

WE GATHER TODAY BECAUSE AMIDST OUR GREAT DIVERSITY WE HAVE A
ED INTEREST: THAT BEING OUR CHILDREN.

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
OUR CHILDREN, TO WHOM YE MUST ONE DAY RELINQUISH ALL?"

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WIHTOUT A DOUBT, A PEOPLE CAN BE JUDGED BY HOW THEY TREAT
IR CHILDREN ... FOR : CHILDREN ARE THEIR LEGACY.

THE GIVEN TOPIC FOR MY BRIEF REMARKS THIS MORNING IS:

CHILDREN OF THE 90's: PERSPECTIVES, PROGRAMS, POLICIES AND
PRIORITIES." QUITE A MOUTHFUL, ISN'T IT? BUT IT DOES INDICATE

THAT WE HAVE OUR WORK CUT OUT FOR US.

TIME IS TOO SHORT TO MENTION THE MANY ONGOING EFFORTS
PERTAINING TO EDUCATION REFORM, DAY-CARE, ANTI-DRUG CAMPAIGNS,
HEALTHY BEGINNING AND CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES, AND ONE
THAT REMAINS VERY CLOSE TO MY HEART, LATCHKEY PROGRAMS. THESE
AND MANY OTHER EFFORTS ARE IN VARIOUS STAGES, RANGING FROM LEGISLATIVE
PROPOSALS TO UP-AND-RUNNING STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AND COMMUNITY-
BASED ORGANIZATION PROGRAMS. WE CAN TAKE PRIDE IN THESE EFFORTS.

BUT AMID ALL OF THESE INITIATIVES, PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS, WE
NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE VERY REAL FACT THAT LOVE, CARING, KINDNESS
COMPASSION CANNOT BE MANDATED OR LEGISLATED. IF WE BECOME
COURAGED UP IN ONLY ENACTING PROGRAMS, WE BECOME PART OF THE PROBLEM
--- A VERY BIG PART OF THE PROBLEM.

I'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU MY BASIC
PREMISE REGARDING OUR CHILDREN IN THE 1990s AND OUR ROLE IN
ENSURING THAT THEIR INTERESTS ARE KEPT AT THE FOREFRONT.

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I SUBSCRIBE TO THE THEORY THAT NO MATTER WHAT THE DECADE OR
CENTURY, THE NEEDS AND DESIRES OF CHILDREN ARE TIMELESS. I F
WE CANNOT LOSE SIGHT OF THIS PREMISE.

CERTAINLY, CHILDREN IN THE 1990s ARE GOING TO BE SOMEWHAT
DIFFERENT THAN THEIR COUNTERPARTS TWO DECADES AGO. THAT'S A GIVEN.
THE STORY ABOUT AN INJURED FIRST-GRADER PROVES JUST HOW 'WITH IT'
AND CONTEMPORARY TODAY'S CHILDREN ARE.

THE CHILD SLIPPED ON THE STAIRS AT SCHOOL AND SKINNED HIS KNEE. CONCERNED, THE TEACHER QUICKLY MOVED TO HELP HIM....IN AN ATTEMPT TO STEER HIS ATTENTION AWAY FROM THE HURT, THE TEACHER SAID, "REMEMBER, JERRY, BIG BOYS DON'T CRY." JERRY--A CHILD OF THE 1980s---WITH HIS LIPS PUCKERED, LOOKED UP AND SAID, "I'M NOT GONNA CRY. I'M GONNA SUE!"

INDEED, CHILDREN TODAY ARE GOING TO BE SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT FROM CHILDREN OF THE PAST BECAUSE THEY LIVE IN AND ARE A PRODUCT OF A DIFFERENT TIME PERIOD.

BUT REALISTICALLY, JUST HOW MUCH HAVE CHILDREN CHANGED? I
D ARGUE THAT THEY HAVEN'T CHANGED MUCH AT ALL.

THEY STILL HURT AND -- DESPITE WHAT JERRY SAID -- THEY ST
CRY. THEY STILL NEED THE FIRM GUIDANCE OF A CARING ADULT....THEY
STILL NEED LOVE.....SUPPORT.....COMPASSION.....

THEY'RE STILL AS FRAGILE.....STILL AS WILLING TO TRUST AN
AS EAGER TO LIVE.

IN ALL OF OUR WELL-INTENTIONED EFFORTS TO PREPARE THIS OR
 THAT...OR TO LAUNCH THIS INNOVATIVE CONCEPT OR THAT MUCH-NEEDED
 PROGRAM, WE CANNOT AND MUST NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE UNIVERSAL AND
 UNCHANGING NEEDS OF OUR KIDS

THE DISCOURAGING THING IS THAT GOVERNMENT CANNOT LEGISLATE
 THINGS LIKE COMPASSION, LOVE, SOUND GUIDANCE AND SUPERVISION. THE
ENCOURAGING THING IS THAT BEING AWARE OF THIS KEY FACT CAN MAKE
 EACH OF US BETTER PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, TEACHERS, FRIENDS AND
 NEIGHBORS TO OUR KIDS.

RECENTLY, THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD MET IN AN HISTORIC CHILDREN'S SUMMIT TO FOCUS ON THE NEEDS AND RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN ALL LANDS, INDUSTRIALIZED AND IMPOVERISHED. EVEN AMIDST THE OIL AND THE ILL-WILL IN THE MIDDLE EAST TODAY, IT APPEARS TO PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD STAND AT THE THRESHOLD OF TRUTH SPOKEN 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.

THIS REALIZATION NEEDS TO BE ... IN EVERY HOME. AND
 THROUGH ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE AMERICAN FAMILY INSTITUTE, WE'RE
 ... EDING ON THIS FRONT. AND, ARMED WITH THE UNDERSTANDING TH
 ... R KIDS REMAIN UNIVERSAL IN THEIR NEEDS, I'M HOPEFUL THAT THE
 1990s WILL BE A DECADE IN WHICH OUR KIDS --- RIGHTFULLY --- COME
 FIRST.