

Observance: World AIDS Day 2004: December 1, 2004

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[START RECORDING]

REVEREND DR. JAMES KOWALSKI: . . . are privileged to host this event, and in doing so, to pay honor to the important work of the United Nations and to express deep respect to our General Secretary, Kofi Annan and to thank all of you for caring about people, whatever disease or challenge they may face, believe that hope is something that's made real when people like you and me and folks like them work together. That's what tonight will be about in the season of light and hope. I hope you enjoy the evening, that you are inspired and encouraged, to make a difference. Thank you for being here. [Applause]

FEMALE SPEAKER: Welcome to our first host. She's an Emmy-nominated actress and singer, Gloria Reuben. [Applause]

GLORIA REUBEN: Thank you. Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen, and welcome to Women, Girls, HIV/AIDS, Commemorating World AIDS Day 2004. On behalf of event organizers UNAIDS, and African Services Committee, thank you for coming this evening. I'm grateful to have this opportunity to be with you tonight as we reflect on women, girls, and the progress made in the battle against AIDS and as we recommit ourselves to remaining focused on the work still required to end this pandemic. As you know, the global AIDS epidemic continues to deepen and women are now increasingly affected, making up nearly half of the 39.4

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million adults worldwide living with HIV. Now more than ever, we must continue to raise our voices and be heard. As women, we must continue to stand together and educate ourselves and others. We must recommit ourselves to using our influence to foster solidarity and guide people towards ending denial, HIV stigma and discrimination.

This evening you will hear testimony from women intimately affected by HIV and AIDS, women unafraid to raise their voices. These women have a unique and valuable role to play, both in society and fighting this pandemic. I'm honored to have the opportunity to stand with them and with you tonight. UNAIDS is the world's leading advocate for a stronger response to AIDS. The program brings together the efforts and resources of ten UN organizations that clear roadblocks to action and mobilize diverse partners to develop and implement solutions to HIV/AIDS globally. At its helm is a tireless leader in the worldwide effort to end this pandemic. Please welcome Executive Director of UNAIDS and Undersecretary General, Dr. Peter Piot. [Applause]

PETER PIOT, M.D.: Thank you Gloria, for these kind words. Good evening everybody. It's great to be here. It's great to see that in 2004 the AIDS movement is kicking and alive. It's good to see so many friends, so many pioneers that fight against. I would really like to thank everybody who made this event possible. In the first place, Very

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Reverend Dr. James Kowalski, the Dean of Saint Joan the Divine, for hosting us in this wonderful cathedral. And it's also a great mix of local community activists, of US Government, our host country, United Nations, of people from a very diverse walk of life. Today, December the 1st is perhaps the most important date in the annual calendar of AIDS, World AIDS Day. It's the day when we renew our commitment to the response to AIDS. It's the day that we commemorate and we remember those we've lost. It's the day when we recharge our batteries in this very long battle. I remember that 14 years ago, on the 1st of December 1990, the global community thought to shine a bright light on the rapidly rising number of women caught in the crossfire of AIDS by focusing the third World AIDS Day on Women and AIDS, and at that time it was estimated that about two million women worldwide were living with HIV. Today, as we once again return to the scene, the number of women living with HIV in the world has skyrocketed to 20 million, ten times more, and that doesn't even include those of the women who have died since then, another 10 million. What do we need more? What do we need more to focus our attention to women and AIDS and to put women at the heart of the response to AIDS? As we announced last week in the UNAIDS Report, nearly half of all people living with HIV in the world today are women and it's increasing in every single region of the world. I'm now

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convinced that in many, many societies, in many countries, if we do not put women at the heart of the response to AIDS, we're not going to make it. And if there's one place in this epidemic to intervene, one place where our efforts will yield dramatic results, this is it. And the simple truth is that empowering women and girls to protect themselves and their families from AIDS is key to turning the tide. But the truth is also that this is not happening yet, that this is not funded yet. And finally, tonight our message to the world must be a message of hope, that this is a problem with a solution, that AIDS can be beaten. We have more resources than ever. We have more leadership and more expertise of what works. Yet, there is not magic bullet, and yes, we will be in here for the long haul, but if everyone plays their part, we can make a difference. And we all fought hard to get the money. It's not enough. We've made big progress. Now let's fight equally hard to make the money work for the people on the ground. That's the commitment we should all have tonight. That's the commitment we have in the United Nations system, united in UNAIDS. Thank you very much for being here with us.

