

**World AIDS Day 2005 Observance  
The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, N.Y.  
December 1, 2005**

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[START RECORDING]

**FEMALE SPEAKER 1:** Please welcome the dean of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, the very Reverend Doctor James Kowalski.

[Applause]

**DR. JAMES A. KOWALSKI:** Thank you for being here this evening and for being part of "keeping the promises," which not long ago we weren't really able to make because there wasn't much hope and we didn't understand and there wasn't much we could do. And thankfully a lot of that has changed at least the potential for us to do something wonderful with the people who are suffering from HIV/AIDS so that we together, we can overcome this disease. We can make promises that we can keep now and tonight in a very real way, you're renewing those promises and reaffirming that we will keep them.

At World AIDS Day at the cathedral, it's a great honor to welcome you here this evening; I hope that you will be inspired by your time in this cathedral during this season of hope. And that hopefulness will translate into our capacity to keep the promise alive and to spread it all over the world. I'm also pleased now to welcome the New York Commissioner for the United Nations and Counselor Corp and Protocol, Marjorie Tivens.

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[Applause]

**MARJORIE TIVENS:** I'm pleased to read a proclamation from the mayor: "Where the global effort to overcome HIV-AIDS is best understood through the personal testimonials of those brave individuals who have been directly touched by the disease. New York City, which has suffered the highest cumulative number of AIDS-related deaths in the United States, lends its collective voice to today's worldwide chorus of hope. We gather at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine to express our solidarity with the approximately 40.3 million men, women, and children around the globe currently living with HIV. This World AIDS Day 2005 Commemoration organized by the United Nations and UNAIDS in partnership with African Services Committee and the New York City Department of Health, honors two of New York's greatest resources, our cultural and ethnic vitality as a means of empowerment and understanding. The poetry, music, and prayers of today's performers are moving testimony to the impact of HIV and AIDS on the lives of everyday New Yorkers. Every song, stanza, and story represents hope in the journey toward a cure. Now, therefore I, Michael R. Bloomberg, mayor of the City of New York, in recognition of this inspiring event, do hereby affirm Thursday, December 1, 2005 in the city of New York as World AIDS Day."

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[Applause]

**FEMALE SPEAKER 1:** This evening's first host is a talented film and television actress. She has been an admirable and committed human rights' activist and is the co-founder and co-chair of FilmAid International, a non-profit launched at the height of the Kosovo refugee crisis. The organization uses the power of film to promote health, strengthen communities, and enrich the lives of the worlds' vulnerable and uprooted. Please welcome the Goodwill Ambassador of the United Nation's Office on Drugs and Crime, Julia Ormond.

[Applause]

**JULIA ORMOND:** Good evening. On behalf of event organizers, UNAIDS and African Services Committee, I thank you for coming this evening. World Aids Day 2005 cumulates an international year-long campaign under the theme "Stop Aids, Keep the Promise." Its goal to hold leaders, policy makers, and donor government accountable to their promises and to advocate for their fulfillment of the 2001 United Nation's Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. This agreement was adopted by all 191-member states of the United Nations and it pledged to increase access to HIV prevention and treatment in order to reverse the epidemic. The agreement marked a milestone in the history of the AIDS

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epidemic. It sent a signal that it was time for action, a time for true leadership and commitment in dealing with the devastating, global impact of AIDS.

While nations around the world had a local response to HIV and AIDS, this was the first time they gathered to recognize that AIDS was a global crisis requiring global action.

Tonight we gather to remind our governments of their promises and to remind the world to translate their words into consternated and sustained action. We know that the battle to stop AIDS is not solely in the hands of political leaders. Each of us has a role to play in responding to this pandemic. This evening you will hear testimony from people living with HIV and AIDS, other special guests and witness some spectacular musical performances. We hope that this evening will help to heal and strengthen your resolve. I know it will mine. And as we acknowledge our successes, let each of us here tonight agree to continue to be a witness to the world. That this fight against the greatest pandemic to ever hit our global community is not over, it's just begun. And tonight it begins with us. I'm honored to be counted among you this evening.

