

GARY YOKIE
WRITING SAMPLES

1993 Great City Schools Conference: Speech for Governor Ann Richards 2

1994 *Jewish Herald-Voice*: Editorial for Houston ISD Trustee Cathy Minberg..... 3

1995 *Houston Defender*: Article for Houston ISD Superintendent Rod Paige 5

1996 Family Matters Conference: Speech for Houston ISD Superintendent Rod Paige..... 8

1995 Prejudice Awareness Summit: Speech for Houston ISD Deputy Superintendent Faye Bryant ... 22

2008 Texas Democratic Primary: Letter to Dennis Kucinich Supporters 25

2009-2010 Leisure Learning Course Catalog: About the Cover 27

Governor Ann Richards
37th Annual Fall Conference and Urban Technology Forum
The Council of the Great City Schools— Houston, Texas
October 26—31, 1993

It's a privilege to welcome our friends from the Council of the Great City Schools to Texas. It is an honor to host some of the hardest-working people in the country. Urban public school officials have the most difficult job in America—next to being Governor of Texas, of course. Gathered at this conference are some of the most talented, dedicated, and determined policymakers and professionals in the field of public education, and America's children are the better for it.

One reason you have such a challenging task is that, these days, everyone thinks they know exactly how to fix education. Talk to any twenty people, and you get twenty different solutions. We all appreciate the fact that more Americans are taking a serious interest in our public schools, but it shouldn't take one crisis after another to get their attention. Still, some enjoy putting on rose-colored glasses, remembering their own classroom experiences, and telling themselves that things would be better if we could just turn back the clock. Before people outside the field start prescribing solutions for our schools, however, they should actually walk into one, sit down at a desk, and see how much things have changed.

Few of today's adults entered first-grade classrooms and switched on a computer. We didn't get our lessons from a videodisc player. We didn't use terms like "the global marketplace" to describe our future. Our teachers did not hold international conferences by satellite to compare the latest instructional techniques.

Along with new technology comes new demands, and the Council of the Great City Schools is creating a new dynamic to meet those demands. You are leading a revolution in public education that will prepare the young people of this country to compete in an international arena. The world is continuing to change, and it's our public schools that will give us the knowledge we need to prepare ourselves for that change.

I'm proud that you chose Texas for your annual conference. This week, Houston will be a forum for discussing some of the most innovative and constructive ideas in urban education. This conference is another step on the path to building first-class public schools and a well-educated American society. Enjoy the conference and your stay in Texas!

* * *

**Editorial —The Jewish Herald-Voice
For Houston ISD Trustee Cathy Mincborg
On the Search for the Next Superintendent, 1994**

Since Dr. Frank Petruzielo accepted the superintendency in Broward County, Florida, the Houston Independent School District is once again gearing up to fill its top administrative post. The HISD Board of Trustees, for the third time in seven years, must select someone to lead our school system into the twenty-first century. Our news media is currently buzzing with speculation about Dr. Petruzielo's successor.

As a School Board member experienced in the ordeal of choosing a superintendent, I urge my colleagues to seriously consider interviewing candidates from the Houston area. Our region boasts many respected educators who have the training and the demeanor to continue the legacy of school reform. There are over 30 public school districts in Harris and surrounding counties, a number of private and state universities, and several community college systems with talented administrators in charge. When we seek a superintendent who is a visionary, a problem solver, a negotiator, and a compelling spokesperson for the highest standards in education, we need look no further than our own backyard.

There is no reason for Houston's students, parents, teachers, and taxpayers to endure the time and expense of a nationwide superintendent search. If we decide to take that approach, HISD will be forced to compete with many other big-city districts now grappling with similar vacancies. Search firms typically charge upwards of \$50,000 for their services—for that expense, we could pay the beginning salaries for two certified teachers. While such a search is under way, we may also lose precious momentum in our ongoing efforts to restructure our schools. A leadership vacuum of six months or more could seriously hamper our progress and lower employee morale. We cannot afford to jeopardize the improvements we have already realized.

A superintendent chosen from our area will be familiar with the problems and the resources of the Houston community. The School Board remains committed to the reform efforts now underway. With that focus we now have site-based management. Our schools now operate under the shared decision-making model. Each of our 244 campuses has the authority to formulate its own budget. The superintendent selected to head the district will need to be familiar with these changes and believe passionately in the continuing decentralization from the administrative structure to the campus. Moreover, an effective superintendent must convince a majority of School Board members that he or she has a keen knowledge of Houston's culturally diverse urban population along with

significant managerial skills. Public involvement is crucial to our mission in the classroom; a candidate from our immediate region who meets the stringent criteria will have already established a substantial measure of confidence with the people of Houston.

