

ADDRESS

GIVEN BY

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

TO THE

NAACP

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DR. GIBSON, DR. HOOKS, MR. COLLEY, MS. MCMILLAN, AND ASSEMBLED DELEGATES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MR. JACOB, I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO COMMEND THE EFFORTS OF THE NAACP IN HELPING THE BLACK COMMUNITY MEET ITS HEALTH NEEDS. THE ESTABLISHMENT, BY THE NAACP, OF ACTIVE HEALTH COMMITTEES IN THE COMMUNITY, STAND AS AN EXAMPLE OF INITIATIVE, CREATIVITY, AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN A TIME OF GREAT HEALTH NEEDS AND RELATIVELY SCARCE DOLLARS TO MEET THEM.

I ALSO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO COMMEND THIS AND OTHER BLACK ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR EFFORTS IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE SPREAD OF AIDS. AS SURGEON GENERAL, I'M PLEASED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE NAACP ON THE TOPIC OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES. I WILL FOCUS ON AIDS - AND THE EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS WHICH I FEEL MOST EFFICIENTLY CAN HELP CURTAIL THE SPREAD OF THIS DISEASE.

I FEEL A GREAT URGENCY TO SUPPORT THE CALL TO ARMS BEING HEARD THROUGHOUT THE BLACK COMMUNITY CONCERNING THE PROBLEMS OF AIDS. THE ELEVATED LEVEL OF CONCERN IS TIMELY, SINCE AIDS HAS DISPROPORTIONATELY TAKEN ITS TOLL IN THE BLACK AND HISPANIC COMMUNITIES. THE STATISTICS TELL US THAT IN THE GENERAL POPULATION, 1 OF EVERY 8 AMERICANS IS BLACK...BUT AMONG AMERICANS WITH AIDS, 1 IN 4 IS BLACK--24% OF THE TOTAL CASES REPORTED. AMONG THOSE AIDS PATIENTS BELOW 30 YEARS OF AGE, A STAGGERING 47% ARE BLACKS AND HISPANICS.

ALTHOUGH THE MAJORITY OF CASES OF AIDS ARE WHITE HOMOSEXUAL AND BISEXUAL MEN, THE BLACK AND HISPANIC COMMUNITIES HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY LARGE NUMBERS OF AIDS CASES. YET, ACCORDING TO STATISTICAL PROJECTIONS, THIS IS NO MORE THAN THE LULL BEFORE THE STORM. I AM CONCERNED THAT UNLESS WE ACT

QUICKLY, AND IN AN ORGANIZED AND UNIFIED MANNER, THE BLACK COMMUNITY MAY SUSTAIN GREATER LOSSES. I'M ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THE SUBSEQUENT SOCIAL IMPACT. I FEAR IT WILL PROVIDE GREATER OPPORTUNITY FOR DISCRIMINATION AGAINST BLACKS AND HISPANICS IN OUR SOCIETY.

IN ORDER TO BETTER DEAL WITH THE AIDS HEALTH CHALLENGE, IT IS NECESSARY TO FIRST PRESENT THE FACTS. SINCE 1981, WE HAVE SEEN THE OFFENDING VIRUS IN A MICROSCOPE AND WE HAVE NAMED AND RENAMED IT. IT'S CURRENT BIOMEDICAL NAME IS "HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS," OR H.I.V. WE HAVE GIVEN THE SYNDROME CAUSED BY THIS VIRUS THE NAME "ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME," AND TO SIMPLIFY MATTERS, WE HAVE BEGUN TO REFER TO THE INITIALS A.I.D.S., OR "AIDS."

A FEW KEY POINTS ABOUT AIDS: WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A DISEASE THAT IS SPREADING AT AN ALARMING RATE. THE NUMBER OF CASES IS DOUBLING IN LITTLE MORE THAN A YEAR. AS OF JANUARY 1986, WE HAD A CUMULATIVE TOTAL OF 16,000 REPORTED CASES. TODAY THAT TOTAL IS OVER 37,000. OVER HALF OF THOSE WHO HAVE CONTRACTED AIDS HAVE ALREADY DIED OF THE DISEASE...AND THE REST WILL.

