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MRS. REAGAN'S REMARKS
DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION FORUM
WASHINGTON, D.C.
WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 1987

-- Let me extend a very warm welcome to you all this afternoon. Before the experts begin their briefings, I want to express my genuine thanks for your coming. I know all of you have a very busy schedule and I wouldn't have asked for your time today if I didn't think the drug problem was absolutely urgent.

-- As you probably know, I've spent much of the last six years talking with young people, parents, and experts about the perils of drug addiction. I've visited drug abuse prevention and treatment centers as well as schools. And what I've learned is -- I'm scared to death for our children. Drugs ruin lives before they've had a chance to develop and then compound the damage by destroying the family ties that offer the best hope.

-- I'm sure you'll hear statistics today that are as chilling as they are impressive. But please remember that behind the facts and figures are real children. I'd like to make this pain real to you by sharing a couple of letters I've received.

-- One mother wrote: "Dear Mrs. Reagan, Our beautiful daughter was so powerfully influenced by drugs that she took her own life. Young people don't realize the bottomless pit drugs lead them to. I wish all young people would say 'no.' Maybe then there wouldn't be any more families torn apart, anymore sleepless nights wondering if a child is alive or dead. So sign me off as a mother who never has to worry about her phone ringing in the middle of the night -- what a price we paid for sleep." I can't imagine a more haunting phrase for a parent -- what a price we paid for sleep.

-- A father wrote: "Dear Mrs. Reagan: My son, Mitch, was a typical all-American teenager. He played football in high school, was popular with his classmates, and was planning on going to college." But the father described how his son was under the influence of drugs one night and wandered on foot into the center lane of a super-highway. He was killed by a tractor-trailer. "Losing a child," he ends his letter, "is the ultimate tragedy for a parent . . . and a tragic loss for America."

-- What a price paid for sleep. And what a price for ignorance and inaction. Fortunately, many young people themselves are getting involved, such as through the "Just Say No" Clubs. What we need more than anything else to solve the drug problem is people. We need people like yourselves -- committed, determined, active people who will work together. I thank Proctor & Gamble for taking the lead on this -- and my personal goal is to add as many more like-minded people to our ranks as possible.

-- You are leaders; you are activists; and by your very nature, you seek to solve problems. You can have a meaningful impact on the drug crisis. You have the power to make a difference. I am asking you today to use your influence, your energy and your resources to prevent drug abuse. As you listen to the briefings, I hope you will think prevention, prevention, prevention. That is our top priority. We must thwart drug abuse before it begins.

-- This September millions of young Americans will head back to school. The new school year will bring wonderful new experiences and terrible new threats -- threats you will learn more about today. I think the dangers to our children will move you. And over the next few weeks, I hope all of you will join with the "Just Say No" Foundation and Proctor & Gamble in their Back-To-School Pledge Campaign. Your participation in this project can save many lives. Please help our children say NO to drugs and YES to life!

-- Again, thank you for being here.

-- Now, I'd like to introduce to you a very special young lady who is very active in the fight against drugs. She co-hosted a "Just Say No" rally at the Rose Bowl last year which more than 20,000 young people attended. She has just completed a public service announcement which will air across the nation, and has pledged to help educate her friends and the public at large about the dangers of drug abuse. We are so fortunate to have her with us today. I present to you, Drew Barrymore.

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Thursday
SUGGESTED REMARKS FOR DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION FORUM -- JULY 22, 1987

-- LET ME EXTEND A VERY WARM WELCOME TO YOU ALL THIS MORNING. BEFORE THE EXPERTS BEGIN THEIR BRIEFINGS, ~~I'D LIKE TO MAKE JUST A FEW PERSONAL REMARKS. FIRST OF ALL,~~ I WANT TO EXPRESS MY GENUINE THANKS FOR YOUR COMING. I KNOW AN AUDIENCE AS DISTINGUISHED AND INFLUENTIAL AS THIS ONE HAS A VERY BUSY SCHEDULE. I WOULDN'T HAVE ASKED FOR YOUR TIME TODAY IF I DIDN'T THINK THE DRUG PROBLEM WAS ABSOLUTELY URGENT. ~~I WANTED TO REACH YOU PERSONALLY, AND IN MY OWN WAY, CONVEY THE PERIL OF DRUG ABUSE AMONG OUR YOUNG.~~

-- AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW, I'VE SPENT ^{much of} THE LAST SIX YEARS TALKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, PARENTS, AND EXPERTS ^{about the problem} ~~IN THE FIELD OF~~ DRUG ADDICTION, ^{I've} ~~AND VISITING~~ DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT CENTERS AS WELL AS ^{And what I've learned is this -- Jim} SCHOOLS. ¹ ~~I'VE LEARNED TO BE~~ SCARED TO DEATH FOR OUR CHILDREN. DRUGS RUIN LIVES BEFORE THEY'VE ~~EVEN~~ HAD A CHANCE TO DEVELOP AND THEN COMPOUND THE DAMAGE BY DESTROYING THE FAMILY TIES THAT OFFER THE BEST HOPE.

-- YOU'LL HEAR STATISTICS TODAY THAT ARE AS CHILLING AS THEY ARE IMPRESSIVE. BUT PLEASE REMEMBER THAT BEHIND THE FACTS AND FIGURES ^{are real children.} ~~THERE ARE YOUNG LIVES AND LOST DREAMS. WE ARE TALKING ABOUT CHILDREN WHO OFTEN HAD EXCELLENT GRADES, ATHLETIC PROMISE AND CHEERY PERSONALITIES. CHILDREN WHO ARE NOW BULL AND LISTLESS OR DEAD.~~ I WANT TO MAKE ^{this pain} ~~THOSE~~ REAL TO YOU ^{by} AND ^{ING} SHARE A COUPLE OF LETTERS I'VE RECEIVED.

ONE MOTHER WROTE:

"DEAR MRS. REAGAN, OUR BEAUTIFUL ~~20 YEAR OLD~~ DAUGHTER WAS SO POWERFULLY INFLUENCED BY DRUGS THAT SHE TOOK HER OWN LIFE. YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE THE BOTTOMLESS PIT DRUGS LEAD THEM TO. I WISH ALL YOUNG PEOPLE WOULD SAY 'NO.' ~~AND~~ MAYBE THEN THERE WOULDN'T BE ANY MORE FAMILIES TORN APART, ANYMORE SLEEPLESS NIGHTS WONDERING IF A CHILD IS ALIVE OR DEAD. SO SIGN ME OFF AS A MOTHER WHO NEVER HAS TO WORRY ABOUT HER PHONE RINGING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT -- WHAT A PRICE WE PAID FOR SLEEP. ~~WITH TEARS IN MY EYES AND A BROKEN HEART~~ *I can't imagine* ~~SINCERELY, YOURS.~~ WHAT A PRICE WE PAID FOR SLEEP ~~THERE COULDN'T~~ *be* A MORE HAUNTING PHRASE *for a parent --* ↓

-- A FATHER WROTE: DEAR MRS. REAGAN, MY SON MITCH WAS A TYPICAL ALL-AMERICAN TEENAGER. HE PLAYED FOOTBALL IN HIGH SCHOOL, WAS POPULAR WITH HIS CLASSMATES, AND WAS PLANNING ON GOING TO COLLEGE." *But* THE FATHER DESCRIBED HOW HIS SON HAD ~~QUITE A LOT~~ *too much* TO DRINK ONE NIGHT ~~AND~~ *and* WANDERED ON FOOT INTO THE CENTER LANE OF A SUPER-HIGHWAY. HE WAS KILLED BY A TRACTOR TRAILER. "LOSING A CHILD," HE ENDS HIS LETTER, "IS THE ULTIMATE TRAGEDY FOR A PARENT . . . AND A TRAGIC LOSS FOR AMERICA."

