



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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To: Bruce Reed

*FAXed
to Al Hunt*

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Date: _____ Total number of pages sent: _____

Comments:

862 9211

*FVI - need to talk to you re: Al Hunt
inquiry - ~~FLOTUS' office concerned~~ here
criticize us on NEPA, & we need to convince
him we're doing a good job - see attached.*

659-0294

Merkowitz



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

APR 9 1996

The Honorable Paul Simon
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-1302

Dear Paul:

This is in response to your letter requesting information concerning the implementation of the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 (MEPA).

The Department has made great strides in implementing the MEPA to ensure that state laws, policies and practices conform to the statute's provisions regarding transracial adoption.

After the Department issued the MEPA Guidance in April 1995, we notified 27 States and the District of Columbia of regulatory, procedural and/or statutory issues in non-compliance with the MEPA.

By January 1996, 46 States and the District of Columbia had statutes and policies that were in compliance with the MEPA. We expect three of the four remaining States (Iowa, Kentucky and Minnesota), to be in compliance by July 1996, and because of its bi-annual legislative calendar, we expect Arkansas to be in compliance by April 1997.

Since the bill was signed into law, the Department has moved rapidly to implement its provisions in the following ways:

- o We issued the MEPA guidance (copy enclosed) within the statutory time-frame, prepared materials and conducted training/technical assistance on the new law.
- o Our Regional Offices are reviewing state recruitment plans and working closely with the States.
- o We are developing plans for active monitoring of practice compliance.

Page 2 - The Honorable Paul Simon

- o Our new Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System which provides demographic information on children awaiting adoption and their adoptive parents, will allow us to track the number and percentage of children placed transracially.

The enclosed materials should give a good understanding of the policy approach that we have taken. Should there be a need for further clarification on recruitment issues, please contact Ms. Carol Williams, Associate Commissioner for the Children's Bureau, at (202) 205-8618, and for further clarification on civil rights compliance, please contact Dennis Hayashi, Director of the Office for Civil Rights, at (202) 619-0403.

I hope this information will be helpful to you.

Sincerely,

Donna E. Shalala

Enclosures

Adoptable kids go wanting

Programs in the private sector try to fill void left by public bureaucracy

Recently in Philadelphia, the state-run Department of Human Services went to court to stop a private agency from finding a family for an abandoned infant, "Baby Mitch."

Even though the private agency offered to handle the adoption free of charge, the department claimed that a "motive of profit" prevents private agencies from acting in the best interests of children. Instead of finding a loving family, the department proposed to put "Baby Mitch" in foster care, along with a half-million other American children. A Family Court judge ruled that the baby can be adopted through the private agency.

You might think that the Department of Human Services would welcome the private sector's help in finding adoptive homes for children. But more often than not, state agencies act as a barrier between good families



Commentary
By Corina Craig

eager to adopt and the children who desperately need them.

Today, 50,000 foster children — based on a study by The Institute for Children of 48 states so far — are waiting for what most people take for granted: a loving family and a permanent home. They are legally free to be adopted; their biological parents have lost or relinquished parental rights. In 1992, the most recent figures available, less than 20,000 of these children were adopted. They will wait, on average, between three and five years for a family. The American Public Welfare Association states that between 1983 and 1990, on average, 15,000 foster children "aged out" of the system each year; thousands of 18-year-olds are left to navigate early adulthood with no permanent family. The American Civil Liberties Union states that 40% of all former foster children end up on welfare.

Meanwhile, qualified families wait to adopt children of all racial backgrounds and ages, children with disabilities, even children with AIDS. But states — which receive a federal subsidy for every day a child is in foster care — can't seem to find adoptive homes for these children. State bureaucrats say that finding good families is next to impossible. They say they need more money.

That's nonsense. Two adoptive dads

Children of the state

The number of children under state supervision has nearly doubled in a little more than a decade. Of those, 50,000 are eligible for adoption, but bureaucracy leaves many in homes.



in a garage in Virginia prove that where there's a will, there's a way. With a mission of increasing the rate of adoption, Chris Moore and Phil Schulte teamed up to create AdoptioNetwork, a massive database which they built and have maintained on the World Wide Web since 1994 for less than \$1,000. AdoptioNetwork is a privately funded, volunteer-operated service that provides immediate access to adoption resources — including listings of more than 2,500 adoption agencies — to the 15 million people who use the Internet. Moore and Schulte gathered information that was previously "locked up in institutions" and have made it available free of charge. Says Schulte, "Our mission is to serve the adoption community. We've created a structure that is user-based rather than institution-based." Adds Moore, "It's a lot more cost effective and easier for someone to go to a library and use a computer than to make a dozen calls to government agencies."

Every month, 5,000 people visit the AdoptioNetwork site at <http://www.adoptio.org/adopt>.

State agencies claim that some children are "unadoptable." Bureaucrats contend that only a small percentage of the 50,000 are healthy, white babies — supposedly the only children sought for adoption. Instead of adoptive homes,

states offer teen-agers a program called Independent Living. Katie, a 15-year-old foster-care veteran, sums up her experience this way: "All I ever wanted was to be adopted. Instead, the people at the group home taught me how to apply for welfare. To me, that doesn't mean living independently."

In contrast to state agencies that bemoan a shortage of adoptive homes, Pat O'Brien, founder of You Gotta Believe!, a private agency that places teens for adoption, insists that the families are out there. O'Brien's agency doesn't have the money to advertise, so he "works the streets" of Coney Island, spreading the word about You Gotta Believe!'s eight-week "A-OK" (Adopting Older Kids) Parent Preparation course. O'Brien and his all-volunteer staff take the "field of dreams" approach. "We build the training for adoptive families, and people come. Seventy-five percent of the effort is you just gotta believe the families are there."

You Gotta Believe!'s mission is homelessness prevention. While New York and other states offer 14-year-olds in foster care the option of signing away their wish to be adopted in favor of "independent living," O'Brien warns that many of these children will be abandoned by the system at age 18 or 19. "Independent Living means no one tries to

find families for these kids," he says. "To a foster kid, Independent Living means I'm homeless at 18." This year, New York City will discharge 4,000 foster teens for whom the system has found no permanent homes. New York's Coalition for the Homeless reports that 60% of the homeless in the city's municipal shelters are former foster children.

Private agencies are finding families that states say don't exist. Jim Jenkins co-founded the Children with AIDS Project of America, a private, volunteer organization that has recruited more than 1,000 families to adopt children who are HIV-positive or AIDS orphans. The project, which started eight years ago on Jenkins' kitchen table, recruits families and locates children via hospitals and adoption agencies. Jenkins says there is no shortage of interest in adopting the children some states would call "unadoptable." Annually, more than 2,000 people who want to adopt children affected by AIDS contact the project. Jenkins, himself an adoptive father of two children who were born HIV-positive, has been called on by organizations in eight countries for help in creating similar projects.

Private groups are stepping forward to save the children. In its upcoming report, "Private Approaches to Foster Care and Adoption," published by the Reason Foundation, the Institute for Children profiles private-sector methods of making adoption work.

I know, firsthand, the anguish of waiting years for a state bureaucracy to finalize an adoption. I was a foster child in a family that raised 110 children. I was one of the lucky few — I got out of the system after eight years. My foster family adopted me and gave me what I had always wanted: a last name.

If state-run agencies cannot find families for 50,000 children, they should step aside and make room for the people who can. Private groups like AdoptioNetwork and You Gotta Believe! and people like Jim Jenkins are showing that America is ready and willing to adopt every child who waits. In the "Baby Mitch" case, Philadelphia's Family Court Judge Esther Sylvester characterized her decision as a "wake-up call" to the Department of Human Services. For the sake of the 50,000 waiting children, this wake-up call cannot come any too soon.

Corina Craig is president of the Institute for Children, a private, nonprofit group based in Cambridge, Mass.

Women drop out; why can't men, too?

These women stand for a truth that transcends gender: the value of family.

LOS ANGELES — Two years ago, when *She Magazine* was launched in England, it was aimed at the Superwoman image of the 1980s. Who is "she?" the advertising copy asked. "She is for the woman who juggles her life," the woman who balances her role as wife, mother, career woman and lover.

At the end of last year, the award-winning editor of *She* quit, announcing she wanted more time with her young son.



Counterpoints
By Susan Estrich

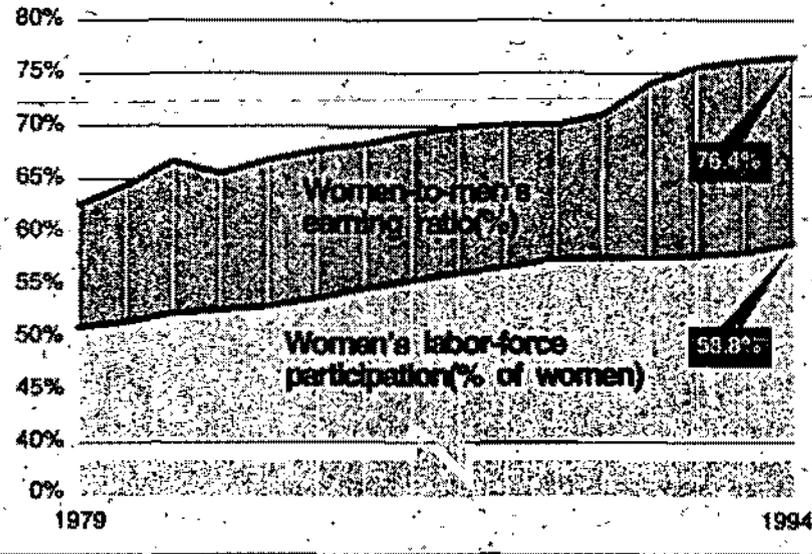
The poster girl of the '90s is the dropout mother. Forget about "Superwoman"; these days, the woman on the magazine cover has traded in her briefcase and partnership for a stroller and diapers.

She's still the exception: Most women can't afford to stay home, even if they wanted to. But she's more than a symbol because she's telling the truth.