LAST YEAR WE HAD OVER 13,000 NEW CASES ADDED TO THE TOTAL. THIS YEAR WE EXPECT ANOTHER 23,000 NEW CASES. IT IS PREDICTED THAT BY THE END OF 1990, A QUARTER OF A MILLION PEOPLE WILL HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED AS HAVING AIDS. MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT, AIDS IS SPREADING AND IT IS FATAL.

SECONDLY, THERE IS STILL A GREAT DEAL OF WORK THAT IS REQUIRED BEFORE WE TRULY UNDERSTAND THIS DISEASE; A LONG WAY TO GO BEFORE AN EFFECTIVE VACCINE OR CURE IS DEVELOPED. IT TOOK 17 YEARS TO DEVELOP THE HEPATITIS B VACCINE AND THAT WAS A COMPARATIVELY EASY VIRUS TO UNDERSTAND.

THIRD POINT: WE KNOW WITH COMPLETE CERTAINTY THAT THE AIDS VIRUS IS TRANSMITTED FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER EITHER THROUGH BLOOD OR SEMEN. THIS IS CLEARLY THE MOST CONCRETE AND SERIOUS PIECE OF INFORMATION WE HAVE SO FAR. IT EXPLAINS, FOR EXAMPLE, WHY SOME 17 PERCENT OF ALL AIDS CASES THUS FAR ARE INTRAVENOUS DRUG USERS. AMONG BLACKS WITH AIDS, 35% ARE I.V. DRUG ABUSERS. THESE ARE MEN AND WOMEN WHO ABUSE DRUGS INTRAVENOUSLY USING DIRTY PARAPHERNALIA THEY'VE BORROWED FROM ANOTHER DRUG USER WHO ALREADY CARRIES THE VIRUS. IN THE PAST YEAR THE PROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF AIDS CASES AMONG I.V. DRUG ABUSERS HAS INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY.

IT ALSO EXPLAINS WHY THE INITIAL ALARM ABOUT AIDS WAS SOUNDED AMONG HOMOSEXUAL AND BISEXUAL MEN. SOME HOMOSEXUAL SEX PRACTICES NOT ONLY PRODUCE SEMEN BUT MAY ALSO CAUSE SOME BLEEDING.

WHEN WE FIRST CONFRONTED THE AIDS VIRUS, THE PEOPLE AT HIGHEST RISK WERE HOMOSEXUAL AND BISEXUAL MEN. I'M AFRAID THIS GROUP WILL CONTINUE TO BE AT HIGH RISK, EVEN THOUGH SOME FAR-REACHING CHANGES HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE BEHAVIOR OF HOMOSEXUAL AND BISEXUAL MEN. ABOUT 40% OF BLACKS WITH AIDS FIT INTO THAT CATEGORY.

HOWEVER, WE NOW ALSO HAVE REPORTS OF THE AIDS VIRUS OCCURRING AMONG HETEROSEXUAL MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE NOT I.V. DRUG ABUSERS. IN FACT, THEIR HETEROSEXUAL ACTIVITY SEEMS TO BE THEIR ONLY RISK FACTOR. MULTIPLE PARTNERS INCREASE THAT RISK. ALTHOUGH MANY HETEROSEXUALS HAVE AIDS, AS OF LAST WEEK, 4 PERCENT OF ALL REPORTED AIDS CASES HAVE BEEN TRANSMITTED BY HETEROSEXUAL ACTIVITY...A FIGURE WHICH IS INCREASING. THE NUMBER OF AIDS CASES WILL INCREASE ABOUT 9-FOLD BETWEEN NOW AND THE YEAR 1991. BUT THE NUMBER OF AIDS CASES INVOLVING HETEROSEXUAL PERSONS WILL INCREASE ABOUT 20-FOLD.

