

Speech by: Mrs. Robert Morgan

To: Onslow County Mental Health Clinic
Annual Luncheon
Jacksonville, North Carolina

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I am happy to be here with you today, though I am a poor substitute for Jessie Rae Scott.

To be honest I'm in a little awe of Jessie Rae for she has the ability to make a speech that is always quoted - that is the criteria of a good speech, I am told - and particularly when she makes a speech and speaks of certain anatomical parts of the body.

But, thank you for inviting me and letting me be a substitute for a dear friend, a charming person, and a gracious first lady.

I thank you, too, for letting me share this occasion with you for I know the Onslow County Mental Health Clinic is a source of pride to each of you for it is a community endeavor. You have come together in a spirit of unity and brotherhood to care for those less fortunate. You have seen a need where

those stricken by mental anguish could be healed and given hope. And you have given those so stricken an opportunity to come back into society and give as you have given. They can now be a volunteer.

Do you know what the word "volunteer" means - literally means - from Webster's Dictionary - "one who enters into, or offers himself for, any service of his own free will."

"Offers himself" - I expect this phrase can provide many an individual story of human worth, of personal dignity and many an individual story of a concern for human rights, or to borrow John F. Kennedy's word, many a "Profile in Courage."

This "offering of one's self" has created a new world for many people. One such "Profile in Courage" and one of the most amazing stories in the history of this land is the story of Dorothea Lynde Dix and her fight for the mentally ill.

This particular concern came to Miss ~~Six~~ one cold March day in 1841 when she was asked to take a Sunday-school class in the House of Correction at East Cambridge, Mass. She returned home that night so shocked at what she had seen that she did not sleep. What Miss Dix had seen was the condition of four insane persons held in confinement by the enlightened townsmen of East Cambridge.

These four unfortunates were not criminals. They were not even listed as "furiously mad~~d~~." They were "harmless lunatics," to use the then current phrase. Yet they were kept in one dark, airless room, the walls of which were whi^{te} with frost. It was her first experience with the awful plight of the mentally ill.

At that time Dorothea Lynde Dix was a sickly, nervous and excessively shy New England spinster, forty years of age - not a likely candidate for one of the most effective reformers the United States or the world has ever known. But for the next forty-five years - to the end of her days - she fought to end the almost universal superstition that insane persons were born depraved and that nothing could be done about it except to confine them as if they were wild and potentially

dangerous animals.

What drove this woman with such an indomitable resolve? Perhaps simply that she saw a need for personal dignity; she had a concern for human rights and was willing to "offer herself" and her love.

I would like to share with you a story I read recently in a little magazine called Guideposts. It was the true experience of a young woman in New Mexico. Her story was entitled "The Language of Love."

Story from Guideposts

The Language of Love

I was shopping in a drugstore in Washington, D. C., one day when I noticed a small boy taking jars from a low counter and playing "train" with them on the floor. The clerk saw him and shouted, "Leave those things alone; you'll break them." The child turned a puzzled face to the clerk. In that moment, I noticed the little boy was not completely normal. After a pause, he again began playing with the items. The clerk scolded him, his voice loud and angry.

Suddenly a girl about seven years old appeared from around the end of the counter, ran to the boy and, dropping on her knees beside him, put an arm about him and began to speak softly. I couldn't hear what she said. But the boy slowly and carefully began to replace the items on the shelf.

The little girl then rose to her feet and faced, the clerk. "He doesn't understand when you talk that way," she said. "He understands what I say because I love it into him."

From Claire Mitchell
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Please return

I believe there are many ways you can heal people and make them well by showing love and concern.

And, you know the somehow quite startling fact is, that though you may be working as a volunteer to help others, you yourself are really the one who gains.

This year, I am serving as Chairman of the 1970 Cystic Fibrosis Campaign, and I have learned what Cystic Fibrosis is and what tragedy it can bring. I learned that one out of every thousand babies born in North Carolina is a victim of cystic fibrosis and of this number, only fifty percent live beyond the age of ten. But, with this grim statistic, I also learned that the age of survival used to be five, but because of research initiated by people who cared, the age of survival was raised. This is hope and progress is being made.

