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A CELEBRATION OF CULTURES

**Remarks by
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ROEPER-R, (ELB,SPC/lb), December 9, 1991

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19% SUNY _____

Can't talk to a mob angry people.

Educate

- not just for accuracy,
- but for honesty as well.

Course on the ethics of connection

- how to listen for truth and experience
- spot propaganda.

T. Elton Trueblood, president of Earlham,

graduate mentor

A paper every week

Is it true?

Is it really true?

But we also need both better language

- **not only nationally,**
- **but globally as well.**
- **Let's reduce the stereotypes of other cultures.**
- **Let's have students study a language other than their own.**
- **Let's confront the fact that millions cannot read.**

And make world literacy an international crusade.

ROEPER-R, (ELB,SPC/lb), December 9, 1991

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My point is this.

We share with people all around the world

- the exquisite use of symbols.

And, in the days ahead, how we use language will either

- separate or divide ____.

Can we develop a common language of the Heart

THE ARTS

This brings me to human commonality number three.

I'm convinced that

- beyond the life cycle and language
- we all respond to the aesthetic
- and global education surely should include a study of the arts.

To put it simply, art is a universal language and surely we can advance global education through the arts.

- Dance is a universal language;
- architecture is a universal language;
- music is a universal language;
- painting and sculpture are languages that can be understood all around the world.

Salvadore Dali's painting,

- "The Persistence of Memory" can be understood by everyone haunted by the passage of time.
- And when Picasso confronts the unspeakable agonies of

war,

the dismembered child,

the scream of a bereft mother,

the shattered home,

and puts them on a huge canvas called
"Guernica,"

he makes a universal statement about destruction that can be felt in the heart of every human beings.

I'm suggesting

- that for the most intimate,
- most profound,
- most moving experiences,
- we turn to music and dance and the visual arts—that words cannot convey.

And when archeologists wish to determine the quality of past cultures

- they often do it by assessing the quality of their ____
to the aesthetic

IVC. HISTORY

This brings me to commonality number two.

All human beings on the planet also have a capacity to recall the past and anticipate the future, and so far as we know, we are the only species that can put itself in time and space.

T.S. Eliot wrote that time present and time past are both present in time future, and time future is contained in time past.

- And yet how often we squander this awesome capacity to look in both directions.
- We live only in the present.

Educating students for a new century means introducing them to the history of ____ other than ____

I'm convinced we do need a multicultural curriculum in the schools,

- one that focuses on both Western and non-Western studies,
- and on the role of minorities who have been so shockingly oppressed.

But to study other cultures is not an attack against anyone's ideals.

- **It's a candid recognition that we live in a world**
- **that is becoming more interdependent every single year.**
- **and _____ simply will do.**

To put it simply, students in this country need to learn about western civilization

- to understand the past.

But they also need to study non-Western cultures

- to better understand their future.

Let's help our students understand that

- while we all have a distinctive past,
- we, in the larger sense, share a common future.

GROUPS OF INSTITUTIONS

This brings me to commonality number five.

In spite of the great diversity on this planet the simple truth is that

- **all people-regardless of where they live—**
- **are all born into institutions that consequentially shape our lives.**

Nearly 150 years ago, Ralph Waldo Emerson, observed

- "We do not make a world of our own."

Rather, he said,

- "We 'fall into' institutions already made
- and have to accommodate ourselves to them."

To promote global understanding, I'd like to see all students

- not only study our own institutions.
- But study the social structures and institutions of other cultures, too.

Our son, Craig, lives in a Mayan village in the jungles of Belize

- with his Mayan wife and 3 Mayan children

the smartest and most handsome in the world.

And when we visit him each year, I'm impressed that while we're separated

- by 1,000 miles,
- and a thousand years,

Mayans and Americans still carry on in very basic ways

- with families,
- and communal life.

And I'd love to see a student,

- as part of the core of common learning, do a paper comparing
- Santa Cruz, California
- with Santa Cruz, Belize.

There are, after all, commonalities at the core.

NATURAL WORLD

This brings me to commonality number six.

The reality is that amidst the differences all people of the planet share a relationship with nature

- in which we are all imbedded and working parts,
 - as Lewis Thomas put it.

And global education surely must examine a

- shared relationship with nature.

David, my 3-year old Mayan grandson in Belize,

- understands the connections to nature very well
 - as he chases after birds,
 - and sees corn pounded for tortillas,
 - and bathes down in the river.

But for his urban cousins, in Boston and New Jersey,

- the ecological connection is far more obscure.

When I was United States Commissioner of Education, Joan Cooney,

- the brilliant creator of "Sesame Street,"

came to see me one day.

- She said they wanted to start a new program at Children's Television Workshop

on science and technology for junior high school kids,

- so they could understand a little more about their world and what they must understand to live.
- It subsequently was funded and called "3-2-1 Contact."

