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INTERVIEW EXCERPTS OF PRESIDENT BUSH AND THE FIRST
LADY

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On November 12, 2008, the President and Mrs. Bush participated in an interview for StoryCorps, the national oral history initiative. The interview was conducted in the White House residence by the President's sister, Doro Bush Koch. An excerpt aired yesterday on NPR stations as a lead-in to today's celebration of StoryCorps' National Day of Listening. The entire interview will be archived at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. Following are excerpts from the interview:

Q How do you want to be remembered, and what are you most proud of?

THE PRESIDENT: I would like to be a person remembered as a person who, first and foremost, did not sell his soul in order to accommodate the political process. I came to Washington with a set of values, and I'm leaving with the same set of values. And I darn sure wasn't going to sacrifice those values; that I was a President that had to make tough choices and was willing to make them. I surrounded myself with good people. I carefully considered the advice of smart, capable people and made tough decisions.

I'd like to be a President (known) as somebody who liberated 50 million people and helped achieve peace; that focused on individuals rather than process; that rallied people to serve their neighbor; that led an effort to help relieve HIV/AIDS and malaria on places like the continent of Africa; that helped elderly people get prescription drugs and Medicare as a part of the basic package; that

came to Washington, D.C., with a set of political statements and worked as hard as I possibly could to do what I told the American people I would do.

Q Laura, you have done so much for women and children around the world. What's been your most rewarding initiative?

MRS. BUSH: Well, it's certainly been very rewarding to look at Afghanistan and both know that the President and the United States military liberated women there; that women and girls can be in school now; that women can walk outside their doors without a male escort.

I worry about Afghanistan, but I will always have a special place in my heart for the women that I've met there, both on my visits to Afghanistan and then the many women from Afghanistan who've traveled to the United States on scholarships or with the Afghan American Women's Council, or with a lot of other ways that American citizens have opened their homes to women in Afghanistan so they can be educated quickly, because they missed their education when they were children or young women, because they weren't allowed to learn anything.

I think that's really important. I think as we look all around the Middle East, we'll see that women can be the ones who really lead the freedom movement, and that American women are standing so strongly, I think, with the women in Afghanistan and other places.

Q Mr. President, one of your education initiatives is the No Child Left Behind. Can you reflect on that a little bit?

THE PRESIDENT: I think the No Child Left Behind Act is one of the significant achievements of my Administration because we said loud and clear to educators, parents, and children that we expect the best for every child, that we believe every child can learn, and that in return for Federal money we expect there to be an accountability system in place to determine whether every child is learning to read, write, and add and subtract.

This is a piece of legislation that required both Republicans and Democrats coming together, and it is a landmark legislative achievement. But more importantly, it

focused the country's attention on the fact that we had an achievement gap that -- you know, white kids were reading better in the 4th grade than Latinos or African American kids. And that's unacceptable for America. And the No Child Left Behind Act started holding people to account, and the achievement gap is narrowing.

When you couple that with a very strong literacy initiative, which Laura has been a part of, it begins to focus our whole system on solving problems early, and not accepting this premise that you're just going to move people through the system and hope for the best, and insisting upon high standards for every single child. And I'm very proud of that accomplishment, and I appreciate all those here in Washington and around the country that have worked hard to see that the promise of No Child Left Behind has been fulfilled.

Q Can you describe the influence our parents had on you?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that the gift our dad gave to all of us is unconditional love. It is the greatest gift a father can give a child. And it has made life so much easier in many ways, because if you have the ultimate gift of love, then the difficulties of life can be easier handled. And to me that is a great gift.

And he also taught me -- and I think you and Jeb and Neil and Marvin -- that you can go into politics with a set of values and you don't have to sell your soul once you're in the political system. And you can come out with the same set of values. And so I remember, I think it was Jeb said, "Dad was busy in politics, but he invented the definition of quality time." In other words, he was a great father before politics, a great father during politics and a great father after politics.

Q What role does faith play in your day-to-day life?

THE PRESIDENT: I've been in the Bible every day since I've been the President, and I have been affected by people's prayers a lot. I have found that faith is comforting, faith is strengthening, faith has been important...

I would advise politicians, however, to be careful about faith in the public arena. ...In other words, politicians should not be judgmental people based upon their faith. They should recognize -- as least I have recognized I am a lowly sinner seeking redemption, and therefore have been very careful about saying (accept) my faith or you're bad. In other words, if you don't accept what I believe, you're a bad person.

And the greatness of America -- it really is -- is that you can worship or not worship and be equally American. And it doesn't matter how you choose to worship; you're equally American. And it's very important for any President to jealously protect, guard, and strengthen that freedom.

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