Now it is with great pleasure that I introduce this evening's first performer. In 1996 a play called *Rent*

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exploded onto the Broadway stage. Jonathan Larson's revolutionary rock opera told the story of a group of young bohemians struggling for success and acceptance while enduring the obstacles of poverty, illness and the AIDS epidemic in New York's gritty East Village. Tonight we are fortunate to have one of the stars of both that original Broadway cast and the newly released feature film. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Anthony Rapp.

[Applause]

**ANTHONY RAPP:** Thank y'all for coming. I also wanted to just say Jonathan Larson who wrote *Rent*, some of you may or may not know that he really did write *Rent* in part to be a memorial and a source of honor for his friends who were living with HIV and who had passed away from AIDS. So, in that spirit and in his memory I sing a song from *Rent*.

[Song performed by Anthony Rapp]

[Applause]

**JULIA ORMOND:** Wow! That was beautiful. Thank you very much. In 2006 the member states of the United Nations and civil society will gather to review five years of progress since that watershed UN General Assembly of 2001, which promised far-reaching engagement, mobilization, and re-doubling of global efforts to fight AIDS. This evening's keynote speaker is a committed global leader in the fight

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against HIV and AIDS. Working within the General Assembly to help end this pandemic, he is a former Swedish Ambassador both in the United States and United Nations and is a former Under Secretary General of the United Nations. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the president of the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly, Jan Eliasson.

[Applause]

**JAN ELIASSON:** Thank you Julia. I'm honored to be introduced by a UN Goodwill Ambassador who is going to fight against another scourge, namely human trafficking, a modern form of slavery, which we must fight also. We all have our battles, don't we? It's a great honor for me to be with you here tonight on behalf of the 191 member states of the United Nations. It's also humbling because I know that I am in the presence of so many people who have done and are doing so much to respond to the scourge of HIV and AIDS.

I want to begin by acknowledging the work that so many communities and individuals are doing. I am pleased to announce the launch today of the Red Ribbon Award for outstanding community leadership for HIV and AIDS. Supported by UNAIDS and by the leadership and community programs of the International AIDS Conference. This award will give greatly deserved recognition to these groups and organizations who have dedicated themselves to the fight against AIDS through

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campaigning, education, and providing care. But despite the efforts of so many, there is so much, so much still to do. Despite 25 years of experience of this pandemic, over 700 people will die as a result of AIDS during the course of this evening's event. And, over 1,000 men, women, and children will be newly infected before we leave this church tonight. Over half of them will be under the age of 24. We're witnessing not just the wide scale loss of life; we are witnessing the loss of the life blood of some of the world's poorest countries. This vast human tragedy is all the more unacceptable because it could have been mitigated earlier and maybe even avoided. The international response to HIV and AIDS was woefully slow. This is one of the scars of the conscience of our generation. But I know we can't turn back the clock, we must ensure that when historians look at the way the world responded to HIV and AIDS however, they will conclude that 2006 was the year when the international community finally stepped up to the plate. The year when in the world's of the world's AIDS campaign, the world finally began to keep the promise to keep the promise.

Yesterday, the United Nation's General Assembly made a good start when it unanimously adopted resolution on enhancing capacity building in global public health. The resolution urges the international community to increase

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investment and health services in developing countries. Such action is vital if we are to win the fight against AIDS and other diseases like tuberculosis and malaria. You know of course that 3,000 children die a day of malaria, every 30 seconds a child dies of malaria in southern Africa.

The General Assembly will also play its part next year when we convene as Julia was saying in a three-day meeting here in New York at the end of May, beginning of June to recommit ourselves to the promises we made in the 2001 Declaration of Commitment and also to the millennium development goals on AIDS. I wear this bracelet, I'm sure you have it, many of you also to remind you of these very important millennium development goals. And also to remind ourselves of the inter-relationship between these goals, the relationship between poverty and AIDS, the relationship between education and AIDS, the difference it makes that girls in Africa and all over the world are educated in terms of infection of AIDS is striking. So let us also remember that reminder of solidarity, solidarity of which we need so much in today's world. I will be following up on the 2000 World Summit Commitment and here I coach the United Nations text and bear with me, "to developing and implementing a package for HIV prevention, treatment and care with the aim of coming as close as possible to the goal of universal

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access to treatment by 2010 for all those who need it," end of quote. We must ensure that this commitment is turned into action.