No one has it all at once. The question is what you're willing to have less of. The answer men have always given is their families — a lot less of their kids in exchange for more work, money and power. Men with children work harder and earn more; women with children work and earn less.

The message of the dropout mothers is that the men have it wrong. Nothing against work, money and power, but a "man's world" just isn't all it's cracked up to be. I thrive on work; I can't imagine living without it. But there's a reason

Women working and making more



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

By Elyse A. McLean, USA TODAY

It's called "work." You give your all in hopes of doing OK, making it through the merger: You get hired, you get fired, you get downsized.

Women aren't the only ones who don't make it to the top; most men don't, either. Everybody changes jobs; almost everybody has a period of insecurity or unemployment.

Sociologists have found that the happiest women are those who have both family and work. Two sources of satisfaction and joy in life make you happier than one, even if you're sacrificing some on both fronts. It's possible that the same might be true of men if they gave themselves the chance.

No question boys and girls come differently. I did not teach my daughter to love dolls or my son to turn every stick into a gun. But I'll teach my daughter she can be anything she wants — the president of the United States, or the

class mother, or maybe someday, both. Should my son have fewer choices?

When I ask law students how many hope to make partner, every male hand goes up. Almost every female hand stays down. Why? Children. Family.

If those are good enough reasons to persuade the girls to trim their professional sails, why isn't even a single man agreeing? "We have no choice," one student says, shaking his head. The woman's choices are far from ideal — why can't there be part-time partners? — but at least there are more of them. We are raising a generation of young women who don't see themselves as victims and a generation of men who do.

Discrimination against women still exists. Women who work make less than men, which is one reason women stay home more than men. Men who leave jobs to serve their country get them back, with thanks for doing some-

A 'rosier' view

Is there a brighter side to news about women and work? The Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy, a free-market-oriented think tank in San Francisco, sees one. Analyzing census data and economic labor studies, it found:

► Among childless women and men ages 27-33, women earn close to 98% of men's wages.

► Today there are 7.7 million female-owned businesses in the U.S., generating nearly \$1.4 trillion in sales and employing 15.5 million people in the U.S. alone. That's 35% more people than the Fortune 500 companies employ worldwide.

► In 1992, the largest category of bachelor's degrees earned by women was in business, at 20%. The institute sees that as powerful encouragement for the future.

thing important. The women who leave to raise families rarely catch up when they return to work. So much for family values. But it's not all a one-way street. When a mother is unemployed, she's likely to see it as a chance to spend time with her kids. An unemployed father is a failure — even though we all know that kids need fathers desperately and that being a good father means much more than being a provider.

The women who are dropping out grab our attention because they stand for a truth that transcends gender: the value of family. The baby-boom men owe their sons a revolution. You can't change half the world. You have to change the whole thing.

COUNTERPOINTS' four columnists provide views from diverse perspectives on today's issues. Mondays: Tony Snow. Tuesdays: Michael Gartner. Wednesdays: Linda Chavez. Thursdays: Susan Estrich.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

12-Feb-1996 04:57pm

TO: Carol H. Rasco

FROM: Diana M. Fortuna
Domestic Policy Council

CC: Jeremy D. Benami
Elizabeth E. Drye

SUBJECT: Adoption

In preparation for our meeting on my issues tomorrow, I wanted to give you an outline of the adoption issue. (We have been planning to do a brainstorming session on this with you, Carol, pending your availability; I think this would be a good idea.)

I have met a few times with Carol Williams of HHS/ACF and Deb Both of the First Lady's Office to discuss this. Here is the beginning of a draft strategy. I'd be interested in your advice/input.

The problem has different facets, so it must be attacked in different ways.

1. To address the shortage of families to act as foster care/adoptive parents, we could put together a group of prominent organizations, including the ABA, AMA, church groups, media, etc. to challenge them to identify what actions they could take to recruit families. HHS has talked about calling this a "Network of Champions." Mrs. Clinton would presumably play a role in such an effort.

2. Improving the state-based system of foster care is difficult. Many state systems are in crisis. However, seeking more mandates or restrictions on states would also be problematic.

For example, one idea that is now popular is "concurrent planning", which means trying to place a child with a foster family that has the potential to be an adoptive family, while you are still working with the birth parents to determine if the child can be returned to them. While this is clearly a good idea, mandating the states to do it wouldn't go over well.

An alternative is to engage in a more collaborative process with the states. Carol Williams is now putting together a strategic plan that would move the system more toward measuring outcomes, setting goals, and sharing best practices.

She now has a small group of 30 interested parties, including a few states, involved in this, and expects to be done in May or June. Then she would expect to talk to all the states.

3. The courts play a significant role in the delays in the current system, but they are hard to approach in a policy sense. However, ACF has a "court improvement project" now underway that looks promising. It gives small grants to each state's court system to engage in a self-examination about how well they currently handle adoptions, and they could improve their track records. Deb Both and I are going to learn more about this.

Anyway, this is the beginning of a strategy, drawn largely from where HHS is already heading -- which I think makes sense. (Carol Williams seems pretty solid to me.)

TO: Bruce Reed
Ken Apfel

FROM: Diana Fortuna

This is from OPM, in response to our request that they consider whether to offer the \$2,000 employee benefit for adoptions that a lot of companies are adding. They propose instead more leave time and a large benefit for special needs adoptions.

Jen Klein and I are looking at this; Jen especially may pursue whether we could do something like this very quickly, given the event coming up Friday.

Obviously there is a (presumably small) budget impact.

ADOPTION ASSISTANCE FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

All over America, children are waiting for a family and a home. More than 100,000 children are waiting to be adopted; many of them have special needs. They are brothers and sisters who want to grow up together, who may be older, or who have physical or emotional problems--but they share the needs that you and I have--the love, comfort, security, and commitment that families bring.

As the Nation's largest employer, the Federal Government has long been committed to helping our employees balance their work and family needs. We offer a variety of family friendly flexibilities that can benefit adopting parents. But the needs of children without families require that we do more.

Current Benefits for Adoptive Parents

Time off the job is one of the most important of these benefits. Several recent Administration initiatives have helped Federal employees who are adoptive parents take time off the job for purposes related to adoption.

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 is a cornerstone of my administration's effort to ensure that the Federal Government is a family-friendly employer. The Act entitles Federal employees who adopt a child to a total of 12 weeks of unpaid leave. The entitlement to unpaid leave begins prior to the adoption (in order to allow time off for pre-adoption activities such as meetings with adoption agencies, attorneys, etc.) and continues for the 12-month period following the adoption.

In 1994, I signed into law two additional pieces of legislation that enhanced the entitlements of Federal employees who become adoptive parents. The Federal Employees Family Friendly Leave Act allows most employees to use up to 13 days of paid sick leave each year to care for family members who are ill or need medical care. This includes adoptive children, who sometimes require greater medical attention.

Separate legislation authorized Federal employees to use an unlimited amount of sick leave specifically for purposes relating to the adoption of a child, including, but not limited to, appointments with adoption agencies, social workers, and attorneys; court proceedings; required travel; and any periods during which an adoptive parent is ordered or required by the adoption agency or a court to be absent from work to care for the adopted child. This is a significant benefit. Based on the results of earlier experimentation with a similar program in the Federal Government (and using current average salary rates), we estimate that the value of this benefit is approximately \$1,000 per adoption. All of these leave entitlements are available to both adoptive mothers and adoptive fathers.

In addition to using paid and unpaid leave for adoption purposes, Federal employees also may take advantage of flexible work scheduling arrangements. Since the first experimental legislation was enacted in 1978, the Federal Government has been a leading employer in efforts to provide workers with the option of flexible and compressed work schedules. Approximately half of all Federal employees now work in offices that offer flexible work scheduling arrangements, which can be very useful to employees who need to schedule appointments with adoption agencies and attorneys to further the adoption process or appointments with health care providers or counselors following an adoption.

Further, many agencies offer a wide range of child care services. There are over 100 on-site child care centers to help our Federal civilian workforce. Resource and referral services are also available to help parents locate quality child care in their communities.

Employee Assistance Programs can provide adoptive parents with assistance, education, family counseling, and referrals to local community resources such as social service agencies and support groups.

The Federal Employees Health Benefits Program covers adopted children, including those with special needs. It also covers foster children who live with the employee and who are expected to be raised to adulthood by the employee. Of special importance, the health benefits program is prohibited from denying benefits solely because of a pre-existing physical or mental condition, and there is no waiting period for coverage to begin.

The Federal Employees Group Life Insurance Program allows employees to insure an adopted child. Further, just as a biological child, an adopted child is automatically a beneficiary if there is no designated beneficiary or surviving spouse.

The Retirement Program's survivor benefits cover adopted children under the same circumstances as biological children.

Proposed New Benefits for Adoptive Parents

I'm proud of what the Federal Government has done so far to help adoptive families, but we can do more.

To facilitate and offer further encouragement to Federal employees who wish to adopt a child, I will propose legislation to create a new category of leave benefits for Federal employees. This benefit would be available to any Federal employee who is a prospective adoptive mother or father and would be in addition to the leave entitlements already available. Under this proposal, an additional 5 days of paid leave would be available for purposes relating to the adoption of a child. To foster the adoption of special needs children, an additional 5 days of paid leave would be provided, bringing the total to 10 days of additional paid leave in such cases. At current average salary rates, the value of this benefit would be in excess of \$750 for each adoption (over

\$1,500 in the case of special needs adoptions). But the real value of this benefit to adoptive parents is the assurance that they would be able to pursue adoption activities while preserving their regular accrued paid leave for the purposes for which it was intended--including the ability to spend additional time off with the adopted child.

Our second initiative focuses on the area of greatest need--the adoption of children with special needs. I believe that children who are waiting for loving families of their own is one of America's most difficult and saddest problems. Therefore, I will also propose legislation that authorizes Federal agencies to reimburse employees who adopt a special needs child up to \$3000 for a single adoption, or up to \$5000 for any employee who adopts several special needs children. This reimbursement will cover adoption-related expenses and would be tax free.

