

Name of collection

Why do American parties hold conventions?

Contributors name:

Bill Clinton

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Mr Chairman, I'm honoured to be here tonight to nominate my friend, Michael Dukakis for president of the United States.

[CROWD CHEERING]

We as Americans have a lot riding on this election. We face big challenges, big problems, big opportunities. The fundamental fact of 1988 is that we can't take our prosperity for granted anymore in this competitive world economy. We've got to work harder and smarter to preserve the American dream, and that means we need new economic policies and new people policies. And that means we need new leadership to take us where we need to go. Michael Dukakis can provide that leadership.

[CROWD CHEERING]

Tonight I want to talk about where Governor Dukakis wants to take this country, what he wants us to do. And I'd like to talk a little about Mike Dukakis, the man. He's come so far, so fast that all over this country of ours people are asking questions. What kind of man is he? What kind of Governor has he been? What kind of President will he be? He's been my friend for a long time and I'd like to tell you my answers to those questions. I'd also like to tell you why I believe Michael Dukakis should be the first American president born of immigrant parents since Andrew Jackson.

[CROWD CHEERING]

The other day when I was back home in Arkansas, a friend of mine came up to me and said, Bill, are you excited about Mike Dukakis becoming president? And I said, I sure am. And then he looked at me and smiled and he said, now I know why you'd want him to be president, but how in the world can you get excited about a guy who mows his own lawn with a hand powered mower and is so clean he squeaks when he walks? And I thought about it and I decided that's one reason I am excited about Mike Dukakis becoming president.

[CROWD CHEERING]

You know, Mike's old fashioned all right. He's the kind of man who plays it straight and keeps his word and pays his bills. In my state, we say he's the kind of man you can tie to. Now, don't misunderstand me. In spite of all the enthusiasm for them and all the articles you've read about what a good fella he is, Dukakis is not perfect. And I have to confess here in the Atlanta Omni, the home of the Atlanta Hawks, Mike Dukakis is absolutely obsessed about the Boston Celtics.

[CROWD CHEERING]

During the recent playoffs, he even broke down his highly regarded discipline to watch the Celtics play on television when he should have been making campaign phone calls. But apart from that minor flaw, I want you to know that I think this man has the character, the record, and the vision America needs at this moment in our journey. He's the right man for this time.

[CROWD CHEERING]

His character is steadfast and consistent. And one thing about Mike Dukakis is he wakes up in the same world every morning, which is a trait of considerable importance for a president. I found Mike willing to listen, an important lesson that we all have to learn and one that Mike Dukakis and I learned the hard way. We got beat over the head with it. You see, we were both elected and then defeated and then given a rare second chance by our people. And I can tell you that does wonders for your sensitivity to others and their points of view. Mike and I met after our defeats. He was teaching at the Kennedy School and I was the youngest ex governor in American history.

[CROWD SHOUTING]

Go ahead.

[CROWD SHOUTING]

[BILL CLINTON LAUGHING]

[CROWD SHOUTING]

All right.

[CROWD SHOUTING]

Now, I want you all to calm down so I can tell the rest of the country why they should want Mike.

[CROWD CHEERING]

The first time I met Mike Dukakis we were both defeated politicians. He was teaching at the Kennedy School and I was the youngest ex governor in American history. I was struck even then by the lack of bitterness he felt over his defeat and by his continuing deep, genuine commitment to public service, whether in or out of public life. As

someone who's worked with Mike Dukakis on hard issues in the National Governors Association. As someone who's hammered out compromises with him, who's disagreed with him, who's fought battles by side, I can tell you one thing. When he needs to be, Mike Dukakis is tough as nails.

Of course, if he hadn't been tough, he could never have come back from that defeat. Most people who are defeated in politics just pull the curtains, yank the phone out of the wall, turn out the lights and pack it in. But Mike Dukakis isn't that kind of person. He hangs in there. He's the Democratic party's marathon man.

[CROWD CHEERING]

One of Mike's political opponents in Massachusetts said of him, he has the strongest moral core of any man I ever met in public life. Mike Dukakis believes actions are more important than words. He has a passionate sense that performance matters too. And that's why his fellow governors, including the Republicans, two years ago said he was the most effective governor in the entire United States of America.

[CROWD CHEERING]

My fellow Democrats, after we nominate Mike Dukakis, when the Republicans take after him and when they say all those things in the campaign season about his record, you remind them of how all the governors, including the Republicans, voted two years ago when there was no presidential politics involved. And they said what they really believe about Mike Dukakis, the governor.

