

Our Greatest Resource: Mentoring Matters

Boys To Men

When we look in the future what will we find
The men that we raised or the boys left behind?

When I gaze in his eyes I know I don't see
A dealer, an inmate or gang wannabe.
When I listen to voices of laughter and hope
I don't hear the anguish of brothers on dope.
When I hug him and hold him I know I don't feel
A child disconnected who'll age caged in steel.
When I give him direction and show him I care
Then I can't imagine a life of despair.
If I let him know often that he is king,
If I make him believe he can do anything,
If I show him that greatness is part of his past
Then his drive toward excellence will make it last.
If I pour a foundation of love and esteem
And provide him with tools that will capture his dream,
If I nurture and strengthen his heart and his soul
Then he'll be encouraged to fulfill his role.
When questioned and challenged, in times of great need,
These brothers will answer, these brothers will lead.
Their rap will be positive, thoughtful and true.
They'll earn our respect through the good that they do.
Their game will be legend as they rise to soar
In neighborhoods, families and board rooms – they'll score.
As they join with their sisters these brothers will build
The future we want and the life God has willed.

When we look in the future what will we find
The men that we raised or the boys left behind?

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Women From Girls

A future more precious than diamonds or pearls
Relies on our choice to raise women from girls.

In her young twinkling eyes I know I can't find
Limitations, detachment, or weakness of mind.
When I listen to voices of laughter and hope
I don't hear a helplessness failing to cope
Through the hugs and the kisses I know I don't feel
Abuse and neglect, or a heart that can't heal.
When I give her direction and show her I care
Then I can't imagine a life of despair
When questioned or challenged, in times of great need,
These sisters will answer, these sisters will lead.
Their words will be steady, their deeds strong and true,
We'll know who they are through the good that they do.
As they meet each new challenge, extending their reach
We'll all benefit from the wisdom they teach.
As they join with their brothers these sisters will build
The future we want and the life God has willed.

A future more precious than diamonds or pearls
Relies on our choice to raise women from girls.

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Good Afternoon,

I generally don't like introductions because they tend toward the irrelevant. If what I have to say is worthwhile then an introduction is not important. If what I have to say is not worthwhile then the introduction is not important but I would like to tell you who I am. I am the son of Calvin and LaVerne; I am the grandson of Ivory, Beryl, Edward and Almeta. I am a product of East 100th street in Cleveland, Ohio where Mr. & Mrs. Knowles, Mr. & Mrs. Bell, Mr. & Mrs. Carson, Mr. & Mrs. Pitts, Mr. & Mrs. Chapman, Mr. & Mrs. Frazier, Mr. & Mrs. Stinson were among the parents who didn't have college degrees, but raised a neighborhood of children who did. I have to acknowledge teachers like Miss Pylick, Miss Smith, Mrs. Lofton, Miss Cloud, Miss Rodney, Miss Dunn, and Mrs. Pontiac, -- the women who taught so effectively at Doan and Miles Standish Elementary schools; and Mr. Barnes -- my only male elementary school teacher. You cannot know me without knowing the relatives, teachers, elders and friends who have supported me through many trials or the community organizations that offered academic, emotional and spiritual guidance. They made me realize that it truly does take a village to raise a child and I am most appreciative that my village is still working on me. I must honor them because so much of what I have been able to do is because of how they prepared me. Most importantly, however, I am a child of God and it is to Him that all praise, honor and glory should be directed. That other introduction told you about some things I had done but it didn't really tell you who I am.

I am honored by the invitation to address the ***School Safety and Violence Prevention Conference***. We are living in a time of accelerating change and complexity where changes in technology, communities, families, work, education, environment, demographics and global interaction challenge us by outpacing our ability to adjust. Thriving in this twenty-first century requires the intellectual and emotional traits and abilities that entail excellence in evaluating and responding to conditions of change. It's imperative that our youth develop the life skills that are crucial to their future. **Change is an *Is Thing!*** It doesn't ask permission and it doesn't always announce its arrival.

[Elaborate]

The changes over the last thirty years are remarkable . . .

In 1976, there were no cell phones, or CDs, no cordless phones or caller ID. Some of us were still watching black and white TVs. Punch cards and Fortran -- the programmers choice and at work on the phone if you heard a voice, it was live. And we couldn't survive without ditto machines -- Selectrics and white-out were used for reports, and if we had to sort, it was done by hand. Carbon paper was still in demand. Pac Man was not yet a game and Atari had not yet achieved the fame that it would. Technology was good. Eight tracks were still being played and VCRs were now being made overseas -- imported for TVs that were still made in the states. We hadn't yet heard of Microsoft or Bill Gates or the IBM PC. And big cities had no cable TV. Pagers were not yet carried by teens -- there were no multiplex theatres with 18 screens. Oil wasn't changed at Jiffy Lube and no one had heard of a Rubik's Cube, a Jarvik heart or an MRI, Indie Jones or that Skywalker guy. Microwave cooking was not yet the rage and research demanded our eyes on a page -- Not the Net. Not yet! The mouse and the hard drive had not yet appeared and Kodak film was still revered for our photographs -- and just for laughs we watched Happy Days not Different Strokes. We listened to Cosby's stories and jokes while the Sony Walkman was just a thought and the first pair of Nike's had just been bought. **Change!** In this shifting changing

