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THE WHITE HOUSE
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"THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE
POINTS OF LIGHT INITIATIVE FOUNDATION"

Remarks By

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Prepared For

The President's Advisory Committee
on The Points of Light Initiative Foundation

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of my testimony is to convey to you a sense of the President's vision of the role that The Points of Light Initiative Foundation should play in a national effort to make community service central to the life and work of every individual and every formal and informal "institution" in America.

The nation clearly recognizes the extraordinary leadership role the non-profits play in addressing community problems and we know full well that government has a critical role to play in addressing our social problems. However, these problems can never be solved by government and non-profits alone. From now on each of us as individuals and each of the institutions of which we are part must begin to play a direct and consequential role in community problem solving.

I will begin my remarks by attempting to place today's meeting of this Presidential Advisory Committee in perspective. Then I will give a general "overview" of the role we envisage for the Foundation. I will conclude with specific examples of discrete policy areas such as youth, literacy and drugs which the Foundation may influence.

A PERSPECTIVE ON THIS MEETING

Why are we here today?

Just as the countries of Eastern Europe are afire with change, with power flowing from the government to the people, so it is now in America. Every week examples appear of individuals empowering themselves in every corner of the nation. The most serious problems of our time like educational reform, literacy, and drug abuse prevention are no longer simply awaiting government action. Instead individuals are solving the problems themselves. As with Eastern Europe, America is being changed from the "bottom-up."

America is also being changed from the "top-down." For in President Bush, we have a national leader who is unalterably committed to making community service national policy.

It is true that many of the problems that we face seem intractable. Yet while they are formidable, at the heart of problems like illiteracy, drop-outs, crack-cocaine, gangs, unwed pregnant teens, suicidal young people, AIDS victims, the homeless, the hungry, the unemployed, and the lonely are essentially good people. And although they are now free falling, estranged from family, disconnected from society and bereft of community, each of those lives can be reclaimed.

And all across America, in a uniquely American way, many of these lives are being reclaimed. Successful efforts of one kind or another are everywhere. And at the heart of every success story is an individual leader with vision and will, and often a small team of people that itself has taken ownership of that vision and will. Typically they share a determination to make a difference by breaking new ground. They take pride in the special way they are succeeding. They have an ability to generate support from every direction and to hold to their own vision, often in the face of many defeats. Perhaps, most important of all, they are able to develop and keep enormous faith, not simply in one another, but in those whom they are serving.

THE ROLE OF THE FOUNDATION

What role can the Foundation play in this dramatically evolving community service movement? It is to that question that I now turn.

In brief, the role of the Foundation is to implement the President's three-part strategy to make community service national policy of the highest priority. As you will recall from the policy statement entitled "Points of Light Initiative:

Community Service as National Policy," which you have received, that strategy is as follows:

The first element is attitudinal, because attitudes must change before behavior does. So the **first step** is a call to **claim society's problems as your own**. This means to call every American and every American "institution" to engage in solving our most critical social problems directly and consequentially in whatever way they can and with whatever means and skills are available to them.

Second, to identify, enlarge and multiply what is working. This means to identify successful and promising community service projects and initiatives and bring news of their existence to other communities in such a way as to multiply them throughout the nation.

Third, to discover, encourage and develop leaders. To discover, encourage and develop individuals and "institutions" who are "points of light" and to convince every American that a life that includes serving others is a meaningful, adventurous and successful life.

I want to describe in more detail the role of the Foundation in carrying out each of these three strategic objectives.

Claiming Society's Problem As Your Own

First, with respect to claiming society's problems as your own, in this part of the strategy the Foundation's challenge is to **persuade every single "institution" in America to develop a community service initiative (or a family of initiatives) in which every member is urged and welcomed to participate.** By "institution," we mean every family, corporation, firm, school, place of worship, union, club, group or association, as large as General Motors and as small as a bowling team.

In addition, the Foundation's challenge is to persuade every single person in America to participate in at least one such community service initiative, either through one of the "institutions" of which he or she is a part, or individually. Such initiatives should ideally be focused on serious community social problems such as illiteracy, hunger, homelessness, drug abuse, or AIDS.

If this aim is to be achieved, the Foundation must engage in a massive public call to action and information campaign. In many different ways a clear and unequivocal message must be heard throughout the nation that from now on in America any definition of a successful life must include serving others. Much of the work of the Foundation, then, will be heightening public

awareness and activating the impulse to serve, making serving others part of everyone's and every "institutions's" value system, and changing attitudes in such a way as to engage the body politic in community action.