Amidst this dark statistic, there is some good news. There's much more money in the system now than it was, though still not enough and I've just come back from Geneva where I was encouraged to see for myself how the WHO, UNAIDS, The Global Fund, The non-governmental associations are working together as part of a more coordinated international effort in support of countries own programs in fighting the pandemic. There are some good results too. In parts of the Caribbean and a few countries in Africa, adult infection rates have begun to fall in total between 250,000 and 350,000 people's lives were saved last year because of expanded access to treatment. [Applause] I'll make a quick calculation. I'll make a quick calculation what that means, that's over 100 cathedrals like this one we are in tonight full of people who are living and who are otherwise have died. [Applause] One hundred cathedrals full of people, that's my answer to those who say that universal access is too difficult and it's also my answer to those who say that the international system including the United Nations doesn't make a difference.

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And the United Nations and its member states need to continue hearing their citizens, you, tell them, us that more has to be done. We the peoples, we the peoples, those are the three first words of the United Nations charter, I usually have it in my pocket but I left it at home. It is also the three first three letters, we the people, singular, of the US Constitution. [Applause] You need to be heard! The four out of five people who are at high risk of HIV but have no access to any form of prevention need to be heard and the 39 million people living with HIV but no access to treatment, must make their voices heard. You need to ask the world why it responded so well to the Indian Ocean tsunami, and that was a wonderful response and I commend it, but has yet to respond adequately to the tsunami of HIV and AIDS that is sweeping across our globe. You need to question how such selected solidarity can be justified. You need to hold the worlds' leaders to account. You need to insure that we keep the promise. I look forward to hearing your strong and your vibrant voices as we enter the next critical year in the fight against HIV and AIDS. This we must do together. Together is the key word in the today's world. To do things together and do it if I may enter a personal note, with two words that mean very much to me, that meant very much in my life and those two words are passion and compassion. Without

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passion nothing happens in life, without compassion the wrong things happen. Let's go together, continue this struggle against AIDS and HIV with passion and compassion. I thank you for inviting me here tonight.

[Applause]

**JULIA ORMOND:** Thank you Mr. Eliasson. Over the past 20 years the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company has shaped the evolution of contemporary dance through the creation and performance of over 140 works. Artistic Director, Co-founder and cultural trailblazer Bill T. Jones is recognized as one of the most innovative and powerful forces in the art world. An MacArthur Genius Award winner, he is the 2005 recipient of the Harlem Renaissance Award, the Wickner Prize and the Scripts American Dance Festival Award which honors his lifetime contribution to modern dance. Bill T. Jones received the 2003 Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize for reshaping the cultural landscape and in 2000; the Dance Heritage Coalition named Mr. Jones one of America's irreplaceable dance treasures. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Bill T. Jones accompanied by David Bernard Roumain.

[Applause]

[Dance performed by Bill T. Jones and David Bernard Roumain]

[Applause]

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**JULIA ORMOND:** Thank you Mr. Jones and Mr. Roumain. Our next guest heads the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, one of the world's oldest and largest public health agencies. Since becoming Commissioner in January, 2002, he has expanded data collection so that we know more than ever about the health status of New Yorkers, established Take Care New York, a comprehensive health policy which targets the city's most critical health problems and open community based district public health offices in Harlem, Central Brooklyn and the South Bronx to improve health in the city's sickest neighborhoods. Please welcome the Health Commissioner for the City of New York, Dr. Thomas Frieden.

[Applause]

**THOMAS R. FRIEDEN, M.D., M.P.H.:** Good evening everyone and for those of you not from New York City, welcome. Thank you all for participating in this year's event. I'd also like to thank the President of the UN General Assembly, UNAIDS New York Office and all the others who have made this year and in previous years' such a memorable and meaningful event.

