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Parents' Voice handbook: "Nurturing the Father-Child Relationship"	\$5.00		\$
Survey report: "What Will Parents Vote For: Findings of the First National Survey of Parent Priorities"	\$10.00		\$
Additional contribution to support the National Parenting Association			\$
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*Giving Parents a
Greater Voice
in the Public Arena*

51 WEST 74TH STREET, SUITE 1B, NEW YORK, NY 10023
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**The National Parenting
Association should be
applauded...for trying to
push forward a subject that
too often breaks down into
partisan bickering.**

Wall Street Journal editorial



WHAT WE STAND FOR AT THE NATIONAL PARENTING ASSOCIATION...

The National Parenting Association was created to give parents a greater voice in the public arena. We promote renewed recognition and practical support for the role of parenting.

Few issues have the power to unite so broad a spectrum of Americans—men and women, of every race and income group—as our common stake in seeing our children flourish. They are our nation's future.

To achieve our mission we:

- listen to parents, through surveys, discussions and our state partner network
- advocate practices and policies to ease the family time famine — helping mothers and fathers balance family and work
- engage community, business and union leaders with scholars in round table discussions on the role the private and public sectors can play in supporting parents
- help parents become better informed about issues and urge them to make their voices heard at the voting booth, and
- focus public attention on the importance of good parenting through exhibits, publications, our Web site and other forums.

WE'RE AN ACTIVIST THINK TANK WITH LOCAL PARTNERS...

We encourage organizations with large parent constituencies—like PTAs, Boys & Girls Clubs and church and synagogue groups—to join forces around a common parents' agenda. Our partners in Santa Barbara, St. Paul, Cleveland, and other cities have launched local initiatives with our support and technical assistance.

WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED...

What Will Parents Vote For?

This report releases the findings from the NPA's groundbreaking nationwide poll of parents' political priorities. In our survey, conducted by independent pollsters Penn + Schoen, we explored the reality behind the rhetoric of "family values" and "soccer moms" to find out what issues parents really care about.

NPA Task Force on Parent Empowerment

We brought together parents, prominent business leaders and scholars to propose measures to combat the tough problems of raising children today. This project led to a broader recognition of how our society too often works against parents. The resulting book, *The War Against Parents*, makes the case for a public agenda that gives struggling mothers and fathers the support they deserve.

Nurturing the Father-Child Relationship Handbook

One-quarter of America's children are being raised without fathers. This issue of our Parents' Voice series examines the vital role of fathers and the devastating consequences of their absence. We offer concrete suggestions to help fathers become more involved in their children's lives and a directory of resources for parents and professionals.

Children's Voices: Images of Mothers and Fathers

NPA's "Children's Voices" dramatizes the gulf between how children see their own home lives and how they imagine themselves as parents in the future. Powerful and poignant images selected from hundreds of works submitted by New York City school children provide a wake-up call to the nation. Exhibits have been mounted in 1994 and 1996 at The Children's Museum of Manhattan, Christies and municipal offices.

The results of [NPA] research are remarkable in that they show an unexpected unity transcending class, race and gender. Parents share an urgent set of concerns and rally around a common agenda.



Cornel West, Professor of Afro-American Studies, Harvard University

WHAT'S NEW...

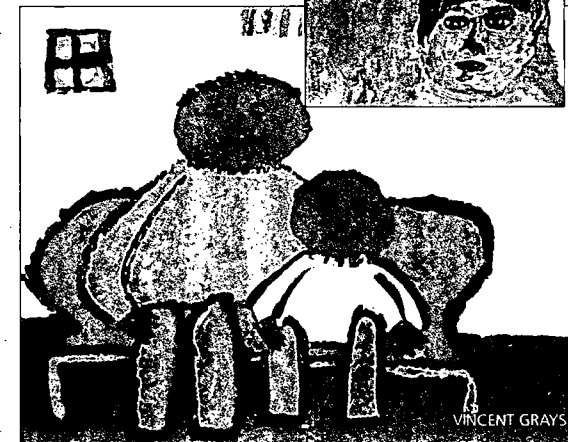
Revitalizing Parenting for the 21st Century

The NPA is launching a new round table series to spark a national conversation on revaluing parenting in American society. A distinguished panel of educators, policy-makers, business executives, union representatives, religious leaders and parents will explore ways to infuse the role of parenting with renewed stature and practical support.

