

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH FIRST LADY LAURA BUSH

SUBJECT:

U.S. AID TO AFRICA, INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT'S PLAN FOR AIDS RELIEF

MODERATOR: JERRY ZREMSKI, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

LOCATION: NATIONAL PRESS CLUB BALLROOM, WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME: 12:04 P.M. EDT

DATE: WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2007

(C) COPYRIGHT 2005, FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC., 1000 VERMONT AVE. NW; 5TH FLOOR; WASHINGTON, DC - 20005, USA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. ANY REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RETRANSMISSION IS EXPRESSLY PROHIBITED.

UNAUTHORIZED REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RETRANSMISSION CONSTITUTES A MISAPPROPRIATION UNDER APPLICABLE UNFAIR COMPETITION LAW, AND FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC. RESERVES THE RIGHT TO PURSUE ALL REMEDIES AVAILABLE TO IT IN RESPECT TO SUCH MISAPPROPRIATION.

FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC. IS A PRIVATE FIRM AND IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. NO COPYRIGHT IS CLAIMED AS TO ANY PART OF THE ORIGINAL WORK PREPARED BY A UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT OFFICER OR EMPLOYEE AS PART OF THAT PERSON'S OFFICIAL DUTIES.

FOR INFORMATION ON SUBSCRIBING TO FNS, PLEASE CALL JACK GRAEME AT 202-347-1400.

-----  
MR. ZREMSKI: Good afternoon and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Jerry Zremski, and I'm president of the Press Club and Washington bureau chief for the Buffalo News. I'd like to welcome Club members and their guests who are here with us today, as well as our television audience watching on C-SPAN. We're looking forward to today's speech, and afterwards I'll ask as many questions as time permits. Please hold your applause during the speech so that we have as much time for questions as possible. For our broadcast audience, I'd like to explain that if you hear applause, it may be from the guests and members of the general public who attend our luncheons, and not necessarily from the working press. (Laughter.)

I'd now like to introduce our head table guests and ask them to stand briefly when their names are called. From your right, Marilyn Geewax, economics correspondent for Cox Newspapers; Roslyn Jordan, reporter for WAMU-FM, a National Public Radio affiliate; Linda Gasperello, co-host of public television's White House Chronicle; Laura Steele, reporter for the Kiplinger Letter; Bruce Wilkinson, director of RAPIDS, which stands for Reaching HIV/AIDS Affected People with Integrated Development and Support; Sheila Johnson, chief executive officer of Salamander Hospitality and president and managing partner of the Washington Mystics WNBA team and a new member of the National Press Club; Ambassador Mark R. Dybul, U.S. global AIDS

coordinator; skipping over the podium Angela Greiling Keane of Bloomberg News, the chair of the National Press Club Speakers Committee; skipping over our speaker for just one second, Katherine Skiba, Washington correspondent for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and the Speakers Committee member who organized today's lunch; Ambassador John Danilovich, CEO of the Millennium Challenge Corporation; Richard S. Dunham, Washington bureau chief for the Houston Chronicle and a former National Press Club president; Vickie Walton-James, Washington senior editor for Tribune Publishing; Kathy Kiley (sp), Washington correspondent for USA Today -- and that is it. (Chuckles.)

(Applause.)

Thirty years ago this coming November, a young woman from Texas named Laura Welch married George W. Bush, after extracting a promise that she would never have to give a political speech. (Laughter.) I trust that I speak for those gathered here today as well as those watching at home on television all around the country when I say we're very pleased that that promise is no longer operative. (Chuckles.) Today marks Mrs. Bush's second visit to the National Press Club podium. She follows in the footsteps of only two other sitting first ladies to speak at NPC luncheons; Rosalyn Carter in 1978 and Eleanor Roosevelt in 1938. (Scattered laughter.)

A teacher and librarian by trade, Laura Bush has always loved literature more than the limelight. But once she married into the decidedly political Bush family, Mrs. Bush nonetheless went to work on causes that mattered to her. As first lady of Texas, she championed the Texas Book Festival, literacy, and breast cancer awareness. Now, as first lady of the United States, the world is her platform. Her interests include education, global literacy, human rights, and fighting diseases such as AIDS and malaria. She has emerged as an enormously popular presence, a reassuring voice after 9/11, a much-in-demand campaigner in 2004, and now, in the second half of her husband's second term, as a woman of the world.