This years' theme as you know is "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise." We have a promise to keep, to stop the spread of AIDS, and end this epidemic. We must keep this promise so

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that people living with HIV can learn of their status as early as possible in the course of their infection, so that they can enter care, so that they can better protect themselves and those they care for. We must keep the promise to ensure that those in care get the best possible care and that those who are not infected with HIV remain uninfected. Despite the grim news about HIV, there is hope. It is possible with the tools we have today to stop HIV and AIDS. We can do it. We can do it if we do what works. Widespread free access to condoms, easy access to clean needles for those who are using drugs, [applause] universal offer of voluntary and confidential testing with linkage to care of every person who tests positive [applause] and optimal treatment of every single person who's infected with HIV.

[Applause]

We need determined political will and also resources and technical excellence to back it. On World AIDS Day, 2005 New York City is ready with our local, national, and international partners to re-double our fight against this epidemic. But in order to keep our promise, we can't keep doing what we've always done because if we keep on doing what we've always done, we'd only get the results we've always gotten. To keep our promise, we must do more. It will take hard work and it will take brutal honesty with ourselves

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about what's working and what's not, so that we can effectively find and care for those who are living with HIV in all our communities. The world has changed in the past 25 years and our approach to the HIV epidemic must also change. There can be costs, there can be controversy, but there can be no turning back. Advocacy has succeeded in many ways but we must continue to develop new strategies to keep a step ahead of the epidemic. Together we can keep the promise and stop this epidemic in this city, in this country and on this globe. Thank you all very much.

[Applause]

People living with HIV are among the greatest champions for HIV prevention since the beginning of the epidemic, prevention strategies have been most effective when they have meaningfully involved people living with HIV in their design, implementation, and evaluation. The next speaker personifies the reason we are all here. He is one of the many men here this evening living with AIDS and working for change. Please welcome Joe Pressley.

[Applause]

**JOE PRESSLEY:** Fifty years ago to this date, a black woman in Alabama refused to give up her seat and move to the back of the bus. [Applause] Rosa Parks' refusal sparked the Montgomery bus boycott, which helped paved the

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way to widespread desegregation and related laws. In many ways, her action made it easier for people of my community and other communities of color to stand more easily in settings like this today. Unfortunately, the theme of being relegated to the back of the bus, rears its ugly head when it comes to appropriate funding and sound policies for people like me who live with HIV and AIDS each and every day. Today we are called to re-invigorate our efforts and re-focus our intentions toward one common goal, to stop AIDS and keep the promise. As we seek out new tactics to combat this epidemic, this complex and ever-changing epidemic, we must fully consider the following. "Keeping the Promise" is as much about putting an end to HIV infection as it is about the process we embark on to achieve this objective. We must rely on what is tried and true. Ending AIDS and protecting the lives of our most vulnerable populations requires involvement of stakeholders at every level in a truly participatory process. It requires adequate fiscal and programmatic support for scientifically proven effective prevention paid based strategies like condom distribution, rapid testing, and peer education. If we dismantle and defund community-based HIV prevention efforts, we will have abandoned the communities hardest hit by this epidemic who respond so positively to this outreach. Ending AIDS and protecting the

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lives of our most vulnerable populations requires that the Bush administration and both congresses, Houses of Congress soundly reauthorize and fully fund the Ryan White Care Act, [applause], which outside of Medicaid and Medicare is the largest payor of HIV and AIDS services in this nation.

"Keeping the Promise" requires that Mayor Blomberg in his administration honor its commitment that revised HIV curriculum that was made available today, that it's soundly implemented for each and every of the one million New York City's public school children. [Applause] Such a commitment is an important tool in the chest to fight the epidemic among our young people in this city. "Keeping the Promise" requires equal access to treatment and care for all people, including supportive services like housing, nutrition counseling, and legal assistance, which make it adherence to treatment toward a treatment plan truly possible. Further, it requires an end to pharmaceutical politicking in an honest effort to develop and disseminate affordable treatment that saves lives.

[Applause]

Putting an end to AIDS and "Keeping the Promise" requires a truly collaborative effort and discernable commitment from government, service providers, scientists, religious leaders, faith based groups, schools, families,

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friends, and most importantly, ourselves. "Keeping the Promise" means not letting HIV fall silent to deaf ears and closed mouths. Ending AIDS meaning letting go of our differences and coming together for one shared purpose, to protect our global community from the devastation and destruction of HIV and AIDS. For those of us who are positive, HIV positive, like myself, it means raising our voices and demanding that promises are not empty but filled with solutions and services. We are truly capable of ending this preventable disease. The question is, will we as one body, government and residence, heterosexual, homosexual, clergy and community keep the promise so that no one with HIV and AIDS is left at the back of the bus? Thank you.

