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**REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
TO NATIONAL PRESS CLUB NEWSMAKERS LUNCHEON**

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MRS. BUSH: 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. I'm happy to actually 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 have 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 is 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 is the U.S. Malaria Coordinator, is here. What about Dr. Sarah Moten? There is Dr. Moten, I see her here. Is Admiral Ziemer here? 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 truths 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 very 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 questions 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 claim millions of lives every year.

Despite these challenges, 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 the prospects for future generations.

They report greater confidence in their governments -- which, with technical and financial support from the United States and other developed countries, are beginning to devise solutions to poverty, lack of education and disease.

The philosophy behind these solutions is 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 is 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 re-taught 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 Africa 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 are without electricity or running water. In that village, education for women is rare. One of the young women, Nango Dang, 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 Textbooks 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 texts 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 more transparent. Through MCC, nations led by accountable governments devise 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 built 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 up their countries, and to foster accountability and justice.

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 joined to finance the Regiment School's PlayPump: 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 Playpump 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 weakened 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 life-saving 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 family. Jose and Ana Arbino 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 test 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 developed 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 the 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 50,000 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 2 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 4 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 6 percent today. Data suggest 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 and classroom buildings are messages promoting abstinence and HIV-prevention. PEPFAR supports Regiment's Anti-AIDS Drama Club, which uses dances, skits, and songs to open dialogue and reduce stigma. Ambassador Dybul 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'll work with Congress to build on the Emergency Plan's early success, and to reauthorize the program for another 5 years. He has 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 G8 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 two-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 antiretrovirals 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 how out of 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 the treatment he receives at

Chreso, he said, "I am healthy. My children are in school. And my family is smiling."

Another moving visit was to the Mututa Center. Mututa's director established the center in honor of her husband, who died from AIDS. At Mututa, 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 fans out into the rural community on bicycle and foot. They go door-to-door with care kits and antiretroviral drugs. And now they're also taking insecticide mosquito nets with them. By encouraging clients to be tested for HIV, and to seek treatment, the caregivers help bring ailing people back to life.

Beneath the trees of Mututa'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 re-telling, but there was also hope: The confidence to speak out is a sign of healing. With help from Mututa, both girls plan to finish their educations. 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 named Raphael, who was orphaned at the age of 3, and is HIV-positive. Raphael was near death when a friend of Raphael's late father and a Mututa caregiver, Sylvester, found him. Sylvester made sure Raphael got on antiretroviral 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 6th-grade class and he plans to attend the University of Zambia. Thanks to Mututa and Sylvester, this HIV patient who no one would have expected to survive, now expects a long life.

A favorite in the Mututa community is 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 was too feeble. For two weeks she lay bed-ridden, alone and afraid. "Eventually," Esnart said, "I just accepted that I was going to die."

That's when Esnart met Vaines, a World Vision caregiver from Mututa. Vaines was in Esnart's neighborhood, going door to door, asking whether anybody needed medical attention. By chance, she happened upon Esnart. Vaines 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 antiretrovirals. Soon after she went on the medicines, she found energy she hadn't felt for ages.

With money she received from Mututa, 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 says, "was a miracle."

Esnart and Vaines 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 Vaines; like Raphael and Sylvester; like Julia and Jonathan. If you ask "Why Africa?", they are 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 interests 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 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 will be, "Why not?"

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

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

One of the reasons PEPFAR 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 care-givers was really very, very inspiring.

Q 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 was very welcomed in both of those countries. And, actually, both of those countries have a little bit lower HIV rate, and they think maybe 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.

Q 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 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, Millennium Challenge is not just Africa, they're 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 \$1.8 billion 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. 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 country's governments are never going to be able to afford on their own. They really need this sort of development. And the thing that -- we take all of our infrastructure so for granted. We don't really ever think what a legacy we have from every generation for 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 urge the Congress to at least appropriate \$1.8 billion, if not more, for this. I think it's one of our most effective ways we've ever given foreign aid in our history.

AMBASSADOR 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, has 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 governance. And it's done a tremendous amount to increase the 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 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.

Q 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 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 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 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 have a job for the rest of their lives. Instead, they bring their own labor.

When I went to Liberia, to Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's inauguration, I was riding with our ambassador there, and he pointed out a stadium, a soccer stadium that China had built in Liberia. And I said, oh, great, 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.

Q 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 if stigma can be reduced so that people will get tested, so that everyone will get tested. I just recently -- which you may not know, but Howard University Hospital is serving as a cite 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 may be -- I'm not positive about this, but some very small percentage are HIV-positive of the people that come in to 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, that 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.

Q 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 that'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.

Q 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 -- obviously, the First Lady is not elected, there's no written 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 -- (laughter) -- or one that I admired very much, a fellow Texan, Lady Bird Johnson -- is that we benefit, our country benefits by whatever our First Ladies' interest are. And that in many cases -- I've said this before, you 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 the First Ladies have to do something specific. 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 of course 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.)