Parents' Electronic Network

Our Web site will offer parents a way to keep informed and make their voices heard. Parents, employers and educators will be able to exchange information about innovations that help time-pressured Moms and Dads balance family, work, school and community obligations. The site will give parents access to NPA publications and links to other resources. And electronic postcards will

your elected officials
only a click away.



WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Join with us to build a parents' movement that gives new respect and support to mothers and fathers — of every income and color — who are struggling to come through for their kids.

Your contributions are a primary source of our financial support. Thank you for your generosity.

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Los Angeles Times

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1996

This Year, Parents Have Plenty of Political Clout

REAL LIFE

By LYNN SMITH
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Except for the fact that she doesn't drive a minivan, Becky Allen fits almost anyone's definition of a soccer mom. Her daughters, 15 and 18, have played soccer since they could kick. Her husband coaches soccer. She even plays soccer herself in a women's league in Irvine.

She also works 40 hours a week as a bookkeeper, is squeezed by the time crunch and is being wooed by both presidential campaigns. Like most of the so-called "soccer moms"—a catch phrase this political season for white, suburban wives and mothers—she's switching her presidential vote this year from Republican to Democrat.

She doesn't follow politics that closely—who has time?—but she says she likes Clinton because, "I like what he's doing for the young people. He's making them more interested in politics. He's making education more of an important issue, and athletics in particular. I think it's important that kids stay involved. It keeps them away from the drugs and the crime."

**'The time deficit is killing everyone
and kids are being squeezed to the
edge of their [parents'] lives.'**

Sylvia Ann Hewlett
Founder of the National Parenting Assn.

"Soccer moms" like Allen have clout this year not because they're organized into any special interest group, but because they are perceived as a demographic group Dole has to win back for the Republicans, said Susan Carroll, a senior research associate at the Center for the American Woman and Politics at Rutgers University.

Both campaigns are implying they are trying to help. Clinton runs ads on the Family and Medical Leave Act he signed. Dole suggested in the presidential debates that high taxes make it more difficult for two-income families to make it.

As usual, politicians are using women's family issues as a political football—this year, a political soccer ball—but without inviting parents onto the field.

A recent survey of 500 parents by the National Parenting Assn. suggests both candidates are only marginally in touch with what real families really want.

"Many of the measures parents support most aggressively are the ones that go to the heart of their problems," said Sylvia Ann Hewlett, founder of the New York-based advocacy group. "Over 80% want flexible hours. They want the school day and the school year to better mesh with the workday. They want government to give incentives to companies so that if you work full time, you can keep your family above the poverty line."

The survey confirmed her hunch that these problems are shared across class and race lines. "The time deficit is killing everyone and kids are being squeezed to the edge of their [parents'] lives," she said.

Mothers indeed are interested in the economy, said Carroll, just not in the deficit and tax-cutting Dole talks about. They are more interested in job security and higher minimum wage jobs because, "They're the ones most likely to be laid off and their families now depend on them. Many know they're really just a divorce away from being in bad financial straits."

Parents of course do not comprise the majority of voters. From a high of 50% in the 1960s, the number of households with dependent children has shrunk to 37%. But it's parents' role, not their numbers, that make them important, Hewlett said. "Kids are 100% of our future."

She plans to use the survey to create a national agenda, harnessing the political power of parents, like the American Assn. of Retired Persons focused the clout of senior citizens. The association will be conducting more surveys and focus groups at state and local levels to form a coalition of all parents, not just the currently popular soccer moms.

"I don't want a national conversation to get caught up in soccer moms," she said. "There's such a need to pull men and women together behind the act of parenting."

OUTLOOK

DATABASE

Painless surgery. "Gentlemen, this is no humbug," marveled a doctor who watched the first public demonstration of surgical anesthesia 150 years ago this month. Surgery was virtually nonexistent until Oct. 16, 1846, when Boston's William Morton astonished colleagues by successfully anesthetizing a patient (who was having a growth removed from his jaw) with ether breathed through a glass flask known as a "Morton inhaler."

