



WR-Statutory Rape

FAX TRANSMITTAL SHEET

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(including cover page)

FAX # 456 5557
PHONE # _____

TO: Bruce Reed

FROM: Kate Sylvester

COMMENTS: _____

IF THERE IS A PROBLEM WITH THIS TRANSMISSION
PLEASE CONTACT:



27 September 1996

Dear Bruco:

I met for several hours yesterday with Grace Mastalli and the Justice Department's working group on statutory rape.

The only research on the law enforcement piece of the problem is the current Progressive Foundation/ABA project. So we've begun to map out of a plan for what they can do to press the issue beginning early next year.

Attached is a memo with some initial ideas for the short term. We can refine it if you can give me a specific idea of what you need in the next two weeks.

Please give me a call when you have a chance at 608-1239. I'd be happy to do whatever I can.

Kate Edwards

TO: Bruce Reed

FROM: Kathleen Sylvester

RE: Older Men/Teen Mothers

President Clinton can make a clear moral statement about this issue and present a strong response to the problem by proposing a four-part strategy.

- 1. Get tough with the men.** Endorse expanding the scope of the Justice Department's Violence Against Women initiative to include sexual violence. (The Lieberman Amendment to the welfare bill required this.) Promise that the Justice Department will work with states to help them learn the best ways to make their law enforcement responses more effective. This does not necessarily require passing new legislation; many state laws are adequate. But it may require new law enforcement strategies to ensure that laws are enforced. At the same time, the president can challenge governors to pay equal attention to male involvement programs that stress the positive aspects of fatherhood as Governor Wilson has done in California.
- 2. Announce a government effort to learn more about the men.** All we really know about the men is old they are and some anecdotal data about their life histories. To deal with them effectively, we need more information. Order HHS' Office of Population Affairs to fund a grant to the Alan Guttmacher Institute to study the life histories of men who become involved in these relationships with young girls. What causes them to behave this way? What interventions with young men would help them develop healthy and respectful attitudes toward women?
- 3. Challenge communities and churches and men's organizations to speak out about this issue.** This is the "dirty little secret" about teen mothers that no one has wanted to talk about. It's time for society to stop ignoring it. The Violence Against Women initiative is funding many state initiatives. The President could announce that some of these funds will be available to communities that want to address this problem.
- 4. Help the young women who are pregnant.** If their pregnancies are the result of exploitation, they need help healing and learning to nurture their children. Give every community that wants a "Second-Chance Home" for its teen mothers. HUD allows non-profits to lease property on HUD's inventory for \$1-a-year to create housing for the homeless. Expand that program to include groups working with teen mothers.

I believe this approach is more consistent with the president's philosophy than a narrow and strictly punitive approach. It would distinguish his approach from Dole's and reduce the risk of racial backlash. Many in minority communities are labeling this effort as a conspiracy to put more men of color in jail. Thus it's quite important to offer a balanced approach that stresses statutory rape enforcement as one component of a national effort to require male responsibility and a strategy that complements child support enforcement efforts. This approach also paints the picture more accurately as a gender problem rather than a racial one.

What the president could say:

- * In a nation where more than one million teenagers--one in nine--become pregnant each year and 48 percent of U.S. teenage girls become pregnant once before the end of their teenage years, we must do everything possible to reverse this trend.
- * No young woman should be forced to choose between raising a child alone in poverty or having an abortion.
- * Conservatives have portrayed teen mothers as reckless and manipulative young women who choose to have babies to get welfare checks. But now we know that many of these young women have not made a choice at all.
- * In some cases, they have been exploited by men who have too much power over them.
- * Many teen mothers are victims of early sexual abuse. This leaves them emotionally damaged and sometimes unable to cope with the pressures of negotiating relationships with men.
- * And two-thirds of teen mothers have babies by older men. While many of these teens are married and some choose partners just a few years older, statistics show that the youngest mothers--the 12- and 13- and 14-year-olds--are having babies by men who are as much as 10 or 15 years older. That's not right.
- * In the last few years, births to teen mothers have begun to drop slightly. That's good. But not among our youngest teen mothers. In the late 1980s, the birth rate for girls age 14 and under actually under increased 26 percent. Those children should not be having children..

*** No 12- or 13- or 14-year-old girl should be having sex or getting pregnant.
That's why our society must seek to protect them.**

How the president could deliver the message.

The president could announce his four-point plan at the site of a future "Second-Chance Home" in Chicago or Northern Virginia. HUD is actively working with both communities to open Second-Chance Homes.