

Vice President have done a wonderful job with our empowerment zone program and the other HUD economic development initiatives.

I want to say a special word of appreciation here today to the Members of Congress who are here—Congressmen Rangel, Velázquez, Owens, Maloney, Engel, and Jackson. And my personal thanks to two former Members of Congress who are here, the leader of the NAACP, Kweisi Mfume, and my good friend Reverend Floyd Flake, who went home to his mission in life. And I thank him.

I saw my friend Mayor Willie Brown from San Francisco, and we congratulate him on his reelection. And former Mayor David Dinkins of New York, thank you, Mayor Dinkins; and our comptroller, Carl McCall; and so many others who are here.

I want to thank Hugh Price for the Urban League's work. And I'd like to thank all the business leaders here who have helped the whole effort that Reverend Jackson has made over the last several years, but I would like to say a special word of appreciation to three who have been close to me and also close to Reverend Jackson: Willie Gary and Ron Burkle and Dennis Rivera. Thank you all very much for what you have done.

Now, we've got a lot of folks here who have done things, but I want to say also how much I appreciate Reverend Jackson's family, Jackie and all their wonderful children. They've been great friends to Hillary and to Chelsea and me, and I just get a big rush every time they stand up and get introduced. It's quite exciting. Reverend, you've done a lot of important things in your life, but those kids are the most important, by a long, good way, and I want to thank you.

Let me say, I always look forward to this event, but it keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger. If it gets any bigger, we've going to have to start holding it in Yankee Stadium—[laughter]—and that's a good thing. I would like that very much.

You know, I'm just practicing for my—did you see the way I got Berry up here and I took out the stand and then I picked up his glasses when he dropped them? I'm practicing for my role as a Senate spouse. [Laughter] Did you catch my wife on "Letterman" last night? Was she great, or what? [Applause] You know, it's bad enough that I have to give up being President; now I've got to give up being the

funny one in my family. [Laughter] Life is always teaching you lessons of humility. [Laughter]

Although the press, you know, they keep saying I'm a lame duck. I think what a lame duck is, you know, you show up for one of these things, and nobody else comes. [Laughter] So I want to thank all of you for making me feel like I'm still President today.

Now, to the business at hand. We all know why we're here, and we all know what we're supporting. I am profoundly grateful, not only as President but as a citizen, for the work that Reverend Jackson has done with this Wall Street Project. I am profoundly grateful that so many business leaders have supported it.

I want to say, also, a special word of appreciation to the Members of the Congress that I have already introduced and to the current and former leaders of the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Representatives Waters, Clyburn, Roybal-Allard, and Becerra. I want to thank Senators Sarbanes, Kerry, Robb, Rockefeller, and Congressman LaFalce from New York, because they've been especially supportive of this new markets initiative.

Now, you heard Sandy Weill say some very kind things about the economic record of the administration, but I would like to put it in a little different context. It is true that we have the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, that in just a few weeks we'll have the longest economic expansion in the history of America. We'll then be over 20 million new jobs, surpassing the expansions that occurred in World War II when we were fully mobilized for war. It is true that we have the lowest recorded African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years. That's all true. But it's also true that the minority unemployment rate and the minority poverty rate is still about twice the national average.

I was just in Brooklyn with Nydia Velázquez to kick off a small business center with Aida Alvarez. You heard her talking about it. In Brooklyn, a borough in New York City that has been very good to me and to the Vice President—the national unemployment rate is 4.1 percent; the Brooklyn unemployment rate is still over 9 percent. The national poverty rate down to about 11 percent; the Brooklyn poverty rate