We should also consider the fact that many of our neighbors are disenchanted with the premise that our governmental and educational institutions must continually look elsewhere for talented, competent leadership. Elected officials are too easily tempted to hire the “white knight” galloping in from somewhere else. Let’s not underestimate the skills of the dedicated professionals already working to advance public education in the Texas Gulf Coast. I believe Houstonians are eager to rally around a seasoned school superintendent who is one of our own.

* * *

Article for the *Houston Defender*
For Dr. Rod Paige, Houston ISD Superintendent of Schools
December, 1995

Americans of African ancestry deserve to take pride in the strides we've made over the last half of this century. At the same time, we know that we still face considerable challenges as we strive for equality. Education poses particular challenges for black America. Our young people seem disproportionately affected by society's problems. We hear accounts of lower test scores, higher rates of teen pregnancy, lower graduation rates, and other unfortunate trends among young black men and women—and struggle for an answer. In the midst of significant problems, however, there are encouraging signs. I watched with great interest in November as millions of black men gathered in our nation's capital to accept a greater responsibility to uplift our community. Our desire for progress as a people rests on assuring a top-quality education for our children; here are my suggestions for improving the climate for learning in the Houston Independent School District:

Promoting learning in the home. Our schools are not isolated islands of education; teachers need the support of parents and families. Of course, we understand that parents don't have it easy. Along with coping with the everyday pressures of the workplace, parents also make elaborate arrangements to get their sons and daughters to and from school and provide satisfactory after-school supervision until they return home. Single-parent families have it even harder. Fortunately, more parents strive to create a home environment that reinforces classroom instruction. Today's parents begin reading to their children while they are still in the crib. They help their children with their homework, guide them through school projects, accompany them on outings and extracurricular activities, and attend PTA and PTO meetings. That's the kind of cooperation that enhances our academic efforts.

Supporting the Minority Male Initiative. We all recall those awkward adolescent years, those years when we know we're not really children anymore, but we're not yet ready to accept all the adult responsibilities. Those years are particularly rough on young men in middle school. That's why we began the Minority Male Initiative. We bring adult male authority figures into the life of the school, pair them with at-risk students, and show these youngsters that there are positive outlets for their energy and creativity. These dedicated volunteers demonstrate that our youngsters need not follow the negative stereotypes. Instead, they can aspire to achieve more rewarding goals. We need more concerned volunteers who are willing to give these youngsters guidance during a critical time in their lives.

Improving our students' test-taking skills. I don't want to get bogged down in the controversy over racial bias in achievement test preparation or scoring; the simple fact is these instruments—whether we like them or not—will not disappear from the educational landscape anytime soon. Preparation is crucial. Everyone, regardless of his or her race, has experienced the pressure of “test anxiety,” so removing the fear factor is half the battle. Once students overcome their apprehensions about the various formats of standardized tests, they can analyze the questions, rely on their accumulated knowledge, and begin to solve the problems with confidence.

Fighting drug, alcohol, and tobacco use. In recent years, we have seen encouraging news about smoking and drug and alcohol abuse among black teenagers. While statistics show that experimentation and continued use of these dangerous substances is declining among African-American youth, we can't afford to assume that we have solved the problem. If the message is indeed getting through, we must maintain the dialogue and help our youngsters resist the temptations that lead to chemical dependence.

Opposing violence and gangs. HISD has adopted a “zero-tolerance” policy toward violence, weapons, and gang activity. We now take swift and deliberate disciplinary action to remove offenders from school so that the children who want to learn can do so in a climate of safety and security. Our schools need the same commitment from the entire community. Work with your schools, the police, civic clubs, and neighborhood watch groups to report incidents of violence and gang activity. If we refuse to accept this negative behavior, we can guide our young people to more productive and fulfilling pursuits.

Encouraging 18-year-olds to vote. Many of our high-school students turn 18 in their junior or senior years. The best civics lesson these young adults could possibly receive is the chance to participate in the democratic process. We need to make sure that these students have every opportunity to register to vote and to discuss the various levels of government, the issues of the day, and our electoral system. Let's bring our young people into the process and show them that they too have a stake in deciding our city's future.

