

## **Statement on the Passing of Barbara P. Bush**

**April 17, 2018**

*Louis W. Sullivan, M.D.*

*President Emeritus, Morehouse School of Medicine*

*U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 1989-1993*

Barbara Bush was a great humanitarian and a “larger than life spirit” who contributed much to enhance and enrich the lives of Atlantans and people around the world.

A committed trustee of the Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) from 1983 to 1989, she wrote the foreword to *The Morehouse Mystique*, the history of the medical school, in which she stated, “Morehouse School of Medicine has made a profound difference in the lives of countless people.” MSM is the only four-year predominantly African American medical school founded in the United States in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An endowment gift from a Texas foundation established the George H.W. and Barbara P. Bush Professor of Neuroscience at MSM.

Barbara was also the keynote speaker at the annual Downtown Atlanta “Rotarian-Daughter Day” in the late 1980’s, stressing the importance of family relations.

I first met Barbara when we both accompanied then-Vice President George H.W. Bush as part of his delegation during a two-week trip to Sub Sahara Africa in November 1982.

While Vice President Bush was meeting with Heads of State in these newly-independent countries, Barbara was interacting with adult literacy groups – mostly women – stressing the life-changing effect of learning to read. I was impressed with her commitment to increasing adult literacy throughout the world. That commitment continued throughout her life.

She also spoke at the dedication of Belvedere College, a new institution in Harare, Zimbabwe, built with funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development. The college was designed to provide education and training in agriculture, carpentry and bricklaying, in addition to academic offerings, to assist the citizens of Zimbabwe.

Although she denied it, I always suspected she joined with others to encourage her husband to appoint me as U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services in his administration, where we worked to improve the health of Americans by decreasing tobacco use, increasing use of seat belts in our vehicles, creating at NIH the office for Research on Minority Health (which has grown into the National Institute for Minority Health and Health Disparities). We worked to increase race and gender diversity among the leaders in the department, including the first female director of NIH (Dr. Bernadine Healey), the first woman and first minority Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service (Dr. Antonio Novello), the first African American Commissioner of the Social Security Administration (Gwendolyn King) and the first African

American Administrator of the Health Care Financing Administration (now the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, or CMS: William Toby).

Barbara Bush was committed to the concept of equal opportunity for all Americans. She embodied a quiet, but firm and noble dignity. She glorified the importance of public service, to uplift the lives of others. She believed in the importance of family and a strong, clear value system. We are all beneficiaries of her contributions and are inspired by her citizenship. Barbara Bush lived her life to the fullest and is a role model for all of us.

--00--