[Applause]

GLORIA REUBEN: Thank you, Dr. Piot. Indeed, hope and commitment. World AIDS Day is an opportunity to acknowledge successes in the struggle against HIV and AIDS and to recommit ourselves to meeting the challenges ahead, and there

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are successes. Through innovative and aggressive prevention campaigns and its bold stand on treatment, that access to antiretroviral medicine is a basic human right, the country of Brazil has taken the lead in reversing the tide of the pandemic. To recognize those successes, it is with great pleasure that we introduce this evening's first performer. She's a multi-award winning singer and composer hailing from Sao Paulo, Brazil. Please welcome Luciana Souza, featuring Bruce Barth, Scott Kali and Antonio Sanchez. [Applause]

LUCIANA SOUZA: [SINGS, ACCOMPANIED BY BRUCE BARTH, SCOTT KALI AND ANTONIO SANCHEZ. [Applause] Thank you so much. It is an honor. It is an honor to be a part of this event. In 1988 I was with at my last year of college up in Boston and helped organize with my fellow colleagues at school the first World AIDS Day and the fight [inaudible], and we'll fight it [inaudible]. Thank you. This next piece is something I wrote. We played a poem of Pablo Neruda before and-pieces of several poems, actually. [Singing] [Applause] Thank you so much! Thank you.

GLORIA REUBEN: Here in Harlem, we are fortunate to have elected officials who are committed supporters of the fight to end AIDS. This evening we are delighted to have with us a longtime friend of UNAIDS and African Services. Please welcome Congressman Charles Rangel. [Applause]

REP. CHARLES RANGEL: Thank you. Thank you. I was so

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carried away! What a great gig! Beautiful jazz! What a wonderful cathedral. And it's just so sad that it takes such a tragic pandemic that is sweeping the world that would bring us together, but we have to be thankful that we are together. There is so much education that has to be given at a time where sometimes it seems that the world is so insensitive to the problems that people are facing. That is why at this time of the year, it is especially moving that so many of you would come out and show your compassion, your sensitivity and your concern, because this too has to be some kind of an epidemic to educate and remove the stigma of this terrible disease. In Washington, there is much talk, as it should be, about life before birth, but wouldn't it be just an explosion of love and common sense if there was talk about how hard life can be after birth? [Applause]

We are engaged in a senseless, endless war where we don't even count the people who don't look like us. They call them collateral damage! It's not life. The tragedies that happen in the Sudan, where we could come and bring some sense of safety, and Haiti is a country that just begs and needs for people to come and to give some assistance. But this epidemic that we're talking about today throughout the world is one that is not restricted to Haiti or to the Caribbean or to Africa or to China or to Russia. It's a threat to all of us who breathe every day, and have to remind ourselves that

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we're not talking about illness and disease, we're talking about people, people who have families, who love people and want to live like we do. And so, let me just thank you. It is so warm-feeling to see that on a cold night in the beautiful theater, this beautiful cathedral, that we could have such wonderful music, but more important, such beautiful people that would take some time out to remind each other that we all have to care, we all have to do more. God bless you for all that you do. This has made my evening. [Applause]

GLORIA REUBEN: Thank you, Congressman Rangel. This next speaker personifies the very reason we are here tonight. She is one of the many women living with HIV and working for change. Please welcome Juanita Williams. [Applause]

JUANITA WILLIAMS: Good evening. I'm so glad to have an opportunity to share my story with you. In November 1989 in rural South Carolina I was tested and diagnosed HIV-positive without my knowledge, and denied adequate medical services, treatment and care, all during what seemed to be an outpatient surgery appointment. Six months later I relocated to Atlanta and became a volunteer and client of Sister Love Incorporated. Because of continued discrimination from the medical field and doctors with fatalistic attitudes, I became my own doctor. I educated myself and never revealed my status for five years. Sorry, I'm very nervous. [Sighs.] [Applause]

After watching the epidemic take the turn towards African

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American women, I knew it was time that I had to put a face on this disease. In September of 1995, Rutgers University presented me with an opportunity to testify on a tribunal during the fourth United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, China. I testified on discrimination with the medical field in the United States. That powerful experience led me to the decision to quit my job and devote all of my time to educating the people on HIV/AIDS and its impact on women of color. [Applause] On a state, national and international level, I started providing trainings to healthcare providers in various settings around culturally specific matters. I went from China to Africa, from Honduras to Jamaica. I also started educating HIV-positive women on the issues of self-advocacy, education about the virus and empowerment, because you see, if you empower a woman, you empower a community. [Applause] Empowered communities create powerful nations. Having a voice, stating your needs often and loud enough, someone will hear you. You have to be selective to when and where so it can make a difference.

I don't have any college degrees or letters behind my name, except for AIDS. I've been positive for 15 years, eight of those years have been with AIDS. This past April, I was blessed with the opportunity to speak at the March for Women's Lives in Washington, D.C., the only HIV-positive woman, African American, I might add. So dreams do come true.