Morton inhaler

► Early agents of anesthesia: **hashish, mandrake, opium, alcohol**; first documented account of a major operation performed with hypnosis as anesthesia: **1842 in England**; first use

PAINTING: HINDKLEY—AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ANESTHESIOLOGISTS



Boston, 1846. Operating with ether

of anesthesia for childbirth: **John Snow gave chloroform to Queen Victoria in 1853 for birth of Prince Leopold**

► Literal meaning of anesthesia: **insensibility**; person who coined the word: **Oliver Wendell Holmes**

► South American arrow poison once used as a muscle relaxant during anesthesia: **curare (a synthetic form is used now)**

► Number of deaths attributed to anesthesia in 1970: **1 in 10,000 uses**; number today: **1 in 250,000**; number of surgical procedures in the U.S. annually: **more than 25 million**

► Anesthesiologists in U.S.: **32,853**; average salary in 1995: **\$240,666**

Basic data: American Society of Anesthesiologists, American Medical Association, Medical Group Management Association

FAMILIES

PARENTS UNDER PRESSURE

Mothers and fathers, a new survey shows, are clearly feeling the strain of balancing the demands of work and family. The poll of 500 parents with kids at home—conducted for the National Parenting Association in New York—found that 86% of fathers and 73% of mothers hold jobs, 1 of every 5 parents works two jobs and only 1 in 6 moms is a stay-at-home parent. As a result, 84% of today's parents believe their roles are tougher than those of their own mothers and fathers. Other findings:

► **Helping hand.** Most parents (53%) say employers do little or nothing to help families. Many (39%) say firms could do a great deal. Most (57%) agree with the statement

"I don't think public officials care much about what parents like me think." Nearly half (47%) say government could do a lot to help. Only 13% say government could do

little or nothing.

► **Involvement.** Most are at least somewhat active in their communities. Some 73% go to one or more PTA meetings a year, 62% help with organized activities for children and 58% take part in religious activities besides services. But few spend lots of time on community activities: 39% blame their jobs.

► **Needs.** Parents were asked what would ease problems. Steps

deemed helpful: flexible work hours, 91%; more tax breaks, 86%; laws to keep guns away from children, 81%; raising wages above the poverty level, 81%.

CAUSES OF CONCERN

Parents were asked to give up to three answers to the question "What are your biggest concerns or worries for your children?" Responses:

Crime, violence, gangs or safety	30%
Drugs	21%
Quality of schooling	17%
Declining family or moral values	14%
Paying for college	9%
Providing opportunities	7%
Paying for schooling before college	5%
Health, AIDS	5%

USNA&WR—Basic data: National Parenting Association

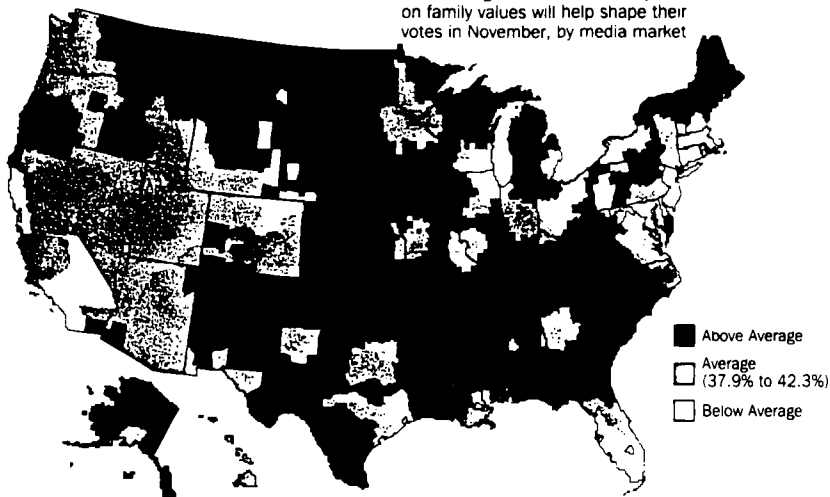
FACE OF THE NATION



WHERE FAMILY VALUES STRIKE AN ELECTORAL CHORD

It's not a majority, but it is large and widespread: the 40 percent of the electorate that considers family values an important issue in next month's election. A disproportionate number of these voters are married, white and middle class and live in small towns and rural communities. Typically conservative, they tell pollsters that they support school prayer, oppose abortion and wish they could spend more time doing household chores.

