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Patsy Fleming Speeches - December 1995

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Speech of Patsy Fleming
National AIDS Policy Director
The White House
United States of America

**At the Closing Ceremony, Ninth International
Conference on AIDS and STDs in Africa**

14 December, 1995

Kampala, Uganda

Good Afternoon.

It is indeed an honor and a pleasure to be able to speak to you this afternoon on the occasion of the conclusion of the 9th International Conference on AIDS and STDs in Africa. I'd like to thank His Excellency, President Museveni, for hosting this important conference in his country.

I would also like to congratulate and thank the conference coordinating committee under the leadership of Dr. Sam Okware for the invitation to address this body and for their work in arranging this;s meeting. I am sure that everyone joins with me in thanking you for your leadership in the global response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

I bring you greetings from the President of the United States, Bill Clinton. I want to convey to you the great sense of urgency that he feels about the important work that you are doing at this Conference. My presence here today is a statement of President Clinton's

commitment. The President wanted me to tell you that we are all in this fight together and that he stands by you.

I think we all understand the devastation that AIDS has caused in our countries. It has affected all people, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, geographic boundaries, and age. There are nearly 20 million people -- including one million children -- living with HIV around the world. Nearly one million of those people live in my country, where it is estimated that one out of every 250 people is infected with HIV.

In many of our countries, these represent people who were marginalized even before HIV, and now in living with HIV continue to be forgotten or, just as bad, punished by society at a time when compassion is needed most. We must not allow people with HIV to live among us without support, without dignity.

I am here to let you know that we are aware of your suffering and the very difficult times that you face dealing with the ravages of HIV and

AIDS. I am here to let you know that we understand that you work with small staffs and even smaller budgets, full hospital beds and empty stock rooms, that we know there are coordinating nightmares at the local level between international organizations and indigenous groups, and that the lack of drugs and resources to care for persons with HIV/AIDS is devastating, but I am here with an important message. The United States does not intend to let you down in the hour of your most critical need for help.

From the very beginning of the epidemic in Africa, the United States has served as partner with African researchers, scientists and community leaders, to have an impact in africa and to make a difference worldwide. Many of the African presenters at this conference, in fact, have worked through CDC's (projay Retro see) Projet Retro-Ci, or (projay seeda) Projet SIDA, or through USAID's many outreach and research projects, to name a few.

I believe our shared responsibilities, as demonstrated here in Africa, have borne fruit. The information shared at this meeting clearly attests

to that. It is our intent to remain partners in this struggle until the struggle is, indeed, over.

I want to say that too often we divide the world into categories -- developed versus developing; Third World versus Super Powers. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has divided us even further -- infected versus non-infected; vulnerable versus empowered; homosexual versus heterosexual. These distinctions contribute nothing to our efforts to stop HIV. They only hamper our willingness to work together. Instead of further dividing an already-fragmented world, our efforts against HIV and AIDS must serve to bring us together. For it is only through a "World United Against HIV and AIDS" that we will have victory over defeat.

President Clinton created the Office of National AIDS Policy at the White House, which I direct, to provide overall coordinating and direction for our efforts. He has appointed a Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS which has just concluded its second meeting in Washington. More than one-third of the Council members are,

themselves, living with HIV or AIDS.

And just this past week, the President convened the first ever White House Conference on HIV/AIDS where over 250 researchers, care providers and activists were invited to call national and international attention to AIDS. We must remind everyone that AIDS remains an urgent public health and social development priority and that it will not just go away.

Internationally, President Clinton has continued to support a high level of cooperation and commitment to global HIV/AIDS activities. Through the U.S. Agency for International Development, the United States continues to provide the world's largest bilateral program for HIV prevention in the developing world. The United States is also a major donor to the new joint and co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. We have had high level participation in all International HIV/AIDS conferences and the World AIDS Summit in Paris. We have directly sponsored at least 80 participants to this conference here in Kampala, and countless more through their U.S. Government program

funding. The U.S. Agency for International Development held its Third HIV Prevention Conference in August in Washington, DC, which was attended by many of you. That conference resulted in an action agenda of strategies which I hope will be pursued over the next several years.

It is true that as we meet today, our budget is under intense discussion and negotiation in our Congress, and we are not sure about the final outcome. A number of you have expressed your concern to me about the future of USAID. Let me assure you that President Clinton is committed to maintaining the American contribution to the global fight against AIDS. Through USAID, the President expects to continue these efforts.