Mrs. Bush is here to talk about her recent trip to Africa. The trip, her fourth to the continent, took her to Senegal, Mozambique, Zambia, and Mali. And all along the way, she discussed the Bush administration's groundbreaking but somewhat unnoticed efforts to combat AIDS, malaria, and poverty.

Announced in 2003, the president's Emergency Plan for AIDS relief commits an unprecedented amount of aid to the fight against global HIV and AIDS. Meanwhile, President Bush's \$1.2 billion effort to combat malaria in Africa aims to cut the death rate from that disease in half. And through the Millennium Challenge Corporation the Bush administration is bringing innovative new foreign aid programs to the third world, and demanding results. Mrs. Bush will likely touch on those topics today as she poses an important question: Why Africa?

Mrs. Bush, thank you so much for joining us, and welcome to the National Press Club.

(Applause.)

MRS. BUSH: Thank you very much, Jerry. You sure covered a lot.

Thank you all, thank you, Jerry. Thanks, everybody.

The promise that I would never have to give a political speech was actually our pre-nup. (Laughter.) But it did -- I also promised that I would run with George, be a jogger with him, and I never once did it, so I guess I don't feel that bad about his breaking the promise. And I'm happy to actually have to speech -- to speak, and to have this opportunity to speak to all of you. Thank you, Jerry, very much. Thank you for your kind introduction. Thank you, Katherine, the event organizer; thank you for asking me here. And I want to say a special thanks to the people who've joined me today that I invited to sit on the head table, and that's Ambassador Mark Dybul, the global AIDS coordinator. Thank you very much, Mark, for joining us. Ambassador John Danilovich, the Millennium Challenge Corporation CEO; thank you, John. Bruce Wilkinson, who's the director of RAPIDS, and Bruce really represents today at the head table all of the charitable and faith-based, non-government organizations that are on the ground in Africa, organizations that our government uses to make sure we can reach into every community as we work to try to eradicate malaria or AIDS.

I also have on my paper, but I don't see him here, that Admiral Tim Ziemer, who's the U.S. malaria coordinator is here. What about Dr. Sarah Moten. There's Dr. Moten; I see her here. Is Dr. -- is Admiral Ziemer here? Somebody's pointing in the back, but -- oh, there he is, right there. Good. Thank you very much for joining us. Dr. Moten is the USAID director of the Africa Education Initiative, and thank you, Sarah, very much, for being here.

Members of the press, congressional staff, distinguished guests, thank you for your welcome back to the National Press Club. Many of you are print reporters, so you might appreciate the fact that yesterday I visited the Mark Twain house in Hartford, Connecticut. Mark Twain, one of our greatest American writers, got his start as a print journalist. Despite the fact that some of his earliest work was published in newspapers, Twain didn't seem to have much use for them. He once said, "Advertisements contain the only truth to be relied on in newspapers." (Laughter.) I was going to tease you all about this, until I read what he said about presidents. (Laughter.)

I know that the Q&A session is the centerpiece of the Press Club's Newsmaker Luncheon, so I thought I'd start by addressing a fundamental question about the United States' involvement in development in Africa, and that is, "Why?" Why would we spend our time and money working on that continent?

African development is an issue that President Bush and I care about deeply. It's an issue that's drawn the attention of our former presidents, of world leaders, of heads of businesses and religious groups, of artists and musicians, and compassionate people the world over. And in recent interviews, your colleagues have asked me the same question many of you are probably asking, and that is, "When there are problems in so many countries around the world, why are so many eyes turned to this place at this time? Why Africa? Every year, the American taxpayers spend more than \$6.5 billion on African development. We're able to provide these resources because our history has yielded a free and prosperous nation. In Africa, however,

history has been less kind. Colonialism, the slave trade, poverty, and war have each by turns devastated the continent. In recent decades, African nations have faced a new, deadly threat, and that's a pandemic disease that claims millions of lives every year.

Despite these challenges, though, the people of Africa remain hopeful. If you ask why Africa, one answer is that there is now unprecedented optimism that these challenges can be overcome. In fact, a recent poll showed that most Africans believe they are better off today than they were five years ago and that they're encouraged about their prospects for future generations. They report greater confidence in their own governments which, with technical and financial support from the United States and from other developed countries, are beginning to devise solutions to poverty, lack of education, and disease.

