

Speech by: Robert Morgan
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It was with a great deal of enthusiasm that I accepted the invitation to be your main speaker this evening. I am always pleased to speak to our young people, for it is in the young that we find enthusiasm and idealism - two qualities which a society cannot do without and which those of us who are older envy you for possessing with such strength and conviction.

I have another reason for being enthusiastic about joining you this evening. And, that is because you, as individuals and as a group, have already made your mark on society. It is very difficult for an individual who is young to gain a reputation for good things, and to be widely known for his positive achievements. You have done this and I congratulate you.

One of the main avenues through which a young person can do this is through athletics. Therefore, I was not only happy about the prospect of speaking before young people, but particularly happy because I was

speaking to young athletes. This group, at a relatively youthful age, has already made itself and its members known and respected.

I will have to admit to you that as far as athletics are concerned, I was always an "also ran." But, I still retain the splinters from the bench, corns on my hand from the water bucket, and unfortunately, a slight complex from always being the last to be chosen. I even believe I remember having someone take my "last strike."

However, the fact that I did not make my mark as a youth in the excitement and determination of a sports event, certainly did not lessen my respect for athletes. Indeed, it increased my admiration.

We all realize that the self-assurance, determination, and appreciation for rules and fair play which one gains through athletic endeavors contribute in many ways to building positive individuals determined to make themselves felt in their community and in their nation. The list of athletes who have excelled in their chosen professions such as medicine, law, education, science and politics is long indeed, and I could not begin to cite all the prominent examples. I can think immediately of my friends State Representative Jim Beatty, an international track star and John Baker, former professional football

player and now one of three State Parole Commissioners, both excellent examples of using the leadership they attained in sports to leadership in other fields.

Clifton Daniel, in an address to the graduating seniors at the University of North Carolina, entitled "Change the World But Do Not Destroy What is Good," made reference to an editorial from the New York Times, which stated, "It is time that more Americans recognize that their sons and daughters are asking the right questions - questions about poverty and prejudice, pollution and peace - that too many complacent adults have ignored or brushed aside in their selfish pursuit of the affluent life."

Recognizing the fact that we are turning to young people more and more for their opinions and assistance in solving the problems of our nation, I would like to turn to this prominent group and ask for its help.

We have in North Carolina a problem. It is a problem which represents a threat similar to war in its capacity to kill, enslave and imperil the nation's future; similar to cancer in its ability to spread a deadly disease among us. No other challenge, in my opinion, requires more brain power, manpower and resources to overcome it. The crisis I am speaking about is our drug problem.

What do we know about drugs and addiction? We know right much about the drugs themselves; a little about addiction; but much less about the entire relationship of drugs and addiction to our culture, our society, and our civilization. We have ideas, hints, intuitions, and the beginnings of knowledge. We do know that drug addiction is an expensive habit. It can run from \$20 to \$100 a day, and the victim, because of his dependence on the habit, is going to obtain the money somewhere to support it, and many times will turn to crime. But we need, and must have, further knowledge.

I believe that our nation must mobilize its resources and direct more energy to solving the drug problem - the acuteness of the problem demands it. Mothers and fathers worried sick by the fear of drug abuse among their children and grandchildren demand it; teachers who see bright minds dulled by drugs demand it. So are clergymen, who are losing their spiritual influence to the false gods of kicks and thrills; businessmen, who see drugs causing absenteeism and hurting productivity; and judges who see the courts collapsing under the crush of narcotic cases. They must have an answer to their demands and help for their grief.

What good are billions spent in defense of freedom and individual dignity, if our young people lose their freedom and dignity to drugs? What good are all our early efforts to raise healthy children, prenatal and postnatal care, immunization and wholesome diets, if we permit the disease of addiction to afflict them? Of what value are billions invested in education, if good minds are to be dimmed and distorted by drugs? What good are our efforts to instill a belief in the sanctity of human life, if life is reduced to a dismal, daily struggle to feed a drug habit?

North Carolina is certainly not alone in its drug problem. As a matter of fact, we are probably very lucky in North Carolina that our problem is not more severe than it is; that we are still in a position of prevention. But the drug-use problem is growing, and all of the allied evils associated with drug use are growing.

Let me share with you three propositions that I believe would help considerably in the area of drug abuse prevention and control.