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Opportunities do come true. One point five million people heard me speak that Sunday morning. Finally, we are at last recognizing women, girls and HIV. Children are our future, and our women are the nurturers that bring life to the human race. It hasn't been easy doing this work and living with this virus. You deal with doctors, medications, illnesses and death every day. But when I see women and children still becoming infected every day, we still have a long way to go. So I ask you, please don't just be in this fight for today. Let's continue tomorrow to create safe spaces and places for people who are infected and affected. Let's continue to raise our voices to stop the spread of this awful disease so that we all can look forward to a brighter future. Thank you.

[Applause]

GLORIA REUBEN: Juanita Williams. [Applause] Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a great honor to introduce this evening's keynote speaker. He is one of the preeminent leaders in the global fight against HIV and AIDS. His personal commitment to defending the rights of girls and women and ending this pandemic are a shining example of the enduring power of true leadership. Please welcome the Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan.

[Applause]

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL KOFI ANNAN: Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Thank you all very much. Thank

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you. Let me start by thanking the Very Reverend James Kowalski for receiving all of us this evening, to allow us to share experiences and to continue the fight against HIV/AIDS. Let me thank Miss Reuben for the very warm introduction.

Dear friends, I am moved to be here tonight to hear the experiences of women and girls in the age of HIV/AIDS particularly to celebrate their achievements in the fight against the pandemic. Women are our most courageous and creative champions of the fight against HIV/AIDS. In most countries and communities I have visited around the world, it is women's voices that are heard above all others, women advocates and activists who are moved to act selflessly, often risking prejudice, abuse or violence in order to improve the lives of others. They have understood that in the age of AIDS, leadership means daring to do things differently because this is a different kind of disease. It stands alone in human experience, and it requires us to stand united against it. The courage that women have shown in this fight is matched only by the toll the disease has taken on them. Women already bear the brunt of poverty. AIDS makes a poverty trap even easier for them to fall into and even harder to break. Women continue to face discrimination on a number of fronts, from the workplace to laws governing land ownership and inheritance. AIDS puts them at even greater risk. Girls already make up the majority of children not in school. When

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AIDS strikes the family, those girls who are attending school are all too often taken out to help run the household or care for sick relatives. Women now account, as we heard earlier for about half of all the people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, and in sub-Saharan Africa, almost 50 percent of adults living with HIV are women. Why are women more vulnerable to infection? Why is that so, even where they are not the ones with most sexual partners outside marriage? No more likely than men to be injecting drug users? Usually, it is because society's inequalities put them at risk, unjust and unconscionable risk. A range of factors conspire to make this so: poverty, abuse, violence, lack of information, coercion of older men, and men having several relationships at one time. From issues of mortality to issues of morality, women pay a higher price, including within bonds of marriage. In some heavily infected countries, married women have higher rates of HIV infection than their unmarried sexually active peers. These factors cannot be addressed piecemeal. What is needed is real positive change that will give more power and confidence to women and girls, change that will transform relations between women and men at all levels of society, change that can only be brought about through education of girls, through legal and social reform, and through greater awareness and responsibility among men, change that will allow women to play the full role in the fight against

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HIV/AIDS. Only when societies recognize that educating girls is not an option but a necessity will girls and young women be able to build the knowledge and self-confidence and the independence they need to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS. Once they leave school, we must work to ensure that they have job opportunities and that they enjoy the rights of land ownership, which too many of them are denied today, perhaps not in this country, but in many other countries around the world. And we must ensure that they have full access to the practical options which can protect them from HIV/AIDS, including microbicides as they become available. Dear friends, empowering women in the fight against HIV/AIDS must be our strategy of the future. I am moved that we have with us tonight a number of courageous women, and we heard one of them who have shared their stories with us. It is among them that the real heroes of this war are to be found. It is our job to furnish them with hope. The fight continues. Thank you very much. [Applause]

GLORIA REUBEN: . . . with a dynamic young voice that shows the power of the spoken word. She is an internationally renowned poet and AIDS activist, Jessica Care Moore.

[Applause]

JESSICA CARE MOORE: I want to say that it is an honor to be here. I was asked to do this. This hasn't been the first poem I've ever written about AIDS to bring voice

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and awareness to the AIDS pandemic, but it is the first one that is focused on women and girls. And I entitled it "Invisible Woman" and I dedicate it to all the women here tonight.