The philosophy behind these solutions is a real partnership between governments. Because the United States has a thriving economy, we're able to provide some resources for development efforts around the world. The leadership for these efforts comes from the developing nations themselves. Our aid initiatives are effective because countries in Africa devise their own national development strategies. Before the U.S. provides money, our partner governments devise how they'll invest in expensive infrastructure and combat poverty, malaria, lack of education, and AIDS. The ultimate goal of all these development partnerships is long-term, sustainable economic growth. We know that people who are healthy and educated are more likely to prosper, and we know that societies with strong economies are more likely to be able to sustain transparent governments that are accountable to their people.

Our partnerships with the countries of Africa are yielding progress. Across the continent, college degrees are being completed, roads and airports are being built, and lives are being saved. Last month I traveled to the African nations of Senegal, Mozambique, Zambia, and Mali. This was my third trip to Africa on my own. I visited schools and villages, clinics and hospitals, micro-credit programs, and community centers supported by the American people, and I saw many signs of this progress. I visited programs that are helping the people of these nations build educated, prosperous, and just societies. If you ask why Africa, one answer is that it's in our country's interest to stand with governments that bring stability and opportunity to their people.

We've learned that it's in our urgent interest to invest in successful governments now so that we don't have to pay the price for failed governments down the road.

The last time I addressed the National Press Club was in November 2001 to speak about the events of September 11th. The attacks of that day reminded us that misery and oppression on another continent can manifest themselves on the next block, a lesson that has been retaught in cities from London to Madrid to Jakarta.

We've learned that nations that value human freedom are more likely to be our partners in maintaining security. And we know that nations that value educational and economic freedom for all their

citizens are more likely to be our partners in fostering prosperity.

On my trip, I visited programs that invest in educational opportunities for African children. I met with students who benefit from our government's African Education Initiative. Launched in 2002, AEI is a \$600 million program that will provide scholarships to 550,000 African girls and train more than 900,000 teachers by the year 2010.

At the Grand Medine Primary School in Dakar, Senegal, I met with five young women who are receiving AEI ambassadors' girls scholarships. They come from rural Senegalese villages; their villages, without electricity or running water.

In that village, education for women is rare. One of the young women, Nago Dang (ph), hopes to become the first girl in her village to ever go to college. And since her community has no nurses or doctors, she wants to study medicine so she can return to her village and serve her people.

I helped distribute books produced through the AEI's textbook and learning materials program. Six African countries have partnered with six American universities, primarily minority-serving universities, to produce 15 million school textbooks.

Through the program, more than a million books that are Africa-centered, tailored to the culture and curriculum of Senegal, written in French, printed in Senegal, are being delivered to that nation's schools.

Many of these books were pilot-tested at Grand Medine School. For the first time, the school's math text teach basic statistics.

From their health books, the students learn how to prevent HIV-AIDS. They go home and inform their parents that mosquitoes transmit malaria, and they pass along lessons about basic first aid. Grand Medine teachers say their students are so excited by these new books that they skip ahead of their teachers and can't wait for the next lessons.

On my trip I also saw programs that invest in economic opportunity for Africa. My day in Mozambique, by coincidence, was the same day that country's half-billion-dollar Millennium Challenge Compact was approved in the United States. It was fun to be in Maputo with Mozambique's President Guebuza to celebrate.

In 2002, President Bush proposed the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which Congress established in 2004 to encourage governments to invest in their own people, foster economic freedom and become transparent.

Through MCC, nations, led by accountable governments, devised their own development strategies based on the needs of their countries. Once they've been approved by the MCC compact, the corporation provides MCC countries with the money to achieve their strategy.

The infrastructure these countries build with MCC help gives people in these nations the resources they need to improve education, to create jobs and to sustain economic growth long after MCC sunsets.

When I was in Mozambique, President Guebuza explained how the MCC compact will help his country upgrade its roads, improve agriculture, invest in water treatment and wells, and strengthen property rights.

In Mozambique and Mali, which is also an MCC country, leaders told me how this initiative is giving their nations the first real chance they've ever had to take charge of their own development agendas. MCC resources support African governments as they take on difficult reforms and work to lift their citizens out of poverty.

If Congress makes funding the MCC a priority, the American people can continue to support governments that will use the money wisely to build their countries' economies for the benefit of all of their citizens.

If you ask why Africa, one answer is that we have a moral obligation to help. The American people believe that every life in every land has value and dignity. Many Americans are called to help others meet these basic human needs. Our country's citizens provide food and clean water so that mothers can see their children grow up healthy. We provide books and teachers so that people can read and write. Our country supports doctors, medicines and basic care so that people can enjoy the blessings of good health.