Promoting health care and nutrition. We must start in kindergarten and pre-kindergarten to instill good health and nutritional habits that last a lifetime. In this day and age, we must also give our youngsters solid, sound information about HIV and AIDS. The fastest-growing segment of the population testing positive for the AIDS virus is teenagers and young adults. We need to convey the

message that, regardless of how indestructible they may feel, our young people are in grave danger if they ignore the public-health warnings.

Reducing teen pregnancy rates. Society must work with our schools to give young women a sense of self-confidence and independence so they do not value themselves solely in terms of their sexuality. Likewise, we must create a similar sense of responsibility (and respect for their female peers) among our male students. When students can ponder the realities of parenthood and other aspects of adult relationships, they will be less willing to jeopardize their education and careers by engaging in irresponsible behavior.

Enlisting in one-child, one-parent mentorship. Since assuming the role of Superintendent, I have advocated an informal program under which a concerned adult takes one child under his or her wing, and encourages that child to succeed academically. I'm sure we can all find time in our busy schedules to help one student with a problem. Our youngsters look up to us for advice, guidance, and approval. We should be there when they turn to us.

Practicing what we preach. The final, overriding suggestion I have is perhaps the simplest to explain and the toughest to practice: serve as a consistent example to young people. The most endearing aspect of children is their innocence and sense of trust. From their youthful, morally absolute perspective, young people can instantly recognize insincerity, especially on the part of us adults. This is not to say that we must be perfect; if we've made unfortunate decisions in our lives, we should be open and honest about them. We can own up to our mistakes and let our youngsters benefit from both our good and bad experience. As we dispense advice to members of the next generation, let us always do our utmost to live up to that advice.

Many of the measures I advocate are common-sense, "bootstrap" approaches to the problems we face as a community and a nation. The overriding theme that connects all these proposals is that Houstonians cannot look to our public schools to solve deep societal crises by themselves. Whenever possible, I urge every responsible adult to get involved with their neighborhood school. After all, education—and our future—is everybody's business.

* * *

**“THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AS A NATURAL
STARTING POINT FOR REBUILDING COMMUNITY”
FAMILY MATTERS 1996 CONFERENCE
NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI
FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 1996**

Good morning. It’s a pleasure to be back on my native Mississippi soil.

- This part of the country holds many positive personal memories for me, and it’s always good to visit family and long-time friends.

[insert new material here]

Of course, it’s great to be in Houston where we don’t have the heat, the humidity, and the mosquitoes.

- And if you believe that, we’ve also got an NFL team we’ll sell you—cheap.

[pause]

Let me thank the leadership of the Cooperative Extension Service of Mississippi State University for inviting me to speak to you today.

I commend all those responsible for organizing this event dedicated to strengthening our families.

- I know I speak for us all when I express my fervent hope that the family can again become the primary resource for positive social development.

As Superintendent of the Houston Independent School District, I offer the vantage point of someone charged with serving the needs of 207,000 students in the seventh-largest school system in the United States.

There is any number of reasons why our social institutions are being stretched to the limit, but the main one is that to a large extent schools, government, social-service agencies, and private industries are assuming roles that were once the domain of the family.

Our image of the family influences the way our institutions responds to the needs of the families we serve.

[TRANSPARENCY #1: “LEAVE IT TO BEAVER”]

For many years, in American popular mythology, the modern family consisted of Ward, June, Wally, and the Beaver.

That idealistic yet narrow example painted us an attractive and comforting portrait.

- Dad worked in his mysterious, vaguely defined job at the office, while Mom cheerfully vacuumed the house in her pearl necklace.
- Each waited anxiously to hear about the entertaining hijinks of their children.

Of course, we all understand that fictional model—and the stereotype it projected—for what it was.

Like all stereotypes it was far removed from the reality of the time, and it certainly bears little resemblance to today’s social situation, particularly in our cities.

- Where the nuclear family is still intact, both parents are working—in one or more jobs each—to bring economic stability to the household.
- A far more common occurrence in many urban neighborhoods is the single-parent household.

- Moreover, America's high mobility rates, the prevalence of divorce, economic troubles, and other societal factors severely test the resilience of the extended family—grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and close friends and neighbors.

We didn't arrive at this situation overnight.

- Although our nation's families have their problems, it's important to keep these issues in perspective.

We're going to spend a great deal of time at this conference examining the problems that beset us, but while we do that, let's refuse to abandon our optimism.