And finally, I am directing all Heads of Departments and Agencies to assure that all agency Employee Assistance Programs have comprehensive services relating to adoption, with an emphasis on adopting special needs children. Such services should include information regarding adoption procedures, referrals to adoption agencies, specialized counseling concerning special needs children, and awareness activities designed to familiarize employees and managers regarding existing personnel and management flexibilities (such as paid and unpaid leave). Agencies will be encouraged to develop innovative campaigns which can increase employee awareness concerning the adoption of children with special needs. The Office of Personnel Management will provide agencies with guidance in these matters.

As an employer, we must provide national leadership to sensitize and educate our workforce about the many children, especially special needs children, who are waiting for families. The Federal government is committed to shortening their wait. We hope that the benefits and assistance we are proposing will provide greater support to Federal employees who are considering adopting special needs children.

Mazen, noting that international observers are arriving in Israel to eventually monitor the transfer of authority in Hebron. "We hope that it will be settled."

However, the main redeployment of Israeli troops, like the final-status negotiations themselves, are not expected to get under way in earnest until after the May 29 Israeli elections.

President Clinton endorses adoption bill that allows tax credits and easier transracial adoptions

By Rachel L. Jones Knight-Ridder Newspapers(KRT)

WASHINGTON President Clinton on Monday endorsed a bill that would give a \$5,000 tax credit to most families adopting a child and punish states that make it difficult for whites to adopt black children.

Clinton's support expressed in a letter he sent to House Republicans makes it likely that the bill originally part of the conservative Republican "Contract With America" will become law.

It marks another shift by Clinton away from the liberal wing of the Democratic Party and clearly reflects an election year strategy of making family issues a central theme in his campaign.

On Saturday, Clinton told states they would lose federal funds if they don't end welfare payments to teenage parents who refuse to stay in school or live with a parent or guardian. House Republicans have long sought such measures as a part of their welfare reform proposals.

Whatever its effectiveness politically, the proposed adoption legislation is unlikely to have a large impact on the enormous problem of half a million American children waiting in foster care, child welfare experts say.

There are too many children in need and not enough potential parents of either race, they explain.

Still, many Republicans and moderate Democrats see the legislation as a useful first step.

"We haven't deluded ourselves into thinking this is the solution," said Patrick Purtill of the National Council for Adoption. "But we think removing some of the barriers is better than removing none of them."

Many in Congress have long supported a less restrictive adoption process, disregarding the cultural concerns raised by the placement of minority children with white parents.

But some black child welfare administrators have opposed transracial adoption the placement of black and other minority children with white families. The National Association of Black Social Workers has condemned the practice as "racial genocide."

In his letter, Clinton called such concerns "outdated assumptions," and said he was "committed to breaking down barriers and making adoptions easier," by providing financial incentives and eliminating racial barriers.

In the past, some child welfare agencies have opted to keep black children in foster care rather than place them in white homes, arguing that they would be culturally deprived in such settings.

Nearly half of the 500,000 children in foster care are black and they often languish without families as much as five times longer than white children.

Sheryl Chatman, executive director of the Baptist Home for Children and Families in Bethesda, Md., said she would have preferred that Clinton endorse legislation that committed more resources to finding minority parents. She and others think the transracial adoption issue is too complex to be solved with a tax credit and a slap on the wrist.

"He definitely seems to be making up his own mind, but at what cost?" Chatman said. "You have to wonder what kind of political deal he cut, at the expense of children."

"We're still focusing on parents' rights, as opposed to the rights of the child and what children need to grow up emotionally healthy," said Chatman, who deals largely with black children.

But supporters of the proposed law say research shows that transracially adopted children don't suffer in white homes.

"These so-called problems just don't show up in longitudinal research," said Purtill. "They are well-adjusted, have a strong sense of self-esteem, and are excelling in school. They're doing just fine."

The legislation, which may be voted on by the House later this week, would provide a \$5,000 tax credit for families earning up to \$75,000 a year. The credit would lower for families with incomes between \$75,000 and \$115,000, and disappear for families earning more than \$115,000.

States that delay the placement of minority children with white families would risk losing federal adoption assistance funds.

Bill advocates contend that there's no way blacks, who are 12 percent of the country's population, could ever meet the steadily-growing need for black adoptive parents.

Former Ohio Senator Howard Metzenbaum, a Democrat, led the crusade to end the practice of "race matching" black children with black families with his Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994.

But when it wrote the rules for states on the new law, Clinton's Department of Health and Human Services allowed cultural issues to be considered as part of the adoption process a move that some supporters of the 1994 law said gutted the intent of the measure.

The North American Council on Adoptable Children in St. Paul, Minn., has long supported transracial adoption, but only when suitable parents of the same race are unavailable. But the Council contends that, historically, there hasn't been enough recruitment, training and education in minority communities about adoption.

"The point is not that there aren't enough minority families," said Diane Riggs, a council spokesperson.

"The real problem is that minority communities are held to different standards, and aren't supported enough in their attempts to adopt."

(EDITORS: STORY CAN TRIM HERE)

Because the majority of children in foster care have been physically, emotionally or sexually abused or have severe medical problems a \$5,000 tax credit will not entice prospective parents to take on such challenges, Riggs said.

Some Republicans say Clinton is attempting to steal conservative thunder by backing the adoption bill and ignoring such concerns. But this attempt to repackage Republican strategy as his own will fail, they say.

"He cannot at the 11th hour start talking about supporting Republican policy when he has not done so for the past four years," said Mary Crawford, a spokesperson for the Republican National Committee. "People have gotten wise to his saying anything he thinks will get him a few extra votes."

Chatman of the Baptist Home for Children and Families thinks that ultimately, the adoption bill is a Band-aid approach.

"They've developed a simple answer to a very complex phenomenon, and it won't work," she said. "If they say race doesn't matter, they're in denial."

Study shows President Clinton-appointed federal judges not as liberal Bob Dole charges

By Aaron Epstein Knight-Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

WASHINGTON The first study of President Clinton's court appointments contradicts Republican Bob Dole's charge that Clinton has filled the federal bench with lenient, liberal judges who are soft on crime.

Three political scientists from different universities said their data showed that Clinton-appointed judges "exhibit moderate decisional tendencies." Other scholars supported those findings.

Clinton judges are not as liberal as judges appointed by Democratic President Carter or as conservative as jurists named by Republican Presidents Reagan and Bush, the researchers said.

apparent wavering and a possible increase in tariffs on Chinese imports.

"Tariffs like these are bad for business and they are bad for American consumers," he said. "I don't think it is politically wise for (Doyle) to say he will wait until he sees what the president is going to do before making up his mind."

Recent trade figures show China greatly benefiting from the present tariff levels.

The latest report from the Commerce Department showed that the U.S. merchandise trade deficit with China jumped 39 percent in January to \$2.7 billion from \$2 billion the month before.

According to China, it registered an overall trade surplus of \$20 billion in 1995 compared with \$5.3 billion the year before.

Yeltsin says he won't postpone June election By James P. Gallagher Chicago Tribune(KRT)

MOSCOW President Boris Yeltsin on Monday rebuffed a call from one of his closest confidants to postpone next month's Russian presidential elections.

Yeltsin assured the Interfax news agency that elections would be held as scheduled on June 16. He said he had instructed his chief bodyguard, Alexander Korzhakov, "not to get involved in politics any more or make such statements."

Twice in the past week, the usually secretive Korzhakov had urged cancellation of the balloting, making it clear he fears Yeltsin could be defeated by the Communist Party front-runner, Gennady Zyuganov, and that a civil war could erupt after the election.

Yeltsin repeatedly has rejected speculation by his political foes that the elections could be called off if they looked like a lost cause for the incumbent. But many Russians now wonder if Korzhakov had floated a trial balloon to assess how much public protest there might be in Russia and the rest of the world if the balloting were indeed postponed.

Yeltsin sought to ease those concerns.

"Korzhakov is not alone in thinking that Zyuganov's victory would start a civil war," Yeltsin was quoted by Interfax as saying. "But I still believe in the wisdom of Russian voters. That is why the elections will take place according to the constitution."

Yeltsin continued to paint a frightening picture of what Russian life would be like under a Communist president. He warned that political and economic reform could be rolled back by Zyuganov and his team.

"I would not say today that the process of reform has gone so far it cannot be reversed," Yeltsin's press service quoted him as emphasizing in an interview with *Delovye Lyudi* magazine.

Addressing himself to millions of pro-reform Russians still unwilling to vote for him because they oppose the war in Chechnya, are burdened by oppressive taxes or resent his failure to combat crime and official corruption, the president added:

"Here lies the main delusion of certain segments of the democratic forces in Russia: They think that any political movement will be forced to continue economic transformations."

Korzhakov, a Yeltsin loyalist whose power inside the Kremlin has grown steadily in recent months, told Interfax on Sunday he was most concerned that next month's elections would bring in a wave of instability, regardless of who emerged triumphant.

But his remarks left no doubt he is deeply worried that Yeltsin cannot close the gap with Zyuganov in the less than six weeks left before voting takes place.

"People must be given time to think clearly about everything and reach a mature conclusion," Korzhakov said. "For this, more time is needed than we have until June 16."

In a May 1 interview with Britain's *Observer* newspaper, which also was published on Sunday, Korzhakov maintained that there is support among Yeltsin's top aides for

holding off the elections.

"A lot of influential people are in favor of postponing the elections because we need stability," Korzhakov said. "If we have the elections, there is no way of avoiding a fight."

Despite a flurry of opinion polls indicating that Yeltsin has pulled roughly even with Zyuganov, most analysts in Moscow remain convinced that the surveys overstate the president's strength. Sources close to Yeltsin's administration say the president's own polls have him trailing Zyuganov by up to 20 percentage points.

Some polls show that Yeltsin might even finish third on June 16, behind ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and fail to make it into a runoff round.

Palestinians and Israelis begin final stage of peace negotiations By Storer H. Rowley Chicago Tribune(KRT)

TABA, Egypt With smiles and handshakes, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators on Monday concluded their inaugural round of talks on a permanent peace agreement vowing to "put an end to decades of confrontation."