[CROWD CHEERING]

When Mike Dukakis speaks out for the American Family, you can believe him. I have never known a person more devoted to his wife and to his children. He and Kitty are as different as daylight and dark, but they're so good together. And they'll be wonderful role models for our young people. And Kitty Dukakis will be a first lady this whole country will be proud of and one who will gain respect worldwide.

[CROWD CHEERING]

It's time tell the people who aren't in this hall why they ought to want him too again. Mike Dukakis has a record that is as strong and solid as this character. I've known him for many years as a governor, but he's also been a soldier and a teacher and a lawyer and a legislator. He's excelled in all these roles because of his fine mind and his keen interest in the welfare of other people. And Michael Dukakis can speak to more of his countrymen in their native tongue than any person we have ever nominated for the presidency.

[CROWD CHEERING]

He speaks in his native Greek, in Italian, and French, and as millions now know, in Spanish. As governor, Michael Dukakis hasn't just played with issues the way some politicians do. He's wrestled them to the ground. He's made the hard decisions to

balance budget, to create jobs, to fight crime and drug abuse, to increase day care and health care, to do all those things that a leader has to do.

Michael Dukakis knows how to translate ideas into action. One of our major news magazines called him the master of innovation. And more than any other governor he has worked hard to bring good jobs to poor people and poor communities in his state. Long before, long before Mike Dukakis thought he would be running for president, he said to me over and over again, I just don't understand why there is no national strategy, no national leadership to bring to the distressed areas of this country the kind of good opportunities my people in Massachusetts enjoy. It's wrong that nobody's trying to do it and someone should try. And Michael Dukakis will try.

Michael Dukakis believes that all citizens should lead productive lives. His famed welfare reform program, ET, has been a model for national welfare reform for one simple reason. It's taken so many people from the welfare rolls to the work rolls.

[CROWD CHEERING]

Now, Governor Dukakis knows from his own experience, as does every other Democratic governor here tonight, that government cannot solve all problems alone. But unlike the present national administration, Mike Dukakis knows you can't leave the problems alone either. And that's why he's broken new ground in building partnerships with business, with labour, with educators, with local government, with anybody who would work with him to solve problems and seize opportunities.

He's worked with welfare recipients like Ruby Sampson, a single mother who was dependent on welfare for 14 years. Mike helped her to get the education and training she needed to land a job as an operating room technician. Tonight, Ruby Sampson is not on welfare. She's earning more than \$20,000 a year.

[CROWD CHEERING]

He's worked with local officials, like the mayor in Taunton, Massachusetts to take the unemployment rate in his community from over 14% to under 4%. And he's worked with companies, like Morris Toole and Diamond International to keep them open and healthy and to save jobs for hundreds of his constituents. Old Mike knows, as the Republicans always say, we may want the government off our back, but we sure do need it by our side.

[CROWD CHEERING]

And Michael Dukakis knows that working together works. He's proved that again in this great convention because we're here in unity and poised for victory.

[CROWD CHEERING]

Mike Dukakis is a man with a vision, a shining vision for this country. He wants a country with good jobs at good wages. It's a country where everybody can send their kids to good schools and where they can offer them the opportunity to go to college. He wants a country where working parents have access to good child care for their

children. He wants a country where people don't have to go to the poorhouse to get decent long term care. He wants a country with a clean environment and yes, he'd like to have a country with a clean government, which once again is devoted to the rule of law.

[CROWD CHEERING]

Mike Dukakis wants a country that can compete and win in the world economy. He wants a country that can continue the quest for peace. Mike Dukakis, when he's president, will continue to work for arms control by sitting down across the table from Mr Gorbachev. But as our commander in chief he will see that American interests are strongly represented all across this globe. And any time, my fellow Democrats, because of his character, because of his record, and because of his vision, governor Michael Dukakis would be a proud standard bearer for our party.

But at this critical moment in our history, he is the man for all of America. The post World War 2 era in which we dominated the world economically, politically, and militarily is over. For the rest of the lives of everybody in this great hall tonight we'll have to compete with people in other countries for new jobs, for new businesses, for technological breakthroughs. And as the painful experience of the last decade has proved, we won't win if we're not prepared.