Let's keep in mind the fact that our civilization's values have always undergone agonizing reappraisal.

In the fifties, we began to bemoan the loss of the American tradition of rugged individualism.

- Books such as *The Organization Man* and *The Lonely Crowd* fueled intense debate among educators and social observers.

In the sixties, we witnessed the decline of our cities as centers of social activity.

- The population shift to the suburbs, which began only a decade and a half earlier, went into high gear.

We also began to question the effectiveness of the churches and other religious institutions and witnessed a turn to a more secular society.

In the seventies we focused on the disappearance of the so-called "nuclear family," and now many of us are fearing the disintegration of the family itself.

In the eighties, our public schools came under scrutiny with the publication of William Bennett's *A Nation at Risk*, the rise of the concept of "cultural literacy," and other critiques of compulsory education.

Now, in the 1990s, two other institutions have joined the ranks of perceived disarray—business and government.

- Mega-mergers, hostile takeovers, and "downsizing" have created a sense of unease and insecurity for nearly every working family.

- Americans have always maintained a healthy cynicism regarding their government, but the level of mistrust directed toward our public institutions is at an all-time high.

All these evolving concerns—the loss of individual initiative, the decline of the city, the shift to a secular society, the family in crisis, our troubled schools, and a loss of confidence in business and government—point to a larger issue.

In our nation, generally speaking, we have strayed from any real, overriding sense of community.

We have lost the concept of the *agora*—the place where everyone within society, regardless of status, gathered, rubbed shoulders, and discussed topics of vital interest to the entire culture.

I'm afraid the closest our culture comes to the notion of the *agora* is the modern shopping mall.

- Don't get me wrong; it's nice to have a central place where you can buy sneakers, a best-selling book, and a frozen yogurt, but it's a far cry from a town hall meeting where people pull together to face common challenges.

In our consumer culture, modern conveniences have allowed us to compartmentalize various aspects of our lives and isolate ourselves.

- Sometimes even those modern conveniences fail to satisfy us.

- How many times have you caught yourself standing in front of a microwave oven, impatiently tapping your foot, annoyed that it's taking too long to heat up a snack?
- Often instant gratification just isn't "instant" enough.

I come from the world of public education.

- Although we're in the business of realizing long-term gratification, our arena has also been affected by the technological revolution in dramatic ways.
- Our school district in Houston has taken advantage of every appropriate teaching technology, including educational television, computer instruction, and distance learning.
- These tools and other advanced scholastic techniques certainly have their place in a teacher's repertoire, but they are no substitute for human interaction.
- Regardless of the amazing progress of virtual reality and artificial intelligence, we will never be able to generate at random a scenario that equals a classroom full of students asking questions and working together to solve problems.

That is not to say that we should ignore individualized or technologically based forms of instruction.

The information age does indeed bring us many opportunities, but we should not expect to find the answer to all our concerns on the electronic frontier.

After all, our schools are not merely storehouses of knowledge.

- We teach our children teamwork, etiquette, and social skills; in other words, we build a microcosm of the larger civilization on our campuses.

- Our children learn the manners and *mores* of our culture at home, in church, and at play; but in school they practice them with regularity.

For this and other reasons, I respectfully submit that the public school is a natural choice for rediscovering that lost sense of community.

- In fact, this community building is already taking place in school systems across this land.

Compulsory public education offers a natural forum for a meeting of the minds.

In the Houston school district, we are working diligently to forge new alliances among teachers, parents, business people, public employees, social-service workers, church groups, professional organizations, fraternal societies, military personnel, and our colleagues in higher education.

- This interaction can only serve to strengthen all these cultural institutions, particularly the beleaguered family structure.

I'd like to illustrate how the school can serve as a focal point by concentrating on a social development that has only begun to receive widespread attention, but it is one I have examined extensively: the phenomenon of the grandparent-headed household.

In the urban landscape—although none of these factors is exclusive to city life—drug abuse, HIV, high rates of incarceration, long-term unemployment, high divorce rates, and teenage pregnancy have dissolved many nuclear families.

In this vacuum, the grandparent has been thrust into the role of primary person responsible for child-rearing.

The Center for Excellence in Urban Education, affiliated with Texas Southern University in Houston, studied 23 inner-city elementary schools in the Houston Independent School District as a statistical sample.

This pie chart shows the living arrangements of the students examined in the study.