In a joint communique issued at the end of their two-day session at this Egyptian Red Sea resort, the parties agreed to form a steering committee to guide the talks on the thorniest disputes still holding up a final agreement: Jerusalem, security, Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlers and future borders.

The committee will work in secret to help resolve deadlocks over the next three years of tough bargaining on "final-status" issues between their two peoples.

The panel must define a format for the talks and formulate the outlines of a final pact. It will be the make-or-break negotiation in the long, torturous Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Uri Savir, director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry and chief Israeli negotiator, said the peace process, which started in secret talks three years ago in Oslo, was close to collapse earlier this year after four terrorist bombings by Palestinian extremists killed 59 people in Israel.

A series of discreet meetings by senior Israeli and Palestinian negotiators helped bring the talks back from the brink. Israel loosened its crackdown on self-rule areas in the wake of the bombings, and the Palestine National Council voted to annul clauses in its founding charter calling for the destruction of Israel.

"If, after one month, we have all the committees working, we have implementation again on the ground, we have the PNC decision and we have the permanent status talks, it means that this process is very strong and very solid and based on common interests," Savir said.

The final-status talks mark the third and final phase of the process begun at Oslo in 1993, which led to the signing of a Declaration of Principles calling, in the first stage, for limited Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Both sides complain that the other has failed to fulfill key commitments from the second stage, the so-called Interim Agreement signed last year extending Palestinian autonomy to six major West bank towns and hundreds of villages.

Israelis complain Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has failed to protect them adequately from terrorist acts by violent Islamic groups such as Hamas that reject the peace process.

Palestinians protest that Israel has failed to comply with its promises to release Palestinian prisoners, open a safe-passage link between Gaza and the West Bank and redeploy its troops out of most of a seventh major West Bank town, Hebron, on schedule.

There were indications that Savir and chief Palestinian negotiator Mahmoud Abbas, known as Abu Mazen, had used some of their time at the first session of final-status talks trying to work toward a compromise on the outstanding deadlock over Hebron.

"I think we will reach an understanding," said Abu

Instead of opposing they must now explain to a dubious public why something ought not to be merely discouraged that most people know to be wrong. "For years," writes John Leo in *U.S. News & World Report*, "feminist leaders have treated moral discussions of abortion . . . as a betrayal," adding "there is an obvious tactical reason . . . any such debate would split the pro-choice constituency, a large portion of which thinks abortion is wrong." Exactly. This is why one should be forced. Naomi Wolf's piece drew a shriek from Planned Parenthood, which compared her to "murderous fanatics," described as "intemperate" her description of abortion as "evil," called the casual acceptance of abortion "one of humankind's greatest achievements," and claimed "every woman's decision about abortion is a moral decision," including what Wolf describes as "the repeat abortions . . . the suburban summer country-club rite-of-passage abortions, the 'I don't know what came over me, it was such good Chardonnay' abortions," and much else.

A Democrat who ticks off Planned Parenthood loses much of his backing and money. But how many of the voters the Democrats need to coax back or retain would support Planned Parenthood against Naomi Wolf? A moral debate is the Democrats' nightmare. A good reason for one to be held.

Imagine a united Republican party that dares to do this:

Lay out in moral terms its objections to convenience ethics as subversive of culture in general.

Lay out in specific terms the connection of those ethics to crimes against women.

Urge a policy based on adoption and explain it as follows: "Since 1973, there have been about 1.5 million abortions yearly in the United States, a frightening destruction of human potential. At the same time, nearly one couple in five is described as infertile. Many of these have been made quite unhappy. Some have spent vast amounts of time and money in attempts to have children; often with little success. To address these two problems, we tend to treat them as

one. We urge abortion and adoption services to join forces to match parents and children. We plan to compile a national registry of people willing to adopt and raise children and distribute it nationwide to clinics that treat pregnant women. We suggest that women about to abort be urged to bear and place children, and be encouraged to do so. We ask Democrats to join us in this voluntary, non-coercive effort to save and enrich human lives."

What would this do to the national Democrats? They would be cleft, by their center and left. They could endorse this, which would please the center and

be good for the people and country. Or, they could please the left, and denounce it. They can alienate what remains of their center, and marginalize themselves as extremists. Or they can play to the center, and alienate, perhaps engage, their one source of power, their activist, fund-raising, base. What would happen to the PAC checks from left-leaning lobbies? The civil rights caucus? Emily's List? From NARAL? From NOW?

Another side of this that is largely unrealized is the power to splinter their base. Abortion by choice is itself anti-

woman: When women worldwide commit infanticide on the basis of gender, they overwhelmingly choose to kill girls. Before the Clinton administration sends off another delegation to an international conference, armed with language to make "abortion rights" global, let it mull this one over: Some years ago, the *New York Times* ran a story from China, to the effect that the widespread use of prenatal testing had brought on a slaughter of girls. "Partly because of ultrasound . . . the sex ratio of newborn children in China reached 118.5 boys for every 100 girls . . . more than 12 per cent of all female fetuses were aborted, or otherwise unaccounted for. Based on a population of 1.17 billion, that adds up to more than 1.7 million missing girls each year." Not only in China, with its one-child policy: "Throughout Asia, with its traditional preference for boys, ultrasound scanners . . . are being used to



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 3, 1996

MEMORANDUM FOR BRUCE REED

FROM: DAVID SHIPLEY ^{David}

SUBJECT: STATE OF THE UNION

Since you're doubtless flooded with State of the Union suggestions, I will take the liberty, at Don's suggestion, of adding a few more to the pile.

I. This idea links military service with our successful war on crime. The President could introduce a plan that rewards those who are serving in the military by making it easier for them to join local police forces when their time in the service is up. The work the military is doing, increasingly, involves helping people learn to keep the peace. These skills, I would argue, are exactly the skills our police officers need to have here at home. So let's reward those who have served their country abroad by making it easier for them to serve America at home: fast-track them into law-enforcement. Reward patriots with jobs. Strengthen law enforcement. Create a mini-G.I. bill for cops. The good these men and women are doing in Haiti and Bosnia can be done in Detroit and small towns across the nation.

II. While we believe the decision to have an abortion is such a momentous one that it can be decided only between a woman and her God or conscience, and that it must therefore remain legal -- we also believe that we should do everything in our power to see to it that abortion is exceedingly rare. To that end, the President should propose that every publicly financed abortion clinic also have, in the same building, a publicly financed adoption clinic.

III. Education.

a. English as a national language. Intensive courses in our shared language must be a condition of citizenship.

b. School uniforms in public schools.

c. Extend the school year to match that of our competition: Germany and Japan.

cc: Don Baer

Bruce

Here's the information on adoptions

that Melange mentioned. Call if

you need anything else.

Jon Klein

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the First Lady

For Immediate Release

November 13, 1995

REMARKS BY FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
AT NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH EVENT
WASHINGTON, D.C.

MRS. CLINTON: Good Afternoon. Thank you. Thank you. Please be seated and please be welcomed to the White House. This is a very special day for all of us. And there have been many very important events that have occurred here in the East Room of the White House, but I honestly don't believe there is any that is more important than what we are doing by celebrating National Adoption Month. And November is a particularly appropriate time to highlight the importance of adoption in this country.

It's hard to believe but Thanksgiving and the Holiday Season are a little more than a week away. And during this season we traditionally focus on family. And we recognize how much we need and depend on the love of our parents and spouses and children and other relatives. So for all of you who are gathered here to begin this celebration, that we hope will ignite a fire of enthusiasm throughout the country about adoption, I want to say thank you.

There are several members of Congress here and I am delighted that all of you could join us. Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala, a long time advocate of family and children services is here with us because all of us believe that there isn't anything more important than our families and that the families formed by adoption are special and deserve the support of all the rest of us. Because we want to emphasize that there's a need in our country to bring the richness and love and support and guidance and discipline and attention of family life to every one of America's waiting children.

As we go into the Holiday Season, I hope every American will recognize that there are tens of thousands of children waiting for the love of a mother, a father, a sister, a brother, to have grandparents and aunts and uncles, to have a dog or a cat like Socks. Tens of thousands of those children, every single day, are growing up without mothers or fathers to help teach them, to nurture them and to tell them that they are special. We know

they are, but they need someone in their family to tell them that.

Often when we think of adoption, we have a picture in our mind of infants being welcomed into a family. But adoption today involves children and teenagers of all ages, backgrounds and circumstances. In this room today are adoptive families and waiting children who demonstrate the range of adoptive experiences. Adoption has provided a new beginning for school-aged children, for adolescents, for children with physical and emotional and educational disabilities, children of different races and cultures, and brothers and sisters who want to remain together.

Let me give you a picture of the children in America who are waiting. Six out of ten of them are school-aged children. Four out of ten are white. Four out of ten are African-American. The rest, Hispanic, Native American and every other race and color that you can imagine. Two out of three have special needs. Each one of these children has the capacity to love, to bring new joy and energy into a family. Most of you who are here, the families that already know that, are living proof of how adoption can be successful and emotionally rewarding. But we need more of you.

I recently met with Shane Salter, a young man who grew up in foster care without ever being placed in a permanent family. He described what that meant to him. He talked about his continued longing for parents who would not only care for him but who could be grandparents to his own children. Adoption can change lives, not only of those in the immediate family, but through generations.

I know that adoption in America today can be frustrating and emotionally draining and expensive. A newspaper column I wrote about adoption this summer generated more responses than any other I've written. I meet people throughout the country who come up and say they have read my column and they're an adoptive parent. Or they have read my column and they're a foster parent. Or they read my column, and they were adopted. Prospective parents have written to tell me of the immense obstacles, the red tape, and the costs, particularly the legal costs, that have led them to despair of ever being able to adopt a child.

I want you to know that the President is committed to easing and encouraging the adoption process. And I recently convened a group of experts to discuss how to make the government a better partner, and more responsive to the needs of prospective parents and children. In particular, the administration is working hard to ease the adoption of minority and special-needs children. The President is committed to enforcing the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act which prohibits adoption agencies from denying the placement

of a child solely on the basis of race, color, or national origin of a child or prospective adoptive parents.