[Applause]

It now gives me great pleasure to introduce a multifaceted and dynamic writer, publisher, actor, and poet. Her work is internationally renowned and is truly one of the great young writers of our time. Please welcome Jessica Care Moore.

[Applause]

**JESSICA CARE MOORE:** Once I was a little girl who believed in fairy tales and colored the entire world with eight wax crayons. I may seem different now but I promise it's still me, same sand brown hands with no sense of time,

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but this time around I learn a promise is not a shiny diamond on your finger. It is more than words, more than a report or a statistic, it's more than a pledge, it is work. It involves action, something we owe to every person on the planet. Someone broke the promise in South Africa 25 million times. Someone whispered the rumor of change into the mouths of millions of poor mothers, newborn babies and their unborn brothers and sisters and a half million children still died this year. And one of these half million children repeated this promise to their pregnant mothers, who are infected by their husbands. It used to use one breath of your life to help make another breath. What would you promise? As we face humanity with our own mirrors and ask what we can do finally to stop AIDS, the promise, blue paths Swazi-land [misspelled?] and follow it to India with 30 percent based of street based workers didn't know that condoms could prevent HIV. It traveled to Spain and Brazil and some received help, but still prevention has to outrun HIV. What happens to a promise deferred when only one out of ten in Africa will ever receive treatment, one in seven in Asia waiting for our promise to translate into real care? What is our word worth in places like Indonesia where drug use is a crime? Drug addicts risk their lives with dirty needles because of their fear of doing time and a promise is not acquired, it is not

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hiding behind race or gender or class distinction. It is not naturalistic or patriotic. It is the undeniable truth without border or protection. There's a way for someone else to figure it out, find a cure, feed the sick, disseminate information while they pour about it, challenge the government fund place, smile, hold a small hand, kiss a tired face. Imagine a promise that could spread faster than an epidemic of any kind. Imagine us watching a number of people dying of AIDS in 2006 slowly decline in Haiti, Uganda, Atlanta, New York City, San Francisco, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana. This is your inheritance. Keep to your tongue, quietly Kenya every 30 minutes say a prayer, which place this socket under your pillow, don't talk about the rape. Huh? Rub it around your neck like an umbilical cord, where, tongue, blue, why, most of you are black anyway. Wasn't it the one to kill off the women? Eve, first, who are, what are the ocean, balance the universe, serve the tea, cook the meals, feed their sons, whose back stairs, huh? Tell her it as a gift not property, tell her she owns it and it is not for sell, tell her her color is sacred, tell her that her strength can stop wars, tell her this is not her war, loathe that her reflection is there, she just can't see it yet. She is a phoenix, a panther, a thunderbolt, a passion paralyzed by her circumstance, she lives and will die the statistic you

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study. She like an animal is being called an endangered species. They are children. 300, 3 million and 2,005 in subsets in Africa give it butterflies wings and HIV during delivery. Breastfeeding has become lethal. We are failing our girls, our daughters without a trinity of our prayers, we bond the oath and arrogantly forget this is our womb, our birthplace is being mutilated with our legs and arms held down. Injected with dirty needles carved up with used knives without honor or western medicine, we spoil. Turn our backs on our own beginning, America how can we turn our back on mother Africa? You have mined her diamonds, worn her gold, drilled her oil, enjoyed her oceans, enslaved her people, her history [Applause] how can we say not save Africa's greatest natural resource? African women! A promise is complicated, it is a marriage of treatment and prevention, it is a long-term commitment. It needs love and redemption, sacrifice and a true investment of time and money. Our promises cannot be for the rich. Our promises cannot be for the rich, it cannot be limited to one race or region when AIDS is the leading cause of death of women my age who look just like me. When you make a promise to a 13-year-old girls, who became infected the first time she thought she made love or by force her innocence was taken and suddenly her promise of a long life was shorted. We can light candles, we can gather her