[TRANSPARENCY #2: PIE CHART]

- Of 14,904 students included in the study, 5,331—or roughly 36 percent—lived in nontraditional arrangements.
- By nontraditional, the researchers meant that both parents were absent from the household or that, if parents were present, their role was in significant ways subservient to (or less influential than) that of the grandparent.
- Nearly 17 percent of the children studied—2,511 of them—lived in a grandparent-headed household.
- Another 1,476—or nearly 10 percent—lived in dysfunctional-parent households where one or both parents depended on the student’s grandparents for their livelihood.
- Another six percent—896 students—fell into the category of “shuttle” children, or those who reside in their parents’ home one day and the grandparents’ home the next.
- A smaller but more disturbing statistic is the number of elementary-level students living in household with no parental figure present. Four hundred forty-eight students, or three percent made up this group.

Researchers for the Center broke the number of grandparent-headed households down into ethnic subcategories.

[TRANSPARENCY #3: BAR GRAPH—ETHNICITY]

- While this phenomenon cuts across demographic lines, this bar graph shows that while African-American students were only 76 percent of the students in the sample, they accounted for 94 percent of the grandparent-headed homes.

- In the three remaining ethnic categories—Hispanic, white, and Asian—we see not only that they made up a small portion of the homes in which a grandparent is the primary responsible adult but also that grandparent-headed households were not the predominant living arrangement.

Now that we've taken time to absorb the empirical data on this phenomenon, we can consider what effect a grandparent-headed household has on a child's development and his or her schooling.

These grandparents, by choice or by circumstance, have borne the burden of raising a second generation of children.

- Most never dreamed that they would spend their remaining working years, or even their retirement, bringing up their children's children.

We wanted to understand not only the extent to which grandparent-headed households figured in the overall school population but also the impact this living arrangement had on education.

We asked the principals of the schools involved in the study for their observations.

The principal is in the best position to know, since he or she has an overview of scholastic achievement, disciplinary problems, parent discussions, school counseling, and social-service referrals.

To begin the investigation, we asked principals for their estimation of why grandparents were in charge of the home.

[TRANSPARENCY #4: TABLE—EXPLANATIONS FOR GRANDPARENT-HOUSEHOLD STATUS]

They weighted their responses, giving five points to the most important explanations and one point for the least important explanation.

- Economic factors ranked first among the reasons they cited.

- Drug addiction was the next major factor, followed by the grandparents' desire to create a better child-rearing environment in general.
- Principals then cited parent incarceration, teen parenthood, abandonment, illness, and the death or irresponsible behavior of parents in descending order.

These factors vary in severity, but they tend to have a destabilizing effect on the home. This in turn affects the student's performance in the classroom.

We then asked the principals to assess the behavioral differences between students living in grandparent-headed households and those living in traditional arrangements.

[TRANSPARENCY #5: TABLE—PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH GRANDPARENT HOUSEHOLDS]

- As you can see from this table, our principals found that these students tended to be more disruptive and displayed more anger, aggression, and attention-getting behavior.
- They also found that, in general, these children tend to be less sociable and have poorer self-images, earn lower grades, take part in fewer activities, and are sent to the office for discipline more frequently.

We found an interesting and encouraging sign, however, in the midst of these observations.

- Even though principals cited parental drug abuse as a major factor contributing to the formation of grandparent-headed households, the children in those house were not reported more often for drug abuse than their peers in traditional homes.
- Since many of these grandparents have had to struggle with chemical dependence on an intimate basis, it is understandable that they would be alert to the signs of chemical abuse.

- It's also natural to assume that their experience would lead them to dissuade their grandchildren as forcefully as possible from engaging in that type of self-destructive behavior.
- Furthermore, the absence of a parent or a legacy of family turmoil is likely to serve as a powerful example in the students' young, impressionable minds.

We know that these beleaguered grandparents are striving to do the best they can.

Where grandparents come up short, from our principals' perspective, is in the supervision of the children in their care.

All parents have experienced the intergenerational tug-of-war, pitting themselves against their children and grandmother and grandfather.

- Grandparents have a natural desire to spoil their grandkids, and the grandkids quickly learn to exploit that desire.
- Those of us familiar with traditional households have seen balanced diets, strict bedtimes, expected chores, and precise allowances fly out the window when Grandma and Grandpa come to visit.

Every parent is willing to bend the rules from time to time, but in the extreme, particularly in a day-to-day living arrangement, this kind of indulgence or permissiveness creates real problems.

