

Carol H. Rasco
Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy

Remarks Prepared for Delivery at the
National Summit on Children and Families
Washington, D.C.
April 2, 1993

Thank you for inviting me to be with you

It is wonderful to be here at this historic national summit on children and families. And it is inspiring to hear the stories of young people who are succeeding--with determination, personal responsibility, and help from those who care.

I wish that every child in America could tell such a story. But you and I know that they can't. Many children are thriving in our nation--but too many are not.

The statistics for our children and youth are grim. Educational attainment is stagnant--at best. Mental illness and suicide are up. Violent crime and homicide--way up. And today, child poverty stands at levels last seen a generation ago.

For most of that generation, families with children have faced a relentless economic squeeze. The real wages of workers with young children--even educated workers --have fallen dramatically during the past twenty years.

These are the facts, and it's time we stopped ignoring them. We must show that we have not forgotten how to care. We need a new direction for our country. It's time we adults put our children first.

That's one big reason why our country needs the President's bold new economic program of growth and jobs. It's why we need the President's bold plan for investing in children and their families. With the help of the Congress, we're going to get that program--~~and get it in record time.~~

But the problems our children face are not just economic. Too many American families are disintegrating, or never forming at all. We have the highest divorce rate in the Western world, and the highest rate of children born outside marriage. Today, 28 percent of our babies are born to unmarried parents. For African-Americans, it's more than 66 percent.

Does this matter? Here are some findings from a report out ~~just this week~~. Of the children born to young unmarried mothers without high school diplomas, 79 percent are living in poverty. For children born to married high-school graduates, the figure is only 8 percent.

*Imagine a child
DPC -> Each child shall be empowered to develop to their fullest.*

The message is clear: if you stay in school and get married before you have children, your kids are ten times less likely to be poor. A stable family setting is the best anti-poverty program our country has ever devised. That is the message we adults should be sending our young people, in every way we can.

For too long, these issues were mired in partisan gridlock. Some talked only about the economic squeeze on families and cuts in government programs; others talked only about the disintegration of families and the decline of American culture. It is time--high time--to put an end to the politics of false choices. We must move beyond cheerleading for family values, on the one hand, and on the other, the old big-government notion that there's a program for every social problem.

There is another way, a commonsense path that offers more opportunity to every family and demands more responsibility from every individual. As the President has said so eloquently: Family values alone cannot nourish a hungry child, and material security alone cannot provide a moral compass. We must have both.

That is the trail that the ^{American Jewish Community} ~~National Commission~~ ^{helped to} has blazed for our country. You have advanced an ambitious ~~legislative~~ ^{comp. policy} agenda, which ~~helped shape~~ ^{helped to} the President's budget proposals. You have crafted a new consensus on children and families that could put futile debates behind us. Most important, you have reminded us of basic principles essential values. papers

o First: Every American child should have the opportunity to develop to his or her full potential.

o Second: Government doesn't raise children, parents do. Government can reinforce the vital work of parents, but it can't substitute for them. The family is--and must remain--society's primary institution for bringing children into the world and for supporting their growth throughout childhood.

o Third: Children do best when they have the personal involvement and material support of a father and a mother and when both parents fulfill their responsibility to be loving providers.

These are the principles and values that guide us all. Now let me tell you what the President is doing to turn them into reality.

To begin with, he is rewarding work and family. Today, millions of Americans work full-time but don't make enough to lift their families out of poverty. That's wrong. No one who works full-time and has children at home should be poor in America. And that's why the President has proposed a dramatic

increase in the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Worry
We #1011
about this initiative - Bar Greenstein
At the same time, Bill Clinton is moving aggressively to relax the tension between work and family. He's proud that the first piece of legislation he signed was the Family and Medical Leave Act, twice vetoed by George Bush. And the administration is actively exploring other ways of making America's workplaces--including the federal government--much more family friendly.

Second, he is protecting the health of children and families, by fully funding the WIC program, by investing in childhood immunization, and by committing his administration to fundamental reform of our nation's health care system.

As you all know, we're working night and day to ensure that every American has access to quality health care at affordable prices. ~~Next month~~ we're going to propose a comprehensive new health care plan. And during this Congress we're going to fulfill the dream of every Democratic president since Harry Truman and make health insurance a reality for all.

Third, the President is promoting the development of young children with the biggest expansion of Head Start ever. But the administration is not just going to make Head Start bigger; we're going to make it better. We're going to improve quality, increase flexibility, and better link the program to other child development efforts.

Fourth, the President is proposing fundamental change in public education. As governor, Bill Clinton helped draft the national education goals and bring them to the center of public debate. As president, he'll bring those goals to the center of education reform.

Bill Clinton is going to put an end to business as usual in American education. That means new initiatives with real incentives to states for systemic reform. It means a total reexamination of existing programs--such as Chapter 1--to ensure that every child has a fair chance to acquire high-level skills and make it in the economy of the 21st century. It means unprecedented emphasis on systematic, high-quality school-to-work programs. It means an expanded safe schools initiative because fearful kids can't possibly learn well. ~~And yes, it means more choice for parents and students within our public school system.~~

Continue
Fifth, the President will deliver fundamental reform of our welfare system. He helped draft the Family Support Act of 1988, and he made it work in Arkansas. Now he has asked us to develop a plan to end welfare as we now know it. People don't want permanent dependency, they want the dignity of work, and we should give everyone the chance to have that kind of dignity. *more fully*
It's just common sense: more opportunity in exchange for more

responsibility.

The President's responsibility agenda doesn't end there. He's going to get tough on child support enforcement. That means establishing paternity right at the start, in the hospital; setting up a national registry; and using the IRS to collect seriously delinquent child support payments.

The principle is simple: if you are biologically responsible for a child, then you are morally and financially responsible as well. And that's why we have to get the message to our youth in schools, in the media, in every way we can: it's just plain wrong for children to have children, because you are assuming a responsibility that you aren't ready to fulfill.

The President wants to put government squarely on the side of keeping families together whenever possible. He wants us to do more for families at risk, especially at risk of foster care placement. He knows that constant shifting from one short-term foster home placement to another is an emotional disaster for kids; that in all but the most extreme cases, it's better for kids to be with their parents.

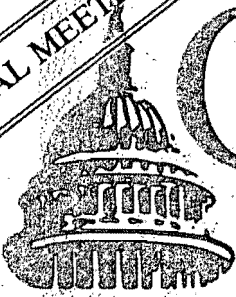
That why, last month he directed us to draft a new child welfare initiative combining family support and family preservation services--building on the work of Senator Rockefeller and Congressman Matsui and Congresswoman Schroeder and others. And believe me, we're going to deliver that initiative--to him, to our kids, and to the country.

I applaud the ^{you} Commission for recognizing that families don't operate in a vacuum, but in neighborhoods, in communities, and in a climate of culture and values. We must do whatever we can to assist parents in educating their kids and teaching them right from wrong.

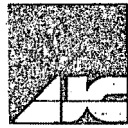
As every parent knows, in modern America that effort begins with the media. Three years ago, the Congress passed the Children's Television Act. And for three years, the Act was ignored. The same kinds of folks who informed us that ketchup is a vegetable were happy to certify GI Joe as an educational television program.