Here in Uganda, we have a powerful example of what can be achieved when the U.S. government and American researchers work collaboratively with Ugandan partners. Since 1989, USAID has provided support to Ugandan agencies, including the Ministry of Health, The AIDS Support Organization (TASO), the AIDS Information Centre,

religious leaders, and community based organizations. All of these groups, with dedicated, competent Ugandan leadership, have been active and aggressive in their prevention efforts.

These efforts are commendable and deserve emulation in other countries. But ultimately, we must ask-- "What is the impact of these efforts? Have they been effective in reducing HIV transmission?" It has been very exciting to learn this week that there now are strong indications that prevalence of HIV infection has been reduced substantially, particularly in young persons 15-19, and that incidence, new cases, have declined significantly in this age group.

What can we conclude from these new findings? Most importantly-- "It works!" Intensive prevention efforts, combined with compassionate care for those already infected and affected by the disease, can eventually result in decreases in the number of new cases. The lessons from Uganda also teach us that these efforts must be locally developed, and must have strong local leadership. To be effective, donor nations such as the U.S. must be partners in the background,

providing the support which enables Ugandans to implement their own projects.

The lesson for other African nations is very hopeful. Intensive, committed prevention efforts can have an impact. They can work. And eventually, other nations as well will begin to see the hopeful trends that have now been observed here in Uganda.

The lesson for the U.S., and for other donor nations, is that our support for nations in Africa which are committed to confronting this epidemic, can truly have an impact in reducing levels of disease and infection. But we must all be patient, and persevere, even when there are no signs of declining rates of infection. And we must allow these projects and efforts to be locally developed, locally driven, and ultimately, credit for success belongs with the local leadership.

Our work is not yet completed, though. Now we must work to get this information, and results from other countries and other research projects, into the hands of service providers like those of you who are

struggling every day to make a difference in the lives of your compatriots. We need to do more in the area of transfer of results from research into the clinics, doctor's offices, and prevention programs. We cannot stand idly by as millions of people around the world are unable to benefit from the advances we are making in medical science. We simply have to find better ways to share the fruits of our labor with those who are in most desperate need, and we need to do it quickly.

It is with much pain that I acknowledge that in much of the world AZT, imperfect as it is as an antiviral, is not available, especially now that it can reduce the risk of peri-natal transmission. The U.S. Administration is aware of these problems and will not retreat from its responsibilities while working with African researchers to find African solutions. Together, I am convinced that by using our best minds and pooled resources, we will be able to increase the availability of basic treatments to improve the quality of life for persons living with HIV disease in developing countries.

Now, I'd like to discuss a few of my own priorities. We must carry out the declaration signed last December at the Paris AIDS Summit. The initiatives it contains can guide each nation as it develops its own government policies and programs. I am particularly heartened by the attention paid to the issues of human rights and the needs and rights of women and the improvement of women's status, education and living conditions.

We must recognize that the fight against AIDS is also a fight against sexism, racism and homophobia. The rights of people with HIV and AIDS must be protected if we are to protect their health and the health of others. We must work collectively to ensure that persons with HIV and AIDS live with dignity and respect in their communities around the world, and we must fight to eliminate the hatred and fear that we have witnessed too often in our neighborhoods.

The theme for this year's World AIDS Day observance, "Shared Rights, Shared Responsibilities" carried the message of equality and solidarity in the global response to HIV/AIDS and it was an especially important

one for me.

As an African-American woman, I have felt the effects of racism and sexism personally. And I have seen the effects on the ability of women to control not only their reproductive rights but also their protection from other sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. In the U.S., AIDS is now the leading cause of death among African-American women. We know that AIDS is a major threat to women of all races and nationalities, and so that any national programs and policies which do not specifically address the needs of women will do little if anything to curb the spread of HIV in those communities.

A major factor in the spread of HIV among women is the fact that women have had to rely almost solely on the use of condoms by their male partners to protect them from STDs. We are moving ahead with research into topical microbicides that could be used privately by a woman to protect herself against these infections. In the last two years, we have more than doubled out commitment to microbicide research at the National Institutes of Health. But even though we've

made good progress, this life-saving product will take years to develop. When we do discover a microbicide, it must be made available to women around the world, not just in developed countries.