The administration also championed -- and the first bill the President signed -- was the Family and Medical Leave Act which ensures that parents can take time off when they adopt a child without fearing the loss of their jobs. And the administration has launched a public education campaign about adoption. A campaign in which I am very honored to participate. These are just some of the many initiatives, both in the government and in the private sector, and in partnership between both the public and private sectors, that are designed to support the placement of children in loving homes.

But all of your efforts and all of the administration's efforts to strengthen our families and children could be jeopardized by actions in Congress. The government currently provides essential recruitment and training services for prospective adoptive parents. As well as subsidies to families who adopt special-needs children, those living with Cerebral Palsy, or HIV, or some other disability, since those children have large medical and educational expenses. Many of the children who are special-needs, when they are adopted into families, bring with them such large medical costs, that if Medicaid is cut back substantially, the medical insurance for many of those special-needs children will no longer be available after they are adopted. Which would be a great tragedy, because there are so many parents who just need a little bit of financial help with the costs. Need a little bit of subsidy but then do need continuing medical help to be able to open their lives to these children. So we must all who care about adoption know that putting our nation's economic house in order does not mean sweeping out compassion and caring for our neediest children and families, making it less likely they will ever have a house of their own.

We have to work together to improve our adoption system. In the Proclamation for National Adoption Month the President said that citizens from all communities and organizations from the public and private sectors must join together to renew our commitment to finding permanent homes for each one of America's children. Two of the private foundations doing this important work are the Ann E. Casey Foundation which is active in five states, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Families For Kids, active in ten states.

I wish we could re-double, re-triple our efforts. I believe that if we really put our minds to it, if we could recruit qualified volunteers out of our judicial system and our legal system and our social work system, to be assigned to each child who is waiting to be adopted. We could make it possible for thousands and thousands more children to be adopted by this time

next year. We have to put our minds to it but there is no more important task than trying to do everything in our power to ensure that every child has a family.

Perhaps no person has been a more effective advocate for children waiting to be adopted, than our next speaker. The founder of Wendy's, the star of T.V., Dave Thomas started speaking out on adoption in 1990 when he became the national spokesperson for the White House Initiative on Adoption. As an adopted child himself, he says he would not have become the successful father, husband and businessman he is today, had he not been able to grow up in a supportive family.

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption seeks to make adoption more affordable, streamline the adoption process, and educate the public about the potential joys of adoption. Mr. Thomas believes that no child is unadoptable and every child deserves a home and a loving family. But he knows, as we all do, that we have to overcome some misconceptions about adoption. We have to make it very clear that the children who are waiting are children just like yours and mine and every other child who goes to school and plays in playgrounds. They are America's children. And we have to make it clear to America that they would benefit greatly from having one of these children in their lives.

Mr. Thomas has also been a leader in the campaign to encourage corporations to extend maternity benefits to adoptive parents. This is so important. We do a terrible job in our country of ensuring maternity benefits in nearly every instance in most of the businesses in our country. It's important for new parents to be able to spend time with that child. Think how important it is for a new child coming into a strange home, filled with anticipation to have some time where he is the center of that family's attention, and that at least one parent gets a chance to spend that time with the child.

Within Wendy's, adoption benefits are paid leave and financial assistance with adoption costs. Available to employees who have been with the company for at least one year. All of us are very proud of Mr. Thomas' leadership and grateful to him for it.

Following him to the podium will be the Reverend Wayne Thompson, President of One Church-One Child. This is one of the great ideas in America. And I wish every church would join One Church-One Child. Because through One Church-One Child, we have seen literally hundreds of thousands of children being given homes who might otherwise not have been known to anyone. And the church serves as a back-up extended family for the members who adopt children. Through this work, thousands of African-American children have found loving homes and supportive church congregations.

You will also be hearing from the Marshall Family. The proud parents of two beautiful little girls, they have experienced so much love and happiness with their two daughters, that they have spent considerable time promoting adoption in their own community. In fact, they are the family featured in the posters supporting adoption that appear in Wendy's restaurants around the world.

And then finally, we will hear from a young woman who knows exactly what's at stake. Deanna is 13. She lived in a foster home for seven years before moving into a group home in Topeka, Kansas. Though she no longer lives with her two foster sisters, she is still close to them and she is still waiting. She is a cheerleader, an avid reader, and a budding poet -- and a lovely young woman based on my experience with her a few minutes ago.

So these people who will be speaking to you have the experience that we would like to see transmitted to every American. They know what it's like to form a family by choice. To be able to say, I choose you to be my son or daughter. And in return to know what it's like as a child to have the love and support that can only come from one's own family. So please join me in welcoming Mr. Dave Thomas."

Dave Thomas: "Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I thank you Mrs. Clinton. I asked Mrs. Clinton about, something like about a year ago, if she would help. And she said, "I will." And that's the reason why we're here today so I just want everyone to know that Mrs. Clinton and the President are dedicated to adoption. So let's give them a big hand, because they did it.

Let me tell you why I'm interested in adoption. I was adopted as Mrs. Clinton said, and my mother, my foster mother died when I was about five years old. And I was born out of wedlock and I had nothing to do with it -- trust me. And I had nothing to do about being adopted, it wasn't my fault. But I was adopted and I had six, no not six, I had three more foster mothers and step-mothers and then I left when I was 15 years old. But I do know how important it is, a family. And all through my life I've always been envious of mothers and fathers. Because I've never seen my mother and father. And if you have never seen your mother and father and the nurturing, you know everyone deserves the love and nurturing, when you grow up. I never had it, and I've always been kind of jealous of it.

And my kids, I have five children, fourteen grandchildren, and I probably spoil them for that reason. Now whether that's good or bad, but it's one of the things that, I wasn't spoiled. But I know one thing, I did have a grandmother that did care for

me. She was my foster grandmother and I didn't find out until I was 13 years old that I was adopted, and I was really hurt. So I do know how important it is and I feel so sorry for these children today, in particular, parents who don't take care of their children. I mean I just think it's a crime. I think we need to have an education to educate these parents about responsibility. I don't know how you feel about it but I'm real strong on responsibility.

You know, in foster care, there is almost a half-million children in foster care right now. And there's about 100,000 waiting to be adopted. And when we started the foundation, we said, well, we need to have some goals. And our objective was to make adoption affordable and take the red tape out of adoption, and so that's what we've really been trying to do. And so the first thing we did, we put adoption benefits right with the maternity benefits. And I want everybody to understand it's kind of a no-brainer. If you have maternity benefits, add adoption benefits. And we've done that--

I'm even trying to get the federal government to do the same. Right Mrs. Clinton? Mrs. Clinton said she's going support me. Congressmen? -- Women? -- Senators? Don't forget now, because it's really important. But right now we have, in about thirty-five states, we have adoption benefits. And in cities and in corporations. We wrote all kinds of letters and it's really the right thing to do. We have not said how much, but just to help.

And we also have a bill in the Congress to a tax-credit. And I think it's something for -- adoption is expensive. And we need to help people to adopt as Mrs. Clinton said. And I hope this bill -- Debby -- is going to work out real well. I hope everybody supports it because it's really an important thing.

And then, I think that the next thing that we've been working on, is that we've tried something that we call a computer. Does everybody understand what computers are? And Jan Heffner is the Director of the Dave Thomas Foundation -- stand up Jan -- Jan has been working on this real, real hard.

You know what it is, it's really children with willing parents. Now the children need to be matched with willing parents. And what's happened is IBM, AT&T and Marriot have helped with some government agencies working to make this happen. And the first example case of adoption's waiting children on-line through the National Adoption Center, there was 100,000 inquiries. Am I right Jan? Over 100,000. So Internet is really something that we're really trying to work on.

We're trying to do everything we can to make it possible and remind people about adoption. Because, what happens, these kids are out there, and they go from foster home to foster home. I was in Chicago not too long ago and a little boy, six years old, was in sixteen foster homes. Can you imagine that? I mean that's not fair. So that's what we're really trying to do and if we can get the federal government -- that would really be a good example to put in for all the federal workers adoption benefits. Don't you think so?"

Mrs. Clinton: "I do."

Dave Thomas: "So, I'd just like to say this, I'd like to just say this. I think this is really a great event. I think it's something that we need to work on. And the more awareness and the more we talk about it. And I just keep talking about, and some people like to listen to me and some don't. But I'm going to keep talking because that -- every boy and every girl deserves a loving family. So thank you, and god bless you."

Wayne Thompson: "Thank you Mrs. Clinton for the opportunity to be a part of this historic day, and for your help in raising the awareness of the need for adoptions in our nation. The importance of adoption of children throughout our country can never be overstated. For these children are fortunate enough to have loving, permanent homes, in which they have been nurtured and cared for. They're led into adulthood with the support of parents which every child is entitled to and every child requires.

The family values are embodied by those parents who choose to bring children into their families and experience the joys of parenthood. The mission of the National One Church-One Child is to challenge each and every African-American congregation to adopt one African-American child. We believe that this furthers our need in our community for taking responsibility for our children. Believe me, this plan works.

In our church, we have had over sixteen adoptions since my involvement in this worthwhile program. In fact, there's one little boy who thinks he's pastor. When he was adopted I noticed that -- I always go to the door to greet the members as they leave -- I noticed that my line was shorter than usual, and I became a little bit concerned. I looked around and saw him shaking hands. And he had been adopted by a single-parent, a young woman who was an accountant, so I went over to him and I said, 'Now listen, there are some ground rules in this church. I'm the pastor -- and I shake everybody's hands so if you want to shake hands, come stand by me.' Well the brightness of his eyes

told the whole story. That where he had had no friends, no extended family, no church home, he was rejoicing, because now he had a new family and new friends.

We've had enormous success in placing children in our community in much needed adoptive homes. Many families, however, cannot adopt children without the help of the federal guarantee of financial assistance for every child and especially for special-needs children. This includes the children with Downs Syndrome and Cerebral Palsy and HIV AIDS and crack-cocaine addictive. These children are important too. And children are important to god and so our mission is one that we feel that we must continue to fight until the battle has been won.