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small bones, bathe her in a rosemary bath, fill her with sky, with a thrill with sky-blue guild, we can fear her blood and turn our backs on her ocean of possibility. We can sing a song in her honor, paint her photo on T-shirts, we can promise to always remember her. Or we can pick her up, tell her she has the right to grow old, that her hurt is lined with lion gold and promised to return with help and we won't come with recourse or western philosophy or somebody's else's agendas. We'll bring medicines and crayons, we will conjure the ancestors, forecast our government's own politicians, and ourselves, a carnival, creating a new epidemic of future children addicted to drawing their future lives outside the lines of HIV/AIDS. Yes, there are still little girls and boys who believe in fairy tales and color the entire world with eight wax crayons. You may be indifferent but I promise they are here now. Same hourglass hands with no more time for lies or uncounted hours, they kept their promise to survive, now let's keep ours. "Stop AIDS! Keep the promise." Thank you.

[Applause]

**MALE SPEAKER 1:** Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome a tireless advocate in the fight against HIV and AIDS, Miss Universe 1999 and a UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador Mpule Kwelagobe.

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[Applause]

**MPULE KWELAGOBE:** Thank you. It is daunting following something so passionate and so inspiring and so meaningful in what you said. That was just so wonderful! Just really [Applause] touched the bottom of my heart.

It is a great pleasure to be here with you tonight and to be part of this special and very personal event. It is a very personal event for me because I am actively and intimately involved in fighting HIV and AIDS in my old country of Botswana, which had until recently, had the highest number per capita of people living with HIV and AIDS. Having being able to reach out to young people in my country, to provide them with counseling and to raise their awareness about what they need to do to stay alive. At the global level I am happy and honored to lend my support to you UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. As an UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador I have a perfect platform to reach out to the most vulnerable, women and young people. UNFPA helps women not just to prevent the infection but also to meet the reproductive health needs of those living with HIV. UNFPA also works with young people, for young people on ways to protect them and their peers. UNFPA backs comprehension programs that promote abstinence, delay in the onset of sexual debut, mensua, [misspelled?] fidelity, and the correct

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use of condoms. For all of us working together and through events such as this one tonight, I'm sure we can make significant differences in the fight against HIV and AIDS. We can start by sending a clear message to leaders and policy makers at all levels. The more must be done to stop this pandemic. Our message to them is simple. "Keep the Promise."

Tonight's organizer and sponsor, UNAIDS is the world's leading advocate for a stronger response to AIDS. The program brings together the efforts and resources of 10 UN organizations to clear roadblocks to action and mobilize diverse partners to develop and implement solutions to HIV and AIDS globally. Complimenting the work of UNAIDS is community based organizations like African Services Committee; one of tonight's presenting partners. African Services Committee is a non-profit organization based in Harlem that has served New York's African immigrant communities. The dedicated staff of African services provides health, housing, legal, and social services to over 10,000 newcomers each year. They also work on the front lines of the international AIDS crisis operating essential HIV testing centers in Ethiopia, through advocacy and policy work. Additionally, they are the North American Angel Representative to the UNAIDS Program Coordinating Board.

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Please take a moment to support this important work by making a donation in the lobby after tonight's program.

And now, it gives me great pleasure to introduce our next speaker. She is a friend of African Services Committee and one of the New Yorkers' living with HIV here tonight. Please welcome Anita Charjee.

[Applause]

**ANITA CHARJEE:** Good evening ladies and gentlemen. It is a great pleasure to be here with you. I would like to share with you my story and a promise I made to my children. I was born in raised in Singapore, Asia. When I was 22 years old I married a man from Gabon and lived in West Africa for the next 17 years. I had heard about AIDS early on and I thought it was a disease of others. I was a married woman, I would say to myself. This disease cannot affect me even though I was in a polygamous marriage. My husband was in good health and my co-spouses were young and healthy. Little did I know HIV was silently entering into my life. In 2000 I came to live in New York City with my three children. The following year I was diagnosed HIV positive. I was devastated and could not disclose my status to anyone. But I found African Services and their services put me back on my feet. Through their counseling and support I am today a healthy and happier HIV positive single mother.