Well, the previous administration's FCC wouldn't enforce the bill--but ours will. By law, broadcasters who want to keep on operating must demonstrate their commitment to the educational needs of children. We're going to hold them to that. And while they're at it, it wouldn't hurt if they cut out the gratuitous sex and violence either.

ANNUAL MEETING



Capital Alert



The American Jewish Committee

May 1993

OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

1156 Fifteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005, Telephone (202) 785-4200, FAX (202) 785-4115

A publication of the American Jewish Committee, **Capital Alert** reviews the status of selected issues and events that are at the top of AJC's agenda in Washington. It is produced by the Office of Government and International Affairs, which represents AJC in its work with Congress, the Administration, foreign governments and an array of ethnic, religious and civic groups to advance the national and international priorities of the Jewish community.

We examine below a number of critical issues AJC has been following in Washington in the first months of the new Congress and the Clinton Administration, as well as in the current Supreme Court term. We also note AJC's positions and actions on these matters of concern.

ISRAEL AND THE MIDDLE EAST

The Peace Process

The Middle East peace talks resumed in Washington on April 27, after a five-month hiatus. Picking up where the Bush Administration left off, and with many of the same State Department officials still guiding U.S. policy, the Clinton team has assumed an active role in the peace process -- seeking to lessen tensions heightened by Israel's December 17, 1992, expulsion of Hamas leaders from the territories; encouraging the parties to return to the table; assuring the parties of America's intention to act as a "full partner" in the process; and imploring the parties to negotiate not on procedural but rather on substantive issues. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, in his first trip abroad in his new post, visited the Middle East for one week in February. During his three-day stopover in Israel, Christopher re-emphasized the strength of U.S.-Israeli relations and the U.S. commitment to Israel's security. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin followed with a visit to Washington, where on March 15 he met with President Clinton and key advisers. Clinton told Rabin that the United States was prepared to help minimize the risks Israel faces in the peace process. "We will do that by further reinforcing our commitment to maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge," Clinton said in a press conference with Rabin.

AJC continues to monitor the Madrid process and encourage our and other governments to support the process by helping to assure the continued security and economic and political strength of Israel -- the one party being asked to make real concessions in the pursuit of peace. The issue was the key topic of AJC meetings in Israel in early March with Prime Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. AJC believes firmly that the U.S.-brokered peace process remains the best hope for bringing an end to the age-old enmities of the Middle East and looks forward to the United States playing an active role as a "full partner" in the talks, facilitating agreement between the parties without in any way substituting for direct negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a publication.

Publications have not been scanned in their entirety for the purpose of digitization. To see the full publication please search online or visit the Clinton Presidential Library's Research Room.

Empowerment Zones -

I've talked about what the President has done and what he wants to do. We've begun to shift course. But this is just the beginning. We must have the courage to change--to recognize mistakes, to abandon what doesn't work, to challenge ourselves to do better. In short, we adults have some growing up to do.

I know that many of you in this room are tired after the last twelve years. Without you, many of the programs that serve children and families would have been gutted. They weren't, and you've earned a rest.

But we're asking you to go another round. The President can't pass or fund his initiatives alone. He can't break the gridlock alone. He still needs your help, and so do America's children.

~~For the first time in a long time, your efforts will be supported--not rebuffed--by the executive branch of this government. The details remain to be worked out. But for sure,~~ there will be an ongoing, high-level focus on children and families, cutting across agency, departmental, and programmatic lines, coordinated by the White House, responsible not to any single constituency but to the national interest and directly to the President of the United States.

Concern for our children must start at the top--but it can't end there. We must empower parents, neighborhoods, communities and voluntary organizations across this great nation to do what our children need. The President can take the lead--but only you can complete the task. *Careful about what I ask you to do - exercise your constit. rights - I applaud your past work papers*
~~At last,~~ a new day is dawning for America's children and their families. We will work together with you. We won't always succeed, and we won't always be able to do everything that you--and we--would want.

But I can promise you this: we will never relent in our effort to give every child a chance to develop--fully. Because at the end of Bill Clinton's second term, at the dawn of the third millenium, I want to be able to say to Hamp Rasco and Mary Margaret Rasco and to all the children of America, with a clear conscience and a full heart: We did our best. And I want all of you at this summit to join me in being able to look at one another and say: We did our best.

Thank you very much.

NORMAN H. STEIN

ATTORNEY AT LAW

757 THIRD AVENUE

12TH FLOOR

NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017

(212) 753-4938
TELEPHONE (212) 753-4938
TELECOPIER (212) 753-0096

TELECOPIER TRANSMITTAL SHEET

DATE: MAY 4, 1993

TO: CAROL RASCO

C/O ROSALYN

(202) 456-2878

FROM: NORMAN STEIN

RE: AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE EVENT

*→ Please call
with any
questions*

NUMBER OF PAGES EXCLUDING COVER SHEET: 13

PLEASE CALL ABOVE NUMBER IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE ALL PAGES SENT TO YOU.


NORMAN H. STEIN

ATTORNEY AT LAW
787 THIRD AVENUE
18TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017

TELEPHONE (212) 763-4900
TELECOPIER (212) 763-0096

BY TELECOPIER

TO: Carol Rasco

FROM: Norman H. Stein 

DATE: May 3, 1993

RE: Luncheon Speech at Annual Meeting of the American Jewish Committee

Thank you so much for agreeing to speak at the Annual Meeting of the American Jewish Committee on Thursday, May 6.

I am forwarding two (2) American Jewish Committee memos on combating poverty and promoting self sufficiency. One memo deals specifically with the relation of AJC's policy position to the Clinton Administration's budget. It is quite supportive of the President's proposals and you should be able to offer your agreement and encouragement for these positions.

The individuals to whom you will be speaking are interested in knowing what they can do substantively to promote these positions in cooperation with the Administration. Also, they would welcome any additional detail you can offer on the Administration's plans to change/reform the present welfare system.

I will be in touch with Rosalyn on Wednesday, to work out any final details. Of course, if you have any questions about any of this, please call me.

Again, thank you for everything.

NHS:ced



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
NATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION
165 East 56th Street
New York, NY 10022-2746
Telephone: (212) 751-4000, ext. 219, 253
Fax: (212) 751-4019

**THE CLINTON BUDGET
ON COMBATTING POVERTY AND PROMOTING SELF-SUFFICIENCY:
AN AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE BACKGROUNDER**

The American Jewish Committee maintains an active program of advocacy on combatting poverty and promoting self-sufficiency in American society. We seek to promote the values of compassion and self-reliance through actions designed to aid the poor, enhance human capital, rebuild cities and create coalitions dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable members of our society. The budget plan proposed by President Bill Clinton would have a major impact on these goals.

The Clinton budget includes three major components: a deficit reduction plan incorporating a combination of spending cuts and tax increases, a short-term stimulus package that seeks to create jobs in a recovering economy, and a series of measures designed to promote long-term investments in the American workforce and physical infrastructure. Many of the major initiatives to overcome poverty and further self-sufficiency are included in the long-term package.