Persons living with HIV and AIDS and non-governmental organizations representing affected communities have a critical role in all the work we do. Over the past year, in my position as the Director of National AIDS Policy in the U.S., I have had the opportunity to meet many different people from all walks of life who are deeply involved and committed to fighting AIDS in their communities.

My staff and I have been reaching out to infected and affected populations and community groups for their views and their guidance in the development of policies that will affect them and the people they serve. I will admit that this is a time-consuming process and it is sometimes difficult. But the benefits are enormous-- better communication, more focused policies, and the engagement of the community in the process.

Because of the importance of the partnership between governments and NGOs, I welcome the presence of NGO representatives as full members of the Programme Coordinating Board of UNAIDS, and in the planning and implementation of HIV activities in the United States. I embrace their participation and I am thankful that their voices are being heard. Two of the five NGO representatives on the UNAIDS board are living with HIV. Furthermore, I know the members representing the NGOs and I know that they do not take the responsibility lightly.

I have experienced, first hand, the value of gaining a seat at the table. As I have told many of you before, I was a Congressional staff person in the 1970's and 1980's and was often the only African-American in the room when decisions were being made on policies affecting my community. It made a difference then who sat at the table, and it makes a difference now.

No matter the country, no matter the title "developing" or "developed," no matter the HIV infection rate, or the AIDS caseload, we still have

much work to do. There are still more research questions to be answered, more funds to be raised, more people to be trained, more treatments and more drugs to be procured, more condoms to deliver, more lives to save.

We are losing our citizens to HIV/AIDS, around the world, at a rate that is clearly unacceptable -- and the toll is getting higher. I pledge the continued support of President Clinton and his administration to working with you to end this epidemic. For AIDS affects and connects us all, despite the differences by which some like to define us. AIDS links us together, and it is only by working together that we can fight this disease.

I want to close with a Frederick Douglas quote used by President Clinton in his speech last week.

"It is not light that is needed, but fire. It is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened. The conscience of the nation must be roused. The propriety of the nation must be startled."

This is true for all nations but mostly especially yours and mine.

I know that I can count on you for the thunder and the fire because each of you is a part of the conscience, not only of your individual countries, but of the world -- and together, we can change our future.

Thank you.

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Welcoming Remarks

to

The White House Conference on HIV and AIDS

December 6, 1995

GOOD MORNING:

Patsy Fleming, Director of Nat AIDS Policy for the White House.
I am ~~[redacted]~~. On behalf of President Clinton,

I'd like to formally welcome you to the White House

Conference on HIV and AIDS. The President will be joining us

later today for the plenary session of this conference and I

know he is looking forward to it.

Today's conference is, in many ways, an historic event.

For the first time in the history of this epidemic, ^{and you are all experts} the highest
level of government has brought together the experts from all
over our country to spend the day discussing the very real
needs of this epidemic.

Today is also an historic opportunity ~~for each~~ ^{for} each of us who ^{care} ~~desperately~~ ^{desperately} about this epidemic to speak to the nation about our concerns.

It's a chance to put AIDS on the front burner of a national agenda. The President and his Administration have worked very hard these past three years ^{later today,} to turn around our national response to HIV and AIDS. And ^{the} President will be laying out for you his vision and his agenda.

This conference has a second purpose, as well. You and I know that public awareness is critical to our ability to put a ^{for} halt to the epidemic. Both ~~in terms of~~ ^{for} the support we need to get the resources that are necessary ^{for} research, prevention, and care, and ~~in terms of~~ ^{for} public education about the threat of HIV.

And that threat is very real. I don't need to discuss the litany of statistics. You/know them. I don't need to talk about the impact/AIDS is having on individuals, families, and communities. You/live them. And I don't have to talk about the sense of urgency/we must feel. You/personify it.

It's time, then, to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

One thing that you will most certainly notice/is that all of the meetings today will be fairly jam-packed. Let me apologize, right now, for that, but also explain that it is a result of the tremendous interest in this conference.

fifteen hundred

We received more than 1,500 suggestions from around the country and were able to invite nearly 300. ~~As you will see,~~ ^T that means ~~that~~ a small number of our guests will be watching the plenary session from another room. Members of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV and AIDS have graciously volunteered to make room for community members.