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[Applause]

Thank you African Services Committee, [Speaking in French].

[Applause]

UNAIDS tell us that there are now 17.5 million women living with AIDS that is one million more than in year 2003. And 77 percent of these women live in Sub-Saharan Africa. We also know that in the last year, 3.1 million people worldwide died due to AIDS while 4.9 million were newly infected. We say that women are caretakers but when they first say, "Who will take of them?" They are 50 million children orphaned today because they have lost one or both parents to this disease. I have shivers to know that I could have been among these numbers or that my children could have been orphaned, having lost their father to an AIDS-related illness. Because of this, I have gone from an average person to AIDS activist.

[Applause] And I made a promise to my children. My promise is that I will live long with the HIV virus. I say that not just to reassure them but in acknowledgement that my children deserve to have a mother. [Applause]

And I can do it because I stand here today with support, treatment, counseling, and a right to speak out!

[Applause] However, a great majority of my sisters around the world are not able to make that promise to their

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children, why? Because the world leaders have not kept their promise. The leaders of this world have made a promise to end this pandemic. A true promise is an assurance of help when it is needed. Was this promise followed by more awareness? More prevention? More treatment? More condoms? More dollars? Before I step down from this podium, I would like to make another promise to my children, that their generations will be helped and saved. [Applause] But is this a promise that I can make? Well, it will take more than just my words. It will take all of us working together to achieve it. It is a promise that we all must make. Thank you.

[Applause]

**FEMALE SPEAKER 1:** This evening's next performer is a 21<sup>st</sup> century musician who has woven his talent, ethnic traditions, and life experiences into a musical force for healing and reconciliation. His traditional music forms, sophic [misspelled?] poems, classic rock sounds and hot guitar licks into the sound of South Asia's most successful group, Junoon. For more than 10 years, Junoon has filled stadiums across India, Pakistan and all the diverse communities around the globe. Junoon, to unify a sub-continent in the throes of conflict as it grows and re-defines its future.

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Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador Salman Ahmad.

[Applause]

[Music performed by salman Ahmad]

[Applause]

**ERIC SAWYER:** Good evening. My name is Eric Sawyer and I have been living with symptoms of AIDS since 1980, that's 25 years. I'm alive today because I'm a member of the middle class with private health insurance that has provided me with access to quality health care. Access to the latest medications has enabled me to survive for decades with a fatal disease that kills poor people, especially in places like Africa in just a few years. That's not social justice.  
[Applause]

My AIDS illness has not always been illness, not easy. I have cared for two boyfriends as they died before my eyes. I have been denied knee surgery in the 1980's and lost my profession due to HIV discrimination. But I joined together with friends and fought injustice through forming "Act Up New York" [Applause]. Our AIDS activism brought about increases in AIDS research, a shortening of the FDA drug approval process and the development of a comprehensive safety net that has made surviving AIDS in the United States much more possible. While I am happy to be healthy, 25 years

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after developing symptoms of HIV and AIDS, I am outraged that millions of people around the world die within just a few years of developing the illness that for me is survivable. For you see, I believe access to healthcare like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states is a universal human right. [Applause]

And even more importantly I believe that human life has value. [Applause] I have dedicated most of the last 20 years to AIDS activism because as a long-term survivor of AIDS, I believe I have an obligation to fight for the over 3 million people who will die of AIDS this year. I do not want to sit by, admit that I did nothing, and watch millions of people die of a preventable and treatable illness. If you value life also, I urge you to become an AIDS activist too. Ask yourself what you can do today to help prevent an AIDS infection or provide somebody with AIDS with access to life extending treatment. We know how HIV is spread and how to prevent new infections. We also have treatments that can extend the lives of people with AIDS. These facts mean that we have the ability to end the AIDS pandemic as know it. What we as a society lack is the will and the commitment to do so.

In the AIDS documentary "Closer Walk," a Kofein nun said, "We all can do something depending upon who we are."