- Principals cited this climate of indulgence along with overprotectiveness as two main factors contributing to the academic and disciplinary problems.
- They also reported that a grandparent's lack of physical strength and stamina, poor knowledge of disciplinary techniques, failure to recognize a discipline problem, inability to attend school activities, and fear of retaliation by their grandchildren resulted in difficulties at school.

What does this research tell us as educators trying to bolster the strength of families in our neighborhoods?

- We have identified grandparent-headed households as a significant aspect of the urban public-school profile.
- We have also begun to fathom several problems unique to this living arrangement.

Now we must ask ourselves what we can do to support such households and create a genuine sense of community for those families and the school.

- First and foremost, we can encourage principals, teachers, and other school officials to follow the example of the Center for Excellence in Urban Education study.
- They should set aside the necessary time and resources to conduct a regular student census to determine the types of living arrangement, so they can sensitize themselves to the problems of grandparents raising a third generation of children.
- Schools must tailor their parental-involvement outreach programs to respond to the special needs of grandparents.
- Parent liaisons, social workers, counselors, and other school support personnel can arrange parent-training sessions on the campus or at convenient neighborhood centers.
- School personnel should also urge civic groups, churches, and social-service agencies to consider gearing more programs toward grandparent-headed households.
- Professional development and teacher-training programs must focus on the role of grandparents in the lives of elementary-school students.

Many of these recommendations, such as the professional development and parental counseling components, originate with the schools.

The key to solving many of our neighborhood problems, however, is to use the campus to create a deeper sense of community by bringing more dedicated people into the schools.

In Houston's public schools, we leave no stone unturned when it comes to community involvement in the educational progress.

- We foster school-business partnerships in which members of the private sector, from sole proprietorships to multinational corporations, play a vital role in the classroom effort.
- We reach out to our men and women in blue with the D.A.R.E., Love Our Kids, and ASAP (Absent Students Assistance Program) and other programs in which law enforcement officers devote personal time to our students.
- Area clergy and laity get involved through our adult mentorship projects, such as the Minority Male Initiative and Ministers Against Crime, which focus on giving at-risk students guidance from positive role models at a difficult and pivotal point in their development.
- We've also turned to our professional societies, launching efforts such as Lawyers in Schools, in which respected attorneys serve as guest teachers who stimulate our young people to consider careers in civil law and criminal justice.

HISD also helped pioneer Volunteers in Public Schools, or VIPS, a quarter of a century ago.

- Concerned citizens from all walks of life—from CEOs to average parents, to veterans, to gardeners, to interested neighbors—take part in the day-to-day school activities.
- These committed Houstonians help out in the office, read to classes, landscape gardens, chaperone field trips, and perform a variety of services we could not otherwise afford.

We're also exploring new avenues to create more options within the public school system and to respond to specific needs in the community, such as

- Full-service schools that incorporate municipal health centers, dental and vision screening, day care, family counseling, parent training, child nutrition, and other crucial neighborhood resources
- Charter schools, in which we invite private firms to oversee the operational and educational matrix with an eye to improving academic performance
- Magnet schools, which offer specialized academic instruction in fields such as science, mathematics, health care, fine arts, and law enforcement
- Academy schools, associated with local colleges and universities, where our colleagues in higher education work with teachers and students to advance their academic and professional careers

Through these programs and other initiatives, schools are responding to the needs of our neighborhoods.

- We know that the public is responding in a reciprocal manner. Volunteerism and parental involvement are at an all-time high, but we know we can do better.
- To foster a cohesive sense of community, all our institutions must come together and invite widespread participation.
- We must instill a sense of investment on the part of every member of society.

We all must join forces to return our nation to the concept of community, from which too many of us have strayed.

To put it another way, we must awaken that American tradition of cooperation that has been dormant in recent years.

There's no better place to look for the building blocks of community spirit than the first place most of us learned those notions—in our public schools.

- Those of us attending this conference know that the resources are out there, waiting to be tapped.
- Our job is to make sure that everyone—100 percent of the populace—understands that we are truly all in this together.

Let's begin the process of building community.

Education, as we all know, plays the most critical role in preserving our culture.

H. G. Wells once characterized civilization as a race between education and annihilation.

[insert new material]

As you might expect, I'm firmly planted in the cheering section for education—on the opposite side of the field from Howard Stern, gangsta rappers, and Bevis and Butt-Head.

[pause]

- You can join me. The starting block for this race is as close as your neighborhood school.

Thank you very much.