Important components of American Jewish Committee policy find support in the investment package of the Clinton budget. These include:

- **EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTIONS:** The Clinton budget would devote significant new resources to improve the health and education of children, increase their potential to contribute meaningfully to the society and avoid the necessity for more expensive later interventions if problems are not addressed at an early stage. Included in the package are funding over a five year period to make Head Start childhood education programs available by 1999 to all children who qualify, resources to provide benefits under the Special Supplementary Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) to all eligible applicants by 1997 and assurance of universal child immunizations. These initiatives aim to improve both current programs for families with children in need and to enhance the nation's human capital for the future.
- **JOB TRAINING:** The budget devotes major new resources to job training initiatives. Included are a new set of apprenticeship programs for high school youth who do not

plan to attend college and an expansion of the summer youth jobs program to include basic skills upgrading. Moreover, the budget proposes a significant expansion of the Job Corps which targets disadvantaged youth in real need of training rather than concentrating, as some previous programs have done, on program participants whose skills are already quite advanced.

- **CHILD CARE:** Increased resources are devoted to the child care block grant, which assists low and moderate income families to secure child care they can afford, and to parenting and family support programs for disadvantaged families.
- **INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS:** New resources are provided in the budget for construction projects such as federal highways, mass transit, air traffic control systems and airport improvements. These initiatives aim both to enhance the efficiency of the nation's physical infrastructure and to provide jobs.
- **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:** The budget provides new aid to create and bolster community development banks to provide loans for housing and commercial initiatives in depressed areas. It increases funds for housing vouchers and certificates to allow low-income families to find housing in the private market as an alternative to often unsafe massive housing projects. In addition, it expands housing block grants to allow states to meet housing needs in ways appropriate to their locales.
- **URBAN ENTERPRISE ZONES:** A number of tax reductions and program initiatives would be established to stimulate investment and bring jobs to designated blighted neighborhoods. This program would test a major proposal to improve distressed areas that has generated much support but has not been adequately assessed in practice.
- **CRIME INITIATIVE:** New funds are granted for programs in community policing and scholarships for applicants who make a commitment to serve on local police forces.
- **EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT:** Perhaps the most representative element of the Clinton budget is its proposed expansion of the earned income tax credit which seeks to reward work by enhancing through the tax system the earnings of the working poor. If adopted, this initiative will raise the incomes of millions of American households, above or closer to the poverty line. Tax credits will continue to benefit primarily families with children, though a new small credit is added for childless working poor. The earned income tax credit

3

best exemplifies the strategy to assist poor people by encouraging and rewarding work. It affirms a social contract that if Americans work full-time, they and their families will not suffer poverty.

When combined with new low income energy assistance benefits and an expansion of the food stamp program, the new earned income tax credit will also assure that proposed new energy taxes do not lower the disposable incomes of households earning below \$30,000.

These programs, of course, do not constitute the totality of Clinton Administration social policy. A new task force will propose a major overhaul of the welfare system; its recommendations will surely generate much discussion and controversy. These initiatives are the beginning of an ongoing policy debate.

It is important to stress that these social measures designed to provide income security and promote self-sufficiency form part of an overall package that significantly reduces the deficit. These programs do not add to our national debt but invest in greater productivity in the future and reduce poverty and encourage work in the present. They should find widespread support.

93-800
April, 1993

pcvnc



**COMBATTING POVERTY AND PROMOTING SELF-SUFFICIENCY:
AN AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE STRATEGIC AND ACTION PLAN**

The American Jewish Committee has reaffirmed its commitment to a program in social policy three times in recent years: at the 1986 Annual Meeting, in a Board of Governors resolution of December 1991 and in an Annual Meeting statement on the urban crisis and the Los Angeles riots of 1992.

Social policy is a very broad term that can encompass a wide array of actions. This paper does not address important social policy concerns such as health care and housing. It rather targets programs related to alleviating poverty and promoting self-sufficiency, areas on which AJC has a long track record and can continue to make an impact if we focus our resources effectively. This planning document seeks to identify specific goals and strategies for implementing AJC action on poverty and opportunity by responding to four specific questions: What major goals do we seek to accomplish? Who are the poor that are the target population for our efforts? What programs will we endorse to meet our goals? Can AJC make a real difference in this field?

This paper aims to set out a broad vision of what AJC can accomplish on social policy but to do so in a way that takes into account federal budget and political realities, as well as AJC's limited resources. We will only take on what we can accomplish effectively. It would be irresponsible and inadequate to deal with social policy in a piecemeal fashion, without a vision of what we want to achieve. But it would be equally irresponsible to take on all issues at once. We will rather adopt a realistic, step-by-step approach for realizing our policy goals.

I - Goals

As in other areas of AJC action, the major goals of the social policy program relate to what we aim to achieve substantively, the interests and values of the Jewish community, the concerns of our coalition partners, the need for breadth and bipartisanship in our positions and our concern for the cities and communities in which we live. Specifically, our major goals for social policy include:

- 1) To combat poverty, promote jobs and self-sufficiency, reinforce the value of work, and support the family as the primary institution for nurturing children through advocacy of effective and realistic policies.

- 2) To protect and promote Jewish interests in several direct ways:
- By supporting and securing adequate protections and services for the considerable number of Jewish poor still living in large metropolitan areas.
 - By supporting programs vital to the functioning of Jewish federation agencies in fields such as vocational, child support and family services.
 - By enhancing Jewish participation in vital concerns of metropolitan areas where we live in large numbers and whose social trends affect us directly.
 - By expressing Jewish values and serving as an authentic Jewish voice on an issue on which our tradition has much wisdom to convey.
- 3) To reach out to ethnic, racial and religious coalition partners so that strong alliances can be built on matters of real importance to them and to the Jewish community.
- 4) To adopt social policy positions that are not ideologically driven but that rely on objective research and adopt the best ideas whether they are labeled liberal or conservative.
- 5) To assume a leadership role in the Jewish community in social policy issues, based on consensus positions which AJC will develop.
- 6) To emerge as a major national voice on social policy, gaining influence similar to what AJC has achieved in the immigration, civil rights and church-state fields.
- 7) To utilize both national and chapter resources in implementing our social policy priority.

II - Who Are the Poor, Why Are They Poor and Can Policy Help Them?

One problem the nation faces in developing effective policy to combat poverty is that the problem appears so overwhelming that nothing we do seems to offer the promise of progress. Urban areas are so burdened with destitution, homelessness, drug addiction, crime and other problems that despair has set in among large sectors of the public that any meaningful action can be taken. Moreover, many people believe that the poor shun work and reject mainstream American values. Yet, experience shows that well-conceived policy can make a real impact on these problems.

3

It is important to look closely at the actual profile of poverty in the U.S. Most of the poor are white, the overwhelming majority do not live in concentrated ghetto neighborhoods, many of them work and a disturbing number are children. Moreover, public policy has succeeded in significantly reducing poverty among some groups, such as the elderly and the disabled. Knowing the following facts about poverty can form the basis for an effective strategy to combat it:

- The official poverty rate in the U.S. fell from about 23% of the population in 1960 to about 14% today. According to the Census Bureau, about 35.7 million Americans lived in poverty in 1991, defined, for example, as at or below an annual income of \$13,924 for a family of four, \$6532 for an elderly individual, or \$9165 for a non-elderly couple. This drop in the poverty rate was not continuous. Poverty rates came down steadily until about 1975; they have increased moderately since then. (There are different measures for poverty in addition to the "official" rate. Some of these alternative measures assume that the official rate is too high because it leaves out non-cash government benefits. Others argue that it is too low because, they believe, it is based on unrealistically low estimates of what the poor need for basic expenses. The key point is that whatever rate is used, the trend in poverty remains the same and is now increasing.)
- At least half of the adult poor work, many at full-time jobs. About 40% of poor families with children are two parent households; over half of them have at least one full-time worker. Their earnings are not sufficient to pull their families out of poverty.
- Public policy has systematically attacked poverty among the elderly and has succeeded. Poverty rates among persons over 65 have declined from 33% in 1960 to 16% in 1980. Rates of poverty among the disabled have also declined.
- Poverty is rising, however, among children. 40% of the poor are now under age 18. While the poverty rate is 14% for all Americans, it is 20% for children.
- The overwhelming majority of the poor do not live in concentrated urban ghettos. If ghetto neighborhoods are defined as census tracts with at

4

least 40% poverty rates, fewer than 10% of the nation's poor live in them.