Dear God, this is a poem for invisible women, those beautiful creatures created in your likeness, those magic bag story-tellers, those nation builders, those who grow vegetable gardens in the desert, those twilight women who hide in trees and wait, who hunt, who gather, those candle lighters, mystic wolves, native Creoles, southern tongue, wide-hipped, African-born, Alabama removed, geographically displaced, hair always in place, perfect, distraught, poverty-stricken, invisible warrior women camouflaged lens in the strings of a harp, invisible. Those grandmothers, those sisters, those aunties, those caregivers, those sun-reflectors, those earth-drivers, those born today, yesterday, tomorrow, this second, those, God, the ones who teach us to love the unloved, to remember we are a royal people. She is in trouble, God, Goddess, prophets, Hail Mary, Queen Sheba, Inzinga, [misspelled?], O-yah, Tara, He-shepsha [misspelled?], She, she, Kali, Durga, black Madonna, great mother, Fatima is dying. She, God, is dying in silence, by the thousands, at knife-point, without protection, in alleys, in her own home, in bathrooms, in schools, by teachers, by men in uniform, by her own father, her uncle, her boyfriend,

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her first love, her last love, her first kiss was bloodshed. She is a soldier for this. She was just trying to find a love in it, like all girls do, searching for God in a man, instead of her throat or hurt. She wanted to feel like a woman, whole, like her mother, who lives in fear, a fear she will soon know as simply the way it is when you are invisible. "This is her body," she wanted to scream at twelve. "She is not ugly," she repeated in the mirror at fourteen. She cannot stand up at seventeen. She is a water sign with no water. There are thieves in her temple. There is no fortress to protect her from herself. She is at the mercy of others. Being born girl is a sin, they say. Bury it, hide it, burn it with acid, give it no resources. This is a slower death. Make her throw it up after dinner or hide the bruises behind dark glasses at work. She will make it the pain she deserves. She will blend guilt with her food and feed it to her daughters. She will tell them to smile in the dark and never dream out loud. This is your inheritance. Keep it under your tongue, quietly, Kenya, every thirty minutes say a prayer. Witch, place this locket under your pillow. Don't talk about the rape. Huh? Wrap it around your neck like an umbilical cord. Wear. Turn blue. Why? Most of you are black anyway. Why do you want to kill off the women? Eve, first. Who will water the ocean? Who will balance the universe? Who will serve the tea, cook the meals, serve their sons? Who's backs then, huh?

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Who's backs then? Tell her it is a gift, not property. Tell her she owns it, it is not for sale. Tell her her color is sacred. Tell her that her strength can stop wars. Tell her this is not her war alone, that her reflection is there, she just can't see it yet. She is a phoenix, a panther, a thunder, but a passion not paralyzed by her circumstance. She lives and dies. The statistics you study. She, like an animal is being called an endangered species. They are children, God, nearly two million in sub-Saharan Africa, given butterfly wings and HIV during delivery. Breast-feeding has become lethal. We are failing our girls, our daughters, left out of the trinity of our prayers. We bomb the earth and arrogantly forget this is our womb. Our birthplace is being mutilated with our legs and our arms held down, injected with dirty needles, her that would use knives with our armor or Western medicine. We've spoiled, turned our backs on our own beginning. America, how can we turn our back on Mother Africa? We have mined her diamonds, worn her gold, drilled her oil, enjoyed her oceans, enslaved her people. How can we not save Africa's greatest natural resource, African women? There is a fire on the river. We have been her heat from existence, her laughter, her books, her rights to freedom over her own body, her longing for an education is considered contraband. We owe it to invisible women everywhere to fight harder, to African women, to the women of Asia and South

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America, India, China, Suweto, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Kenya, Peru, Jamaica, Afghanistan and the nearly 80 percent of African American women living with AIDS in the United States to ensure the safety of girls. The plight of women determines the survival of humanity. We have to find them. We threw the door of no return inside the wind, inside our churches, our mosques, our synagogues, or temples, our homes, our backyards, our doorsteps, behind curtains, dark glasses, next to flowers, inside the dirt, thinking through garbage, inside a smile, behind a teardrop, inside the rainfall, between the hurricane, inside volcanos, in the heart of storms, the pool hall, the lunchrooms, the abortion clinics, the place between love and hate, under our noses, inside our books, our workshops, our classrooms, our elitism, our religions, our politics, our individualism, our capitalism, our revolutionary songs. We have to find a way to give them power, the courage they give freely, to say no, to choose to fight against their own social norms. We must fight against gag orders, enabling our need for information, protection and prevention. Remind them when goddess worship was in the scriptures. Push outside the confines of boundary, of neighborhood, of country, of gender, of sexual orientation, of race, of generation, of culture, of reflection. We have to tell them we can hear the Earth crying for help on this night. The ten thousand that died this morning, we know you

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by name. Yes, you, 41 million warriors survivors, those born today, not yesterday, not tomorrow, not invisible, at this second, in this room, magic, invisible women. I see them everywhere. Do you? Thank you. [Applause]

GLORIA REUBEN: Ladies and Gentlemen, this evening's next host is a Tony Award-winning actor and a true friend in the fight against AIDS. Please welcome Alan Cumming.