•

FAYE BRYANT
PREJUDICE AWARENESS SUMMIT MEETING
UNIVERSITY CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
9:30 A.M. WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1995

Good morning. On behalf of the Superintendent of Schools and the Houston Independent School District, I'm pleased and proud to be a part of the fourth annual Prejudice Awareness Summit Meeting.

Such an event could not be more timely—or more needed.

Many people today have been lulled into a false sense of comfort.

- They have been conditioned to feel that prejudice and discrimination are things of the past.
- Whenever you encounter the words “civil rights” in the print and broadcast media, you can be reasonably sure they will dive deep into their archives and pull out pictures from the 1960s.
- Many Americans therefore develop the attitude that we've “been there—done that,” and we solved the problem of prejudice decades ago.

Recent events such as the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in Israel and the bombing in Oklahoma City show us that we can never become complacent—we can never afford to ignore intolerance.

Hatred, if we allow it to grow unchecked, can fuel irrational acts with devastating consequences.

We must, if we are to survive as a democratic society, strike a new balance of people's rights to free speech, publishing, and personal association, weighed against the tragic results of hate-mongering, race-baiting, and the politics of fear.

- We will find that precious counterbalance in education, information, understanding, and, to borrow from the title of this event, awareness.

These days hatred is as close as your radio dial.

- The new electronic prophets of prejudice seek refuge in our First Amendment freedom while they implore their listeners to dismantle the engines of social progress.
- These irresponsible talk-show hosts, while they try to distance themselves from the most dangerous extremists, foster a wholesale mistrust of our governmental institutions, the concept of sexual equality, the labor movement, ethnic minority groups, civil-rights activists, and—what is particularly distressing to me—our public schools.
- The unelected spokesmen for an oppressive, bankrupt tomorrow are creating an “us *versus* them” mentality.
- Make no mistake: everyone in this room is in the “them” category.
- By pleading for tolerance and understanding, even for those with whom we disagree, we somehow constitute a threat.

- Unfortunately, these nonstop attacks on tolerance and pluralism pass for political dialogue in the so-called “Information Age.”

It is the duty of every thinking, compassionate individual to explode the myth that there ever can exist acceptable, subtle levels of prejudice.

We must dispel the erroneous notion that America’s legacy of social reform is somehow hindering the right of the poor, downtrodden bigot to discriminate.

- We will not accomplish our mission through legislation, police action, censorship, or any similar means.
- We must carry the dialogue of this summit meeting outside this room to our friends, families, colleagues, and to anyone who will listen.
- The solution is so simple, a child in kindergarten can understand it: we just need to get to know one another.

As always, I salute the B’nai B’rith Women for offering the light of understanding in what are often dark and disturbing times.

- HISD is proud to play a part in your efforts.
- I look forward to a highly successful summit meeting.

•

Dear Texas Kucinich Supporters:

As I write this, we await a decision from the U.S. Fifth District Court. The court's ruling will determine if Dennis Kucinich will appear on the Texas Primary ballot. As you probably know, Dennis fulfilled all the filing requirements for the Texas Democratic Party (TDP) except one. He refused to sign, unaltered, a "loyalty oath," an agreement to "fully support" the eventual nominee. Most of us recall Dennis stating, very clearly, that he wouldn't support a nominee who would use war as an instrument of foreign policy. He signed an amended loyalty oath and added that precise qualification. TDP officials rejected his application, so the Kucinich campaign filed suit. They asked the courts for an injunction against the rejection.

The first hearing took place Friday, January 11. The District Judge ruled in favor of the TDP and against our campaign. Dennis's attorney filed an appeal Monday, January 14. The attorney also filed for an emergency injunction from the U.S. Supreme Court; the high court refused to hear the argument.

While we anticipate the Fifth District decision, the mail-in absentee ballots are now going to press. The Texas campaign must presume that those ballots (due to time constraints) will not be recalled and reprinted, whatever the outcome of the appeal. The best-case scenario is that the Fifth District rules in our favor, allowing Dennis's name on the in-person early voting and on the March 4 Primary day ballot. Then, at least, Dennis will be eligible for the portion of delegates selected from the ballot results. Unfortunately, we haven't been reaping best-case scenarios-with Democratic Party regulars, the courts, or the mainstream news media.

