
Presidential Documents

Title 3—

Proclamation 6908 of July 1, 1996

The President

A National Month of Unity, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our Nation was founded by people who sought the right to worship freely, and religious liberty is enshrined in our Constitution as the “first freedom” granted by our Bill of Rights. The United States is now the most multi-ethnic, multi-religious democracy in history, and we must preserve this precious freedom while making the most of our diversity. Ours is a great and noble struggle to make our national voice a chorus of unity—varied by differing intonations, but carried and lifted by a rich harmony.

The recent rash of arson attacks against black churches and other houses of worship is a stark reminder that our work to build common ground is far from over and that our progress can be threatened by forces that tear at the very fabric of our society. It is hard to think of a more heinous act than the destruction of a sacred structure. The violence that charred and defaced these buildings challenges our fundamental right to worship in safety, and has left us grim emblems of the hatred and alienation that too often darken our daily experience.

And so we must look into our hearts as America approaches the new century, pledging to devote our energies to reinvigorating the shared values that will enable us to embrace the future together. We must never go back to the terrible days of racial and ethnic division, nor can we afford to dismiss our problems by ascribing them to isolated groups or areas of the country. Instead, let us join hands to lighten our burdens and build bridges among people and communities so that we can be one America—a Nation of extraordinary possibility with opportunity, freedom, and respect for all.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim July 1996, as A National Month of Unity. I call upon religious leaders of all faiths to emphasize the need for healing and tolerance. I ask all Americans to join these efforts by working together to mend divisions and promote understanding; by reaching out to friends and neighbors of all races and faiths in a spirit of fellowship; and by seeking to strengthen, through words and actions, the ideals of equality and community cherished by generations of Americans. In this birth month of our Nation, let us set an example for the world we welcome to Atlanta for the Centennial Olympic Games by rededicating ourselves to America’s fundamental truth: E pluribus unum—from many, one.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of July, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twentieth.