ALAN CUMMING: Good evening. I have to say it's really amazing to be here tonight amongst so many inspiring women. I was really loving Juanita William's speech, when she said about how if you empower a woman you empower an entire community. I thought that was really so true. And I thought imagine if you took that a stage further, what a different state we would be in tonight, what a different united state we would be in if we had a President who was a woman. Just a thought. [Applause] I bet she would be a Democrat, too.

Anyway, on your way in tonight, you will have noticed that several panels of the AIDS Memorial Quilt are on display. The Quilt, of course, is a powerful American symbol of the AIDS epidemic, and it's the largest ongoing community arts project in the world. Each of the more than 44,000 colorful panels that make up the quilt memorializes the life of a person lost to AIDS. The organizers of this evening's program are grateful to Broadway Cares Equity Fights AIDS for facilitating this display. Complimenting the work of the

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United Nations under the inspirational leadership of Kofi Annan is the work of community-based organizations such as African Services Committee, a partner in tonight's program. [Applause] African Services Committee is a non-profit service organization based in Harlem, dedicated to serving New York City's African immigrant communities. It was founded in 1981 and is staffed by dedicated community health workers from around the world. African Services provides health and social services to over 8,000 immigrants a year from all over the African continent, including people living with HIV and AIDS. They also work on the front lines of the international AIDS crisis through advocacy and policy work and is the North American NGO representative to the UNAIDS program coordinating board. Last year, they launched African Services Adisababa [misspelled?] an HIV outreach and testing center in Ethiopia. Please, support their critical work by making a donation before you leave tonight. They help the most vulnerable communities in New York City in the fight against AIDS.

Our next performers are a Grammy Award-winning vocal ensemble, renowned for their excellence in jazz, and the art of group singing. I'm very delighted to ask you to welcome New York Voices. [Applause]

MALE SINGER: It is indeed an honor to be with you here this evening. We would like to start with a piece. This

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is a poem written by James Thurber. The music is written by Peter Eldridge. [GROUP SINGS, ACCOMPANIED BY PIANO.]

[Applause]

FEMALE SINGER: Thank you. We would like to now welcome our good friend, Aloniov Nye [misspelled?] at the piano, and bring you a song that you are probably familiar with by Lerner and Lane, this is our uplifting note of hope with On a Clear Day. [GROUP SINGS, ACCOMPANIED BY PIANO.]

MALE SINGER: Aloniov Nye at the piano.

FEMALE SINGER: [Inaudible.] Well, I just want to thank you again for allowing us to be a part of this. I brought my daughter here to be with you and [inaudible] to feel blessed and hopeful, and all of us in this dream work that we have ahead of us. And this is a song that we've been doing for many, many years now, actually made famous by that great jazz quartet, the Beatles.

MALE SINGER: Probably, you could sing along with us. [GROUP SINGS "MY LIFE".] [Applause]

ALAN CUMMING: Sinikithemba is a Zulu word meaning "we bring hope". It's also the name of one of the world's most unusual choral groups. The members of this South African choir have a bond which goes beyond music, because they're all living with HIV. Before we hear them, we're going to meet one of their members. Please welcome Mimi Badumuti.

[Applause]

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MIMI BADUMUTI: Good evening. It is an honor to get such opportunity to be in front of you tonight. My name is Mimi Badumuti, all the way from South Africa. [Applause] As it has been said that millions of women are infected with HIV and AIDS, I'm one of those women who are infected with HIV and AIDS. As an HIV-positive mother, it is very important how I tell my kids about my status. I take myself as an ordinary mother who needs, like any ordinary mother, to deal with a pressure our children face when they reach some stage of years. I take every challenge as it comes and deal with it as I'm still, and will be their mother, no matter what.