The things we take for granted here in the United States have an enormous impact on the lives of people in Africa. In Zambia, I visited the Regiment School, which benefits from an innovative solution to one of the greatest development challenges in Africa -- the lack of clean water. Every 15 seconds, a child dies because of water-related illnesses. The work of fetching water keeps children out of school and is the central daily task for women and girls.

At the Regiment School, the water supply was once so limited, the principal had to ask children to carry their own water from home. Now students have steady access to clean water, thanks to the U.S. government, the Case Foundation and other partners.

These partners join to finance the Regiment School's play pump, a children's merry-go-round that's attached to a storage tank and a water pump. When the wheel turns, clean drinking water is produced. The pump is fueled by a limitless source of energy -- children at play. (Applause.) The Regiment School's play pump is one of 4,000 that this partnership will build to provide 10 million Africans with clean water by the year 2010.

In Mozambique, very simple technologies protect people from the devastating epidemic of malaria. This treatable and preventable disease, which we eradicated in the United States half a century ago, claims more than a million African lives every year.

Somewhere in Africa, a mother loses her baby to malaria every 30 seconds. The disease imposes a crushing burden on developing African economies. When children are sick with malaria, they can't be in

school. When adults are sick with malaria, they can't work. Doctors, nurses and caregivers treating malaria patients can't devote their time and resources to other health challenges like cholera, tuberculosis or AIDS.

In some countries, malaria consumes 40 percent of spending on public health. In Mozambique, where malaria is the leading cause of death, the illness accounts for 40 percent of outpatient consultations, 60 percent of pediatric inpatients, and a third of pediatric hospital deaths.

If malaria were eradicated on the African continent, an enormous burden would be lifted from nations' already weak health infrastructure.

In 2005, President Bush launched the President's Malaria Initiative, a five-year program to combat malaria in the hardest-hit African nations. So far, the Initiative has distributed lifesaving medicines, insecticide sprays and mosquito nets to millions of people across the continent. By the end of next year, 70 percent of families living in eight President's Malaria Initiative countries will be protected by insecticide-treated nets.

I visited Mozambique's remote Mozal village, which receives bed nets provided through PMI and is treated with mosquito sprays supported by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. Amid Mozal's cluster of tiny huts lives the Arbino (sp) family. Jose and Anna Arbino (sp) are the proud parents of four precious children. They've suffered, as all parents do, when their babies are sick, watching their children come down with the tell-tale fever. On the day I visited, the Arbinos had a scare when their baby girl was taken to the hospital with malaria symptoms. Fortunately, her tests came back negative. Too many children in Mozambique are not so lucky, but with sprays and nets, parents and children of Mozal can look forward to a life free from malaria.

If you ask, why Africa? One answer is that what we're doing in Africa works. We've developing successful models for development based on strong partnerships with African governments. Our initiatives are also working because we partner with other developed nations; and with all of our development programs, we partner with the private sector. President Bush has called on foundations, businesses, religious groups and private citizens to join the fight against poverty and pandemic disease. Across Africa we're seeing the success of these partnerships, especially in our efforts to address one of the greatest humanitarian challenges of all time -- the crisis of HIV/AIDS.

Around the world, nearly 40 million people are infected. AIDS respects no national boundaries, spares no race or religion, devastates men and women, rich and poor. AIDS is a problem in our own country where more than a million people are living with HIV. Since 2001, the U.S. government has devoted approximately \$18 billion to domestic HIV/AIDS research and provided nearly \$90 billion for treatment and care, increasing annual funding by 47 percent. Government initiatives also promote voluntary testing so that more Americans can know their status and help prevent the spread of

HIV/AIDS here at home.

This disease's most devastating toll though, is felt in Sub-Saharan Africa, which represents about 26 million of the world's HIV infections. In 2003 President Bush announced the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, a five-year, \$15 billion initiative to combat HIV/AIDS in 120 countries around the world. In the years since, thanks to strong bipartisan support in Congress, our country has met this pledge and our actual commitment over five years will exceed \$18 billion. The Emergency Plan works in partnership with the hardest-hit countries and that partnership is saving lives.

When President Bush announced PEPFAR at the beginning of 2003, only 50 thousand people in Sub-Saharan Africa were thought to be receiving antiretroviral treatment. Now, in PEPFAR's 15 focus nations, the United States has helped provide treatment for more than a million people. PEPFAR has supported care for more than two million orphans and vulnerable children, and in its first three and a half years PEPFAR has supported services for pregnant women to avoid transmission of HIV to their babies, preventing more than 100,000 infant infections through March of this year. This direct medical care keeps people in good health.