The average family could not accept the responsibility for these children without the federal guarantee of financial assistance that is currently provided. This guarantee enables these families to care for children who would otherwise languish in the foster care system. And we are aware that there are welfare reform proposals that are pending now in Congress that would eliminate this much needed guarantee. And so our aim, and our struggle continues as we sound the alarm throughout our communities and from our pulpits, that there are children who are needed to be adopted, but that the government needs to accept the partnership which we offer. We offer it willingly. We offer it gladly.

Two out of three children who are waiting for adoption in this country have special-needs, making this federal guarantee more essential than every before. In the history of One Church-One Child, since 1980, more than 90,000 children have found homes through our congregations across this nation.

We thank god for the vision of Father Clemence many years ago and we thank you, Mrs. Clinton, for the vision you've cast forth today, because with your support and the support of those who represent and make up our government, we know that the prayers of the righteous will be answered. And so we offer, in this partnership consortium, the prayers of many people who want children to have permanent loving homes. Many pastors who work in our programs have themselves, like me, become adoptive parents and so we know that we practice what we preach. And we know that the children are the ones who get the blessing.

Again, thank you for making this a special day for children across this nation. We know that they long and deserve permanent, loving homes. And so that the need for further guaranteed federal protection most come and we believe with the help of god it will come. Thank you."

Mrs. Marshall: "First of all, I'd like to thank Mrs. Clinton, Mr. Thomas and all others involved, for inviting my family to be a part of this special event for a very important issue.

First of all, I would like to say that if only everyone out there knew, how much joy and happiness Kayla and Terry have brought into me and my husband's life, everyone would be lined up at all adoption agencies everywhere to adopt a child.

My husband and I have been married for 12 years. After being married 9 years, we decided we wanted children. I went to the doctor and found out that I wasn't able to have children. I used to always watch a local spot on our local news program called, 'Wednesday's Child'. They highlight on children that are up for adoption and need homes. So we decided to call Franklin County Children's Services and see how we could go through the adoption process.

They invited us to an adoption party in April of 1992. We were there for about an hour and there were hundreds of kids there from the ages of new-born to 7 years of age. We were there and we played with kids, we made balloons, we jumped rope and then all of a sudden, a little girl comes in. She was late. She came in and she had her little friend's hand and I looked at my husband and I said, 'Look at those jaws, I just love her.' When I first saw her, we knew that she was the one.

She talked to us at lunch, she asked for our fruit that we didn't want. She wasn't shy at all. And so we knew that she was the one and we called the next day and said that we wanted to start our class immediately, we wanted to get her as soon as possible. After we adopted Terry, she wanted sisters and brothers and so we said, 'Hey, we're willing to go and adopt another.' So then, Kayla comes into our life and there's not a day that doesn't go by that she just makes us smile and laugh so much. And if we had room in our home we would adopt 1,000 kids, no matter what race, what religion, color. We just love kids, because children are our future.

I remember when one day we didn't have kids, back when we didn't have kids, we adopted 15 children, nieces, nephews, neighbors' kids, and we went to the Ice Capades. We took up a whole row. We came back to our one bedroom apartment, we threw a big pajama party for 15 children. So, I mean, if we had room, we would adopt more, but we don't have the room in our home but we do have the room in our hearts. And we would like to let the kids know that are waiting for families and homes to keep the faith and with a little bit of help, hope and prayer, you'll all have a family and a home some day. Thank you."

Deanna Moppin: "My name is Deanna Lee Moppin. I have been in SRS custody ever since I was five years old. I was removed from my birth home because of sexual abuse. I was then placed in a new home where I remained for seven years, but then we seemed to have some problems so I was removed from that home along with two other of the girls that were in there.

We were placed in a shelter in Topeka, Kansas where we remained for a few nights before moving on to the villages. In the villages, I have two foster parents and there are nine other kids living with me. The foster parents try to help us feel good about ourselves and they try to help us with our problems and they do the best to find us all good homes that we will happy in.

Some of the kids have nowhere to go, so they just have to keep putting one foot in front of the other and hope for the best while making goals for themselves until they reach their destination.

For most of them their destination is adoption. It is also one of mine. The reasons that I want to get adopted is usually if I want to go to the movies, I have to ask my house parents and they have to ask my village social worker who has to ask my social worker -- and then it has to come back the same way. That usually takes awhile. And if I want clothes, I have to ask my house parents who have to ask my village social worker who has to ask my social worker. There is also paper work that needs to be done and that usually takes up to about three weeks.

The other reasons that I want to be adopted is I would have a place that I could call home. I would have a room that I could call my room. I would have a family that I could love and would love me back.

I wrote a poem about waiting for a home and I would like to share it with you now:

My nerves cringe with excitement as I must wait.
I don't know when it will happen; there is no date.

My one wish that I hope to come true.
Will you make my wish come true, will you?

I don't want to be here forever, I want a home.
Please get me out of this system and out of this dome.

Does anyone want me; it feels like three whole years.
I am still waiting for you, I'm so close to tears.

I want to live happy with my spirit so free.
Only you can make it happen; when will it be?

The papers are here, you have finally heard.
I'd fly to you now if I were a bird.

One question left; Do we make a pair?
Are you somebody who will really care?

I hope you're the one for other choices have come.
I'll go through them all for my choice should not be dumb.

I've always been hoping for this day to arrive.
Without a good family I could not survive.

My nerves boil with excitement I no longer wait.
I know when it will happen and I do know the date.

Mrs. Clinton: "I want to thank everyone who's here and all of the participants. I want to invite all of you into the State Dining Room where there will be a reception and some cookies and things for all of the children who have demonstrated extraordinary patience this afternoon. I just want to end with something that really, I think, echoes what everyone said. The primary responsibility for children lies with the parents and parents have the highest obligation to their own children and should do everything in their power to take care of those children. But sometimes for a lot of reasons that go back to the beginning of human history, that responsibility is not accepted. And then all the rest of us, I think, have the responsibility. We are a part of every child's family whether we acknowledge it or not. And so in any way that we can, we should try to accept that responsibility and give the love and attention that every child who was born deserves to have. And so that's what we hope the result of this National Adoption Month campaign will lead to -- more and more Americans accepting responsibility for all our children. Thank you very much."

tody decisions must be made. Regardless of individual feelings, everyone involved in the process, especially a parent, has an obligation to temper the pain children will inevitably experience.

Anyone who has raised children knows how attached they are to the security of routine. Long after divorce, they usually harbor hopes that their parents will reconcile. The anxieties that come with divorce require that parents do whatever they can to avoid creating additional uncertainty. Parents need to remember that little things often matter most—maintaining mealtimes, helping with homework, telling bedtime stories, taking weekend excursions, praying together. Children's needs must come first.

In deference to their children's feelings of shock, abandonment, and insecurity, adults have to control their own feelings, whether they are relieved and pleased at leaving a marriage, or angry and resentful at being left. This requires a degree of awareness and self-control that can be hard to muster in the midst of so traumatic an event.

Simple acts of decency and civility may be most important: Refusing to criticize the other parent to a child. Providing a decent level of child support, because your child deserves to be taken care of financially, regardless of your feelings about your former spouse. Honoring the times you promise to spend with your child. Using that time to become involved with your child's life, whether by attending sports events, volunteering at school, or simply sitting together talking. Making the effort to celebrate birthdays and holidays and attend school performances. Sparing your child adult disagreements.

As a lawyer, I handled my share of divorce cases and

tried my hardest to keep the parties out of court by working to help them solve their disagreements. Time and again I saw otherwise rational adults, twisted by revenge, jealousy, or greed, attempting to use their children as bargaining chips. Watching one parent browbeat the other over child support or property division by threatening to fight for custody or withhold visitation, I often wished I could call in King Solomon to arbitrate.

That wise king, faced with two women who both claimed to be the mother of a child, ordered that the child be cut in two, so each could receive half the body. The woman who cried out that Solomon should give the child to the other, rather than kill him, revealed herself as the real mother by placing the child's welfare above the contest over his custody. How I wish that all modern-day parents, divorce lawyers, and judges would put so high a priority on determining a child's best interests.

There are signs of hope, however. Some courts now require that divorcing parents attend classes to learn about the potential effects of divorce on their children. They are given training in ways of keeping their children out of marital conflict, opening up lines of communication, and arranging for parenting to continue in a loving and supportive manner.

I admire the way the Parent Education Program in Columbus, Ohio, treats divorce as a public health issue, "because it constitutes a major life stress for 40 percent of American children and can put many of these children at risk for long-lasting difficulties that can derail their development." Twenty-three states have already established voluntary child custody mediation programs, and four more require mediation through statewide programs.

In Michigan, the Friend of the Court system investigates and makes recommendations on custody, visitation, and support in all domestic relations matters, including divorce. The total population of Michigan is only about 4 percent of the nation's, yet that one state repeatedly collects more child support than any other—10 percent of the nation's total in 1993. At the same time, the state strictly enforces visitation rights, in line with its philosophy of treating "the non-custodial parents as more than simply a billfold."

It is incumbent on the village—friends, teachers, mediators, counselors, and ministers, among others—to advocate for children during and after divorce, especially when parents cannot or will not be there for them. Adults beyond the immediate family reached out to my mother, giving her enough support to make it through a difficult childhood. Similarly, the Louisiana teenager who wrote to me found a male role model in a friend of the family.

A long-term study of children in Hawaii examined why some children from poor and broken homes were resilient in the face of adversity while others were not. The study found that resilience depended on many factors, key among them the dependability of the adults in the child's life and the social supports available to the family.

Although children's relationships with parents, particularly their mothers, were found to be especially important, relationships with siblings, grandparents, other adult caregivers, teachers, ministers, and neighbors were significant too. The study reported that positive changes in behavior and attitudes were possible even after early childhood, "if the older child or adolescent encounters

new experiences and people who give meaning to one's life, and a reason for commitment and caring."