- Poverty is growing significantly in female-headed households. In 1960, a quarter of the poor lived in female-headed households; in 1987 about 40% did. The poverty rate for female-headed households exceeds 50%.
- All of these problems are worse among blacks and minorities. White poverty rates hover around 10%, Hispanic poverty rates approach 30%, and over 30% of blacks are poor. Ghetto neighborhoods, as defined above, are 85-90% black and Hispanic (still, only about a quarter of black poor live in ghetto neighborhoods). Among children being born today, 73% of whites will spend no time in poverty and only 3% will live in poverty for at least 7 of their first 10 years. By contrast, only 23% of black children will experience no poverty and 34% will be poor for at least 7 of their first 10 years. Nevertheless, most of the poor are white and more than two-thirds of blacks are not poor.
- Policy can have a positive impact on disadvantaged black youth. Research indicates that employment rises and poverty falls among young poor black males when economic conditions in their areas improve. Suburban poor black populations also have higher employment rates than comparable inner city black poor, indicating that they take jobs where available. This population is not unreachable, but responds like others to economic opportunity.
- These figures present a decidedly mixed picture. The poor are not all enmeshed in a tangle of unsolvable problems on which policy can make no impact. Poverty trends, in fact, move in several different directions at once. Christopher Jencks, perhaps the least ideological of all prominent poverty researchers, argues against the notion of a monolithic underclass. Rather, Jencks demonstrates that factors thought to affect the size of the underclass have varied widely during the 1970s and 1980s: long-term joblessness and the percentage of births to unmarried mothers have gotten worse; the proportion of single mothers collecting welfare has leveled off since 1975; high school graduation rates have risen in the 1970s and 1980s, for blacks faster than for whites, and basic reading skills have improved; the proportion of teens having babies and the overall rate of poverty have shown

little movement in the past decade.

Overall, these data should both provoke concern over the significant problems they indicate and give hope that policy has worked to reduce poverty among some groups and that others can be targeted for policy help in the future. If many poor already work, for example, policy can be developed to enhance their earnings and discourage welfare. If many of the poor are children, health and educational initiatives could improve their future prospects. Based on what we know about poverty, we face not an entirely intractable problem, but a difficult but achievable challenge to improve the lives of the poor by tailoring policy to specific groups in need.

III - An Effective Policy Agenda

A comprehensive policy approach to poverty must have several components. It must provide opportunity for poor children to rise out of poverty, encourage work rather than welfare, assure that those who work earn sufficiently to escape poverty, and protect the poor, especially children, from deprivation, hunger and homelessness.

No one policy can accomplish all these goals simultaneously. Rather a broad roster of programs is needed, each geared to a specific aspect of poverty, and each supporting the other in a comprehensive plan.

It is also important that the plan be bipartisan and draw from the best ideas advanced by liberal administrations (e.g. the Job Corps) and conservative administrations (e.g. housing vouchers), so that a viable consensus can be built on initiatives to help the poor and promote their self-reliance.

Setting out a broad comprehensive plan does not mean that the agency's resources will be stretched by advocating for several programs at once. At any one time, our efforts will focus on supporting only one or two initiatives under serious consideration. But in working on any segment of the plan, it is important to keep in mind the full view of what we aim to achieve. Over several years, we hope to have worked on all our objectives.

Finally, any plan we support must meet the standards of previously adopted AJC policy such as our guidelines on church-state implications of funds for services under sectarian auspices or for use in religious institutions.

6

Major parts of a broad social policy plan would include:

A) Welfare and Self-Sufficiency Programs:

1. Protect basic food, housing and support programs, further cuts in which would especially hurt poor children.
2. Invest in programs to improve the health and education of young children. These include: Head Start programs for preschool youth; women, infant and children's health programs; community health centers; and child immunizations.
3. Capture greater child support payments from absent parents, almost always fathers. This can be done by strengthening efforts to establish paternity at birth, deduct child support payments from fathers' wages, just as we now deduct social security taxes, and relieve mothers of the necessity to go to court in a difficult and often futile effort to force support payments. Fathers must accept responsibility for their children, and should be required to do so by public policy.
4. Operate effective transition programs from welfare to work by enrolling recipients in job training and vocational programs while they receive governmental assistance and supplying child care and transportation services to make this training possible. Programs in place to promote welfare to work transitions are hampered by low funding and ineffective regulations and should be made more effective. Experience has shown that these transition programs can produce modest but measurable gains in helping welfare recipients achieve self-sufficiency. The goal of policy should be clearly to reduce welfare and place those able to work in jobs.

B) Human Capital and Job Promotion Programs

- 1) Support job creation and job training programs to enhance the skills of the poor and make them employable. These programs should not concentrate, as some have in the recent past, on those already most job-eligible among the poor but should, like the Job Corps, aim to improve the skills of people who suffer

7

significant disadvantages but could, with effective training, become productive workers in mainstream jobs.

- 2) Promote urban investment strategies such as urban enterprise zones that give tax and other incentives for businesses to locate in targeted inner-city neighborhoods. These programs should be accompanied by job training to assure that local residents qualify for the jobs made available. Public investments should be channelled through local mediating institutions such as community development corporations and utilize market-based mechanisms such as housing vouchers and low income housing tax credits.
- 3) Support improvements in elementary and secondary education, especially in the inner cities, through enhanced teaching and curriculum standards, equitable school financing, choice among public schools and values education.
- 4) Support a package of proposals to give greater support and professional development to child care agencies, whose services are increasingly needed as families break up. Enhanced child care would provide needed support for agencies of Jewish federations around the country, in addition to services for other communities.

C) Make Work Pay More Than Welfare

- 1) It is vital to assure that taking a job will bring greater benefits than remaining on welfare, which many jobs do not pay enough to accomplish. To make work pay, the earned income tax credit, which now enhances the earnings of over 13 million Americans, should be expanded and instituted, as six states do now, on a state as well as national level; the child care tax credit, which many single mothers need to make work possible, should be made refundable for poor working families; and families should not have to pay the severe penalty of losing health care when they leave welfare to take jobs. These measures, which have strong bipartisan support, can effectively alleviate need and reduce the welfare rolls by raising the earnings of the substantial numbers of poor families now

8

earning below or slightly above the poverty level.

Taken together, these policies, which can only be achieved gradually over several years, draw on the best of conservative and liberal ideas and seek to promote self-sufficiency and decent support for the poor, especially families with children.