And how have I benefited? I have become friends, really gotten to know, the parents of these children and have seen their beautiful example of

courage, dogged perservance and love. They are givers - not receivers - they should be anyone's "Profile in Courage."

I note that you have incorporated into your mental health clinic's program a program on alcoholism and drug abuse. Certainly, there are no two greater contributors to human degradation. But, you have given here in your community to those so enslaved hope.

I know that the one thing that worries my husband the most in his job as Attorney General is the continuous rise he sees in the SBI statistics of drug users in this State particularly among the young. It is so tragic. The tradegy, too, is not only what they are doing to themselves but the hurt they are inflicting upon their families and their communities for communities need their youth.

We cannot lose patience and complacently shrug our shoulders and say, "It will not happen to my child," or if you do not have a child, "It's not my problem." It is your problem because it is a growing problem of your community, your State, and your nation.

You must be concerned that our young people are experimenting with drugs. There is another statistic that parallels this rise in the use of drugs - the rise in crime. And yet, there are those who scoff at the problem of drug use in relation to crime.

Let me tell you the sad story of one such man:

This young man from the Eastern part of our State got high on drugs - a "clean high," as some members of the drug community call drug use as contrasted with the use of alcohol. This young man, while under the influence of drugs - while on a "clean high" - picked up his small baby, his own child, and slammed her against the wall killing her. Later he realized what he had done and attempted to hide the nearly dead child in a trash dump. It was discovered there in that trash dump where it had died, and the father was tried and sentenced to life in prison.

However, before being sentenced, he was asked by the presiding judge if there was anything he would like to say. The actual court record reveals

"Yes, there is, your Honor. Like the Solicitor says, it is a tragic thing for a person to let himself be taken into this drug world and not really understand what it is all about and yet think that he does know all the time. In thinking as to what has happened to me, if only time could be turned back, with a little more understanding, just to change one second of one's life.

"These things would never happen, if only the young people in society, like myself, understood what was going to happen when they permit themselves to go into this type of conduct.

"I certainly don't condone what has happened as to me and it is going to be a hard thing for me to have to live ^{with} the rest of my life ~~with~~ this burden on my shoulders and the shame that it has caused my family.

"But I just hope that as a result of this, maybe there are young people here in this city and this county of ours, and all over the world, ^{who} can look at

me as an example and not let themselves get off into this same situation that I have gotten myself into.

"I wish there was some way to change it all. That is all I can say, sir."

A similar statement, but in different words, might come from a young salesman in the same section of our State who, after smoking marijuana, killed a customer in a dispute over a bill; or from a young husband, who while under the influence of drugs, brutally killed his wife and left his infant child to perish from inattention by her side; or from a young soldier, who committed a bold daylight robbery in an attempt to support a ^{drug} ~~drug~~ habit acquired in Viet Nam.

So, whether you are directly concerned with a drug problem - your community is, your State is, and your nation is. And the keys to the problem - prevention and help for those so addicted.

I know how valuable your Diagnostic Evaluation program in the clinic must be to this community. For ^{by your actions} I believe, as you must, in a democratic society where

where every life is so precious, we cannot afford to overlook one person, to waste one talent or to squander any ability. With such programs in the offering, we will not waste talent nor squander any ability. Sometimes society's set rules of progress cannot be met by an individual. But, by applying another set of rules (or using another method if you will) that same individual will blossom. His talent and ability will not be wasted. He just needs another approach. Then, he too, can contribute to society, to his community.

As the story goes, "Look, Mom, everybody is out of step but Johnny, " maybe Johnny is out of step because he must take another route to reach certain goals in life. But, the happy point is that now he can reach them!

I understand we now have scattered across the State, 93 mental health clinics. This indicates a community endeavor - not just a state endeavor - everywhere. Communities across the State are doing what you are doing. Except in extreme cases, a large mental institution a hundred or so miles away from a person's home and loved ones is not the place to help

those already suffering mental instability. Certainly, this mental institution cannot provide the preventive measures necessary.

You have seen the need and you have given your support. This clinic is a beautiful example of what a group of interested unselfish human beings can do when they work together for the betterment of all.

I am happy to have been in your company even for a little while.