Anyone can provide that reason for commitment and caring, as long as he or she is stable and devoted to the best interests of the child. When a parent needs help, individuals in the village can pull a child into their embrace and provide guidance and support, informally or through organizations like Big Brothers/Big Sisters or Boy and Girl Scouts.

In the terrible times when no adequate parenting is available and the village itself must act in place of parents, it accepts those responsibilities in all our names through the authority we vest in government. That means our city, county, and state social welfare services are not only the province of their employees. They intervene in families to protect children on our behalf. And by any fair assessment of our foster care and adoption system, we are not doing a good job taking care of our children.

Approximately 450,000 children are in our foster care system at any given time, and close to 100,000 of them will not be reunited with their families. Too many children are in limbo for far too long. There are not enough qualified foster parents to go around, and those who are available are frequently discouraged from forming warm attachments with children whose futures are still uncertain. Caseworkers are overwhelmed by the numbers of children for whom they are responsible and by the severity of the emotional and physical damage many have suffered.

Loving adults are eager to offer permanent homes to many of these children. But the American adoption process can be a nightmare of complex regulations,

outdated assumptions, and institutional inertia. Public adoptions can take years, and private adoptions may be too costly for many to afford. One woman wrote to tell me how she and her husband, both musicians, had spent thousands of dollars adopting a little boy who is "the joy of our life." When her cousin's teenage daughter recently became pregnant and could not afford to keep her child, the same couple volunteered to adopt again. As simple as this case should have been—the parents and baby being members of the same extended family and all parties agreeing to the adoption—it still cost upward of \$4,000 because of legal fees and paperwork.

For others, there is the shadow of fear cast by uncommon but highly publicized cases in which birth parents sue to reverse an adoption. A forty-year-old newscaster I met in New Mexico wanted to adopt but was discouraged by notorious cases like that of Baby Richard, in which a child lived happily with his adoptive parents until his birth father won custody of him a few years later. However rare they are, such cases undermine people's faith in our adoption system and encourage them to look to other countries for children, while so many of our own country's children go without proper care or love. At an event in the East Room of the White House promoting National Adoption Month, thirteen-year-old Deanna Moppin spoke eloquently about the longings of these children: "I would have a place that I would call home. I would have a room that I would call my room. I would have a family that I could love and would love me back."

Adoption in America is also made more difficult because of a historical bias against interracial adoptions,

which can mean interminable waiting until children are matched with parents of the same race. Although many adopting parents would prefer to bring up children who share their own cultural and racial identity, many others do not have a preference and would gladly take a child of a different background. Today, despite heroic efforts by groups like One Church, One Child, there are far more minority children needing homes than there are same-race homes for them. To prevent these children from languishing in foster care, my husband signed legislation and ordered that new guidelines be put in place to prohibit federally funded agencies from using race as the sole deciding factor in placing children.

The village can take it further. We could set a goal of reducing our foster care and adoption rolls by 100,000 children each year for the next five years by moving children either back home or into adoptive families, whichever is in their best interests. We could be willing to terminate parental rights more quickly whenever physical or sexual abuse is involved. We could recruit qualified citizens to share with overworked social workers, lawyers, and judges the burden of moving children's cases through the courts. We could make decisions by birth parents to give up children for adoption more difficult to overturn, especially when a child has already become strongly attached to an adoptive family. We could ensure that government continues to cover some of the costs associated with adoption. We could enlist more businesses to follow the leadership of Wendy's president Dave Thomas, who has been vocal about businesses subsidizing adoption costs as well. In these and other ways, we can see to it that considerations like regulations, money,

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skin color, and even parental rights and adult prerogatives take a back seat to the love and security children so deeply need.

Discussions of modern families often miss the point. Although the nuclear family, consisting of an adult mother and father and the children to whom they are biologically related, has proved to be the most durable and effective means of meeting children's needs over time, it is not the only form that has worked in the past or the present. I know many successful adults, like my mother and my husband, who were raised in families that did not fit the conventional mold. Others I know thrived in the care of biological and adoptive surrogates, and even in foster care or institutions. What a family looks like to outsiders is not as important as whether adults know what children need to develop positively, and work to fulfill their responsibilities to each other and to their children.

In addition, however, every society requires a critical mass of families that fit the traditional ideal, both to meet the needs of most children and to serve as a model for other adults who are raising children in difficult settings. We are at risk of losing that critical mass in America today. Parenting has never been easy, but today, when most adults consciously choose to become mothers and fathers, we owe an even higher degree of love and respect to the children we bring into this world.

Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of the families we grew up in, we get a second chance at domestic happiness when we create a family of our own. Bill and I have watched with joy as Roger and his wife, Molly, and my brother Tony and his wife, Nicole, have joined us in parenthood. We've been impressed with the willingness

our brothers have shown to participate in the daily tasks of child care, and particularly with Roger, who learned by negative example the importance of a father's influence on a son's life. Every parent makes mistakes, sometimes serious ones. But if we find mediating influences along the way, as Roger found in his mother, brother, extended family, and wife, we can learn even from the painful lessons our upbringing has to teach us.

Those of us who work hard enough—and are lucky enough—to create a flourishing family life have a bounty of joy and security to share with others less fortunate. By extending our good fortune, we create a village that acknowledges children as our first allegiance and strives to ensure that every child has at least one champion.

Talking It Over

By Hillary Rodham Clinton

Let's Make Adoption Easier, Less Costly

The first time I met Mother Teresa was not in an urban slum or a remote village in India but in the fancy ballroom of a Washington hotel. It was February, 1994, and she had just delivered a speech against abortion at the National Prayer Breakfast. When she finished her remarks, she pulled me aside for a chat.

She told me about her homes for orphaned children in New Delhi and Calcutta and asked for my help in setting up a similar home for abandoned and neglected babies in Washington. I agreed to work on the project. Although we differ on some issues, we found common ground on adoption. So we sat and talked about how to find homes for the hundreds of thousands of American children who need loving families.

A year later, my daughter and I visited Mother Teresa's home for children in New Delhi. There were too many cribs and too few toilets, and there was too little space. There was on way the place could ever pass inspection in any American city. But there were also dozens of beautiful babies, mostly girls, being fed, clothed, sheltered and loved until they could be adopted.

These images stayed with me when I returned home. I was even more determined to help Mother Teresa bring to Washington the compassion I had witnessed in India. But you cannot imagine how much red tape was getting in my way. Ironically, many regulations designed to protect children often overlook what kids need most: love and attention.

Finally, on a sweltering day this past June, the Mother Teresa Home for Children opened in an affluent residential neighborhood of the nation's capital. It is a two-story Tudor house with a swimming pool in the back yard, donated by a remarkably generous person who chose to remain anonymous. At the dedication ceremony, Mother Teresa walked me through brightly painted rooms filled with cribs, bassinets and stuffed animals.

Although it will accommodate only eight children, this home is a crucial step in awakening Americans to the crisis of adoption.

We should worry less about how many cribs can be placed in a room and more about how many children can be placed with loving families. And instead of yelling at one another about abortion, we should spend our energy making adoptions easier. If that were to happen, there would be far fewer abortions and far more children in happy homes.

Today, there are about 450,000 children in the United States who need permanent families. There are tens of thousands of parents seeking to adopt. Yet every day, complex regulations, outdated assumptions and wrong-headed laws stand in the way of bringing these parents and children together.

For some Americans, such as a woman who wrote to me recently, cost is the biggest barrier. She and her husband, both musicians, spent thousands of dollars adopting a little boy six years ago. When her cousin's daughter recently became pregnant at age 18 and could not afford to keep the child, the same couple volunteered to adopt again. As simple as this case should have been—the parents and baby were members of the same extended family and all parties agreed to the adoption—it still cost upward of \$4,000 because of legal fees and paper work.

For others, there is a fear factor. A 40-year-old newscaster I met recently in New Mexico was interested in adopting but was discouraged by highly publicized cases such as Baby Richard's, in which birth parents seek to reclaim custody of adopted children.

Decisions to give up children for adoption should be difficult to overturn; the decision to return the child to the biological parents or to uphold the adoption should be made as quickly as possible. No child should be left in limbo.

The process also is made more difficult because of a historical bias against interracial adoptions, which can mean endless waiting until children are matched with parents of the same race.

Today, there are far more minority children needing homes than are being placed for adoption. To prevent these children from languishing in foster care, new guidelines are now in place that will prohibit federally funded agencies from using race as a factor in placing children.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we did something dramatic about adoption? Why not set a goal of placing 100,000 children each year for the next five years? To do this, we would have to make adoption easier and enlist volunteer lawyers and judges to speed up the legal process. And we should also follow Mother Teresa's model, in which considerations such as money, regulations and skin color do not outweigh the more important gift of love.

Hillary Rodham Clinton's column appears every Sunday in

TALKING IT OVER**BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON****RELEASE: WEEKEND, OCTOBER 28-29, 1995**

When I first began writing this column more than three months ago, I hoped to occasionally use this space to respond to the many people who write to me.

So far, I have received more heartwarming and thought-provoking letters than I can count. I also have received a few angry letters whose contents cannot be published in a family newspaper.

I've heard from a class of second- and third-graders in Kansas who are concerned about pollution, a man from Illinois who is campaigning against tobacco use, and a retiree in Florida worried about the high cost of health care.

A boy from Texas wanted to know what Socks eats (dried cat food) and a 10-year-old in Minnesota asked how many rooms are in the White House (132).

I wish I could respond to all of these letters in this column. Instead, I can only answer a few.

Many readers wrote in response to my column in July about our nation's complicated system of adoption and the thousands of needy children who are waiting for permanent, loving homes. Not surprisingly, I heard from lots of people who said they were eager to adopt children but had become overwhelmed by the long wait, red tape and high cost involved.

A Florida woman, frustrated by a lack of communication among adoption agencies and government social workers, summed up the feelings of many prospective adoptive parents: "I know there is a little girl in this country somewhere waiting for my home."

One couple from Oregon, trying to adopt through a county agency, was told that it might take several years before a child was available. Their alternative, to adopt through a private agency, could cost \$16,000 or more.