The Republicans' main claim to the White House in 1988 is that in the face of this competition, they produced a five year recovery. Well, that recovery let a lot of middle class and poor people out. It was financed by a sea of borrowed money and it ignored or aggravated some very, very harsh realities. The huge government and trade deficits, the rising class of poor people in this country, almost all of them young women and their little kids. An epidemic of social problems. The loss of our competitive position and low wage, low skill industries and import sensitive jobs in energy and mining and agriculture, and even in some high tech areas.

Left unattended, these difficulties will compromise not only our children's future, but our own. In the first half of this decade, for the first time in my life time, only four in 10 of our people had an increase in their income. 20% stood still and 40% of the American working people endured a reduction in their standard of living and it's wrong. We used to believe, as President Kennedy told us, that a rising tide lifts all economic boats. Well, today's tide is drowning. Four in 10 of our fellow Americans who have fallen overboard and the Republican crew of the ship won't even throw a lifeboat to the women and children.

[CROWD SHOUTING]

There are a lot of people who see these developments as proof positive that our country is in decline. You can go into the bookstores here in Atlanta and buy best sellers confidently predicting that we're on the downhill slide because we either can't or we won't do anything to stop it. Michael Dukakis doesn't believe that for a minute. He thinks America's best days are ahead of it and he knows we have faced and overcome greater challenges before.

[CROWD CHEERING]

Michael Dukakis is an apostle of hope. Last night when Jesse Jackson gave that awesome, wonderful speech, many of you waved signs with his slogan, keep hope alive. In his own way, Mike Dukakis will never let us forget Jesse's admonition. He knows we all have to be apostles of hope. And he knows there's a reason to hope.

As the scripture reminds us, we must not grow weary in doing good, for a new season we will reap if we don't lose heart. Michael Dukakis won't lose heart. He is a builder who wants to build a bridge to tomorrow. A bridge strong enough to carry our heaviest load. A bridge wide enough for all of us in this great country to walk across together. A bridge long enough to take us into the 21st century.

He's got a big job to do and we have to help him. His economic challenge is to revitalize America, reducing our debt, making us more competitive, enlisting the help of other countries, working to relieve the awful burdens of our hundreds of millions of neighbors in Latin America whose futures are so closely bound to ours. This is an ambitious agenda, but Michael Dukakis has great ambitions for America. And even if he carries it off, we still have to be concerned because economics alone will not take us where we need to go.

Why? This is the most important case for the Dukakis election. Why? Because of all the advanced economies in the world we here in America do the worst job of developing our most precious resource, our people. We let more babies die than others do. A child born in Costa Rica tonight has a better chance of living to be a year old than a child born in the nation's capital. We stand idly by while more of our children have children than others do, swelling the ranks of the truly disadvantaged.

We accept far more adult illiteracy than others do, even though we know that 80% of the workforce in the year 2000 is already working. And we know that when workers can't read, eventually they'll have to pay for it and we will too. We tolerate more homeless children than others do, degrading the most blameless among us. We live in the only advanced country in the world that's still in the dark ages when it comes to child care.

That means we have lower productivity on the job and higher stress in the home. Our school dropout rates are twice those of our competitors. Those of our children who do finish school are two years behind their competitors in Japan and Europe and learning all those kids that are going to be competing with ours for the good job Mike Dukakis wants them to have. And so many of our young people want to go to college but they can't afford to go.

You might ask, if you're looking at this on television, what has this got to do with me if I've got a job and my business is in good shape or my kids in college. Why should I worry? I'll tell you why. Because the children that are in trouble tonight are the workers of tomorrow. And if they can't do the jobs of tomorrow, we're all going to suffer and America will not be able to fulfil its dream and its destiny.

[CROWD CHEERING]

I want, and you want Michael Dukakis to be president overwhelmingly for this reason. Mike Dukakis knows we don't have a single solitary person to waste. I want

him to be president because he cares that one in four children under five are living below the poverty line. And that without pre-school education and good health care, their futures will be cheated and so will ours. I want him to be president because he understands today a middle class family has to spend a lot more of its income to send a child to college than he and I had to spend when we went a generation ago. And he thinks government ought to help make up the difference.

I want him to be president, and listen to this, because he knows one big reason there are so many families that are homeless is that since 1980 the Reagan administration has reduced new housing starts by 800% and the children are on the street as a result of it. I want him to be president because he knows one big reason there are so many families that are homeless is that since 1980 the Reagan administration has reduced new housing starts by 800% and the children are on the street as a result of it.

