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Sandra L. Thurman - 2/99

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**OFFICE OF NATIONAL AIDS POLICY
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
THE WHITE HOUSE**

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO:
[Paul Delay]

COMPANY:
USAID

FAX NUMBER:
[216-3046]

FROM:
[Sarah Holewinski]

DATE:
February 26, 1999

PAGES:

[# of Pages (including cover)] 3

COMMENTS:

**As requested – Please let me know if you need any
additional information on my direct line: 202/395-
1441. Thanks!**

Talking Points

- I am deeply concerned about the rapidly growing HIV epidemic in South Africa. It is my understanding that in just the last few years, the rate of HIV infection has doubled – with no end in sight. This crisis will not only cause untold human suffering, but threatens your economy, foreign investment, civil society, and the success of the transformation itself.
- From painful experience in Uganda, Thailand, and other nations, we have learned a great deal about successful approaches to turning the tide of this deadly epidemic. Essential components of a program that works are:
 - a commitment to political leadership to reduce stigma, encourage public and private cooperation, and to develop and implement sound policies;
 - a delivery of aggressive control and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases (STD); and
 - a focus on the treatment of pregnant women to reduce mother-to-child transmission.
- We applaud your development of the SA National AIDS Plan and creation of the Partnership Against AIDS and believe that your continued strong support is essential if these efforts are to realize their goals. The US stands ready to be an active partner.
- Scientists in the US tell me that they look to SA to assume a leadership role in AIDS prevention and vaccine research for the entire southern Africa region. You have the expertise and I hope you will seize the opportunity to exert leadership in this area.

**REMARKS BY
THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AL GORE
AND
DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA THABO MBEKI**

**PRESS CONFERENCE
KIRSTENBOSCH GARDENS
FEBRUARY 18, 1999
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA**

April Ryan, American Urban Radio Network: Vice President Gore and Deputy President Mbeki, you're both wearing lapel pins dedicated to the fight against AIDS. How can you effectively fight the spread of the disease when many people here and in the United States run from issues of AIDS testing and prevention techniques?

Mbeki: Well, what we are trying to do in this country is to engage in as widespread and sustained as possible a campaign of AIDS awareness. It's a very major challenge to educate the entirety of the South African population about this issue to make sure everybody knows what's involved, what's at stake, what preventive measures to take and so on. And we are quite certain, and I think universal experience around the world, shows, including Africa, shows the critical importance of that kind of campaign. Of course, you need also to keep a very close watch on this as to practically what is happening in the society on rates of infection and all of these kinds of questions. And, these are areas in which there is cooperation between ourselves and the United States to be able to keep an eye on this. But, as I say, we are quite convinced that the most effective way to deal with this is continuously, at all levels of society, the entirety of the society, the entirety of its leadership, business, labor, politicians, religious people, everybody, artists, sports people, and so on; to engage this thing in a way that makes its impact. And that's the direction in which we are setting.

Gore: If I could respond also. In the United States of America, the AIDS epidemic really began to hit home around 1981. Our national leaders did not really raise the alarms at that time. There are many reasons for it; I won't go into it lest my comments be misinterpreted. The point I'm trying to make is a simpler point; we did not ring the alarm bells. Our national leadership did not raise the roofs in trying to alert people to what was going on. It took some time before that happened. Now, finally, we have begun to see a little bit of progress, but we're not out of the woods yet. Here in South Africa this epidemic, which is really a pandemic, has hit with hurricane force. South Africa is blessed with a leader in Thabo Mbeki who has been speaking out forcefully, boldly and often. In order for South Africa to turn the corner, his leadership must be joined with leadership from every sector of society. Please forgive me, as a non-South African, for speaking in this way about a matter affecting your country. I'm wearing this pin because my friend, Thabo Mbeki, gave it to me this morning after a very lengthy conversation we had about HIV/AIDS last night. This is a crisis for South Africa. Listen to what Deputy President Mbeki is saying and ask the leaders of entertainment and sports and business and labor and every sector of society: Why aren't you also adding your voice to that of the Deputy President? Minister Zuma has been leading the way. Our Surgeon General, David Satcher, engaged in a very interesting and illuminating discussion with her in our Commission meeting today. Secretary Shalala, from the United States, has been actively involved in the health committee's work as well. This is a problem that must be faced at a new level of urgency. And by the way, it is not only in South Africa. South Africa keeps good statistics. Neighboring countries may not in the same way. This is a regional epidemic and a worldwide pandemic that must be faced with the kind of urgency that Deputy President Mbeki has been bringing to it.