Because these problems are so widespread -- and because so many children continue to languish in foster care -- I recently got together a group of experts, adoption advocates and concerned parents to help people learn more about adoption and to make the process simpler and more efficient for waiting parents. There is no reason so many loving parents cannot be united with children desperate for their care and attention.

I also have received mailbags of letters about my trip to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September. Some people were

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON 10/28-29/95

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concerned about my participation, and many others were enthusiastic about it. A few expressed their outrage over infanticide and coerced abortions in China, problems that people became more aware of because the conference was held there. Others wondered if the conference would really make a difference in improving women's rights around the world.

I believe the conference was an important and historic first step in giving women the tools they need to lead productive lives. More than 180 nations agreed for the first time that women are integral to the economic, political and social life of every country and that global peace and prosperity depend on the well-being of women.

However, the conference in Beijing will only be a lasting success if governments, institutions and each of us in our own lives work to ensure that women are full and equal partners in society. Here at home, for example, the President has created a special White House Council on Women that will enable government agencies to work together and reach out to private organizations to fulfill the goals of the women's conference.

Health issues were on the minds of many readers. I heard from scores of Gulf War veterans and their families, who were concerned about the government's response to illnesses commonly referred to as Gulf War Syndrome. I hope those families, many of whom have suffered greatly, know that the President has established an advisory committee to investigate Gulf War veterans' illnesses.

Perhaps the most gratifying health-related letter I received came from Miriam Murtha, a Virginia woman who got a mammogram as a result of our breast cancer awareness campaign that began earlier this year. Her screening found two malignant tumors before they could spread to other parts of her body. "I will be having regular checkups from now on," she wrote.

Children also wrote to me with suggestions and questions. Many wondered if I could raise their allowances, lower the voting age or send them free tickets to Washington. (Sorry, I can't.)

And quite a few offered their own editorial comments. "I think there should be no more drugs. I don't want any more guns and no more pollution," wrote Brandon Jackson, a second-grader from Kansas.

To Brandon and everyone else who wrote to me over these last few months, thanks for talking things over with me.

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FOCAL POINT

A NATIONAL BULLETIN ON FAMILY SUPPORT & CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

ADOPTION: A LIFELONG JOURNEY FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

OPENNESS IN ADOPTION

Sweeping changes in adoption practices are taking place in the United States and other western countries. The movement is generally away from confidentiality and secrecy toward more "openness" in adoption, in which either mediated or direct contact occurs between the child's families by birth and by adoption.



Why such changes? First, the practice of confidentiality in adoption was based on several assumptions: that birthmothers, once tainted by the stigma of illegitimacy, would willingly "relinquish" their children in order to "get on" with their lives; that adoptive parents who were infertile would be able to build a family through adoption just as if they had "their own children;" and that adopted children would be integrated into the new families with minimal difficulty and live happily ever after, as if they were biological children of these parents. But these assumptions are not accurate. Birthmothers don't forget that they gave birth. In fact, many of them spend the rest of their lives wondering how their children are doing. Adoptive parents can't pretend that a child is their own by birth, especially if they look different or have different interests or talents. And adopted children cannot pretend they had no history before the adoption. Where are their roots? What piece of their identity puzzle is missing? Whom do they look like or talk like? And why shouldn't they know their biological roots?

Second, the pool of babies available for adoption has shrunk because

of the availability of abortion and the decreased stigma associated with single parenting. Thus, adoption agencies have had fewer babies to place.

Third, growing numbers of adopted persons are returning to the agencies that placed them years before to seek information about their birthfamilies. Birthparents have been more keenly aware of the possibility of having at least some knowledge of their children's well-being as they are growing up, and they are sometimes forming search groups in order to establish links with the children they placed through confidential procedures. Adoptive families are contacting agencies to get information about birthfamilies because they cannot adequately answer their children's questions.

Consequently, agencies have found that options that include openness are attractive to birthparents who might place with them, and many adoption professionals feel that openness is in the best interests of the child. This change has been very controversial. Some adoption specialists argue that fully open adoption should be standard practice for everyone and

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MID-LIFE REFLECTIONS ON ADOPTION

It was a recurrent dream. A large, old Victorian house with at least three stories and a cavernous basement in an unknown city. Its wood is rich, but dark, the hallways are narrow and poorly lit. Where there were windows, they were a bit smudged so that what light came through was diffuse and pale. The doors to the outside were loose or sometimes nonexistent so that a chill wind blew through them. Yet, it wasn't a frightening place—no ghosts inhabited it, no creatures menaced from its shadowy corners—it was simply empty. There was no furniture in it anywhere. Night after night for as long as I can remember, I walked its floors, from basement to attic, sometimes stopping to rest or sleep fitfully usually on a seat in a bay window. Sometimes through the window I could see blurry faces going by as if I were on a train moving through a crowded station. Throughout the years two things have never changed: I was always cold and I was always alone.

For years I made no attempt to create meaning from this repetitive image. Then one night, I had a radically different dream that gave meaning to the first and banished it forever. I dreamed of a modern ranch-style house with pocket doors between the living room and a patio enclosed by clear glass walls. I was showing a friend through the house and had dramatically pushed open the sturdy doors revealing a striking image that imprinted itself as I awakened. The patio was filled with familiar furniture, knickknacks, people and bright sunlight!

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HRC: 'More younger kids - how much further will we be behind?
How to expedite termination of parental rights - need better
What to do about kids who can't escape system

DRAFT

December xx, 1996

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY
THE SECRETARY OF LABOR
THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

SUBJECT: Steps to Increase Adoptions and Other Permanent
Placements for Waiting Children in the Foster Care
System

As we enter this Holiday Season and reflect on the importance of family in our own lives, let us remember the tens of thousands of our nation's children who live without permanent homes and caring families.

Today, there are over 450,000 children in America in our nation's foster care system. More than half have been in foster care for two years or more. While the great majority of these children will return home, for about one in five, returning home is not an option, and they will need another home, one that is caring and safe. These children wait far too long -- typically over three years, but for many children much longer -- to be placed in permanent homes. Each year, state child welfare agencies secure homes for less than one-third of the children whose goal is adoption or another permanent placement. I know we can do better.

*Adoption credit
Fact sheet*

I am committed to giving waiting children what every child in America deserves -- loving parents and a healthy, stable home. I believe we should work toward a goal of at least doubling the number of waiting children who are adopted or permanently placed from the public foster care system by the year 2002. Of the over 450,000 children in the nation's foster care system, approximately 20,000 were adopted last year and approximately 7,000 were permanently placed in legal guardianships. While the number of adoptions each year has been constant for many years, I believe that by working with states to identify barriers to permanent placement, setting numerical targets, rewarding successful performance and raising public awareness, we can meet the goal of at least 54,000 children adopted or permanently placed from the public foster care system in the year 2002.

Today, therefore, I direct the Secretaries of Health and Human Services, Treasury, Labor and Commerce and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management to take the following actions:

1) Within sixty days, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with state and civic leaders, will

report to me on actions to be taken to double the number of children in foster care who are adopted or permanently placed out of the public foster care system by the year 2002. This report should include, but should not necessarily be limited to, recommendations in the following areas:

- (a) Plans to work with states on setting and reaching state specific numerical targets, through technical assistance, initiatives to involve community leaders, parents, the business and faith communities, and national resource centers to make information on best practices available to states. The details of the technical assistance program should be included in my budget submission to Congress this coming February;
- (b) Proposals to provide financial per child incentives to states for increases in the number of adoptions from the public welfare system. Options considered should have little to no net costs, as increases in the number of adoptions from the public system will reduce foster care costs, thereby offsetting much if not all of the incentive payments. The details of this program should be included in my budget submission to Congress this coming February;
- (c) A strategy to ensure continued aggressive implementation of the Multi-ethnic Placement Act;
- (d) Plans to compile and publish an annual state-by-state report on success in meeting the numerical targets; and
- (e) A strategy to recognize successful states.

2) Within sixty days, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with state and civic leaders, will report to me on recommended changes to federal law and regulations and other actions needed to move children more rapidly from foster care to permanent homes. The goal for all children in our nation's foster care system is permanency in a safe and stable home, whether it be returning home, adoption, legal guardianship or another permanent placement. The law should be strengthened to emphasize the importance of planning for permanency as soon as a child enters the foster care system. Barriers that needlessly keep children in foster care should be removed. The Secretary's report should include, but should not necessarily be limited to, recommendations in the following areas:

- (a) Plans to provide states with funding to identify barriers to permanency and to develop targeted strategies to achieve permanent homes for children who have been in foster care a particularly long time. The

details of this program should be included in my budget submission to Congress this coming February;

- (b) Proposals to shorten the period of time between a child's placement in foster care and his or her initial hearing at which a permanency determination is made;
- (c) A strategy to clarify that the purpose of "dispositional hearings" is to plan for permanency, and, as appropriate, to consider referrals for family mediation, termination of parental rights, adoption, legal guardianship or other permanent placements;
- (d) A strategy to clarify the reasonable efforts requirement and its implications for permanency;
- (e) Plans to ensure that states give appropriate weight to permanency planning by establishing standards for securing permanency through adoption or guardianship, once a decision has been made that the child cannot be returned home; and
- (f) Plans to examine alternative permanency arrangements such as guardianship, when adoption is not possible.

3. Last month, I signed a proclamation designating November as National Adoption Month -- a time to increase awareness about the tens of thousands of children waiting for families and to encourage all Americans to consider the rewards and responsibilities of adoption. However, adoption must be a national concern throughout the year. Therefore, I direct:

- (a) The Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop and lead a public awareness effort, including use of public service announcements, print materials and the Internet;
- (b) The Secretaries of Health and Human Services and the Treasury in consultation with state, civic and private sector leaders to develop and disseminate information about the new adoption tax credits and other adoption benefits;
- (c) The Secretaries of Labor and Commerce in consultation with state and civic leaders to identify and recognize companies in the private sector with model policies to encourage and ease adoption among employees; and
- (d) The Director of the Office of Personnel Management to direct all federal agencies to provide information and support to federal employees who are prospective adoptive parents.