A considerable amount of talent and other resources will be devoted to inundating the public with messages from a variety of sources about engaging in community service. Every conceivable "distribution channel" for the dissemination of information and influencing opinion will be utilized, from national, regional, and local television, print media, motion pictures, videos and billboards, to "specialty publications" reaching discrete segments of the population (Teen magazine for adolescent girls; Ebony for black Americans) to "trade" or constituent publications (airline magazines, American Bar Association magazine).

As part of its efforts to implement the first element of the strategy to claim society's problems as your own, **the Foundation will determine what each kind of "institution" can distinctively contribute to the community service movement and then persuade each such "institution" to make that contribution.** For example, every television and radio station, newspaper, magazine, cable system and other media institution will be encouraged to promote community service relentlessly, spotlighting successful service initiatives, profiling outstanding community leaders and "institutions" and informing the public of how to engage in service.

We can already point to a number of media initiatives whose combined impact on public opinion will likely be significant. In the print media, for example, in yesterday's Sunday New York Times, two pieces ran side-by-side on the op-ed page under a common headline, "In the Heartland, Points of Light." The articles described successful community service initiatives by corporations. In early August The New York Times ran a similar series of articles under the title "Four Points of Light." Another example with the print media are daily articles now running in the Memphis Commercial Appeal in a series entitled "A Thousand Points of Light." Each article describes several successful community service projects or individuals serving the needs of the community.

In the broadcast arena, on October 25, the President acknowledged a media campaign called "Prime Time to End Hunger," a collaborative effort involving the three major television networks, telecommunication companies, volunteer organizations and corporate sponsors. For a three-week period in December, each of the networks has agreed to weave the theme of community service as a means of addressing not only hunger, but also homelessness, illiteracy, drug abuse and other social problems, into the plots of some of their top-rated shows. The combined audience of these shows is 290 million people. At the end of the

shows, viewers would be invited by the celebrities of the respective shows to call a hotline telephone number to learn where and how to volunteer to help those in need. A volunteer handbook will be distributed to those who call, providing written guidance for those who need it. As part of this project, the President will be featured on televised public service announcements during this period, urging viewers to engage in community service.

The Advertising Council is a private, non-profit organization that coordinates the volunteer services of this country's leading corporations, advertising agencies, and the media to address today's critical social issues and concerns. Saatchi & Saatchi will serve as the volunteer advertising agency with The Advertising Council on a campaign to encourage direct and consequential engagement in the lives of those in need.

In order to assist local media in its search for high quality news material, the Foundation will create a mechanism to provide satellite feeds to television stations all across the country, containing stories about highly successful and newsworthy community service leaders and developments and also a wire print service to disseminate such information.

Many other examples exist of distinctive contributions that can be made by various "institutions."

- Every credit card issuer, bank, telephone and utility company, for example, will be asked to include in billing and statement envelopes printed information about how and where individuals and "institutions" can serve others.
- Every place of worship will be asked to make community service central to the life of their congregations.
- Every real estate developer, building contractor, architect and financial institution will be asked to form consortiums to build at least some housing for the homeless.
- Every restaurant, grocery and convenience store and farm will be asked to make surplus food available to the hungry each day.

As the final part of its effort to implement the notion of "claiming society's problems as your own," **the Foundation will strive to make service to others a national ethic.** To do so, the Foundation will ask:

- Every family in America to make community service a regular family activity of premium importance.

- Every "institution" in America to identify and honor prominently those within the "institution" and those outside the "institution" who are doing exemplary work in the field of community service.
- Every employer to include community service among the criteria that determine hiring, compensation and promotion decisions.
- Every school will be encouraged to make community service a central part of school life.
- Every not-for-profit service organization will be asked to cooperate among themselves and to share their expertise with other "institutions" new to the business of community service. Finally, non-profits will be asked to build their own capacity to absorb increasing numbers of new volunteers.
- And, recognizing that our young people are our greatest natural resource, every young person in America will be challenged by the Foundation to lead the nation in an unprecedented service movement.

Identify, Enlarge and Multiply What Is Working

With respect to the second part of the strategy, the Foundation will canvas the nation in search of successful and promising ideas for solving social problems. The Foundation will then take these ideas and, with the help of those who have actually implemented them, spread these ideas throughout the nation, so that they may be applied in different communities.