[Applause] I don't allow HIV to put a gap between me and my kids because I love them very much. Well, as a single mother, I need to answer all the questions that my little girl asks me, and she knows that I'm taking the medications which are antiretroviral treatment. As giving her the answers I make sure that I stick into the points and the points that I'm giving her are wise, because I want her to stay negative as she is. Answers of hope will also help her to see me as a mother full of hope, not as a dying mother. [Applause]

Knowledge that I have about HIV is helping me to give her as little education as she can understand, as she is still seven years old. Well, the other strength that I have I got from singing with Sinikithemba Choir. I got strength to sing and spread the message of hope to all South Africans and indeed,

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to you good people. [Applause] To sing with Sinikithemba Choir encourages lots and lots of people to go and have their blood tested, because if they see a beautiful lady like me HIV-positive [Applause] they know that HIV doesn't choose ugly people or poor people, but HIV, you get infected anyway, anyhow. So, no matter how sad I may be, how angry I may be, how stressed I may be, how broken-hearted I may be, but, I've got family, friends, brothers and sisters, which are Sinikithemba HIV-positive Choir [Applause] who makes me happy, ever happy.

So, let us not remember HIV on the First of December, which is tonight, but let us make it the thing that we talk about each and every day of our lives, as it is destroying lots and lots of women, and indeed, we are giving birth to infected girls. I thank you all for lending me your ears. Before I go to sing, may I introduce Sinikithemba HIV-positive Choir, all the way from South Africa to give you the message of hope. Thank you. [Applause]

MALE SINGER: Good evening. Good evening to everyone. Much has been said by Mimi. This piece that we're going to perform right now, it's about—we're saying we won't go down, we have this heavy spirit in our bodies, but we won't go down, we're going higher and higher. Enjoy the song. [Applause] [GROUP SINGS ACAPELLA.] [Applause] Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. Right now, this is our

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traditional song that we're going to perform right now. If I might explain it to you guys, it will take me some five, six days. You just enjoy the dance and enjoy the song, because if I can start here up until next week explaining the history of this song, but it's a very cool song, a very nice song. You can enjoy it. Stay calm. We love you. God bless you. [GROUP SINGS ACAPELLA.] [Applause]

ALAN CUMMING: Well, the beautiful ladies and gentlemen of Sinikithemba Choir travel the world spreading their message of faith and hope. Unbelievably, they've also had time to make beautiful crafts which you can buy in the lobby on your way out, as well as CD's of your music. I think it would be a really good idea to drop by on your way out and buy some arts items or CD's so they can continue to spread their message of faith and hope around the world. [Applause]

Our next speaker is a member of staff at the Center for Comprehensive Care—that's CCC if you like alliteration—at St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital. Each year the Center serves 3,000 patients from communities in New York City hardest hit by HIV and poverty. Please welcome Cydelle Berlin. [Applause]

CYDELLE BERLIN, Ph.D.: Thank you all for inviting me to be part of this very special evening and to say a few words about my daughter, Evan Ruderman [misspelled?]. Because this year World AIDS Day theme is women and girls, it is the perfect way to honor Evan at this time. Almost exactly

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one year plus two weeks after she lost her valiant struggle with HIV/AIDS. It is also the best way for me to reach out to all the parents and caregivers at St. John the Divine, in the community, in the United States and the world, who sadly, like myself and my family have lost children to the pandemic. I had already prepared some comments to make tonight. Last night about 8 p.m. I was checking my mail at work when I noticed a letter addressed to me. The letter, when I opened it, so moved me that I'd like to read it to you now. It's from someone I don't know but who obviously knew and who remembered Evan very well. Here it is. "For three of my four years as a student at Princeton University in the 70s I volunteered twice a week in open classroom at Princeton Middle School. Evan was a student in that class, the student I remember best and most fondly. I was astounded by her intelligence, maturity, initiative and kindness. I knew Evan would make something special of her life and the world around her, but I had no idea what it might be. Over the years I have at times wondered where the future took Evan, or rather, where Evan took her future. It was only yesterday by chance, when I looked on the Internet to find a clue, and found her memorial website. I was stunned at the world's loss but comforted and inspired by the stories of Evan's life. I lost my sister a year ago after a long illness. I can only imagine what you have been through. My thoughts are with you and your

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family. I am thankful to know Evan and wish so much that she could be with us now. Warm regards, Bruce Henderson.

[Applause] Thank you Bruce, wherever you are.

As Evan's mother, I watched with anguish, but also with wonder and pride at her ability to deal so bravely with her illness over such a long time. Her struggle allowed her to channel her passion, and often her anger about injustice and suffering, particularly about the status of HIV-positive women living around the world that she thought were not as fortunate as she. She became the kind of activist that allowed her strengths and the courage to come out about her HIV status and to fight publicly and with dignity. She used the too short time she had here on Earth well to deliver powerful prevention messages to young people here in New York, create and organize conferences for HIV-women around the world, and to fight the pharmaceutical firms for access to medications for HIV-positive women. Tonight I feel especially close to Evan, apparently because of the letter is just read and because it is the month of her death last year, and the theme of World AIDS Day is women and girls. I feel her presence. I see her beautiful, animated face. I hear her voice telling me and all of you, be strong and keep fighting for justice for women and all of those living with HIV around the globe. And above all, be hopeful.