We must form our strategy based on the conclusion that Dennis will not be on the ballot. This means you must vote in the March 4 Democratic Primary, skip the Presidential slot, and sign in at your 7:00 pm Precinct Convention as "uncommitted." If "uncommitted" makes the 15% threshold at your precinct, you can move up to the next level (state senate district or county). Unless there is a remarkable change in the TDP, we'll have to caucus as "uncommitted" until we make it to the Democratic National Convention.

If "uncommitted" doesn't make the 15% threshold, you can move up by caucusing for another candidate. It's important that we get kicked upstairs to county/senate district and state so that we can make it to National and change our affiliation to Kucinich. If your precinct is overwhelmingly Clinton, Obama, or Edwards, well, you've got to do what you've got to do. Remember that we're

inflating the results of whomever we move up the convention ladder with, so we need to be selective. Two "top-tier" candidates voted to invade Iraq; none of them voted against it. One keeps moving his rhetoric closer to Dennis's anti-NAFTA/WTO stand, but gives few specifics. Still, you may have to choose on the spot. If, for example, your precinct goes 80% or more for Hillary, then you've got little choice. It's extremely distasteful for me to advocate that our activists sail into the political process under a "false flag," but it's the only choice the TDP gives us. We'd have to do that anyway if Dennis fails to make the cut in a given precinct, but at least we could gather official Kucinich delegates at the next levels.

However we choose to caucus, we can present our resolutions to reform the Democratic Party and the U. S. Government. We could have called the 2004 Texas Democratic Party Platform "Dennis Kucinich." Four years ago, we, and the TDP regulars, endorsed the Department of Peace, withdrawal from Iraq, Universal Health Care, and many other core Kucinich positions. We want Dennis, of course, to be the nominee, but getting his issues before the party and the public is the next best thing.

Let me offer my sympathy and concern to all you first-time participants inspired by Dennis Kucinich. You're on board because of his strong, stalwart stands on those issues that really matter. Texas's hybrid Primary/Precinct Convention process is confusing and frustrating to long-time party regulars, let alone those just learning the system. It was challenging to come up with a strategy when Dennis was on the ballot in 2004; it's frustrating to devise a plan if his name doesn't appear. Asking people to declare themselves "uncommitted" isn't exactly inspirational. Moreover, attending large conventions is often tedious and alienating, but if the folks backing the corporate candidates can show up and stand their ground, so can we. The "big three" have their money and media clout; Dennis Kucinich has you beautiful, dedicated, talented, and intelligent people. Our drive will get our message heard.

Thanks for your time and effort.

Cheers,

Gary Yokie
Texas Coordinator
Kucinich for President

About the Cover

This Leisure Learning class schedule appears during the late fall, early winter holiday season. Houstonians of all traditions mark both festive and solemn commemorations from November through the spring. One person's customs may call for feasting, singing, and celebration. Others practice fasting, sacrifice, and meditation. The principle common to Houston's cosmopolitan population, in all beliefs and every ethnicity, is the idea of peace. Peace on Earth.

Prophets and philosophers remind us that peace is not simply a lull between conflicts. We must make deliberate choices to create peace. The road to peace, like all journeys, begins with that first, single step. Leisure Learning, through its talented instructors, humbly offers courses to those seeking more peace in their lives.

Those of us longing for inner peace, balance, and improved physical health can explore yoga. LLU offers gentle yoga, hatha yoga, yoga pila, vinyasa yoga. Gudrun Danburg, who teaches at the Jewish Community Center, introduces her students to a stress-relieving, health-restoring discipline. She helps you pursue your personal goals at your own pace. Our yoga classes start on page 15.

Many of us are moving toward a more peaceful and healthier diet. Everyone from your mother to your doctor to the USDA urges you to get more fruits and vegetables. Get a start and meet new friends on the Farmer's Market Tour (S0391). Don't stop there, however. Consider our many cooking and nutrition courses. Learn to make healthier choices, leave a smaller footprint, conserve resources, and support local organic growers. Cooking classes begin on page 18; diet and nutrition classes are on page 24.

Build and strengthen peaceful relationships by resolving disputes peacefully, amicably, and respectfully. Our relationship, communication, and personal development courses help you avoid conflicts at work and at home and show you how to iron out your differences in a more positive way (pages 23-26).

The big picture, our Earth, is courtesy of NASA, of course. A new class, Moonstruck: NASA Up-Close (7312, page 27) offers insights into our home-based space program. NASA has given us great advances in technology and shown us how small we are in relation to the universe. It has also shown us that we need to take care of our planet. Saving the world is a big job, but there's no better time to take that first step!