This morning, each of you will ~~be~~ ^e participating in a working group dedicated to one of nine subjects. Each group will be led by two co-facilitators -- one from the community and one from the government. We also have asked ~~various~~ members of the Administration to be on hand to serve as resources to you for your discussions.

The discussions you will have this morning/will help to hone our message to the nation. That's why we are so fortunate/to have some of the most talented,/eloquent,/and determined/voices/in this epidemic.

Following those working groups, we will ~~be~~ ^eproviding you with a box lunch/while ^{you}~~we~~ continue discussions with your workshop members/and senior officials from the Administration.

Shortly before noon,/we will move from this building to the Cash Room in the Treasury Department for ~~this~~ ^{the} afternoon's plenary session with the President. We have provided buses for your comfort/and the convenience of participants/who are living with disabilities. Staff members will direct you to the buses.

The plenary session is open to the press and we anticipate considerable domestic and international coverage. It will open with ~~remarks from Patoy Fleming~~ *from me, and then from* Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala followed by comments from two members of the community. The President will then deliver his own remarks and following that, we will begin the plenary discussion.

Each workshop has a reporter selected from the community who has been designated to discuss *workshop's* ~~these~~ issues with the President.

The plenary session is scheduled to begin at 12:30 and end at approximately 2:30. Buses will again be available to transport you to the Renwick Gallery for the post-conference reception.

This conference would not have been possible without the support of many. We are particularly appreciative of our co-sponsors.

Funders Concerned About AIDS is a national organization of foundation and corporate giving executives, trustees, and program officers working to mobilize philanthropic leadership and resources to eradicate the HIV/AIDS epidemic and to address its social and economic consequences.

We are also deeply grateful to the David Geffen Foundation and the Council of Fashion Designers of America-Vogue Institute of the New York City AIDS Fund, which provided grants to Funders Concerned that made their co-sponsorship possible. This is another example of public-private partnerships that are critical to addressing the AIDS epidemic.

We all have a lot of work to do/ but I am confident/ that
when this day/ is over/ we will ^{all} ~~each~~ return to our communities/ →
and our responsibilities/ fortified with greater support/ and
greater conviction.

Again, I thank you for your participation today and for
your work every day/ to confront and combat HIV and AIDS.

Thank you.

Remarks of
Patricia S. Fleming
National AIDS Policy Director
to
The White House Conference on HIV and AIDS
December 6, 1995

GOOD AFTERNOON:

I am Patsy Fleming, Director of
National AIDS Policy for the White House

Mr. President, Secretary Shalala, Secretary Cisneros,

Director Brown, Mayor Schmoke, Mayor Campbell, honored

**guests.// It is my great honor to welcome all of you to the
plenary session of this/historic/White House Conference on
HIV and AIDS.**

**I'd like to start by thanking the President for having the
courage and the wisdom to hold this historic conference. We
have brought together/the best minds and hearts dedicated to
the eradication of AIDS.**

I have to tell you that I still stop and pinch myself once in a while. I've been working on AIDS policy for ten years and for the first seven years I spent a lot of my time standing ~~at~~ ~~the~~ outside of the White House/shouting for action/to stop this terrible epidemic. Now, you and I are on the inside,/ working together/to find the best ways/to reach our common/ goals.

As the French would say, "Vive la difference!"

~~As the French would say, "Vive la difference!"~~

This conference epitomizes something that I think is very important/-- the working partnership between government and community based organizations/ *and activists and advocates.*

Through your activism, you have changed the way the government makes AIDS policy. ~~And~~ Your voices and your views are now sought to help us with all important decisions. You are at the meetings and on the committees. You have helped to transform the drug approval process, the system of clinical trials, the development of prevention programs, and much, much more.

We in the Clinton Administration embrace those changes and today we seek your advice again to help us accelerate our progress against HIV and AIDS.

You have all had a very busy and, I am sure, a very productive morning. Having spent some time ⁱⁿ ~~with~~ your workshops ~~working groups~~, I know the discussions have been intense, enlightening, and forward thinking.

But the work isn't over yet. In fact, it's far from over. I know ~~that~~ the President is anxious to hear from you and to talk with you about the ideas you have to move our nation forward. And I am sure this is also true for the thousands of Americans who are observing this plenary session by satellite around the country.