I AM CONCERNED THAT MANY PEOPLE STILL ARE NOT AWARE OF THE THREAT THAT AIDS POSES TO HETEROSEXUALS. I AM ALSO VERY CONCERNED THAT THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF SELF-DESTRUCTIVE DENIAL BY HETEROSEXUALS ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF AND TRANSMISSION OF AIDS AMONG HETEROSEXUALS. THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT POINT THAT I WISH TO RELATE TO YOU TODAY IS THAT AIDS HAS

ENTERED THE HETEROSEXUAL COMMUNITY. THE AIDS EPIDEMIC IS NOT OFF ON THE HORIZON, IT IS UPON US! I DOUBT THAT WE ARE ON THE THRESHOLD OF AN EXPLOSIVE EPIDEMIC AMONG HETEROSEXUALS SUCH AS WE SAW AMONG HOMOSEXUALS IN 1981-1982. THE FIGURES DURING THE REST OF THIS YEAR WILL TELL. YOU WHO ARE HETEROSEXUAL COULD BE AT RISK IF YOU ENGAGE IN CERTAIN HIGH-RISK BEHAVIORS. THIS IS NOT A TIME TO PANIC, BUT YOU SHOULD BE VERY AWARE OF THE REALITY OF THIS DISEASE.

THE FOURTH SET OF FACTS ABOUT AIDS THAT I WISH TO RELATE TO YOU IS THE TRAGIC MOTHER-TO-NEWBORN TRANSMISSION OF AIDS. IF A WOMAN IS INFECTED WITH THE AIDS VIRUS AND BECOMES PREGNANT, SHE IS MORE LIKELY TO DEVELOP AIDS RELATED COMPLEX OR CLASSIC AIDS THAN IS A NON PREGNANT WOMAN.. BUT SHE CAN PASS THE VIRUS TO HER CHILD IN THE WOMB OR AT BIRTH EVEN IF SHE

ONLY CARRIES THE VIRUS. APPROXIMATELY ONE THIRD OF THE BABIES BORN TO AIDS-VIRUS-INFECTED MOTHERS WILL ALSO BE INFECTED WITH THE AIDS VIRUS. PRESUMABLY THE INFECTED BABIES WILL EVENTUALLY DEVELOP THE DISEASE AND DIE.

ALMOST ALL BABIES WITH AIDS HAVE BEEN BORN TO WOMEN WHO WERE INTRAVENOUS DRUG USERS OR THE SEXUAL PARTNERS OF INTRAVENOUS DRUG USERS WHO WERE INFECTED WITH THE AIDS VIRUS. I STRESS THIS FOURTH SET OF FACTS BECAUSE BLACKS AND HISPANICS ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY REPRESENTED IN INFANT AIDS CASES. MORE THAN HALF OF THE NUMBER OF INFANTS WITH AIDS ARE BLACK AND ANOTHER 24% ARE HISPANIC. NEARLY ALL OF THESE CHILDREN RECEIVED THE VIRUS FROM THEIR INFECTED MOTHERS EITHER IN UTERO OR DURING DELIVERY.

AT PRESENT, THE ONLY WEAPON WE HAVE AGAINST AIDS IS INFORMATION AND EDUCATION. IN THE PAST 5 YEARS, A CONCENTRATED EFFORT WAS MADE TO TARGET HOMOSEXUAL MEN WITH INFORMATION AND EDUCATION ON AIDS, AN EFFORT THAT WAS EFFECTIVE...THINGS HAVE CHANGED. NOW WE NEED TO DIRECT OUR INFORMATION AND EDUCATION EFFORTS OUT TO OUR ENTIRE SOCIETY. I THINK YOU WOULD AGREE THAT, IF WE HAD TO MAKE SOME CHOICES AND SET SOME PRIORITIES, WE WOULD ELECT TO DO THE BEST JOB WE COULD TO INFORM OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT THE DANGERS OF AIDS. YOUNG PEOPLE ARE NOT ONLY AT HIGH RISK, BUT THEIR SEXUAL PRACTICES OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME WILL DETERMINE WHETHER OUR SOCIETY CAN SURVIVE THIS DEVASTATING DISEASE. WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING THEN, IS TO ATTEMPT TO IDENTIFY THE INFORMATION THAT PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT AIDS. OUR TOP PRIORITY HAS BEEN TO FOCUS ON THE INFORMATION THAT OUR YOUTH, IN PARTICULAR, SHOULD KNOW.

