

Mrs. Abell

December 10, 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FIRST LADY

Subject: Proposed Capital Beautification Program

In one of his Great Society speeches the President said "Our society will never be great unless our cities are great."

Aside from the majesty of the Mall, the monuments and the memorials -- and the attractive circles and small parks of the L'Enfant plan -- Washington is a shabby city compared with most European capitals. There is no better place to begin the creation of great society values than in the nation's capital itself.

It is surprising how few Presidents have really cared about the city of Washington. Until this Administration about the only Presidents who made significant contributions were Washington (who had the vision to hire L'Enfant), Jefferson (who took a keen personal interest in effectuating the L'Enfant plan), and Theodore Roosevelt (who moved the Railroad Station off the Mall and gave support to the McMillan plan). As near as one can ascertain no First Lady in all our history has ever provided sustained conservation leadership on behalf of the nation's capital.

The President plans to make the Potomac River a conservation model for the country. His program will be initiated soon. An imaginative Washington beautification program by Mrs. Johnson, enlisting the finest leadership available, would not only complement the President's effort, but would make Washington a conservation showcase for the nation.

The elements of such a program might include:

- 1) A city-wide beautification effort involving the planting of flowers, trees and shrubs;
- 2) A clean-up, spruce-up program;

- 3) Aggressive support for such vital pending projects as the exciting Downtown Mall of Downtown Progress, Inc., the Pennsylvania Avenue Plan, and the National Park Service's new plan to add exciting amenities to the Mall itself.

How would such an effort begin?

Suggestion: Perhaps with a meeting at the White House soon after the Inauguration at which the First Lady would outline her hopes and appoint an outstanding committee of top-flight government and nongovernment leaders to come up with an action program.

Suggestion: The committee could develop a series of immediate projects and also formulate long-term plans.

What would be expected of the First Lady?

Mrs. Johnson would be free to set her own pace. Possible activities might include:

- a) Occasional meetings with the steering committee to make basic decisions;
- b) Acting as a source of new ideas and plans;
- c) Sponsorship of city-wide competitions -- with awards to neighborhoods, schools, etc.;
- d) Participation in ceremonies marking milestones in the program.

Where would the funds come from?

- a) White House leadership would readily make it impossible for us to require that all federal buildings allocate amounts for floral and landscaping projects from existing budgets;
- b) The school boards could budget some maintenance funds for landscaping and beautification;

- c) Neighborhood Youth Corps groups formed under the President's poverty program could do much of the work;
- d) HHFA might provide special grants for some projects;
- e) The Ford or Rockefeller Foundations might be encouraged to make grants for special projects;
- f) I am confident that someone like Mrs. Paul Mellon or Mary Lasker can be persuaded to provide "seed money" for particular beautification projects similar to Mrs. Lasker's Park Avenue project in New York City.

Stewart L. Udall
Secretary of the Interior

MEMORANDUM

Informal Notes in Preparation for Meeting with Mrs. Johnson on the Beautification of Washington

Commissioner Tobriner is holding a meeting December 10 to suggest that the following improvements be initiated:

1. Kiosks in the parks (other than the ones planned for mall.)
2. Benches in the shopping centers.
3. Covered bus stops.
4. Maps in downtown areas for the use of visitors; and
5. Police in downtown areas wearing armbands denoting knowledge of foreign languages.

Comments on Secretary Udall's presentation to Mrs. Johnson.

If the President decides to give White House support to the Pennsylvania Avenue plan, the implementation and public relations might well be spearheaded by Mrs. Johnson.

1. First, however, Mrs. Johnson should become thoroughly conversant with the plan and its origins and the endorsements, as well as reservations and qualifications it has received from the Federal agencies to which it has been submitted for comment.

2. Embellishments of the mall which the National Park Service proposes are good and should be an additional attraction for visitors. There is a more complete plan for the mall which the Secretary of Interior proposed and which Mrs. Johnson might like to look at.

3. Ponte Vecchio. Sponsored by the Federal City Council (business and professional group) pedestrian bridge with shops crossing the channel from the Southwest water front to the aquarium. (Commercial)

4. Downtown mall - plan of downtown progress (tax exempt association of merchants and business people) - basically an effort to revive downtown shopping attractions. Distinctly commercial, although, incidentally, an improvement in the aesthetics would result. This downtown progress plan would require the contribution of public funds through the Urban Renewal process.

