Tab 1

Mr. President, Mrs. Clinton, members of Congress, Ambassador Holbrooke, friends:

80 years ago, a young Jewish boy, freed by American soldiers from the Buchenwald Concentration Camp, He woke up in a place of eternal infamy. He was free, but there was no joy in his heart. He had been liberated by the American soldiers a day earlier. He remembers their rage at what they saw, their shock, and their compassion. Though he did not understand their language, their eyes spoke volumes—they told him that they would remember, that they would bear witness.

On April 12th 1999, Elie Weisel gave his address, The perils of Indifference to the people in the White House in Washington D.C. In that Audience sat then president Bill Clinton as well as First Lady Hillary Clinton. Weilsel was an Romanian Born Holocaust survivor who experenced the first hand atroncitys that were committed in the Buchenwald and Ashuwitz concentration camps. After the Holocaust, Weisel fled to the United Stated where he published over 57 books and became a professor at Boston University. Weasel spoke about indifference and how it has caused tragedies during WWII and how it continues to cause tradajies acoss the world. He also gives personal experices about his time at Buchenwald and Ashuwitz

Now, I stand before you, Mr. I President—Commander-in-Chief of the army that freed me and tens of thousands of others. And I am filled with profound and abiding gratitude to the American people. "Gratitude" is a word that I cherish because it defines the humanity of the human being. I also thank you, Mrs. Clinton, for your efforts to help children around the world, the homeless, the victims of injustice, the victims of destiny and society. You have given your voice and your actions to those who suffer, and for that, we are all grateful.

As we stand at the threshold of a new century, a new millennium, we must reflect on the legacy of the century that is passing. What will that legacy be? How will this century be remembered in the new millennium? Surely, it will be judged—and judged severely—in both moral and metaphysical terms. This century has cast a dark shadow over humanity: two world wars, countless civil wars, the senseless chain of assassinations—Gandhi, the Kennedys, Martin Luther King, Sadat, Rabin—and the bloodbaths in Cambodia and Algeria, India and Pakistan, Ireland and Rwanda, Eritrea and Ethiopia, Sarajevo and Kosovo; the inhumanity in the gulag and the tragedy of Hiroshima. And, of course, Auschwitz and Treblinka. So much violence, so much indifference.

What is indifference? The word itself means “no difference.” It is a strange and unnatural state in which the lines blur between light and darkness, good and evil, cruelty and compassion. It is a state where people turn a blind eye to suffering and deny the humanity of others. Indifference is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger at injustice can be creative—it may prompt a person to write a great poem or create something meaningful for humanity. But indifference

creates nothing. Indifference never responds. It is not a beginning; it is an end. Indifference is always the friend of the enemy, because it benefits the aggressor, not the victim.

At Auschwitz, the most tragic prisoners were the “Muselmanner,” those who had been abandoned by humanity. Wrapped in torn blankets, they sat or lay on the ground, staring vacantly into space. They no longer felt pain, hunger, or thirst. They feared nothing. They were dead, but they didn’t know it. Nobody bothered to look at them and most were considered an afterthought

Indifference is what makes human beings inhuman. It is more dangerous than hatred. It reduces suffering to an abstraction. When we are indifferent, we forget the suffering of others. We fail to act when we see injustice, and we allow cruelty to flourish unchecked. The indifference of the world during the Holocaust allowed millions to perish. And indifference continues today to fuel injustice in many parts of the world.

. Inside the ghettos and death camps, we felt abandoned, forgotten. Our only miserable consolation was that we believed the horrors of Auschwitz and Treblinka were hidden secrets. We thought the free world did not know what was going on. If they had known, surely they would have intervened. They would have bombed the railways leading to Birkenau. But, as we learned later, the Pentagon knew. The State Department knew. And the illustrious occupant of the White House knew. Franklin D. Roosevelt, a great leader who mobilized the American people to fight fascism, was aware of the suffering. Yet, despite his efforts to defeat Hitler, his image in Jewish history remains flawed.

Take, for instance, the story of the St. Louis, a ship carrying nearly 1,000 Jewish refugees that was turned away from the shores of the United States. This happened after the Kristallnacht, after the first state-sponsored pogrom against the Jews. Hundreds of Jewish businesses were destroyed, synagogues were burned, and thousands of people were sent to concentration camps. And yet, despite the danger the passengers faced, the ship was sent back. I don’t understand why. Roosevelt was a good man, a man with a heart. He understood the suffering of others. But why didn’t he allow these refugees to disembark? A thousand people—turning them away from America, the greatest democracy, the most generous country in modern history—was that indifference at its highest level?

There were heroes during this time—those we call the “Righteous Gentiles.” These are the Christians who risked their lives to save Jews, who gave shelter and protection in defiance of Nazi orders. But why were there so few of them? Why was there more effort after the war to save Nazi criminals than to save their victims during the war? Some of America’s largest corporations continued to do business with Nazi Germany until 1942. In fact, it has been documented that the Wehrmacht could not have invaded France without the oil provided by American companies. How can we explain this indifference?

Despite the failures of the past, there have also been victories: the defeat of Nazism, the collapse of communism, the rebirth of Israel on its ancestral soil, the demise of apartheid, the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, and the peace accords in Northern Ireland. I will never

forget the dramatic and emotional meeting between Rabin and Arafat that you, Mr. President, helped to facilitate. And, most recently, when the United States and NATO intervened in Kosovo to stop the genocide of innocent people, the world responded. This time, we did not remain silent. This time, we acted.

But have we truly learned from the lessons of the past? Are we less indifferent today than we were before? Have we truly become more human, more compassionate? Do we feel the suffering of children who are victims of war, violence, and famine? Every minute, a child dies from these causes. We see their faces on television, read about them in the papers, and our hearts break. But how many of us act to relieve their suffering? How many of us work to save them?

And so, I think of the young Jewish boy from the Carpathian Mountains, who has accompanied the old man I have become throughout the years. He walks with me through the quest for justice, compassion, and hope. And together, we move toward the new millennium, still striving for a world where indifference no longer rules, where humanity triumphs over cruelty