We must as a nation find a way to move the "right messengers" with the "right messages" to the "right audiences." As part of this effort, a project called "ServNet" will be launched by the Foundation. ServNet is essentially a collection of "peer-to-peer action groups." The aim of ServNet is to find promising approaches to social problems and send the "right representatives" from each initiative to new communities where the "right people" want to hear them and empower themselves to act.

For example, the Foundation will assist housing activists like Kimi Gray, who organized her neighbors in a public housing project, reclaimed it from drug dealers and negotiated agreements so that tenants might own and manage units, so that she may travel to other communities and to other housing projects, telling her story and encouraging her peers to follow her example.

Lawyers like Tom Evans from Mudge, Rose in New York who organized a highly successful inner city youth mentoring project for Wall

Street lawyers would be asked to travel the nation, telling their stories to fellow lawyers and encouraging other lawyers to become involved in similar initiatives.

Where possible, it would be hoped that the Foundation could persuade an advocate's own "institution" to donate his or her time and services to the ServNet project or persuade another "institution" or group of "institutions" to contribute resources necessary for the individual's ServNet activities.

It is also anticipated that within the Foundation additional resources would be used to build a comprehensive nationwide telephone hotline system, an interactive computer data base program, and an electronic bulletin board that would permit people all across the country to learn of volunteer opportunities in their own communities or about approaches that are succeeding elsewhere. These mechanisms would be known as "ServLink."

Finally, the Foundation will help to encourage the establishment of volunteer centers in every neighborhood, be they in specifically dedicated places or even local fire stations, libraries, church or synagogue basements or homes.

Discover, Encourage and Develop Leaders

Time and time again, it has been dramatically demonstrated to those of us in the Office of National Service that the one indispensable ingredient for a successful community service initiative is dynamic, visionary and dedicated leadership. In order to attract to community service those who are already leaders from various walks of life and diverse fields, the Foundation will develop and implement a comprehensive recognition and awards program for outstanding community service leaders, participants and initiatives.

Moreover, the Foundation will take steps to urge every "institution" in America to establish prominent and comprehensive recognition and awards programs, so as to encourage others to follow the example of those who are doing outstanding community service work. In addition to the foregoing, the Foundation will sponsor workshops and symposia and prepare and publish videotapes and written materials.

EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL INTEREST GROUPS AND PUBLIC POLICY ACTIVITIES

Having sketched the general mission of the Foundation, I proceed now to provide a brief example of the role the Foundation should play in shaping public policy and influencing significant "interest groups" in various areas.

Youth

Foundation Mission:

To make community service central to the life and work of every young person.

Strategic Objectives:

1. **Mobilize young people, parents, teachers and community leaders to band together to engage in problem solving within their own communities.**
- o **The School:** The President will challenge student leaders from every junior and senior high school to call on the many talented, yet uninvolved students to join with them to commence a school community service initiative. He will also challenge:
 - Secondary school students to create community service partnerships with the local elementary schools, businesses, religious organizations, government and associations.
 - Local businesses, media, religious organizations, government and associations to develop community service partnerships with the schools through:
 - * Providing a director of community service for area schools to serve as a liaison between students and service organizations;
 - * Encouraging community service initiatives which reach out-of-school young people;
 - * Offering employees paid leave to serve in schools and with students in the community;
 - * Offering annual scholarships/awards to students who have served others;
 - * Sponsoring school community service activities;
 - * Mentoring relationships with young people;
 - * Giving discounts to students with I.D. cards earned through volunteer service.
- o **Local Systemic Reform:** The young people, parents and teachers will be challenged to create a task force of educators, business and religious leaders, local

government and association officials to research, identify and address local problems within their families and schools such as substance abuse, drop-outs, AIDS and teenage suicide.

Create a "National Community Action Day" to call all young people, parents, community and religious leaders, educators and business people to work shoulder to shoulder for a day addressing local needs through community service.

Develop community service initiatives which meet the most pressing community needs as identified by the task force.

Develop after school community service project directed towards "latch key" children involving parents and children.

- o **Communications:** PSAs will be produced, perhaps one per month, highlighting an outstanding young person in community service. On the same format as ABC's "Unsung American Heroes," this program may be narrated by President Bush and conclude with a short message by the President and Mrs. Bush. These PSAs may be aired during shows attracting the most young people and the theme may be that "Every Young Person Has A Gift To Give And The Nation is in Need of These Gifts Now."

Presidential PSAs may also be produced to air on Top 40 radio programs.

The Foundation will produce PSA's with famous athletes, musicians and entertainers calling young people to solve pressing social problems.