Bill pending to amend the Urban Renewal Act so that blighted business districts would be eligible, as well as blighted residential, to which the act is presently confined.

The whole Urban Renewal program is a matter of great controversy in the country, as well as in the Congress. This particular proposal to extend it to business areas while we have residential slums untouched raises a lot of question.

from K. E. - Jacob C. C.

MEMORANDUM - CU PLANS for 1965

CU is trying to work out arrangements to send a musical abroad to Russia and Japan. The panel discussed various musicals, of which the most acceptable seemed to be "Hello Dolly".

The Panel is trying to arrange with the Actors Studio to send three different plays to Europe. They are exploring the possibility of having the Washington Arena Stage present a theatre in the round production abroad and are looking for plays that will fit into the program.

A drama coaching team will be sent to Japan, headed by a professional director, two actors, 1 actress and a lighting expert, who will work with the Japanese in putting on an O'Neill play. This will be done in Japanese. This team will help with the acting, lighting effects, etc. They already have done the script in English and Japanese. The Japanese Institute Director knows English and they will have an interpreter handy. Japanese Directors have come to America and worked with the National Institute for Advance Study in the Theatrical Arts, and these Directors speak only Japanese.

The panel is thinking of sending husband and wife acting teams abroad. They are thinking of Frederick March and his wife for the Near East. They are personal friends of the Shah of Iran and will probably go to Tehran, Athens and Rome.

Another team, Ozzie Davies and Ruby Dee, a Negro team, may go the Dakar Festival, and other places in Africa. They will do selections from their past roles.

December 9, 1964

MEMORANDUM ON THE CITIES

TO: MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON

FROM: ANTONIA H. CHAYES

This Administration has accepted the commitment to try to make the cities truly human for all the people who live in them. For the very poor, crowded four to a room - a room too often shared with rats - the city must be changed for survival. This means decent housing, health care, sanitation and basic education in the skills of living that make family life possible. The poor need job opportunities and a good education starting early and continuing along life's track. These are varied needs, not limited to cities alone, but perhaps seen most dramatically in the urban setting. These needs can be met only by a network of concerned people: experts and volunteers, government officials and those from the very neighborhoods of the poor who know their language and can communicate with them.

The President has created the umbrella of services in the Office of Economic Opportunity, and now cities are forging their plans, tailored to their own political and institutional structures, to meet their most urgent community needs in their own ways.

The example closest at hand is here in Washington. The United Planning Organization has received funds and is

beginning to move ahead with neighborhood development programs, including legal services for the poor, consumer education, credit unions, intensive case work services, housing, education and information for landlords and tenants. The program is geared toward developing indigenous leadership so that neighborhoods will take pride in self-improvement.

In other cities, New Haven and Boston for example, the human services are closely linked to urban renewal and rebuilding. These are baseline programs in human conservation. They represent a beginning only, but the quality of federal, state and local cooperation we see developing may write a new chapter in American history.

The cities should offer more than the chance to survive. They should offer people the chance to grow and live a full life. We know that only the metropolitan areas can offer the highest cultural achievements - the theatre, opera, symphony and museums. But it is not enough to have a showcase, even the most beautifully designed and landscaped cultural center. These human expressions must be made relevant to everyone, or they are as inaccessible as if they were miles away. A city should offer harmony to the eye and a sense of repose. This means trees and parks, but in too many cities the

roads are repaired only in the "good neighborhoods" and the playgrounds are bare, if they exist at all. A beautiful neighborhood may be created not by condemnation proceedings and the bulldozer, but by programs which stimulate the pride of those who live there.

Recreation for all must keep pace with the expanding economic opportunities in the cities in order that people's lives may have balance.

These are goals that go beyond survival - beyond breaking the circle of poverty. These goals reach for the "Great Society". They are more easily stated than achieved, for they demand not only financial resources, but a painstaking attention to detailed differences among cities and even neighborhoods. They demand a breaking down of barriers between professions and heartfelt cooperation, consent and enthusiasm from those who need the most help but who have the greatest reason for bitterness and discouragement.

To build is to collaborate with earth, to put a human mask upon a landscape modifying it forever thereby."*