And education is spreading hope. Millions are now learning to live with HIV instead of waiting to die from it. This is the beginning of a long journey. The challenges of this pandemic remain immense and there is much to be done. We must focus on HIV prevention, which is essential to winning the fight against AIDS. Just last year, there were more than four million new HIV infections. With each infection we prevent, we keep one person alive and healthy but we also protect their partner and we keep their children from being orphaned.

PEPFAR supports the most comprehensive, evidence-based prevention program in the world. Our interventions are tailored to each focus nation, targeting sexual behavior, mother-to-child transmission, and unsafe blood and medical injections. Depending on the needs of each country, through PEPFAR the U.S. has supported nearly 19 million counseling and testing sessions. When people know their status, they can protect themselves and their loved ones from HIV.

In developing prevention methods, the United States is following the lead of our African partners. We support the ABC model of AIDS prevention, which was developed by Africans and which has led to dramatic declines in HIV infection rates in young men and women. People are changing their behavior, and all three are the essential components -- abstinence, being faithful, and the correct and consistent use of condoms.

Promising trends are emerging in countries that have embraced ABC, including Uganda, Botswana, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia. In Kenya, HIV prevalence has dropped from a peak of about 10 percent in the mid-1990s to just above six percent today. Data suggests that Kenyan men are having fewer sexual partners, women are delaying their sexual debut, and people who were once sexually active are now abstaining. Women who do engage in risky behavior report an increased use of condoms.



At the regiment school, 300 students are AIDS orphans, so the disease is personal and real to this community. Painted on the school's perimeter wall in classroom buildings are messages promoting abstinence in HIV prevention. PEPFAR supports regiment school's anti-AIDS drama club, which uses dances, skits, and songs to open dialogue and reduce stigma. Ambassador Dible (sp) and I watched one of their performances. After the skit, the club performed a song with powerful, determined lyrics, they sang, "We are fighters against HIV and AIDS. Keep the promise against HIV and AIDS."

President Bush is determined to keep our country's promise against HIV and AIDS. In May he announced that he will work with Congress to build on the Emergency Plan's early success and to reauthorize the program for another five years. He's proposed doubling the American people's initial commitment to \$30 billion. This increase would bring the overall U.S. pledge to a remarkable total of more than \$48 billion over 18 years -- over 10 years that is, the largest commitment by any nation to fight a disease in human history. I'd like to urge members of Congress to support -- and in Washington, of course, that means fund -- this important initiative.

The world is already showing its support. This June, after President Bush proposed doubling PEPFAR, the G-8 nations responded by pledging \$60 billion to fight tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/AIDS.

Throughout my trip, I met people who benefit from our country's promise against HIV and AIDS. In Mozambique, at the PEPFAR supported Maputo Pediatric Hospital, I met with children participating in the "Positive Art" project. This program gives children a creative outlet for expression while they, or their moms, are being treated for HIV. While the kids paint, their mothers enjoy Positive Tea Time. This is a terrific support group, because even though about 16 percent of Mozambique's population is living with HIV, the disease still carries a huge stigma. Positive Tea brings the HIV-positive mothers together to support one another and to listen to one another's concerns.

One of the HIV-positive mothers, Julia, shared the story of her HIV treatment and her 2-year-old daughter's chemotherapy. It was when Julia's little girl first became sick with blood cancer that Julia had her tested for HIV and her daughter's result came back positive. But with support from PEPFAR, both Julia and her baby girl are living positively.

I was especially touched by the programs I saw in Zambia. More than 16 percent of the country's adult population has HIV/AIDS. And the disease has made orphans out of more than 700,000 Zambian children. In Lusaka I visited Chreso Ministries, which is run by the Gospel Outreach Fellowship. All of the Chreso clinic's anti-retrovirals are provided by PEPFAR. In Chreso's worship hall, I met with patients and care providers. One woman, Patricia, told us about the pain of stigma; about losing her job when people found out she was positive. Another woman explained out her family of 29, only 14 are still alive and 12 of them are HIV positive. One man, Jonathan, a married father of four, explained that he was so weak from AIDS that his entire family thought he was going to die. But with treatment he receives at Chreso, he said, "I'm healthy. My children are in school

and my family is smiling."