I am proud now to introduce Nitestar, a theater-based

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educational program for young people and their families that I founded in 1987, and of which I am the Executive Director. First you will hear a poem about Evan written by David Williams who was a member of our acting company and is now one of the program's production managers. After his poem, he will be followed by the company members singing its signature song, "You're Not Alone", which was written for us by Cliff Grisham a long time ago in 1988. He was Nitestar's musical director before he, too, died of AIDS complications. Thank you very much, and here's Nitestar. [Applause]

DAVID WILLIAMS: With the diagnosis of AIDS, Evan found herself facing the beginning of a very long road. A dark, deserted, dangerous road that bode no more promises than the uncharted, unrelenting, unmerciful and the unknown. Brush-overgrown and pathways unshown, others might have collapsed with despair, but others, but Evan took action, put on shoes with good traction, and Evan started walking. Walking blindly into a path with no light, no end in sight, she continued by pruning away prejudice by sheer determination. She cut through the darkness of ignorance with beacons of information. She gave strength to others to continue their own trial, to fight for that next mile, by giving them the gift of hope with the passion of inspiration. And Evan kept walking. She forged pathways where there were none before, lived a life where some thought there could be

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no more. And when she tripped and fell and went through Hell, she came back even stronger with a message to tell. She kept on walking. Evan always kept walking. See, Evan kept walking. And then last year in November, when the infection got too deep, it was time for Evan to rest. Even heroes need to sleep, so Evan stopped walking, and she began to fly. Now down here on Earth the path remains long. Evan's song has not ended; it still remains strong. There are lives to save, to engage, to embrace, so let's pick up her mantel and continue the race. There are miles to be traveled and mysteries to unravel and support to be gained from those who bang gavels, so let's get out in the world and shake up people's views. Come on. Who will join me? Let's walk in Evan's shoes.

[Applause] [NITESTAR SINGS "YOU'RE NOT ALONE."] [Applause]

ALAN CUMMING: The United States Department of State has been actively involved in helping diverse international partners come together in the fight against AIDS. Our next speaker is here to present this evening's final performance by one of the cultural ambassadors of the United States. Please welcome Undersecretary of State, Patricia Harrison.
[Applause]

PATRICIA HARRISON: Good evening. I'm so overwhelmed by the wonderful talent we've had the honor and pleasure of listening to tonight, and for me it's a pleasure to be back in the greatest city on the face of the Earth, New York City.

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I want to thank each and every one of you for being here on this very, very important day, World AIDS Day as we work together—and that's the operative word, "together"—globally fighting HIV and AIDS through our support of and partnership with organizations such as UNAIDS and WHO, especially helping girls and young women. President Bush's five-year global AIDS strategy is the largest commitment ever by a nation toward an international health initiative for a single disease, but it can't stop there. If we're going to move forward, as the choir sang, "higher and higher", we're going to need the help of people of goodwill everywhere, and the fact that you are here tonight is very, very heartening. The courage of the choir, the passion of Jessica Care Moore, the testimonials we've heard tonight really do give us hope, and we can all find our own individual ways to find this initiative, the power of one person to make a difference. Through my Bureau, Educational and Cultural Affairs, we are working with anti-trafficking organizations, we're training teachers and healthcare providers in Africa so they can encourage young people to get tested, to get care. Protecting women and girls is a priority of the President's plan. As we've seen tonight, the arts have a critical role to play as we reach out to youth at risk, and we are working with cultural organizations for creative and innovative approaches to engage US and foreign artists in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Through my

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Bureau's Culture Connect Ambassador program, we're working with men and women in the arts who are really eager to contribute their time as the artists have tonight, to help young people. One of our Cultural Ambassadors traveled to Africa, and through her music, her wonderful warm and outgoing personality, she brought the message of hope to thousands. She even demonstrated in front of so many people—I think it was three thousand people in Botswana—her willingness to get tested. And she talked about how so many of her friends are living a full life, even though they have been diagnosed with the disease. I'm so pleased she's made time to be with us tonight. She's saved so many lives through her music and outreach. Please join me in welcoming a founding member of the most successful female musical group in history, and a cultural ambassador for our country, Miss Supreme herself, Mary Wilson! [Applause]

MARY WILSON: Whoa! Hello. Thank you so much. And Patricia Harrison, before you leave, I must tell everyone how you have empowered me to be involved in this fight. You see, Mrs. Harrison actually chose me to be an ambassador, and I worked for 40-some years as a Supreme and now you give me the opportunity to travel around the world and do more than just entertain, but hopefully to be able to heal lives through the message, show people how to heal themselves. I just returned from Botswana as Patricia said, and it was such an amazing