IV - AJC Potential

The American Jewish Committee has the potential to play as significant a role in the social policy field as we do now in immigration or civil rights. We would utilize our traditional tools of public education, issue advocacy on a national and local level, coalition-building, and media exposure to pursue this program. The following recent events demonstrate the viability of AJC efforts in this field:

- 1) Within AJC: Chapters have moved quickly to implement the social policy priority. Los Angeles, Houston and New Jersey have planned a public education campaign on social policy issues. Seattle, New York, Westchester and Long Island are focusing on policy advocacy efforts. Denver helped launch a city summer jobs program and Kansas City instituted an urban assistance fund and volunteer corps. Social policy offers an excellent opportunity for a chapter-national cooperative program.
- 2) Within the Jewish Community: AJC was a prime sponsor of a well publicized and attended conference for the Jewish community on combatting poverty that received support from leading federations and community relations agencies around the country, as well as from the Rockefeller Foundation. Social policy is an issue on which AJC has already assumed communal leadership and on which we can continue to improve our ties to large federations.
- 3) On the National Policy Scene: AJC played an effective and visible role in defeating 1992 proposals for a balanced budget amendment which would have had devastating effects on domestic as well as foreign policy. This experience demonstrates that we can achieve national influence in promoting policies we adopt in this field. Significant U.S. communities are suffering from poverty and unemployment and look to AJC for coalitional support, as we look to them for backing

9

on matters of core Jewish interests.

- 4) With Coalition Partners: Social policy forms a major topic of the black-Jewish dialogue that AJC has been conducting with the Joint Center on Political and Economic Studies and has figured prominently in our discussions with Hispanic and Asian groups. In 1992, it is a vital topic for ethnic, racial and religious coalitions with groups important to us.

In short, if we adopt the goals and action recommendations listed above, we have the potential for effectively implementing them in chapter cities, within the Jewish community, with our coalition partners and on the national policy scene.

Adopted by the AJC Board of Governors, December 7, 1992.

92-600
pov.solfault



The American Jewish Committee

OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

1156 Fifteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 785-4200. Fax (202) 785-4115

Call Norman Stern & see how this differs from group he asked me to speak to in June. Does he think I should do this one too?

April 12, 1993

Ms. Carol Rasco
Assistant to the President
for Domestic Policy
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ms. Rasco:

The American Jewish Committee extends to you our best wishes for success in your role as Domestic Policy Adviser to President Clinton, and looks forward to the prospect of meeting with you and exchanging views on the Administration's ambitious public policy agenda.

In that regard, and on behalf of our 50,000 leaders and members, it gives me great pleasure to invite you to appear at the 87th Annual Meeting of the American Jewish Committee in Washington, addressing a session on the Administration's anti-poverty and social welfare efforts. The session will take place Thursday, May 6, 1993, at 12:30 p.m., at the Capital Hilton Hotel.

As you may know, the American Jewish Committee is the nation's first human relations organization. Founded in 1906, it has been in the forefront of efforts to combat bigotry and anti-Semitism in the United States and abroad, advocate human rights for all, defend Israel's security and seek deepened understanding between Americans and Israelis, and promote democratic values and seek their realization in American public policy.

The American Jewish Committee shares the Administration's vision of a renewed America and a new world. We believe in the need for our country to rebuild at home as well as assume leadership in pursuing peace, stability and democracy the world over.

We have long-standing concern with social welfare and family issues. We support such programs as Head Start, women's, infants' and children's health programs, enhanced child support collection from absent parents and more effective welfare-to-work transitions.

The Annual Meeting of the American Jewish Committee will provide a forum in which to address a broad cross-section of American Jews, hundreds of civic and community leaders who are active and influential in their home states and cities and

Left msg to call back 4/21

- Not 1 Group - more formal speech - No need to do both - Your call - may be better for Admin - This is fine with you.

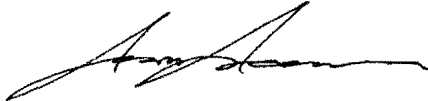
Ms. Carol Rasco
Page 2

engaged in the resolution of our country's most fundamental social concerns. I believe you will find them an interested and enthusiastic audience.

We would appreciate your consideration of this invitation. Shulamith Bahat, our Associate National Director and the coordinator of the convention, can assist your staff with further details.

Best wishes to you and your family.

Sincerely,



Jason F. Isaacson
Director

MEMORANDUM
OF CALL

Previous editions usable

TO *Roz*

YOU WERE CALLED BY YOU WERE VISITED BY

Norman Stein

OF (Organization):

PLEASE PHONE FTS AUTOVON

WILL CALL AGAIN IS WAITING TO SEE YOU

RETURNED YOUR CALL WISHES AN APPOINTMENT

MESSAGE:

*pm. today 914-834-8211
6pm*

*American Univ on Friday
202-885-2605*

RECEIVED BY

pr

DATE

4/22

TIME

11

63-110 NSN 7540-00-634-4018

STANDARD FORM 63 (Rev. 8-81)

☆ U.S.G.P.O. 1992 312-070-40024

Prescribed by GSA
FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6



FIGHTING POVERTY

**The Challenge to the
American Jewish
Community**

**A strategy conference
for the Jewish community**

CO-SPONSORED BY:

American Jewish Committee

**Jewish Community Relations
Council of Greater Boston**

**National Jewish Community
Relations Advisory Council**

**UJA-Federation of Jewish
Philanthropies of New York**

September 21-22, 1992

CONFERENCE REPORT

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a publication.

Publications have not been scanned in their entirety for the purpose of digitization. To see the full publication please search online or visit the Clinton Presidential Library's Research Room.



**The American Jewish
Committee**

Orange County Chapter
2222 Martin Street, Suite 150
Irvine, CA 92715

Gayle Byrne
Hands Across the Campus
Project Director

(714) 660-8525
FAX: 660-0570



The American Jewish Committee

Orange County Chapter • 2222 Martin Street, Suite 150 • Irvine, CA 92715 • (714) 660-8525 • FAX (714) 660-0570

HANDS ACROSS THE CAMPUS

LEARNING RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

HANDS ACROSS THE CAMPUS is a multi-faceted educational program aimed at reducing prejudice and developing understanding and appreciation of cultural differences. HANDS ACROSS THE CAMPUS embraces the national goals of the American Jewish Committee through its curriculum and activities which are geared to combat anti-Semitism and other forms of extremism, and promote intergroup cooperation by increasing mutual understanding, and reducing racial and cultural tensions.

The HANDS ACROSS THE CAMPUS program provides three basic components:

The first component focuses on teacher/staff training and curriculum.

The teacher/staff training includes prejudice/bias awareness, strategies for confronting prejudice and promoting intergroup cooperation. Participants explore their personal prejudices as well as the nature of institutional prejudice and its affect/effect upon the educational process.

The curriculum is a series of lesson plans and student activities for middle and high school students. The curriculum is designed to fit into existing Social Studies and English courses of study. The lessons and activities explore the social development of culture in society including language and religion, and allow teachers to supplement their regular daily lessons and integrate the exploration of multiculturalism within the framework of the regular curriculum while exploring the nature of prejudice and discrimination and its destructiveness to the basic principles of American democracy.

The second focuses on student leadership training.

