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Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON AT THE
WOMEN DOERS LUNCHEON AND PANEL DISCUSSION ON
"WHAT CITIZENS CAN DO TO HELP INSURE SAFE STREETS"
THE WHITE HOUSE, JANUARY 18, 1968

Friends:

This is a grim subject for a pleasant meeting such as this. But I believe every citizen is increasingly determined to come to grips with it.

None of us who read or hear the news can escape the shock of the headlines.

A group of hoodlums mug an old man and leave him to die. A grocer is murdered by a strongarm robber. The taxi driver is knifed. The quiet man murders his own family in a suburb. He seemed like "such a nice man!" Just the other day, a 16-year-old deaf and mute girl was raped in a school playground -- the third raping there in six months.

From misdemeanors to murder -- the myriad of crimes know no safe neighborhood, nor income level.

Most shocking to me is the incredible number of cases where a cry for help goes unheeded. Why? Those who heard it, "did not want to become involved."

Acts of violence are not the doing of a handful of people. The President's Crime Commission revealed the startling figure that, in the United States today, one boy in six is referred to juvenile court. Crime knows no age. It occurs even in broad daylight.....and in cold blood.

The costs are high, not only in the tragic loss of human life and property. One of the great costs to every citizen is his loss of ease and freedom in his own neighborhood. The existence of crime and the fear of it have eroded the quality of all of our lives.

Commissions have been named to inquire into the cause. But -- in the end -- the success of freeing our neighborhoods from hoodlums and fear depends upon the cooperation of all citizens.

We can take the lazy path by merely sounding the alarm and putting the extra bolts on our door. But I think more of us are tired of just "being shocked" and talking about it. Within the limits of each of us, there is something constructive we can do.

And there are things responsible citizens are doing in crime control, in prevention, in legislation.

Three women are here to tell us -- the way they see the problem from where they work.

After we hear from them, I hope any of you who wish will add your own constructive observations, or examples which point the way to making our neighborhoods safe.

I heard recently of radio stations in various cities where each night an announcer states: "It is now eleven o'clock. Where are your children?"

I heard of a woman in Washington's southwest who saw the need to help some neighborhood youngsters get their spending money honestly. Because of thefts in the neighborhood, the grocery store wouldn't hire them for carry-outs unless they were supervised. She gives two hours each Saturday to supervise the group and thereby help them earn their money, and she got other mothers to do the same. Mrs. Chumbris is here today.

There are many ways large and small a citizen can help, and that, after all, is the definition of total citizenship, isn't it? That no task is too large or too small.

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