*** TX REPORT ***

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 2, 1999

Olivia Carter-Pokras, Ph.D.
Director, Division of Policy and Data
Office of Minority Health
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
5515 Security Lane, Suite 1000
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Dr. Carter-Pokras:

On behalf of President Clinton and myself, I cannot thank you enough for having allowed Mr. Matthew Murguía to serve as a representative to the Interdepartmental Task Force on HIV/AIDS in the White House Office of National AIDS Policy. I know of the hardship his absence has placed on the Division of Policy and Data, and I ask that you personally convey to the other members of your Division my appreciation for their support of Mr. Murguía's assignment.

Mr. Murguía proved to be an extremely valuable asset to this Office. His knowledge, expertise, contacts, and grasps of the issues was truly remarkable. His ability to move issues, develop responses accurately and quickly, and his professionalism were very impressive. Mr. Murguía was an outstanding member of the very limited staff I have, and I cannot overstate the importance of his work to this Office's ability to meet its mission. Mr. Murguía's understanding and advocacy of issue affecting racial and ethnic communities clearly added to and helped focus this Office's response to the epidemic in these communities.

Thank you again for your support of this Office and its mission. I know that you must be pleased to have Matthew back at the Office of Minority Health.

Sincerely,

Sandra L. Thurman
Director
Office of National AIDS Policy

cc: Mr. Matthew Murguía

THE WHITE HOUSE

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February 2, 1999

Clay E. Simpson, Jr., Ph.D., MSPH
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health
5515 Security Lane, Suite 1000
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Dr. Simpson:

On behalf of the President and myself, I cannot thank you and the Office of Minority Health enough for having allowed Mr. Matthew Murguía to serve as a representative to the Interdepartmental Task Force on HIV/AIDS in the White House Office of National AIDS Policy.

Mr. Murguía's outstanding efforts over the past year and three months contributed greatly to this Office being able to meet the needs of people with HIV and AIDS. He was a tremendous asset to this Office; his knowledge of issues, programs and key officials, as well as his ability to develop comprehensive responses to complex issues, has been extremely useful in addressing the myriad of concerns which face people with HIV. Mr. Murguía's efforts on behalf of the Interdepartmental Task Force on HIV/AIDS, in addressing the concerns of the Presidential Advisory Council, his leadership in developing a report to the President on HIV and Youth, and the many other projects he worked on truly helped advance this Office's mission. In particular, Mr. Murguía's focus on the concerns of racial and ethnic minority populations clearly helped shaped this Office's response to the epidemic in those communities. He was an excellent advocate for the concerns of the Office of Minority Health (OMH).

I know of the hardships his absence from OMH has caused. Given all that I have seen and heard from many about Mr. Murguía, I clearly understand how important he is to OMH and why you want him to return to OMH. Please express my thanks to the staff of OMH who had to work even harder to cover the issues that Mr. Murguía would have been addressing had he been at OMH.

Thank you for allowing the Office of National AIDS Policy the opportunity to benefit from Mr. Murguía's presence, and thank you for your support of this Office and its mission.

Sincerely,

Sandra L. Thurman
Director
Office of National AIDS Policy

cc: Mr. Matthew Murguía

**(Sarah, these two letters
should not go out any
earlier than
FEBRUARY 1!)**

THANKS

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Sandra Thurman 02/24/99 04:54:19 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Maria Echaveste/WHO/EOP

cc: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

Subject: Africa Trip

Regarding the proposed trip to Africa that resulted from the President's remarks on World AIDS Day, I wanted take the opportunity to convey my concerns about the suggestion that the mission be led by the Congress and to reiterate a brief history of this project.

First, while a congressionally driven delegation may save money, this approach could be serious trouble for us if the Republican Congress decided to get deeply involved in the politics, the policy, or the invitee list. For example, what if they decided that since they were paying for the code to Africa -- a look at the family planning programs, abortion, or other issues were also in order? Further, as you know, Dr. Coburn has taken a keen interest in HIV/AIDS, particularly with respect to women and children. Should he or any of his highly conservative colleagues seek to be part of the delegation, our inability to restrict the invite list would be problematic. Finally, those who are looking to us for leadership on this issue (i.e. the CBC and the African American and AIDS communities) would be extremely disappointed if we gave control of this process to the Republican Congress, and the trip ended up being a failure.