Another moving visit was to the Mutata Center. Mutata's director established the center in honor of her husband who died of AIDS. At Mutata, the RAPIDS Consortium -- and Bruce is here from RAPIDS -- a group of religious institutions, led by World Vision, brings the personal healing touch of faith to the campaign against HIV/AIDS. With support from PEPFAR, a corps of dedicated caregivers fan out into the rural community on bicycle and foot. They go door-to-door with care kits and anti-retroviral drugs. And now they're also taking insecticide, mosquito nets with them.

By encouraging citizens to be tested for HIV and to seek treatment, the caregivers bring ailing people back to life. Beneath the trees at Mutata's citrus orchard, caregivers and patients told me of their personal struggles with HIV. Tears streamed down the faces of two young women, Sarah and Mwelwa, as they shared their stories of abuse and rape. There was pain in the retelling, but there was also hope. The confidence to speak out is a sign of the healing. With help from Mutata, both girls plan to finish their education. Mwelwa is an AIDS orphan, and she hopes to become a pediatrician to help other orphans lead healthier and more hopeful lives.

The youngest member of the group was a 10-year-old boy name Raphael who was orphaned at the age of three and is HIV positive. Raphael was near death when a friend of Raphael's late father and a Mutata caregiver, Sylvester, found him. Sylvester made sure Raphael got on anti-retroviral treatment and today keeps up his regimen. Raphael is now a regular visitor to Sylvester's home. They pray together and the little boy and the grandfatherly volunteer have become best friends. Raphael is first in his sixth grade class and he plans to attend the University of Zambia. Thanks to Mutata and Sylvester, this HIV patient who no one would have expected to survive now expects a long life.

A favorite in the Mutata community with Esnart Banda. Three years ago Esnart didn't know she had HIV, but she knew she was sick. She suffered recurring bouts of tuberculosis and her body was covered with sores. Her husband abandoned her, taking all of their household items with him. She struggled to care for herself, but she was too feeble. For two weeks she lay bedridden, alone and afraid. Eventually, Esnart said, "I just accepted that I was going to die." That's when Esnart met Vinus (sp), a World Vision caregiver from Mutata. Vinus (sp) was in Esnart's neighborhood going door-to-door asking whether anybody needed medical attention. By chance she happened upon Esnart. Vinus (sp) and her fellow caregivers bathed Esnart and cleaned her sores. They gave her blankets and a jacket. They encouraged her to be tested for HIV. And when Esnart learned she was positive, they provided her with anti-retrovirals. Soon after she went on the medicine she found energy that she hadn't felt for ages. With money she received from Mutata she started a business. Every night she cooks samoosas, chapat, and gamola -- Asian sweets that are popular in her community. In the morning she's a regular on the road to the nearby market selling her treats. "Before I didn't have the strength," she said, "But now I can do whatever I need to." Her transformation, she said, was a miracle.

Esnart and Vinus (sp) use a phrase heard increasingly throughout Africa. They speak of a "Lazarus effect" where people who once waited quietly for death celebrate a second chance at life. These daily miracles are made possible by partnerships like PEPFAR, the compassion of the American people and the determination of citizens throughout Africa -- citizens like Esnart and Vinus (sp), like Raphael and Sylvester, like Julia and Jonathan. If you ask "Why Africa" -- they're the most important answer. They share the same dreams as people across their continent and everywhere of good health today and a more hopeful future for their children.

It's in our country's interest to help the nations of Africa build stable societies. Compassionate Americans want to help, not for our own benefit, but because we believe that every human life has value. Our partners in Africa are faced with extraordinary challenges, but as President Bush has said, Africa is much more than the sum of its problems. It's a beautiful continent with fascinating cultures, with a proud and determined people who have an entrepreneurial spirit and a deep faith. And if you have the opportunity to meet these people, your question will no longer be "Why Africa". It'll be, "Why not?"

Thank you all. Thanks so much for coming today. (Applause.)

Thanks everybody. (Applause.) Thank you all. Okay, now I'm ready for the questions. Are you ready, Jerry?

MR. ZREMSKI: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Bush's staff has informed me we have about 10 minutes for questions and we have lots of them, so I'm going to speak really fast. (Laughter.)

First of all, what was the most impressive life-altering situation that you witnessed during your recent trip to Africa?

MRS. BUSH: Well, I think it was hearing the "Lazarus effect." I mean, these stories of people who were literally dieing, and then once they one anti-retrovirals they came back to life.

But certainly one of the most moving parts is the work that so many groups are doing on the ground in Africa. Bruce's group, RAPIDS Consortium, have a donor who has given 23,000 bicycles to Zambia so that the caregivers that we met can literally go door-to-door in their neighborhoods and find out who needs help.