FIRST, WE NEED TO INTRODUCE THE LIFE-SAVING MESSAGE OF SAYING "NO" TO DRUGS. SECONDLY, WE MUST PUT INTO THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF SEXUALLY ACTIVE PEOPLE, AND THAT CAN MEAN ANY PERSON BETWEEN THE AGES OF 12 AND 80, JUST TWO MESSAGES. THE FIRST ONE IS SIMPLE: ABSTAIN FROM SEX. THAT'S GOOD ADVICE FOR CHILDREN - AIDS OR NO AIDS. BUT IT'S UNREALISTIC FOR MOST ADULTS. IF THAT IS NOT POSSIBLE FIND SOMEONE WHO IS WORTHY OF YOUR RESPECT AND YOUR LOVE...GIVE THAT PERSON BOTH...AND STAY FAITHFUL TO HIM OR HER. IN OTHER WORDS, SHORT OF TOTAL ABSTINENCE, THE NEXT BEST DEFENSE AGAINST AIDS IS TO MAINTAIN A MONOGAMOUS RELATIONSHIP, IN WHICH YOU HAVE ONLY ONE CONTINUING SEXUAL PARTNER...AND THAT PERSON IS AS FAITHFUL AS YOU ARE.

I AM NOT APOLOGIZING IF THAT SOUNDS LIKE A LESSON IN MORALITY: MY ADVOCACY OF MONOGAMY IS ALSO GOOD SCIENCE. IN CONTAINING THE AIDS VIRUS, SCIENCE AND MORALITY ADVANCE HAND-IN-HAND TOWARD THE SAME GOAL. I AM A FIRM BELIEVER THAT A FAITHFUL, MONOGAMOUS RELATIONSHIP IS ALSO A PERSON'S BEST DEFENSE NOT ONLY AGAINST AIDS BUT ALSO OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES, SUCH AS HERPES, SYPHILIS AND GONORRHEA AND FOR MANY OTHER THINGS THAT GO TO MAKE WHAT WE CALL THE HUMAN CONDITION. FOR THOSE WHO THINK THAT THESE OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES ARE NOT A SIGNIFICANT HEALTH PROBLEM, LET ME POINT OUT THAT AS OF JUNE 20TH, FOR THE CURRENT YEAR, WHILE THERE WERE 8,300 NEW CASES OF AIDS REPORTED, 362,575 NEW CASES OF GONORRHEA AND 15,355 NEW CASES OF SYPHILLIS WERE RECORDED.

MY FINAL WORD IS FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT ABSTINENT OR MONOGAMOUS AND CONTINUE TO HAVE MULTIPLE SEX PARTNERS. THIS MESSAGE IS CAUTION. YOU NEED TO KNOW WITH ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY THAT NEITHER YOU NOR YOUR PARTNER IS CARRYING THE AIDS VIRUS. IF YOU ARE NOT ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN, THEN YOU MUST TAKE PRECAUTIONS.

IF YOU ARE A MAN, USE A CONDOM FROM START TO FINISH. IF YOU ARE A WOMAN, MAKE SURE YOUR MALE PARTNER USES A CONDOM. A CONDOM WON'T PROVIDE 100 PERCENT PROTECTION, BUT SHORT OF ABSTINENCE AND FAITHFUL MONOGAMY IT SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY PROTECTION AGAINST AIDS.

