

*Speech
Chita Alvaro*

DEDICATION OF CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION CENTER

REP. ELINOR Z. TAYLOR

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[...Offer an appropriate response to introduction...]

I'M DELIGHTED TO BE WITH YOU TODAY TO PARTICIPATE IN A VERY SPECIAL MOMENT FOR THE FAMILY SERVICE CENTER, THE EXCHANGE CLUB OF WEST CHESTER, AND ALL THOSE WHO WORKED SO TIRELESSLY TO MAKE THIS CENTER POSSIBLE.

WE GATHER TO FORMALLY DEDICATE A PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE CENTER FOR THE GREATER WEST CHESTER AREA AND ITS YOUNG CITIZENS. THE DEDICATION OF THIS FACILITY AND THE SERVICES IT WILL BRING TO HURTING CHILDREN SPEAK VOLUMES ABOUT THE KIND OF PEOPLE WE ARE AND CAN BE.

IT WAS SOCRATES WHO SAID:

"IF I COULD GO TO THE HIGHEST PLACE IN ATHENS, I WOULD LIFT UP MY VOICE AND SAY: WHAT MEAN YE, FELLOW CITIZENS, THAT YE TURN EVERY STONE TO SCRAPE WEALTH TOGETHER . . . AND TAKE SO LITTLE CARE OF YOUR CHILDREN, TO WHOM YE MUST ONE DAY RELINQUISH ALL?"

I DARE SAY THAT THERE'S NO ONE AMONG THIS GATHERING WHO WOULD DISPUTE SOCRATES ON THIS POINT. A SOCIETY AND A PEOPLE CAN BE JUDGED BY HOW THEY TREAT THEIR CHILDREN . . . FOR THEIR CHILDREN ARE THEIR LEGACY.

IN PREPARING THESE BRIEF REMARKS FOR THIS SPECIAL EVENT, I COULD NOT HELP BUT VIVIDLY RECALL A MAGIC MOMENT WHICH I SHARED WITH MANY THIS PAST SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 23. I WAS PRIVILEGED TO TAKE PART IN THE WORLDWIDE "CANDLELIGHT VIGIL" TO CHRISTEN AN EFFORT TO SAVE THE LIVES OF 50 MILLION CHILDREN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD DURING THIS FINAL DECADE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

THOSE OF US IN CHESTER COUNTY WHO CAME TOGETHER FOR THAT VIGIL FELT A DEEP UNITING SPIRIT WITH OUR FELLOW CITIZENS ACROSS THIS NATION AND AROUND THE WORLD. ON THAT NIGHT, BEGINNING IN NEW ZEALAND AND SWEEPING AROUND THE WORLD, MILLIONS OF VOICES WERE RAISED IN UNISON AS CARING PEOPLE, THEIR FACES ILLUMINED BY A CANDLE ... THEIR HEARTS WARM WITH COMPASSION, FOCUSED ON THEIR CHILDREN OUR CHILDREN OUR FUTURE OUR LEGACY.

THAT CANDLELIGHT VIGIL WAS INTENDED TO FOCUS WORLD ATTENTION ON THE PLIGHT OF CHILDREN AND TO ENCOURAGE WORLD LEADERS TO PARTICIPATE WITH GOOD FAITH IN THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN LATER THIS WEEK AT THE UNITED NATIONS IN NEW YORK.

THAT SEPTEMBER 29-30 "WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN" REPRESENTS THE LARGEST SUMMIT EVER, AND -- WOULDN'T SOCRATES BE PROUD? -- IT'LL BE ALL ABOUT CHILDREN.

NATURALLY, MUCH OF THE SUMMIT WILL CENTER ON THE PLIGHT OF MALNOURISHED, DISEASED AND UNEDUCATED CHILDREN IN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES. DID YOU KNOW THAT NEARLY 40,000 CHILDREN UNDER AGE FIVE DIE EVERY DAY FROM MALNUTRITION AND DISEASE? THE INEXCUSABLE THING ABOUT THESE DEATHS IS THAT THEY ARE PREVENTABLE. SOCRATES WOULD BE MOST DESPONDENT AT THIS FACT.

THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN WILL ADDRESS THIS ACUTE SITUATION IN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES. BUT, THERE'S MORE ... INDEED ... THERE'S MORE.

CHILDREN IN OUR SO-CALLED INDUSTRIALIZED AND DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FACE EQUALLY SERIOUS PROBLEMS, AND THEY TOO WILL BE A FOCUS AT THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN. WHILE THE CHILD IN, FOR EXAMPLE, A WAR-TORN SUDAN FACES THE THREAT OF CONTAMINATED WATER SUPPLIES, DISEASE OR MALNUTRITION, THE CHILD IN THE UNITED STATES MAY FACE AN ARRAY OF PROBLEMS RANGING FROM DRUGS TO ABUSE AT HOME.

HOW WE DEAL WITH THESE SERIOUS PROBLEMS SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT US. HERE IN AMERICA, OUR FAST-PACED AND HIGH-PRESSURE LIFESTYLE HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROBLEM OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE BY CHILDREN AND TEENS; IT HAS RESULTED IN CHILDREN BEING THE OBJECT OF AN UNEMPLOYED PARENT'S FRUSTRATIONS; IT HAS RESULTED IN A HIGH-INTENSITY ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH PEER PRESSURE OFTEN REIGNS ... AND RUINS!

STRAY BULLET SHOOTINGS. DRUG-ADDICTED BABIES. ABUSED CHILDREN. CHILDREN CAUGHT IN THE EMOTIONAL CROSSFIRE OF PARENTAL DIVORCE, SEPARATION OR SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES. THE TV/NINTENDO AGE INSTEAD OF THE BASIC EDUCATION AGE. MANY OF OUR KIDS ARE SUFFERING TOO.

(PAUSE)

FOR THESE REASONS, WHAT YOU HAVE DONE HERE AND WHAT YOU WILL ACCOMPLISH HERE ... MEAN MORE THAN ANYONE CAN FATHOM. CHILD ABUSE IS PERHAPS THE FOULEST OF CRIMES. FOR IT UNDERMINES THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH CIVILIZATION RESTS: OUR KIDS.

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR ACHIEVEMENT HERE. YOU CAN BE PROUD OF YOUR INTEGRAL ROLE IN RECOGNIZING THAT OUR CHILDREN ARE OUR LEGACY.

EVEN AMIDST THE TURMOIL AND THE ILL-WILL IN THE MIDDLE EAST TODAY, I CANNOT HELP BUT THINK THAT THE PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD STAND AT THE THRESHOLD OF TRUTH SPOKEN SO WELL BY SOCRATES SO LONG AGO. NATIONS OF THE WORLD SEEM TO HAVE AT LONG LAST FOUND THE COMMON GROUND ON WHICH TO COOPERATE: CHILDREN.

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INSTEAD OF STEPPING ON CHILDREN IN OUR ZEAL TO COMPILE WEALTH AND PERSONAL GAIN, WE NOW SEEM MORE PRONE TO PAUSE AND CONSIDER THAT WE ARE NOTHING IF WE DO NOT PRESERVE AND CARE FOR OUR COLLECTIVE OFFSPRING.

HERE IN WEST CHESTER, A LITTLE CORNER OF PENNSYLVANIA, WHICH IS ANOTHER CORNER IN THE UNITED STATES, WHICH ULTIMATELY IS A SMALL CORNER ON THIS VAST EARTH, THESE BASIC RECOGNITIONS ARE BEARING FRUIT IN THE FORM OF ACTION ON BEHALF OF OUR KIDS IN NEED. I'M HOPEFUL AND CONFIDENT THAT THE 1990s WILL SEE AN EVEN GREATER AWAKENING IN THIS VAIN. THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN IS A MOST ENCOURAGING STEP, BUT EQUALLY IMPORTANT ARE THE STEPS WHICH YOU TAKE HERE TODAY IN DEDICATING THIS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT FACILITY.

THANK YOU.

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