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world the challenge for our youth is how to pursue excellence in the midst of change. The changes in the twenty-first century will come even faster. Fifty per cent of technology becomes obsolete every three to five years. Thousands of children are being promoted to ninth grade in the fall. At the time these middle school graduates were toddlers there was no USB 2.0, no XM satellite radio. We weren't watching high definition TV, playing Xbox, Game Cube or Nintendo Wii, not even PS3 or PS2 – but we aren't through. No DVR, TIVO or camera phones, with Bluetooth, texting, and free ringtones. No Ipods, My Space or Facebook sites; no cyber bullies or cyber fights; Now we blog and we tweet on a twitter page living second lives on a cyber stage or watching the world through a You Tube lens while coping with change that never ends.

Yet only 1/3 of our 9th grade students will be prepared to attend college or enter the work force and 96% of other nations (i.e. Ireland, Finland, China, India, etc.) are out-performing our 12th grade students in math and science. Twenty-first century employment is lean, just-in-time, flexible, mobile and global. Today's college graduate may see as many as 8-10 job changes with 4-7 career changes before retirement. Two of those careers have not yet been invented. Change is an ***Is Thing!*** It doesn't ask permission and it doesn't always announce its arrival. A struggling economy in a dangerous world is a constant reminder of how quickly life can change.

GO TO POWERPOINT!

When we talk about achieving success it is important to put success into perspective. Success is often defined as achieving some desired outcome or reaching a goal. In our communities we have to be tougher than that. The foundation of success is in the quality of the relationships that we develop. True and enduring success for a people is rooted in how we connect the future to the past – and that point of connection is ***our youth***. They are our greatest resource! Success is ***more than doing what we want, it is wanting to do what we need***. Part of getting focused on success is committing ourselves to leaving the world in better shape than we found it. The ultimate test of success is how we make a difference.

How great do you want to be? Some people want to be great but they don't want to pay the price of admission.

From "The Drum Major Instinct", a sermon delivered at Ebenezer Baptist Church on February 4, 1968.

"If you want to be important-wonderful. If you want to be recognized-wonderful. If you want to be great-wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. That's your new definition of greatness. And this morning, the thing that I like about it... by giving that definition of greatness, it means that everybody can be great. Because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love. And you can be that servant."

Beyond biology and geography we all serve as part of an extended community. ***We are connected***. We cannot allow the members of our community who are differently-abled or struggling with health issues to be denied the resources and opportunities that will maximize their development. They don't disappear because we close our eyes. Our

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communities are **not** making a difference until the difference is felt by all who are in need.

We are connected! As a community we cannot afford a prison industry populated with African-American or Hispanic males who will become the poster children and justification for profiling, redlining, steering and exclusion. ***We are connected!*** The young men and young women who have lost their way; the men women and children who are trapped in the glass cage of poverty, *able to see out but not get out*, they are still our brothers, sisters, sons, daughters and cousins and we should make every effort to help the adults and especially the youth who want to make a positive contribution – who want to be successful. ***We are connected!***

When we start our climb toward success we will ***stand on the mountain*** that others have built or we will ***languish in the hole*** that others have dug. ***We are connected!*** As a community we cannot afford to leave anyone behind. When we allow that we make prejudice, discrimination and scapegoating *acceptable behavior*. *Personal success achieved without compassion is moral failure*. Raising the quality of our communities is a person to person challenge where relationships are critical. There is no magic pill and no single solution. The village concept is real. While it takes a village to raise a child, it takes strong families to make a village, it takes strong adults to make strong families, and it takes well-raised children to make strong adults. ***We are all part of this cycle and real men and real women will not wait to be asked or begged to do what needs to be done.***

We should be about the business of elevating the spirit ***because we are connected***. We need to reexamine what we mean by success so that we don't mistake loving relationships, caring and kindness, triumph of the human spirit, and tenacity as failure because it didn't produce enough money, degrees, or titles. Each of us has the potential for greatness. We will have the opportunity to make many good decisions. We are part of future history but if we want to have our stories told ***we*** will have to tell them. If we want to live in communities that protect and respect our families and children, ***we*** will have to build them.

Our challenge is to break old stereotypes – to blend our separate stories into a single narrative that is centered on love, mutual respect, support, and accomplishment. We can achieve success when we become men and women of ***concern, conviction, courage, and commitment.***

When we decide to travel ***that*** road to success we will find ourselves in good company! God wants us to be involved, but we can't score from the stands! We can't score from the bench. We have to be in the game! We need to expect and reflect excellence. But on that road to success-remember: *Success is not how much we have; it is how much we give. Success is not how much money we make; it is how we make that money work to build a better world. It is not the car we drive; it is the lift we give someone when he or she needs a ride. Success is not about our credentials, it's about our credibility. Success - is not living large, it is ***leaving large footprints*** for future generations to follow on their way to success.*