WHAT CAN WE DO, ALONG WITH EDUCATION, TO CURTAIL THE SPREAD OF AIDS? WE OUGHT TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO FIND THE PEOPLE WHO ARE AIDS CARRIERS AND TELL THEM ABOUT THE FACTS OF THIS DISEASE, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF NOT BEING

CARELESS. TESTING MAKES THIS POSSIBLE. I THINK THAT WE CAN ALL AGREE THAT IF SOMEONE IS WORRIED ABOUT CARRYING THE AIDS VIRUS, THAT THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO BE TESTED AT A WALK-IN SITE AND TO HAVE THE RESULTS AND NECESSARY COUNSELING, IF NEEDED, PROVIDED QUICKLY AND IN CONFIDENCE. I THINK WE CAN ALL AGREE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF NOT PENALIZING OR DISCRIMINATING AGAINST A PERSON BASED ON TEST RESULTS. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US, AS A NATION, TO REALIZE THAT WE ARE FIGHTING A DISEASE NOT PEOPLE. TO ECHO COMMENTS OF A PROMINENT NATIONAL LEADER ON THIS ISSUE: "AMERICA FACES A DISEASE THAT IS FATAL AND SPREADING. THIS CALLS FOR URGENCY, NOT PANIC. IT CALLS FOR COMPASSION, NOT BLAME. AND IT CALLS FOR UNDERSTANDING, NOT IGNORANCE. IT'S ALSO IMPORTANT THAT AMERICA NOT REJECT THOSE WHO HAVE THE DISEASE, BUT CARE FOR THEM WITH DIGNITY AND KINDNESS." THAT NATIONAL LEADER IS RONALD REAGAN.

TO THIS COMMENT, I ADD THAT IF WE EXPEND OUR EFFORTS BLAMING, SCAPEGOATING, DISCRIMINATING, OR ISOLATING THOSE WITH THE DISEASE OR THOSE GROUPS WITH PROPORTIONATELY GREATER NUMBERS OF AIDS PATIENTS, WE WILL DEFEAT OURSELVES!!!!

I AM DEEPLY COMMITTED TO STOPPING THE SPREAD OF AIDS, AND AM WILLING TO SUPPORT THOSE EFFORTS WHICH SHOW GREATEST PROMISE OF EFFICIENTLY USING LIMITED RESOURCES. I INVITE THE BLACK ORGANIZATIONS, SUCH AS THE NAACP, TO ESTABLISH A PLANNING COMMITTEE TO SET STRATEGIES TO MEET THE GOAL OF A CULTURALLY RELEVANT AIDS PREVENTION FOR BLACKS.

IN SUPPORT OF THIS GOAL, STRATEGIES SHOULD BE DEVELOPED THAT:

- UTILIZE BLACK COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS
- UTILIZE BLACK HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS
- AND MOST IMPORTANT, STRATEGIES MUST INVOLVE BLACKS IN THE EFFORTS
OF MAJORITY ORGANIZATIONS
- CONNECT AIDS WITH OTHER STD AND WITH OTHER TEEN PROGRAMS
- DEVELOP TRAINING PROGRAMS, ESPECIALLY FOR TEACHERS AND COUNSELORS.

AS A NEXT STEP, WE MUST IDENTIFY RESOURCE NEEDS AND METHODS OF
SECURING PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SUPPORT TO MEET THESE NEEDS.

JUDGING FROM A HISTORY OF SUCCESSES, OFTEN UNDER VERY ADVERSE CONDITIONS, I AM CONFIDENT THAT BLACK ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY, WILL SWIFTLY AND SUCCESSFULLY SHIFT INTO A BATTLE MODE TO DEAL WITH THE AIDS CHALLENGE. I HOPE ALL THOSE WHO HAVE HEARD MY MESSAGE TODAY, WILL DO EVERYTHING WITHIN THEIR POWER TO WARN THEIR NEIGHBORS AND TO JOIN FORCES TO PROTECT THE LIVES OF ALL OUR PEOPLE AGAINST AIDS. SINCE THIS IS A GLOBAL PROBLEM, I CHALLENGE NAA TO SET AN EXAMPLE FOR AMERICA, AND AMERICA TO SET AN EXAMPLE, TO THE REST OF THE WORLD, OF FAST MOBILIZATION, UNITY AND CARING IN WINNING THE FIGHT AGAINST THE SPREAD OF AIDS.

SOME SAY IT CAN'T BE DONE. I DISAGREE. I'D LIKE TO BE ON HAND TO HELP WHERE I MAY.

THANK YOU.