The student training includes out-of-class instruction in prejudice/bias awareness; strategies and methods for confronting prejudice; conflict resolution. The student training also teaches students to develop action plans which create school activities to foster better ethnic understanding and promote participatory citizenship.

The third focuses on school/community coalition building.

School/community coalition building involves school staff, students, parents and community members in an awareness training to examine the multicultural issues of the greater community as they affect the school community. This aspect of the HANDS ACROSS THE CAMPUS program focuses on the essential need of adult role models beyond the school walls to model responsible citizenship, respect for diversity and a sense of personal responsibility in a multicultural society. This training teaches participants to develop action plans which move beyond dialogue and create activities that encourage intergroup communication and cooperation.

The HANDS ACROSS THE CAMPUS program is a multi-faceted approach to address and celebrate the issues of diversity in our schools. In its 1986 report, *What's Working the World*", UNICEF described the HANDS ACROSS THE CAMPUS program as "...an outstanding project which demonstrates a successful solution to problems faced by communities around the world."

It is important for us to understand that no one program can address all of the ethnic issues and problems in a pluralistic society. To survive, the HANDS ACROSS THE CAMPUS program must be open to change and expansion, if it is to continue to do its "good work". The HANDS ACROSS THE CAMPUS program is a beginning - a point of departure, but it is also a concrete, realistic approach for addressing cultural understanding and the basic principles of this nation.

In its long standing tradition of dedication to the protection of citizens' civil and religious rights, the American Jewish Committee has been a frontrunner in issues of multiculturalism. The HANDS ACROSS THE CAMPUS program follows this role by helping our youth develop an understanding and respect for all races and ethnic groups. Empathy, understanding and appreciation are the keys to making a pluralistic society work in harmony. With this in mind, the HANDS ACROSS THE CAMPUS program is a realistic approach, a productive means of combatting the tragedy and explosive nature of prejudice.



The American Jewish Committee

Orange County Chapter • 2222 Martin Street, Suite 150 • Irvine, CA 92715 • (714) 660-8525 • FAX (714) 660-0570

**HANDS ACROSS THE CAMPUS
STUDENT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM**

**"RACIAL DISCORD AT COUNTY SCHOOLS NEAR BOILING POINT"
"CULTURES CLASH IN COUNTY'S SCHOOLS"
"AFTER-SCHOOL FIGHT BLAMED ON ETHNIC TENSION"**

These and other recent newspaper headlines in Orange County, California reflect the growing tension and violence confronting our schools and communities today. In keeping with their longstanding position of embracing pluralism, the Orange County Chapter of the American Jewish Committee in cooperation with the Orange County Department of Education, has embarked on a multifaceted prejudice awareness student leadership program, Hands Across the Campus. The primary purpose of the Hands Across the Campus student leadership program is to foster ethnic understanding while empowering students to resolve the conflicts brought about in an ethnically diverse school community.

The Hands Across the Campus student program encourages the participation of both traditional and alternative student leaders. While traditional student leaders, those involved in student government, athletics and other recognized school activities, are often included in leadership training opportunities, alternative student leaders, those students associated with gang leadership activity, the leaders of the "restroom hangout," or the leaders of the "kids by the south wall," are rarely included in school sponsored leadership opportunities or even viewed as possessing leadership qualities. Alternative student leaders are, more often than not, disenfranchised from the traditional student activity models, not seeing themselves as capable or part of the acceptable student community.

Hands Across the Campus recognizes the cooperation and participation of these alternative student leaders is essential to the success of an effective diversity program that acknowledges and embraces the entire student population.

Once students are identified, they are invited to attend Phase One, a one day training session which explores:

- The demographics of the school community, the destructive power of prejudice and discrimination,
- An examination of the learning that creates prejudice and discrimination,

-And some basic suggestions for learning to confront prejudice and resolve conflicts.

As a final activity, the students develop an action plan to involve fellow students and create activities that will promote better ethnic understanding on campus.

After the one day training, students meet twice a week, during the school day, to work on their action plan and maintain regular contact. Taking into consideration the fact that most of these students probably did not associate with each other prior to the training, the concept of coalition building geared toward establishing shared interests is vital to the program's success. The biweekly meetings are student run, but a school advisor should be available to act as a liaison between students and the school administration.

The "Phase One" plan calls for four student trainings each school year, with the goal of reaching at least 10% of the school population each academic year. Following this plan, after three years, 25% of the students will have experienced the actual training, with an even greater percentage being affected through peer relationships.

Phase two of the student training involves the development of an ethnic sharing model, developed by the Institute for American Pluralism, which includes both students and staff members in an ongoing dialogue designed to promote interpersonal and small group communication. Ethnic Sharing Dialogues can also be used to facilitate the resolution of campus and interpersonal conflicts.

In addition to the one day trainings, action groups and Ethnic Sharing Dialogues, an expanded 2-3 day student/staff training is available. The expanded training allows for greater exploration and time to address the specific needs or issues of the campus community.

All of the student Hands Across the Campus Program activities are designed to promote better ethnic understanding and empower students to "develop" the critical thinking skills necessary to confront the issues of prejudice and discrimination in an empathic and compassionate manner.

As crimes motivated by hate rage throughout our land, we must give our children the skills to combat them. The activities, readings and critical questions of the Hands Across the Campus Program celebrate the cultural, racial and religious diversity of this nation, giving students a sense of pride in themselves and their peers and a belief that the issues of human dignity and equality are non-negotiable not only for themselves and those they love, but for all people.



The American Jewish Committee

Orange County Chapter • 2222 Martin Street, Suite 150 • Irvine, CA 92715 • (714) 660-8525 • FAX (714) 660-0570

**STUDENT/COMMUNITY MODEL
HANDS ACROSS THE CAMPUS**

In today's urban, fast paced society many students have no concept of community within their environments. Their worlds are often limited to school, home and perhaps a part time job. The idea of the neighborhood grocer has given way to the impersonal supermarket and the neighborhood friendly police officer has become a faceless nameless enemy. With these changes has come a disconnection from community and a lacking sense of belonging and personal responsibility to the community at large.

With this in mind, the Hands Across the Campus program is piloting a school/community coalition building model. This model is designed to involve students in their community through a series of activities, dialogues and service. All geared toward promoting citizenship, respecting diversity and developing a sense of personal responsibility to self and community.

Students begin by being paired with community representatives ranging from real estate agents, to police officers, to city council members, each of whom is active in serving the community beyond their professions. Some coach youth sports, some volunteer at the local homeless shelter, others participate in environmental groups.

Two pairs of student/community leaders form a dialogue group that meets initially once a week to explore roles, values and his/her motivation for feeling a responsibility to community. Together the group plans a project that involves a minimum of 20 hours of volunteer service, in addition to each student/leader pair spending 1-2 hours each week working or dialoging together regarding a chosen subject or project.

The purpose of those activities is to allow for cross generation communication beyond the parent/child, teacher/student role--to promote cultural understanding through the efforts of mixed cultural pairing of groups--and to encourage positive role modeling.

The Hands Across the Campus school/community coalition is really about teaching power--people power. The power to direct a cause, address an issue, make a difference. The lack of community involvement creates a missing link in the scope of a democratic education. Community coalition with our schools can bridge that gap.

