalf of Muslim Americans and, indeed, all Americans, I would like to send my best wishes to the Islamic world as the holy month of Ramadan draws to a close, and you celebrate the festival of Id al-Fitr. The month of fasting you have completed demands sacrifice and discipline. But it delivers a profound reward, the chance to teach people of every faith what is precious about Islam: its charity, its generosity, its essential humanity. All people in the world are moved by the observance of Ramadan, by

the devotion and dignity that makes Islam one of the world's great religions.

I fervently hope that the new Moon will stand for a rising tide of peace on Earth, in the Middle East, Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, Africa, every place where devoted people aspire and deserve to lead lives of fulfillment and self-respect. I especially hope we will see the lives of the Iraqi people improve. They have suffered for too long from oppression and war.