The purpose of this plenary session is for you to communicate to the President and to the nation the key points raised during your discussions this morning. ^{FROM} Each of your ~~workshops~~ ^{workshops} ~~has~~ a member of the community ~~who~~ has been designated to represent you in this discussion.

Also joining us is Dr. Scott Hitt, chairman of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV and AIDS and a true leader in our national response to HIV and AIDS.

And/I am very pleased/to share the stage with a dear friend and colleague ~~of mine~~/ Donna Shalala/has spent much of her life working to improve/the lives/of young people.

Whether it was her work as a Peace Corps volunteer/in the 1960s,/ her participation in the movement to improve our cities in the 1970s/^{or} her innovative leadership/at two of our nation's leading universities in the 1980s,/ Donna has been fighting for what's right/and what's good/for our country.

Since becoming Secretary of Health and Human Services in 1993,/ Donna has helped to transform/the government's response to HIV and AIDS from one of hostility and distrust/to one of partnership and progress. She is one of the best/friends/our community has in this town.

**It is my pleasure and my honor to introduce Donna
Shalala, the Secretary of Health and Human Services.**

File - WH Conference
12/6/95

Remarks By
Patsy Fleming
White House Conference on HIV and AIDS
Renwick Gallery Reception

Welcome. What a remarkable day!

I want to thank each of you once again for your participation today in this wonderful conference. I think we have laid the groundwork for some important work in the days, weeks, months, and years ahead. We should all be very proud.

One of the President's themes today is that every American has a responsibility to do something about ending this epidemic. All of you do just that every day.

I'd like to take a moment to thank the women and men who helped to put this conference together. My Deputy Director, Jeff Levi. My Communications Director, Richard Sorian. Members of my staff: LaHoma Romocki, Carmena Parris, and Jane Sanville. The marvelous Marsha Scott and her colleague Richard Socarides. Carol Rasco and Jeremy Ben-Ami. Scott Hitt and the members of the President's Advisory Council. Philip DuFour, for making this reception so wonderful. And a countless number of volunteers and interns who have worked days and nights to make sure this came together.

I would especially like to thank two organizations for helping to make this day possible. The David Geffen Foundation, for co-hosting this beautiful reception. And Funders Concerned About AIDS, for their assistance in getting many people here. As you know, both of these organizations perform miracles every day. We're very thankful that they were able to help us today.

Now it is my great honor to
~~Finally, let me~~ introduce to you a woman who needs very little introduction. Her work as First Lady on behalf of all Americans is unparalleled in the history of our nation. And her lifelong dedication to the health and education of children has helped to make our future that much brighter. Ladies and Gentlemen, the First Lady of the United States, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Andy Spahn & Mary Schenckman

I'd like to introduce

Dr. Scott Hitt the remarkable leader of the Pres. Adv. Council

Remarks of
Patricia S. Fleming
National AIDS Policy Director
to
The White House Conference on HIV and AIDS

December 6, 1995

GOOD AFTERNOON:

Mr. President, Secretary Shalala, Secretary Cisneros, Director Brown, Mayor Schmoke, Mayor Campbell, honored guests. It is my great honor to welcome all of you to the plenary session of this historic White House Conference on HIV and AIDS.

I'd like to start by thanking the President for having the courage and the wisdom to hold this historic conference. We have brought together the best minds and hearts dedicated to the eradication of AIDS.

I have to tell you that I still stop and pinch myself once in a while. I've been working on AIDS policy for ten years and for the first seven years I spent a lot of my time standing on the outside of the White House shouting for action to stop this terrible epidemic. Now, you and I are on the inside, working together to find the best ways to reach our common goals.

As the French would say, "Vive la difference!"

This conference epitomizes something that I think is very important -- the working partnership between government and community based organizations.

Through your activism, you have changed the way the government makes AIDS policy. And your voices and your views are now sought to help us with all important decisions. You are at the meetings and on the committees. You have helped to transform the drug approval process, the system of clinical trials, the development of prevention programs, and much, much more.

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Whether it was her work as a Peace Corps volunteer in the 1960s, her participation in the movement to improve our cities in the 1970s, her innovative leadership at two of our nation's leading universities in the 1980s, Donna has been fighting for what's right and what's good for our country.

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