I want him to be president because he feels the pain of a mother who leaves for work every day worried sick because her child is not in a good childcare center because of the government's feeble efforts to provide affordable daycare. And I want him to be president because he not only knows and cares about these problems, but because he'll do something about it. He's proved over and over and over again that he can make a difference in people's lives. Just as he did in Massachusetts, President Dukakis will insist that we all become partners in forging America's future, that we share the responsibility so we can share the glory.

Mike Dukakis will have some interesting partners. Business partners like Eugene Lang, a wealthy New York businessman who decided to keep hope alive in his old Harlem elementary school by offering all those poor children who stay in school a scholarship to college. Most of them took him up on his offer and President Dukakis will spread and share his dream.

[CROWD CHEERING]

Michael Dukakis will have a teaching partners. Teaching partners like Jaime Escalante, the hero of the movie Stand and Deliver, whose entire class of poor students in East Los Angeles stunned the education world by passing the advanced placement calculus test, a tribute to a teacher who knows all children can learn and who believes that children will perform at the level of our expectations.

[CROWD CHEERING]

When it comes to education, President Dukakis will stand and deliver.

[CROWD CHEERING]

He'll have a public service partners, like Marian Edelman, the president of the Children's Defense Fund who's waged a long bipartisan battle for early investment in our children, reminding us that we can invest in them now or pay for neglecting them later. Mike Dukakis knows we should invest in our children while they still have a future.

He'll have political partners like Senator Lloyd Bentsen, who built a successful business and then went back into politics because Lloyd Bentsen wanted to preserve our free enterprise system and our national defense so that others could have the same success he's had. And he'll have political partners like Jesse Jackson, who long ago, before he ever was thinking of running for president, went with me into the schools in Little Rock in the late 70s to tell those children to say no to drugs and to open their brains and not their veins.

Like Jesse Jackson, Mike Dukakis has worked for drug free schools. And like Jesse Jackson, Mike Dukakis knows it's not enough just to say no to drugs. These kids have to be able to say yes to life. They have to be able to say yes to life. A few weeks ago, the police in Detroit, Michigan broke a huge crack ring. And I'm sorry to say, the ring was being run by two people from my state. They came from the poorest part of Arkansas and they had brought over 100 young men up there to help them peddle dope in the big cities.

The news stories were very touching. You know what they said? We brought these kids up here from the country because they're more reliable than these street smart city kids. They'll give us a good day's work for a good day's pay on the streets. I can't help wondering, when I think of that county they came from, 20% unemployment, 50% unemployment for black teenagers.

If Michael Dukakis had had eight long years to fulfill his commitment of good jobs for all of our people everywhere they live, I wonder if those kids had been willing to trade drugs for money. Maybe they would have said no to drugs and yes to life if Mike Dukakis had been president the last eight years.

[CROWD CHEERING]

My friends, we are moving into a future that will richly reward learning and achievement and innovation. And it will punish harshly ignorance and waste and the pursuit of short term profit at the expense of long term growth. We need a president who understands this, and Michael Dukakis does. This case for Michael Dukakis rests upon the acceptance of two simple ideas.

The first is that we are all in this fight for the future together. That the future of the entrepreneur in Colorado and the investment banker in New York, whether they know it or not, is bound to the drought ridden, debt ridden farmers of North Dakota and the poorest black schoolchild in Mississippi.

And the second simple idea is that we have always got to be willing to pay the price today for our children's tomorrow. I had a professor in college who told me that the sole reason for America's greatness was that our people have always believed the future could be better than the present. And that we've always done what it took to secure it. And he said, look, if we ever get to the point where our parents don't prefer their children's future to their present, we've had it and don't you ever forget it. Michael Dukakis will never, never, never, forget it. In closing.

[CROWD CHEERING]

I want you to remember that when Michael Dukakis becomes president in November, the people of Massachusetts and this country will observe the 25th anniversary of John Kennedy's death, but his election will be a tribute to John Kennedy's life and legacy. When John Kennedy died, Abba Eban, the great Israeli statesman, said this one sentence. Tragedy is the difference between what is and what might have been.

Michael Dukakis who spent his whole life closing the gap between what is and what might have been. He'll stand and deliver for us. He'll build a bridge to tomorrow for us. And that's why I'm so proud to say he ought to be president and a place in nomination the name of the first 42st president of the United States, Michael Dukakis from Massachusetts.

[CROWD CHEERING]

[MUSIC PLAYING]