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trip. Most of the students there that I visited in the schools didn't know anything about the Supremes, had no idea about the songs, but we sang. We taught them how to sing "Stop! In the Name of Love Before You Break My Heart", and they started singing that, because now they will stop this HIV virus. That's how they told me they were going to say. And Patricia, I hope that we will be able to send people back so that we continue the job that was started there. I thank you so very much. [Applause] So, I'm supposed to sing, but what I would like to do is, I would like to offer for anyone who would like to come onstage with me, who's always wanted to be a Supreme, this is a good time. You can do it, you know, because Diane sang out front, she was it. But we had the background. I don't have any background here, so you know, I need some background singers! And if you want to do it, this is your opportunity, okay? Okay. [LAUGHS.] Yes! I got some! [SINGS REFLECTIONS.][Applause] Well, you know what? I wasn't going to do this, but because now I have some background singers, I think, Honey, I think we gotta do Stop. Can you do Stop with me? But before we do, before we do, God, this is for you. Okay, here we go. All right. [SINGS STOP IN THE NAME OF LOVE.] Thank you! Please take a bow! Thank you! God bless you. They all, Honey, you were trying to step up there and take over my part! Everybody tries to take my part! Thank you so very much. Thank you. Thank you very much. I

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wanted to dedicate this next song to everyone who came out this evening because we understand that everyone has a lot to do, but we all need to be a part of, because it's our brother, our sister. It's everywhere. And we've all got to be involved. I especially liked the idea, as the Secretary General said about women, something I was talking to Patricia about today, where especially in the countries like Africa, where we really need to empower the women there, the older women, so they can talk to the younger women. You can't just go over there and give them a little bit and then leave. We've got to give them something to empower themselves so that when we leave they can go on and help heal their own countries. I challenge you women to be a part of this. You know, we can have all the policy making we want, but women are the nurturers, and we need to teach our children what they need to know about life. I've found that since I've reached 60 years old this year, it's amazing because I remember when I was a young girl, when Florence, Diane and I started singing back in 1959, and we dared to dream here in America. Black people were not even citizens yet, but Florence, Diane and I, we dared to dream that we could become more. We made our dreams come true. But now that I'm older, I see that there's still so much. There are still people who can't dare to dream. They don't have that freedom. But perhaps if we all do as much as we can, they can have a

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future and they can dare to dream. They can make their dreams come true. And so, I'm so happy to say that since I'm no longer a young girl in age, but still a young girl at heart, and I have changed so much, because now it's not just about me, it's about everybody, about being a part of everybody. You've got to know that we all are a part of one source.

[SINGS I AM CHANGING.] Thank you. Thank you so much. I have one more selection, that I was so honored when the choir— Could you come on stage? Can we give them another round of applause?—that South Africa decided to—Thank you so much for honoring us with your presence. I was so happy when they said they would sing along with me on this last selection and we actually didn't even have a chance to rehearse, but it's such a beautiful song, we all felt that we could handle it quite well, didn't we? [SQUEALS.] So we want to dedicate this to all of you, all of the people who are working on behalf of the HIV-virus to find a cure or treatment, or all the things that you all do. We know that each person is important, that each person does a job, and all the jobs are important, so we want to dedicate this song to all of those heroes who are working, for those of you who do not have your hands covering your eyes and your ears and just are open to this, open to being a part of finding what's going on. This is for all the heroes. [SINGS HERO WITH ZINIKITHEMBA.][Applause] Thank you. Thank you. Dr. O'Neal. Good night everyone. We hope you've

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had a good time! Hope you've gotten the message. Thank you so much. Thank you so much. Bill Heller on the keyboards. Thank you Bill. Thank you so much. All right, good night. Drive safely on the subway or however you're getting home. Oh, I'm sorry, Darling!

ALAN CUMMING: But anyway.

MARY WILSON: Cabaret! It's a Cabaret, Darling! Yes it is. I love it.

ALAN CUMMING: Thank you very much, Mary. Before you all go, first of all, I can't believe I passed up on my chance to be a Supreme. I'm very inspired by all the women tonight, especially that lady with the hat on who came up here and shook her booty. On behalf of the event cosponsors, the United Nations Department of Public Information, UNAIDS and African Services, thank you all so much for coming along tonight. Please remember to support the work of tonight's community partners in fighting AIDS. There are donation boxes in the lobby. As you exit this evening, please take a moment to support the work of African Services Committee. Thank you, and good night. [Applause]

[END RECORDING]