Motivational videos will be produced to be shown during school assemblies and organization meetings (Churches, Synagogues, Girl/Boy Scouts, Girls/Boys Clubs, 4-H, and YMCAs) in classrooms and youth-targeted businesses (The Gap, Tower Records, McDonalds). These videos will also be shown to adult groups such as the PTA, Junior League, Lions Club and City Councils to indicate the extraordinary role young people can play in community problem solving.

- o **Young People As Consumers:** The Foundation will work with corporate presidents so that various community service logos or messages may be printed on brand name items popular with youth such as jeans, records, fast food containers and billboards.

2. **Identify, enlarge and multiply successful community service initiatives involving youth.**
 - o **School Based Initiatives:** Leaders from the twenty most successful school community service initiatives in the nation will travel around their state or region and work with student leaders and teachers to start community service initiatives in other schools.
 - o **Out-Of-School Youth Initiatives:** Challenge young people and local leaders to work with existing youth service organizations to replicate initiatives targeted at young people out-of-school or on the verge of dropping out, such as "Oasis" and "Breakthrough."
 - o **Communications:** Through ServLink and ServNet, as stated above, a comprehensive data base of young leaders and successful initiatives will be developed and made available.

An 800 hotline telephone number will be aired with the youth PSA's, so that after a young person is called to service there is an outlet for their immediate response.

The Foundation will implement a computerized bulletin board which will allow any person to access information about successful community service leaders and service opportunities.

3. **Discover, encourage and develop youth leaders in two principal ways:**
 - i. **Conspicuous Awards and Recognition**
 - o **The President's National Service Youth Representatives:** One to three youth representatives from every state (based on population) will be chosen to lead others in community service in their regions, assist communities in developing and implementing local projects and circulate models of successful initiatives to young people and leaders of the various sectors (schools, businesses, religious organizations, civic groups, etc.). These representatives will be chosen based on their exemplary efforts in community service and will be regarded as the President's "ambassadors for community service."
 - o **The President's Youth Leadership Award:** This award will be given annually to individuals for their outstanding achievements in community service. These

nominations will be made by existing organizations such as Girls/Boys Clubs, 4-H, local schools, La Raza, Governors and the President's National Service Youth Representatives. Leadership certificates will be given based on the President's Physical Fitness Award model.

- o **Other Awards:** Ongoing Presidential recognition will be given to outstanding young people in community service. In addition, all institutions will be encouraged to establish awards for outstanding youth community service, for example:
 - Local media, businesses and organizations will be asked to give Community Service Awards to outstanding students.
 - Student bodies will be encouraged to issue awards to local companies for their involvement with students in solving community problems.
 - Entertainment channels such as MTV will be encouraged to recognize outstanding young people in community service.
 - o **YES Newsletter:** The Foundation will circulate a quarterly newsletter, which recognizes outstanding young people, successful initiatives and partnerships among businesses, schools and out-of-school youth, to all junior and senior high school newspaper editors to be used in student publications and local media. In addition, circulation will include businesses, youth organizations, educators, religious groups, etc.
- ii. Forums and Workshops
- o **The President's Youth Leadership Forums:** In the first year, the Foundation will conduct perhaps eight forums per year (one per region) which:
 - Call together young people, parents, teachers, business and community leaders to discuss developing young leaders in the field of community service, successful projects, progress at reaching out to all young people, and new community service initiatives.
 - Encourage community leaders to replicate these forums locally.

Literacy

Foundation Mission:

To make all illiterate Americans literate.

Strategic Objectives:

1. **Mobilize individuals and institutions to engage in literacy initiatives.**
 - o Send letters, pamphlets, videotapes and other communications to every institution urging each one to canvas its membership, determine literacy needs and engage literate members in the task of tutoring illiterate ones.
 - o Enlist national, regional and local media in conspicuously and relentlessly focusing national attention on the importance of eradicating illiteracy.
 - o Recruit math and science literate volunteers as literacy tutors and provide their names to state and local educational leaders or groups who will know where their help is most needed.
2. **Identify, enlarge and multiply literacy initiatives that are working.**
 - o Identify successful literacy initiatives, send representatives from such initiatives to their peers in other communities, so that such initiatives may be multiplied throughout the nation (ServNet).
 - o Develop a national hotline telephone number, interactive computer programs, videotapes and publications (ServLink) suggesting how and where volunteers can engage in literacy eradication.
3. **Discover, encourage and develop leaders in the fight against illiteracy.**
 - o Identify leaders in the field of literacy and honor them with awards, letters and other forms of commendation, so as to encourage others to follow their example.
 - o Ask each "institution" to identify and honor outstanding literacy volunteers and initiatives.
 - o Sponsor forums, seminars and workshops on the issue of developing leaders in the fight against illiteracy.

