Family Living

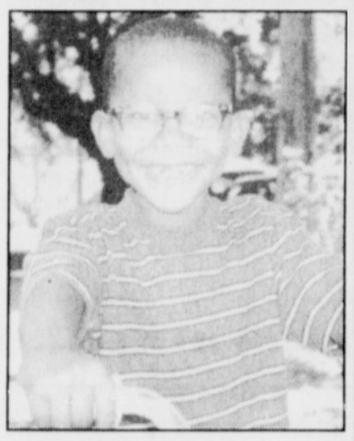
The Portland Observer

"Waiting Children"

Around the United States, there are many children awaiting adoption. In the state of Oregon alone, there are over 200 children in need of adoptive families. We are a group of private agencies working with the state to help find adoptive families. These agencies are completely waiving fees in order to encourage the adoption of these children in need. Single adults, both male and female, as well as couples are welcome to consider adoption. To learn more contact The Special Needs Adoption Coalition at The Boys and Girls Aid Society, (503) 222-9661.

Below are some examples of the special children looking for a loving home:

Issac, age 5



Issac is a warm-hearted, friendly little boy with a dimpled smile. He creates adventures, actively playing with action figures and a toy race track in dramatic play. Inquisitive, he asks thoughtful questions as he strives for a clearer understanding of the world. Therapy has been helping him to process the uncertainties of his past. He has made great progress as he learns to channel his emotions constructively. Issac could brighten a home with his spirit!

Maria, age 12

Friendly and outgoing, Maria is a pleasure to spend time with. With talented and diverse interests, she is an accomplished horseback rider and has even won equestrian awards. Very affectionate and loving, Maria wants to please. Counseling has helped her move forwards from past traumas. Maria blends easily into many different family constellations, providing she gets the individual attention she needs. She could be a great asset to a new family.

City Kids, City Dreams

BY WILLIAM AYERS AND PATRICIA FORD

"What is it," we asked a huge gathering of urban school administrators, "about the presence of large numbers of poor, African-American, or Latino city kids in your schools that makes those places...," we paused dramatically, "wonderful?"

There was stunned silence. Several looks of disbelief. Some nervous laughter. And then a forceful response: "come on," said one older man, his voice ringing, almost angry. "Our jobs are hard enough without you ridiculing us."

The opening question was not meant to ridicule but to examine a glib fiction about city kids. It is true that the last word - "wonderful" - sounds a decidedly discordant note. Until then the question hums along quite comfortably, a familiar melody. But when the anticipated last bar -- something like "terrible," or "difficult," or "challenging" -- is not delivered, the whole thing sounds out of tune.

It is within that jarring discrepancy that we want to begin to think about city kids and city teachers.

An insidious assumption sits heavy and dogmatic on most city schools: that there is nothing about the presence of African-American, Latino, or immigrant youngsters -- especially, in today's environment, Black boys -- that is deemed valuable, hopeful, or important. Their very presence in school is seen as an encumbrance. They are an obstruction, a handicap, and a burden. If these youngsters are known at all, they are known exclusively by their deficits and their putative inadequacies.

Schools tend to focus on the least interesting and simplest of questions: What don't these kids know? What can't they do? School becomes, then, entirely a matter of remediation and repair. Good intentions notwithstanding, feelings of hopelessness and despair define these places for kids and teachers alike.

We were asked recently to look at hundreds of applications filled out by city teachers who had been nominated for an "outstanding teacher" award. One question asked, "What is the biggest obstacle in your teaching?" To our amazement, nearly half of the respondents answered in one way or another that the kids were the biggest obstacle.

Not everyone just blurted it out Many said things like, "I used to be a better teacher, but kids today have so many problems." Some wrote, "If these kids could only speak English. ..." It added up to a powerful message: that schools and classrooms would function much better if the kids would simply not show up.