First, that to effectively control and hopefully eradicate drug abuse, there must be an all-out effort on a national scale. Certainly, the President's

efforts through the establishment of the Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention is a step in the right direction, but when I speak of an all-out attempt, I am speaking of an effort equal to that we put forth in space exploration. And, because I mean an effort of such magnitude, this, of necessity, would have to be funded by the federal government due to its superior resources of manpower and money. Dealing with drugs and its root causes is a time consuming and expensive proposition.

However, I believe that a large amount of any such funds appropriated should be given to the states to meet their particular problem, and individual needs. Some states may need more funds spent in prevention - the drug-use problem has not yet reached overwhelming proportions; others may see addiction as the immediate problem. We must have national support and help - but with no strings attached!

Secondly, while I advise seeking the support of the federal government, I believe we here in this State should be concerned enough to see that money is appropriated on a State level. The State of North Carolina does not provide a place for the treatment of drug abuses. The only place a person with a drug problem

can go is to one of our State Mental Hospitals, and these hospitals only have the capability to detoxify a drug abuser and have no means of actually treating these individuals.

There was only \$500,000 appropriated to the Department of Mental Health last session of the General Assembly to cope with the drug problem, and this money was earmarked for distribution to the 41 county mental health clinics. Nothing was appropriated to establish a badly needed state-wide diagnostic treatment and rehabilitation center.

In addition, only \$44,000 was appropriated to the newly established North Carolina Drug Authority, which has the all important mandate to coordinate all state-wide drug abuse education prevention and rehabilitation efforts.

North Carolinians must let their representatives in the General Assembly know of their concern, and provide them with information, suggestions and support when they are fighting for such appropriations.

My third proposal to you is that I feel to ultimately be effective drug abuse must be prevented in the individual communities. While I am firmly convinced that an all-out national and state effort is needed, I do believe when it comes to actually keeping

people from getting on drugs, this can most effectively be handled in the local community.

This brings us to you. You are young, you are athletes, and through your athletic endeavors you have established yourself as individuals of forthright integrity and leadership. You are respected, not only by your peers, but by individuals younger and much older than you. You have a great deal of influence due to your popularity and notoriety, which can be used in the fight against drug abuse.

There are many local community action groups or committees across the State in which you can get involved. By joining or establishing such a group in your area you can become a vital part of fighting drug abuse.

These committees do a variety of things. One of the most important steps which an individual drug action committee can do is to establish a "rap" house.

A "rap" house is generally a place where young people may go to find help in solving their own problems; a place that is primarily staffed by young adults who are perspective about adolescent problems and who will have rapport with the young people; a place for young people who are involved meaningfully in other people's lives; and more importantly, a place where no one is turned away. These houses can be very effective.

Unfortunately, over fifty percent of them in North Carolina fail and usually because there is not a broad base of community support for the "rap" house. The houses which do have the support of the community can do a great deal of good, both in keeping individuals off drugs in the first place, and in helping individuals who have been hooked on drugs. And community support means support by law enforcement personnel in the area, support of persons in the medical, legal, educational and financial fields and by involvement of youth in the community.

You can help in many ways - by volunteering for the staff of your local "rap" house, or by helping to start one if there is not one presently in existence.

It will take individuals like you to help us find the reason why a person will turn to drugs. Because of your age, you can relate, and establish the all important lines of communication. The reasons for an individual turning to drug abuse are deep-rooted and complicated, and to a large degree, unknown. Without correcting these reasons, we will never effectively correct the problem.

Exploration is the reason given for many beginners in drug use. By your example in the sports arena, you can show that exploration in other ways is just as challenging.

They are exploring without really knowing the consequences, and without really being aware of the laws they are breaking or the penalties for breaking such laws. You can be of help by learning yourself what is involved.

For instance, Bill is sixteen years old and has heard from his parents that marihuana is very dangerous, but has heard on the street corner that it is "groovy". Eddy, the sixteen year old kid down the block is Bill's friend.

Bill goes to a party with Eddie where marihuana is being used. He and his date experiment and feel "groovy."

Next Friday, Bill goes to Eddy and asks if he can buy ten "joints." Eddy obligingly sells to Bill. Eddy never seriously considered that he was probably committing a felony, nor did Bill consider he was committing a felony by possessing ten "joints."

I cannot believe that many of our young people would experiment in such a way if they knew the consequences.

Perhaps if someone had held out a helping hand to the young man I am going to tell you about, his life would have been different.

Under the influence of drugs, he 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 that he would like to say. The actual court record reveals he answered:

"Defendant James Shores: 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 to me and it is going to be a hard thing for me to have to live the rest of my life with this burden on my shoulders and the shame that it has caused my family.