What a price for sleep. And what a price for ignorance or inaction. For surely, many young people themselves are getting involved, such as
~~THEN I GET LETTERS FROM KIDS WHO AREN'T INVOLVED WITH DRUGS, BUT~~
through the Just Say No Clubs.
~~WANT TO DO SOMETHING.~~ *for example,* TWO YOUNG GIRLS, WROTE TO MY HUSBAND: "DRUGS ARE VERY UPSETTING TO US AND WE'VE SEEN A LOT OF CHILDREN TAKING THEM. WHY CAN'T THEY DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE DRUG PROBLEM. IF ROCKETS CAN FLY TO THE MOON, AND SCIENCE CAN CURE DISEASE, THEN WHY CAN'T WE CURE THE DRUG PROBLEM. AMERICA, WE CAN DO IT! WE NEED YOU PEOPLE; WE NEED YOU!"

-- I THINK THESE TWO LITTLE GIRLS HAVE MORE WISDOM THAN A LOT OF ADULTS. WHAT WE NEED MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE TO SOLVE THE DRUG PROBLEM IS PEOPLE. WE NEED PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELVES -- COMMITTED, DETERMINED, ACTIVE PEOPLE WHO WILL WORK TOGETHER. I THANK PROCTOR & GAMBLE FOR TAKING THE LEAD ON THIS -- AND MY PERSONAL GOAL IS TO ADD AS MANY MORE LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE TO OUR RANKS AS POSSIBLE.

you are leaders;
-- ~~I YOUR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS~~ ^{you are leaders;} YOU ARE ACTIVISTS; AND BY YOUR VERY NATURE, YOU SEEK TO SOLVE PROBLEMS. YOU CAN HAVE A ^{meaningful} POWERFUL IMPACT ON THE DRUG CRISIS. ^{you have the power to make a difference,} I AM ASKING YOU TODAY TO USE YOUR INFLUENCE, YOUR ENERGY AND YOUR RESOURCES TO PREVENT DRUG ABUSE. AS YOU LISTEN TO THE BRIEFINGS, I HOPE YOU WILL THINK PREVENTION, PREVENTION, PREVENTION. THAT IS OUR TOP PRIORITY. ~~IT IS OUR~~ ^{IT IS OUR} MORE EFFECTIVE TO THWART DRUG ABUSE BEFORE IT BEGINS. ~~IT IS OUR~~ RESPONSIBILITY TO SEE THAT OUR CHILDREN ARE GIVEN THE BEST QUALITY ~~IF POSSIBLE~~ THAT THEY ARE GIVEN THE CHANCE TO LIVE HEALTHY, ~~HAPPY, DRUG FREE LIVES.~~

-- THIS SEPTEMBER MILLIONS OF YOUNG AMERICANS WILL HEAD BACK TO SCHOOL. THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR WILL BRING WONDERFUL NEW EXPERIENCES ~~AND~~ ^{and terrible new threats -- threats you will learn more about today. I think} EXCITING NEW CHALLENGES FOR OUR CHILDREN. ~~EACH CHILD WILL CONFRONT~~ ^{the dangers to our children will move you.} NEW OPPORTUNITIES ~~AND, OF COURSE, NEW PROBLEMS~~ MANY OF THEM WILL ~~BE EXPOSED TO DRUGS AND ALCOHOL.~~ ^{And} OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, I HOPE ALL OF YOU WILL JOIN WITH THE JUST SAY NO FOUNDATION AND PROCTOR & GAMBLE IN THEIR BACK-TO-SCHOOL PLEDGE CAMPAIGN. YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROJECT CAN ~~HELP~~ SAVE ~~many~~ LIVES. PLEASE HELP US HELP OUR CHILDREN SAY NO TO DRUGS AND YES TO LIFE.

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-- AGAIN, THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE AND I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU
AT THE RECEPTION LATER THIS AFTERNOON.

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