In the end, the idea of this trip is to advance the politics and the policy of this issue. I strongly believe that we can do just that, but our control of the process would dramatically enhance our control of the outcome. With this in mind, I continue to believe that a Presidential mission is in the best interest of the President.

In addition, I thought I would be useful to reiterate the history of how we got where we are.

On December 1, the press release issued by the White House press office specifically stated that we would "lead a fact-finding delegation" and that the "delegation would include representatives from key Congressional offices". This release created an expectation of a White House delegation including members of Congress among:

- (1) members of Congress themselves, particularly CBC members;
- (2) NGOs, advocates in the African-American, AIDS, and religious communities; and
- (3) a range of government officials and NGOs in Southern Africa.

Based on this directive, we began to receive numerous telephone calls from congressional staff and members about their desire to participate in such an effort. At that point, we drafted a proposed congressional invite list and vetted it with NSC, leg affairs, State, and USAID.

As we discussed, it was our hope to move expeditiously on the delegation, and we sought to schedule it for the period between New Year's and the beginning of 106th Congress. However, the impeachment trial, and the Iraq situation and its safety implications for African embassies, ultimately complicated taking a delegation to Africa which included members of Congress during that period.

Once we realized that it would be impossible to move forward in January, we began to tell interested congressional members (who continued to call) that due to circumstances beyond our

control, the trip would have to be postponed -- perhaps until the Easter recess.

At this juncture, there is certainly an expectation on the hill that we will be leading a delegation including members of Congress to Africa some time soon.

This expectation also applies to the USAID teams and US Ambassadors in a host of African nations. Shortly after the President's World AIDS Day speech, the countries were notified -- by the State Department -- that a codel was coming to Africa. While I was there on the advance trip, all of the US Ambassadors expressed serious excitement about an upcoming delegation including members of Congress. The State staffer who accompanied us on the entire trip, engaged in these conversations, and remained genuinely supportive of the codel.

After many years of ignoring the international situation, the US AIDS community is now very focused on the pandemic in Africa. The President's AIDS Council talked with him specifically about the need for increased Administration leadership on the international AIDS front. They are returning to Washington March 15th and will be seeking updates. Given that the FY2000 budget does not provide the USAID funding increases they were looking for, being able to demonstrate our leadership in other ways would be helpful.

As Ben said at our meeting, the CBC and the African American community is actively engaged in this issue and is monitoring this project closely. We are certainly receiving many calls, letters, and emails -- and Ben says that he is as well. While they feel good about my recent trip -- they are looking to us to help build a partnership with Congress for an enhanced response.

I am scheduled to give remarks on Friday at the conference of African Americans on AIDS. This is a large gathering and will be carried on CSPAN. They are expecting me to talk about international issues and what our plan is. Even if I do not mention the delegation, it will certainly be raised in the Q & As.

The religious community including the Catholics and the Methodists have all been actively engaged in this project since World AIDS Day. They worked closely with me on my recent advance trip and continue to call frequently about our upcoming trip and how to coordinate visits to their programs in Africa.

In terms of the strategic objectives we discussed: to elevate the importance and the responsiveness to this issue in host countries; and to build a partnership for progress with the Congress; it certainly seems to me that we have not yet accomplished our goals.

All in all, I believe that this project is well worth pursuing. If we work together, I am confident that we can achieve a substantive and political win for the President.

I have attached a revised Congressional invite list as you requested. I have been hesitant to schedule the briefings we discussed until we are clearer about how we plan to proceed.

I hate to state the obvious, but we need to make a decision about this fairly quickly so that the members can make appropriate plans. We are currently looking at their departing on March 27 and returning on April 5.

As always, thank you very much for your time and your assistance.



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congress.wpd

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cc: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

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In the end, the idea of this trip is to advance the politics and the policy of this issue. I strongly believe that we can do just that, but our control of the process would dramatically enhance our control of the outcome. With this in mind, I continue to believe that a Presidential mission is in the best interest of the President.

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