HANDS ACROSS THE CAMPUS

CURRICULUM

This curriculum is fully integrated with the California State Social Studies Framework grades 9-12 and is designed to convey the major concepts through activities and personal involvement as well as readings and research projects. As a correlated/integrated curriculum it is meant to serve as a supplement and enrichment to existing texts and course material. Application of this curriculum may range from use of lessons, including teacher background information, vocabulary, critical thinking techniques, supplemental readings and follow up activities; to only one or two of the lesson components. The lessons are also organized to be open entry and capable of being used separate from other lessons in the curriculum.

The curriculum is organized by units:

Units I and II explore the nature of culture, then focus on the specific aspects of various cultures. They also highlight the functions and obligations of the many groups that comprise these cultures.

Unit III allows each student to examine some personal thoughts and attitudes in relation to culture and the groups of which he/she is a member. This provides the student with the basis from which to make comparisons with other cultural groups.

Unit IV provides the individual with the opportunity to explore race in one's personal life and in society as a whole.

Unit V emphasizes the pluralistic nature of American society. It begins to explore some of the effects that immigration has had, and continues to have, on present society.

Unit VI takes some of the contemporary issues and examines them, utilizing in-depth the concepts and information introduced and developed in Units I-V.

HANDS ACROSS THE CAMPUS:

Meeting the Needs of a Pluralistic Society

Meeting the needs of a drastically changing society can appear to be an insurmountable task, or a once in a lifetime opportunity. The philosophy of the Hands Across the Campus curriculum adopts the latter outlook as it embraces students with lessons, readings, critical questions and activities which celebrate the cultural, ethnic and religious diversity of this nation. The Hands Across the Campus curriculum and co-curricular components stress the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic origins of the United States as it works to dispel stereotypes and foster positive cross-cultural understanding among the members of the school community and the community at large, as students acquire positive lifetime values.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Developing self identity and understanding: this is an objective consistent with the findings of educational research which acknowledges that students who are knowledgeable about and appreciative of their own background are more accepting and understanding toward others.
- 2) Providing multi-cultural education: empowering students to appreciate and understand the roles and contributions of people of various cultural, racial and religious backgrounds are better prepared to live comfortably and effectively in a pluralistic world.
- 3) Developing critical thinking and questioning skills: empowering students to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes which permit them to establish, evaluate and clarify values necessary for individual achievement/satisfaction and better become effective participating members of a self-governing society.
- 4) Developing empathy and the understanding of personal responsibility in a democratic society: empowering students to act as democratic citizens through mutual support, cooperative decision making and synergistic learning.



Ocean View High School teacher Gayle Byrne, right, directs a meeting of the Ethnic Advisory Forum. Byrne is the group's adviser. Ygnacio Nanetti/The Orange County Register

Without prejudice

The two small racial brawls at Westminster High School last month were the latest indication of the potential for racial violence in Orange County schools.

Experts argue that "entry level" hate crimes, such as racial slurs, bigoted graffiti and gang skirmishes, can expand into racial battles given the conditions on many high school campuses.

Here are two ways schools are trying to avert

potential hate crimes.

At Ocean View High School in Huntington Beach, a group of students encourages racial harmony through projects and discussion groups and serves as a multiethnic volunteer fire brigade whenever racism flares.

Student group fights racism

By Dan Froomkin
The Orange County Register

HUNTINGTON BEACH — When racial slurs get penned in the boys restroom, a group of students at Ocean View High School kicks into action.

They're members of the Ethnic Advisory Forum, students representing the whole range of cultures at Ocean View, work-

ing to improve race relations on campus.

They take on high-profile projects — most recently, a fund-raiser to pay for a Hispanic student's eye operation.

They form "ethnic sharing circles" and "buddy dialogue" groups in which students from different backgrounds share personal stories.

Please see RELATIONS/5

RELATIONS: High-profile student group represents whole range of cultures at Ocean View

FROM 1

And they are vigilant about putting out the sparks of prejudice when their fellow students sound the alarm.

Their most public challenge came last year, when a homemade banner proclaiming "Kill all the Towelheads" went up in the parking lot during the Persian Gulf war.

Members of the forum met quickly and formed a plan. "They thought people needed to be educated about Arab culture and how people feel when comments like these are made," said Gayle Byrne, an English teacher who is the group's faculty adviser.

The students made up a fact sheet filled with information they collected. The school's principal distributed the sheets to each so-

cial science teacher and told them to discuss anti-Arab bias immediately.

"They did, and it stopped," Byrne said.

Throughout the war, there were no further incidents. Flags from Arab nations continued to fly undisturbed in the school's mall.

"It felt great," said forum member Jose Calderon, now a senior. "We did something for the people who come from that culture. That's an example of how students can make a change."

The forum, in its third year, is one part of a program called Hands Across the Campus, piloted by the American Jewish Congress. The other part has to do with helping teachers add a more multicultural perspective to the curriculum.

The forum's Principal's Com-

mittee takes the most public actions. This year, for instance, it embarked on a fund-raising project. After finding that a Hispanic student at the school needed an eye operation, Byrne found a doctor and a hospital willing to provide their services for free. But students pledged to raise the \$1,108 needed to pay for materials.

They hope it will be seen as a sign that all students share what had been a concern solely of Hispanic students. "Many Mexicans are praying for him," said Vicenta Calveron, a senior.

More than 100 students are signed up for the forum's "sharing circles." Each circle consists of six to eight students from different cultures who talk about such issues as how their parents deal with discipline, how they are taught at

home to treat others, and the importance of education in their cultures.

The "buddy dialogue" program groups students who speak little English with those who speak it fluently. Those are two groups that virtually never mix. "The kids who are ESL (English as a Second Language students) are often a school within a school," Byrne said.

Students at Ocean View say their race relations are probably better than those at many other schools. But there are still tensions.

At Westminster High School last month, Vietnamese students skirmished with Hispanic students.

Ocean View's student body, which was 96 percent non-Hispanic white when the school opened in 1976, last year was 55 percent white, 20 percent Hispanic, 18 per-

cent Asian and 7 percent other.

At Ocean View, Calderon said, Hispanics and Asians sometimes rub each other the wrong way as well. The reason is simple: "Each group wants to have more power."

Forum members say white students represent the dominant culture at school. And they don't mix with other students very much.

Karen Jordan, a junior who is white, agreed. "Normally, like in everyday school life, everyone's in their own ethnic groups."

And, she added, "It's not as hard for us because we, basically, fit in because of our nationality."

That leaves the Hispanics and Asians struggling with each other over who gets more status and acceptance.

The forum's goal, Calderon said, is to change that dynamic. "We try

to explain to them that we have to work together.

"We come from different cultures, but we're in the school and we have to live together," he said.

Calderon said that earlier this year, a student wrote in a boys restroom stall, "Kill the people who don't speak English."

Calderon confronted the boy who did it. "I made him understand it wasn't right — that everybody has a right to be here. He understood."

Sometimes, the students can't exactly count on the teachers to set the best example.

As in any school, Byrne said, "Some teachers are out-and-out bigots, and there are racist kids."

"The one thing that's different is the kids here have an avenue where they can vent."

Building bridges — camp helps youth past their prejudices

By Jennifer Vigil
Staff writer

Vivsoth Sin was shocked when he was forced to watch his best friend stumble blind through a crowd of students.