One of the reasons PETFAR and these other programs are effective is because we're working with people who are already on the ground and who can go door to door. And to hear the stories of these caregivers was really very, very inspiring.

MR. ZREMSKI: Now during your trip, you visited two countries that were majority Muslim -- Mali and Senegal. Was there any difference in the way you were received or the way the U.S. was perceived in those countries compared to Mozambique and Zambia?

MRS. BUSH: No, there really wasn't. I mean, I was very welcomed

in both of countries, and actually, both of those countries have a little bit lower HIV rate. And they think maybe because of the -- because the Muslim religion is more conservative that that might be one. Mali is not really on a trade route to anywhere, so they didn't have a lot of traders come through and spread HIV/AIDS. But no, I was very welcomed there and Americans are very popular in both of those countries.

MR. ZREMSKI: One of the Bush administration's main efforts in Africa has been the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which is kind of facing a challenge itself in Congress right now with a potential funding cut from the \$3 billion that your husband -- or \$3 billion that your husband recommended down to \$1.2 billion. How worried are you about that and how would that affect your efforts in Africa if that cut were to go forward?

MRS. BUSH: Well, the Millennium Challenge is not just Africa. There are also Central American and Asian countries and countries like the Ukraine and Georgia -- Central European countries that also either have been approved as Millennium Challenge countries or are on the list and could be approved. We need at least, I think, a million-eight (dollars) to -- a billion-eight (dollars), excuse me -- to fulfill our obligations to the countries we've already approved and then to approve these countries that are working very hard to devise their strategies. The -- it's not an easy process, and Ambassador Danilovich is here and he can tell you more about it.

But I think it's a very, very important way to build the infrastructure that these countries' governments are never going to be able to afford on their own. They really need this sort of development. And the thing about -- we take all of our infrastructure so for granted. We don't really ever think what a legacy we have from every generation before us of all the -- not just the infrastructure, the physical infrastructure which is so expensive, but also the infrastructure of law and civil society that we have that we take for granted. But it's very important and I'll urge the Congress to at least appropriate a billion-eight (dollars), if not more, for this. I think it's one of our most effective ways we've ever given aid -- foreign aid in our history.

Did you want to say anything?

MR. ZREMSKI: Thank you very much. If you could come to the podium, please?

AMB. DANILOVICH: Thank you very much for that endorsement, Mrs. Bush. I very much appreciate it.

The MCC has been in existence for only three years, and in that short period of time had already achieved tremendous results not only in terms of project implementation but in terms of incentivizing countries, as Mrs. Bush has said, to have a good government -- to have good governments. And it's done a tremendous amount to increase stability and security in those parts of the world as well as reduce poverty. It's very important that we have that 1.8 billion (dollars) for FY '08 to continue this initiative. It's one of the most important initiatives and effective instruments that the U.S.

government has for development assistance in the world today.

Thank you --

MRS. BUSH: Thanks, Ambassador.

MR. ZREMSKI: China is also very active in Africa, and frankly, China may not have the same kind of human rights concerns that we have as a nation. And I was wondering if that should -- if that would be a concern to the U.S. government.

MRS. BUSH: Well, you're right. China is very active and as you know, China makes compacts with countries. They use the -- or take the resources they want -- oil and gas or whatever other resources some countries have. And because those countries are so poor, they make those agreements. China offers to provide certain things for them -- a lot of times, infrastructure-building. But China, because they have so much labor, bring their own labor. In other words, they don't use -- they don't train people who live in Africa to -- in construction or in whatever else they're working on -- mining, whatever else -- all those people who need jobs as well and need training so they can support their own families and to have a job for the rest of their lives.

Instead, they bring their own labor. And when I went to Liberia to Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's inauguration, I was riding with our ambassador there and he pointed out a stadium -- the soccer stadium that China had built in Liberia. And I said, "Oh, great! Then they must have really trained a lot of Liberians in construction." And he said, "No. No Liberians are employed because they bring their own labor." And I think that's one of the really important things about the MCC is these are jobs for people that live there to have and ways for people that live there to get skills so they can continue to work for the rest of their life.

MR. ZREMSKI: We have several questions about AIDS in Africa. Is there anything in addition to funding that can change the course of the AIDS epidemic in Africa?