Drug Abuse Prevention

Foundation Mission:

Successful drug prevention efforts must be rooted in the community. Ultimately, this war must be won citizen-by-citizen, block-by-block, neighborhood-by-neighborhood through the extraordinary action of ordinary citizens. As is stated in the September 1989 National Drug Control Strategy, the Foundation is charged with encouraging, galvanizing and directing the energies of individuals to "prevent drug use in their communities with new ideas and programs that have proven successful elsewhere."

Strategic Objectives:

1. **Mobilize individuals and institutions to engage in local drug abuse prevention initiatives.**
 - o Promote drug prevention programs in schools, colleges, universities, community centers, associations, churches, social organizations.
 - o Work with the entertainment industry and advertising agencies to encourage media messages supporting a drug-free lifestyle.
 - o Explore programs to enhance parental role in preventing drug use among their children.
 - o Encourage policies in public housing and welfare to reduce drug abuse among recipients of public assistance and to reduce the presence of drugs in their communities.
 - o Challenge local leaders to bring together the whole community including parents, community activists, corporate chief executives, local management, youth leaders, business associations, not-for-profit groups, education institutions, media organizations, civic associations, minority groups, religious denominations and local political leaders, to form local community action groups to marshal community resources and deploy them against the drug crisis.

2. **Identify, enlarge and multiply initiatives that are working.**

- o Throughout the country, communities are successfully winning the war against drug abuse through innovative initiatives like the following:
 - The Kenilworth Parkside Housing Project in Maryland where residents have successfully reclaimed their neighborhood from drug dealers;
 - The TEACH project in Boston, a partnership between a neighborhood and police whereby residents report vital information on local drug dealers to the police who arrest many dealers on the basis of this knowledge;
 - Brother Bruce Earl in Detroit who mobilizes his parishioners to march on crack houses every Sunday and whose church buys these houses and makes them available at low cost to parishioners through a partnership between the local bank and the church;
 - A Liberty City, Florida initiative in which a public housing tenant involves elementary and secondary aged students in a drug and dropout prevention effort using video tapes and motivational films to persuade other young people to live a drug-free life.
- o While there are many such successful initiatives, too often they are isolated and unknown to others. Successful anti-drug initiatives must be replicated again and again across the nation by individuals and institutions until the best ideas are claimed by concerned citizens and implemented in every community.
- o On a scale never before tried and with an approach never before attempted, leaders with solutions to the drug crisis will go to new communities in search of local citizens with initiative, the will to succeed and access to resources.

3. **Discover, encourage and develop leaders.**

- o Exceptional leaders with promising ideas in the field of drug prevention will be introduced throughout the nation to powerful local institutions and people with leadership skills and resources who have the will and ability to turn ideas into action.

- o All institutions, including the media, schools, and local businesses, will be encouraged to establish conspicuous awards and recognition programs for outstanding leaders in community drug prevention initiatives.
- o On-going Presidential recognition will be given to extraordinary community drug prevention leaders.
- o Forums, symposia and workshops will be conducted throughout the country on the subject of identifying, producing and developing leaders in the fight against drug abuse.

CONCLUSION

Having sketched for you the strategy that the Foundation should implement, the question of how the Foundation should be structured answers itself. The Foundation must:

- o Be broad enough to encompass literally every one of the 240 million individuals in America and literally every "institution" in America, from General Motors to a neighborhood bowling team.
- o Be about releasing energy rather than consuming or controlling it.
- o Be animated more by leaders who cause others to see opportunities than by those who just identify problems.
- o Be about private, decentralized, indigenous initiatives built to respond to locally defined problems with locally empowered resources, not dragged down by the "dead hand" of a bureaucracy.
- o Be more focused on aspirations than problems and on internal forces within individuals and communities and how one causes them to take action, linking ideas and feelings with actions at the level where people are ultimately making a difference.
- o Help communities, as small as families, classrooms and small companies, and as large as neighborhoods, towns and large corporations, create an enabling environment, ultimately fashioning for themselves a vast web of non-financial incentives, some overt and some subtle, to heighten the impulse to serve and to create, lead and manage meaningful service opportunities.