"My best friend had a blindfold. When I saw him walk in the room he was tripping over people," said Sin, 17. "It made me know how my relationship would change with him. I'm not a very patient guy and I probably wouldn't be able to hang out with him. If he were blind, our friendship would probably disintegrate."

Sin learned this last year at the Building Bridges Youth Human Relations Week-end. The National Conference of the Christian and Jewish Communities attended the local high school student to their parents for eight weeks. They learn about prejudice, the way they are stereotyped and the way they stereotype others based on race, gender, handicaps and ways of life.

"You won't have a camp of all white males. We want dialogue between the homecoming queen and the gang member ..."

—Margo Kohut
National Conference of Christians and Jews

people who may have been on the same campus three or four years and not spoken to each other."

Focus on racism

Although past camps have covered all types of bias, this year's camp, which begins Friday, has been narrowed down to just racism.

"Thirty years ago, the problems were essentially black and white, but today you have such a diverse community, you have problems with Latinos, Pacific Islanders, Asians," said Tony Rogers, a teacher at Long Beach Polytechnic High School who will be a co-facilitator at the camp. "You have all these groups that have to interact with one another. You're dealing with a world that is much more multicultural."

In dealing with that world, schools

have found it necessary to begin programs that aid students in gaining a better understanding and respect for the different cultures and ways of life they encounter. NCCJ's program goes beyond the camp, with clubs based on human relations operating at the high schools in the Long Beach Unified School District.

Kohut says NCCJ will also be sending classroom materials to "every teacher in Long Beach," to commemorate Brotherhood/Sisterhood Week, from Feb. 17 to 21.

Classroom help

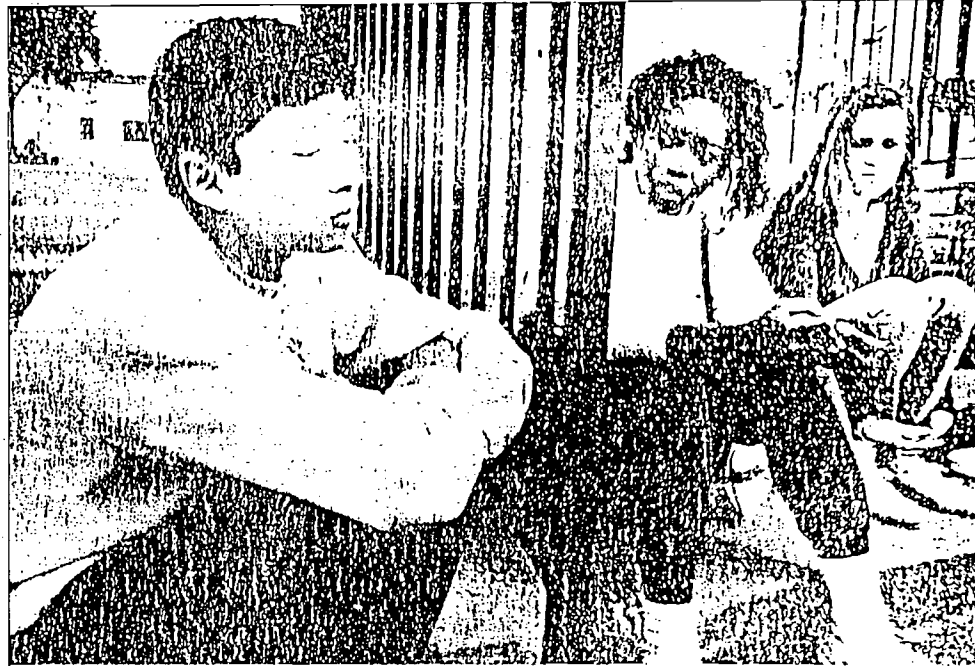
Cristina Bodinger-deUriarte, senior research associate at Southwest Regional Laboratory in Los Alamitos, strongly advocates teaching human relations in the classroom.

"More into crime is concentrated on youth than ever before. School is where they can learn tolerance," said Bodinger-deUriarte, the author of a handbook on youth and hate crimes. "You cannot always depend on the parents or the media or the others that surround kids to counteract the experience. Multicultural curriculum is important because it teaches that everyone has contributed to this culture and has historically contributed to this culture."

Orange County high schools are already adopting similar programs, with the help of Ocean View High School English teacher Gayle Byrne, as part of the Hands Across the Campus program sponsored by the American Jewish Committee.

Social studies teachers at 20 high schools have been trained to include instruction based on "reducing prejudice and learning conflict management techniques," according to project coordinator Byrne.

Looking to the future
"Our kids are half of our population, but they are 100 percent of our future," Byrne said. "If you do not val-



Vivsoth Sin, left, Lakewood High student, describes his new awareness concerning physical handicaps to Lakita Long of Poly High and Shawna Fischer of Wilson High.
Press-Telegram photo by Peggy Peaslee

For more information regarding the National Conference of Christians and Jews and human relations programs at Long Beach Unified School District high schools, call Margo Kohut at (310) 490-0055. For more information about the Hands Across the Campus program, call Gayle Byrne at the American Jewish Committee, (714) 660-8525 or at Ocean View High School, (714) 848-0656.

idate them, you need to empower them, let them know they can make a difference."

The Los Angeles chapter of the American Jewish Committee began Hands Across the Campus in 1982 in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

In 1989, three schools in Orange County began teaching a separate human relations course, but that proved costly and with the recession it was difficult to secure support from local businesses, said Doris Goldman, director of the Orange County chapter of the committee.

Goldman said it was important to save the program by incorporating the curriculum into social studies courses because students were learning that

differences can be positive.

She said students learned that "some of the things they thought were foreign or strange or different were nothing to be ridiculed, nothing to be afraid of."

Kohut, Bodinger-deUriarte and Byrne agreed that one of the best ways to make teens appreciate the unique qualities of others is to improve their own self-images.

"Self-esteem plays a big role in what we do," Kohut said. "It's hard to accept others if you can't accept yourself and that it's OK to be different from other people."

The programs also utilize a variety of educational activities that allow students to step into the shoes of those who are often victims of prejudice.

"An activity that really helps is making a list of 100 confusing word groups, such as bore, boar, bored, board," Byrne said. "As English speakers, no one has to explain to you, it's part of the culture to learn. Now it's easier to understand why someone who's been here for three years still has problems communicating."

"The light bulb goes on for some kids. Some of the racist kids will say, 'Well, then they should learn,' and I say, 'Bad, you still haven't learned,'" Byrne said.

Sin and three other students who

have previously attended the NCCJ camp said the light bulbs went on for them because of two activities.

In the labeling activity, students are labeled as a certain type and must listen to all the stereotypes associated with that type.

"I was laughing," said Carlos Alcanto, a senior at Lakewood High School who was labeled a student council member and called a nerd. "Some of the things said just didn't make sense."

In the other exercise, the room is divided into sections according to race. Each student is asked to go to his corresponding area and then to go the area that bears the name of the race he or she would least like to be.

"That was the most uncomfortable and it was really tense," said Shawna Fischer, a senior at Wilson High School.

As veterans of the NCCJ camp Sin, Alcanto, Fischer and Lakita Long will be attending this year as cabin leaders, and all say they feel the responsibility to make it as positive an experience for others as it was for them.

"We need something that's going to pick up more than the surface attitudes," said Long, a senior at Poly. "You're one color true enough, but it's the content of the character that counts."