Picture the Perfect School

Picture the perfect city school: the classrooms are always quiet, the cafeteria calm, the hallways orderly. No fights, no hassles, no graffiti. Bells ring, mimeo machines hum, paychecks are delivered. The place is efficient, clean, peaceful. No kids? No problem. In this context, even to raise the question of the value of city kids is to sound slightly mad.

Most city teachers struggle mightily to do a good job despite inadequate resources and difficult circumstances. But the structure of most city schools -- the strict schedule, the division of knowledge, the press of time, the pretense toward rational efficiency, and the huge numbers of students -- leads to a factory-like operation characterized by hierarchy, control, and anonymity. This structure, in turn, transforms teachers into clerks and student into objects to fear and coerce.

We do not contend that teaching in the city is identical to teaching in wealthy suburbs or rural areas. It is better in some ways, harder in others, interestingly similar yet importantly unique.

Most powerful, hopeful learning begins with the learners. Knowing city kids as learners, discovering them as three-dimensional beings, as fellow creatures, is an important place for teachers to begin. What experiences, knowledge, and skills do kids bring with them to school? What kinds of thought and intelligence are there to challenge and nurture? A sustained engagement with these questions is a basic starting point for city teachers. It is followed closely by the demand to create and environment for learning that is wide enough and deep enough to nurture and challenge the huge range of students who walk through the classroom door.

We reject the notion that city kids (or city teachers or the city itself, for that matter) can best be understood as all deficit, all danger. We see, instead, a sense of life, energy, freedom, and hope in the city and in poor, immigrant, and African-American communities.

This country faces and unmapped future whose core demand will be learning to live together, united yet diverse. It is a future being rehearsed in our schools and in our cities today. We need to embrace the energy and the freedom that is the signature of our cities and the hope of our city kids. Only in that way can helping our students create the future.

The above is an adapted excerpt from City Kids, City Teachers, edited by William Ayers and Patricia Ford (New York: New Press, 1996).

Emergency holiday food program available

The Northeast Emergency Food Program (NEFP) seeks to match the hunger in North and Northeast Portland with generosity that comes from the community. NEFP provides three to five days worth of nutritionally balanced groceries to people who are in crisis and without food.

The program serves residents of Northeast Portland and part of North Portland. The program's office is located at 1912 N.E. Killingsworth, and its hours of operation are 1:00 to 4:00 P.M., Monday through Friday.

Receiving Food: For someone to receive food from NEFP, he or she must get a referral from the Albina Ministerial Alliance (located at 1425 N.E. Dekum) or the Albina Emergency Food Referral office (located at 30 N. Webster). She or he can then bring the referral to our office to receive a three to five day food box. Low-income residents of North and Northeast Portland may also get bread and baked goods at our office Monday through Friday without a referral.

Donating Food: Nearly all of the food distributed at NEFP comes from donations by individuals, churches and businesses. NEFP truly appreciates donations of excess garden or orchard produce. We are often short of fresh fruit and vegetables to give to our recipients. We also accept donations of non-perishable items including canned goods (such as chili, fruit, vegetables, tuna and other meats), boxed foods and baby items. Please bring donations by our office weekdays between 1:00 and 4:00.

NEFP is a program of Ecumenical Ministries that was founded in 1982 to respond to increasing needs in the Northeast Portland community. The program operates with only 1.5 paid staff, relying mostly on volunteers for the hauling, sorting and distribution of food.

Margaret Carter to meet with parents

State Representative Margaret Carter will meet with Albina Head Start parents to hear concerns and issues facing their children and families. She will meet with parents at the following locations:

November 12, 1996 5:30pm Carlton Court Center 5249 N.E. Killingsworth Portland, OR.

November 19, 1996 5:30pm R. Brown Center 606 N.E. Fremont Portland, OR.

On October 16, 1996 Rep. Margaret Carter meet at Hughes Center and on October 22, 1996 she meet at PCC Cascade-Center.

Margaret Carter