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We all can make a donation to an AIDS organization and then make another. We can all pass out condoms and educate a young person how to use that condom to prevent an HIV infection. We can all urge our congressional representatives to support AIDS legislation and AIDS funding. I urge you to go home tomorrow and write a letter to your governmental representatives and let them know that you are truly outraged that the United States of America is not doing its part to prevent the spread of AIDS around the world or to provide the poor around the world with access with life-saving medications, to programs like the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and malaria. Please go home tomorrow and call your congressional representative and then call the White House and demand that they fully fund all AIDS legislation currently up this year for reauthorization and then demand that they fully fund the Global Fund. You see, the United States government has pledged to provide more than a third of the funding for the Global Fund. At present, they come nowhere near that level of funding. They are really only giving pocket change.

[Applause]

Please do this because AIDS, not terrorism, is the biggest threat to global security.

[Applause]

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Do this because AIDS, not the bird flu is the biggest threat to global public health.

[Applause]

Do this because AIDS not global warming is the biggest threat to the health of our planet. I encourage everyone; please also encourage everyone you know to become an AIDS activist. Only a global army of concerned citizens will end AIDS. Don't stand by and do nothing and then have to tell your children or your neighbor's children that you contributed to the genocide of millions of people with AIDS around the world through your own neglect. Thank you.

[Applause]

**FEMALE SPEAKER 1:** Thank you Eric and Salman. This evening's next special guest and co-host is a brilliantly talented and Oscar nominated actress. Moreover, she is a tremendously committed and outspoken ally in the fight against AIDS. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Rosie Perez.

[Applause]

**ROSIE PEREZ:** Hello. Tonight I'm supposed to introduce our musical guest and they asked me to say something. I don't, why? I guess there's this rumor that I've got a big mouth. [Laughter] And I don't know what to say tonight because everything has been said so well. I go to a

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lot of these events and I write, and write and write they didn't say this, they didn't say that, they left out this person's voice, they left out that person's voice and tonight my heart is filled because everybody that was on the stage spoke for everyone around the world. And every applause and every gush and every tear that I witness in the audience spoke to everybody's heart around the world. I truly believe that we can fight this. I believe it in the bottom of my heart because I have hope and I was one of the hopeless. I was a child of poverty and poverty hurts like a son-of-a-gun! But it doesn't hurt as much as the AIDS. I can't even imagine. And there are people living with AIDS and there are people living with HIV and STD's who have so much hope it could fill a stadium, it could move mountains. And tonight the only thing that I ask and I'm throwing away all my notes is to grab onto that hope, grab onto that hope that we all; everyone in this room can affect and make the change! Grab onto the hope and make sure that we put that hope into action!

And make sure that we hold them accountable and make sure that they keep that promise, because when we all get down and we all do in this fight, whether we have AIDS or not, we all get down. Hope is what keeps us going. And we will tell them this is what we need, this is what we want,

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and like that beautiful poet said, "We will hold you accountable to your promise."

[Applause]

Tonight was filled with so many, singular great performances and that's ironic for a night with the United Nations. [Laughter] But it's very poignant because it only takes one, it only takes one, it only takes one to make us hope. And tonight I want to introduce to you, I would like to call him my friend, we hang out together, we drink together, we do other things together. Not that darling, please. [Laughter] But he is a one voice amongst us all. He is a beautiful voice that sings out with hope and love and he has a beautiful CD coming out, called "On the Corner of Broadway and Soul." I want you to give your undivided attention to my friend, to a beautiful voice out there in the world. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the sensational Mr. Billy Porter.

[Applause]

**BILLY PORTER:** I'm so humbled to be here. I lost my first friend to AIDS when I was 15 and subsequently many more. And about a decade later I was talking to a friend of mine who was ill and he was like my big brother and he said to me, "You have all the time in the world, but don't waste it." And when he passed away, I wrote this poem.

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[Song performed by Billy Porter]

[Applause]

Thank you. So, this next song that I'm about to sing is one of my favorite tunes and it was written over three decades ago when the world was in crisis and we're sort of in crisis again and I find the words very, very poignant. I made a vow that I'm just going to keep singing this song until we learn lessons and things change, how's that?

[Song performed by Billy Porter]

God bless you.

[Applause]

**ROSIE PEREZ:** Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Billy Porter.

[Applause]

[END RECORDING]