In doing background work for that project, they surveyed some junior high school kids in New York City, and asked such questions as:

- "Where does water come from?" A disturbing percentage said "the faucet."
- And they asked, "Where does light come from?" They said "the switch."
- And they asked, "Where does garbage go?" "Down the chute."

I'm suggesting that every single person on the planet

- is inextricably connected to the natural world.

And that our very survival as human beings

- inevitably will depend on our ability to
 - respond sensitively
 - to the earth home we share together.

Surely when it comes to ecology

- we must have an education that is global.

What students simply must understand is

- that the resources of this earth are finite,
- that they are distributed in shocking new ways,
- and that if we pollute the planet we—in the end—
 - pollute ourselves.

WORK

The seventh human commonality is producing and consuming.

Work is universal,

- it's something all people do.

I'm convinced that all students,

- as part of a global curriculum
- should study the meaning of work,
- and how it varies from one culture to another.

When my wife, Kay, and I first visited the Peoples Republic of China in 1974

- we saw an elementary school—in Shanghai—
- where every afternoon the children went to their "little factory" down the hall
 - where they made a little game of "checkers"
- which then were taken to the local store and sold.

They learned very early

- the reality of production and consumption.

I'm suggesting that global education can be enormously enriched

- through the study of work patterns all around the world.

VIII. SEARCH FOR MEANING

Finally, I'm convinced that all of us on the planet,

- regardless of our unique heritage or tradition,
- are searching for a larger purpose.
- We seek to give special meaning to our lives.

Reinhold Niebuhr put it most precisely when he said,

- "Man cannot behold unless he be committed,
- "he cannot find himself,
- unless he finds a purpose beyond himself."

Again, the search for meaning varies greatly from one culture to another.

Religions and rituals are profoundly revealing of the values of any culture.

And it's my own conviction that

- at this moment,
- and in this culture.
- We urgently must help students discover
- a larger purpose and meaning for their lives.

During our study of the American high school several years ago,
I became convinced that we have

- not just a school problem,
- but a youth problem in this nation.

The simple truth is that today's young people are growing up in a world that is

- spiritually impoverished.

It's a world in which they are being fed a steady diet of

- sex
- and violence and obscenities
- that degrade the sacredness of life.

Our children are being told a dozen times a day how "cool" it is to destroy their bodies with cigarettes and alcohol.

And then we wonder why the schools aren't

- disciplined and drug free!

Last year we surveyed 5,000 5th and 8th graders at The Carnegie Foundation and found that

- 40 percent go home to an empty house.
- 60 percent wish they could spend more time with their mothers and fathers.
- Two-thirds often wish they had more things to do.
- And 30 percent said their family never sits down together to eat a meal.

To put it simply

- many of today's young people feel
 - unneeded,
 - unwanted, and
 - unconnected to the larger world.

Margaret Mead said on one occasion that

- a culture of quality is one on which three generations vitally interact.

But we have—in America today—a horizontal culture

- one in which each generation is almost wholly isolated from the other.

For several years my parents lived at a retirement village

- where the average age was 84.

One day my father said

- no big deal being 80 around this place.
- You have to be 90 just to get a cake.

But they had a day care center at the village

- and every four- and five-year-old has an adopted "grandparent"
- they meet with every week.

The whole idea is to make connections across the generations.

The problem is that this same spirit of anonymity is found even in the school itself.

And I'm convinced that—in our larger urban schools—

- many students drop out,
- precisely because no one noticed that they had—in fact—dropped in.

Frankly, if I had just one wish I'd

- break up all schools into units of no more than 400 students each.

I'd assign every students to a "family circle"

- of no more than 20 students each—plus a mentor—
- to meet with at the beginning of every day.

And I'd also like to see every student

- complete a community service term,
- to help them see a connection between
 - what they learn and how they live.

Vachel Lindsay wrote on one occasion that

- It is the world's one crime
- its babes grow dull

- Not that they sow
- but that they seldom reap,

- Not that they serve
- but have no God to serve,

- Not that they die
- but that they die like sheep.

The tragedy is not death,

- the tragedy is to die with
 - commitments undefined,
 - convictions undeclared,
 - service unfulfilled.

CONCLUSION

Here, then, is my conclusion.

More than 50 years ago, Mark Van Doren said that

- the connectedness of things is at the very core of education.
- The student who can begin early in life to see things as connected has begun the life of learning.

The good of global education is to help students understand
that all people on the planet share

Can we build a school community around human commonalities.

The world is a terribly divided place.

Still, it is my deepest wish that

- David, my 3-year-old Mayan grandson, in Belize,
- and Julie, his 3-year-old cousin, who lives in Princeton
- will, through education,
 - grow up firmly believing
 - that even though they are worlds apart, they truly are—deep down inside—
 - members of the same human family.