MRS. BUSH: There are several things. I think it -- that a stigma can be reduced so that people will get tested -- so that everyone will get tested. Just recently -- which you may not know -- but Howard University Hospital is serving as a site for the CDC -- the Center for Disease Control would like for all Americans to make an AIDS test just part of your regular -- all the battery of tests that you have whenever you have a physical because they think that there are around 250,000 Americans who are HIV-positive that don't know it. And Dr. Tony Fauci was with me at Howard University Hospital, where the hospital is offering a free AIDS test. And it's just a mouth swab now -- this is in the U.S., I'm not sure that it's so simple yet across Africa. But they're offering it to every single person that comes to the hospital, whether you come into the emergency room with a broken arm or you're coming for a face lift. They offer the free AIDS test and nearly everyone takes it. And it's very fast -- you just wait for 15 minutes and then they're set up with counseling, and they do find just sort of what they thought -- maybe -- I'm not positive about this, but some very percentage of -- are HIV-positive of the

people that come into the hospital.

Dr. Fauci told me -- he said, "You know, there's sort of this myth that once people find out they're HIV-positive, they quit protecting their partner. They think, 'Well, I'm infected. I don't care if I infect other people.'" But he said, "That is absolutely not true. The people who know they are HIV-positive really try to protect their partners and change their behavior, in fact, to protect their partners." So I think if we could have very extensive testing, if we had a cheap and very effective way to test everywhere and could reduce the stigma of finding out you're positive that that would go a long way toward helping us slowly eradicate AIDS.

MR. ZREMSKI: We also have a few questions about your role as First Lady, including this one. What have you learned about the American people? How have your perceptions of the American people changed in your years in the White House?

MRS. BUSH: Well, I already knew this about the American people. But what I find -- it's reinforced every single day no matter where I go, but certainly when I was in Africa with groups like Bruce's RAPIDS group or every other group that I was there with that's supported in some way by Americans is how generous and compassionate Americans are and how we all take -- feel a real responsibility to do things in the outside world, to do things outside of our own lives -- to volunteer, to be concerned about other people, to give money to other people. But it really is, I think, a trait that's particularly American and that is this responsibility that all Americans seem to feel to reach out of their own lives and their own small family lives to try to help other people at home and everywhere around the world.

MR. ZREMSKI: We're almost out of time, but we have time for one last question and that is this. Early on, you said that the job of First Lady really had no job description. Would you venture to give us one now after all these years? (Laughter.)

MRS. BUSH: Well, I still believe -- I mean, obviously the First Lady's not elected. There's no written, you know, organization chart that shows what her job is -- or the First Gentleman, if there's going to be one.

But, on the other hand, what I think -- and this is after studying first ladies and knowing some of them very well, like my own mother-in-law, or one that I admired very much, a fellow Texan, Lady Bird Johnson -- is that we benefit, our country benefits, by whatever our first lady's interests are and that, in many cases -- I've said this before; you've probably heard it -- the first ladies' records are better than the presidents' because they don't have to deal with every single issue and they have the opportunity to focus on just a few things.

And in most cases throughout our history, it's been what they were already interested in, what their field already was, what their expertise already was, and they've been able to magnify that across our country, and in recent years, because our world has gotten so small, across the world.

And I think that's what first ladies do. And I really believe also that the American people want the first ladies to do whatever they want to, that they don't think that first ladies have to do something specific. And even now, I don't think they even think you have to be a good hostess -- (laughter) -- which earlier, maybe, in our history, that was one of the main roles. But -- (inaudible) -- that's certainly also a role, and I know that Americans are proud when, for instance, Queen Elizabeth came to the White House or when we host all the other world leaders or heads of state here in the United States at the White House.

Is that it?

MR. ZREMSKI: Thank you very much.

MRS. BUSH: Okay, thank you all very, very much. I appreciate it a lot. Thank you. (Applause.) Thanks, everybody. Thank you so much.

MR. ZREMSKI: Thank you very much.

Just a few last announcements; first of all, a few words about our upcoming speakers. On Friday, Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns will be here to talk about the farm bill. On August 1st, Senator Joe Biden of Delaware will be here to talk about his book and to discuss something called "Promises to Keep." And on August 7th, Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the House, will be with us.

I'd like to thank you for coming today. I'd also like to thank National Press Club staff members Melinda Cooke, Jo Anne Booz and Howard Rothman for organizing today's lunch; also thanks to the NPC library for its research.

The video archive of today's luncheon is provided by the National Press Club Broadcast Operations Center. Press Club members can also access free transcripts of our luncheons at our website, [www.press.org](http://www.press.org). Non-members may purchase transcripts, audio and videotapes by calling 1-888-343-1940.

Thank you. We're adjourned.

####

END