Share of registered voters who say stands on family values will help shape their votes in November, by media market



USNA&WR—Basic data: Claritas Inc., NFO Research, Inc. (from a nationwide mail survey, July 1–August 5)

MAP BY MICHAEL J. WEISS FOR USNA&WR

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Tuesday, October 15, 1996



**David
Boldt**

Giving parents political clout

After years of fending off the inevitable, I recently broke down and joined the American Association of Retired Persons.

It was tough. I had to admit that I was now *well* beyond the eligibility age of 50. And I've always felt there was something vaguely subversive about joining an organization whose members have a vested interest in bankrupting the nation.

But, hey — you can't hold out forever against all those travel discounts.

In any event, the guilt I was feeling over having sent off my check to the AARP at least made me more receptive to a proposal floated at a luncheon meeting in New York last week to form a similar association for parents.

The idea comes from economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett, who founded the New York-based National Parenting Association after writing *When the Bough Breaks: The Cost of Neglecting Our Children* in 1991.

Her organization has done some interesting things since then to focus attention on problems like teen violence, but the idea of a nonpartisan parents organization committed to a specific policy agenda goes way beyond any of that.

It would attempt nothing less than a rebalancing of political power to halt a trend toward what Hewlett describes as "subsidizing aging and privatizing parenting."

The problem is that while older Americans are reliable voters, kids can't vote. Hewlett's insight is that parents can.

Common ground

But is there a common agenda that millions of parents could rally around? To find out, Hewlett's organization commissioned a national poll by Penn & Schoen, the same people who do polling for President Clinton, and found that there are a number of policy prescriptions on which 80 percent or more of the parents surveyed agreed.

These are *not*, interestingly, items normally thought of as "family values" issues. Indeed, on matters such as abortion, welfare, divorce, and gay marriage, parents are as divided as other Americans.

But when it comes to measures that would help them spend more time with their kids, and help them bear the economic burdens, the pluralities in favor approach unanimity.

Around 90 percent of parents surveyed favor tax incentives that encourage companies to provide flextime schedules; more benefits for part-time workers; and time off for things like parent-teacher conferences. Seven in 10 would like to be able to trade two weeks' pay for an extra two weeks of vacation.

In some cases, the politicians seem to have caught on. Warnings about violence and sex on TV shows (desired by 82 percent of the parents polled) are going forward, and both presidential candidates have proposed increased tax credits (or deductions) for dependent children.

Predictable findings

Of course, a lot of the answers are predictable special-interest pleadings. Parents, naturally, want more paid time off, just like everyone else. But the data also display flashes of altruism. Regardless of their own income level, three-quarters or more of parents favor tax breaks to lift all full-time workers above the poverty line.

And the findings offered some interesting ideas for making progress on intractable problems. Parents may be split on banning handguns, for instance, but almost 90 percent favor safety devices making guns harder for kids to fire.

There were some interesting wrinkles in the data as well. By a huge margin, parents saw lengthening the school day as helpful, but were significantly less enthusiastic about lengthening the school year.

Harvard University professor Cornel West, author of *Race Matters* and a member of the board of Hewlett's association, emphasized that the poll appeared to locate "common ground" for parents that stretched across the usual dividing lines of class, ethnicity, and political ideology.

The poll results, he said, suggested a way in which the "national conversation" could escape the "paralysis and debilitation" that was fragmenting democratic life in America. One certainly hopes so.

THE NATION'S NEWSPAPER

USA TODAY

NO. 1 IN THE USA . . . FIRST IN DAILY READERS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1996

Poll of parents shows many have no time for their kids' activities

By Karen S. Peterson
USA TODAY

More than one-third (36%) of parents don't give any time to their kids' extracurricular activities, while about a fifth (22%) give 15 hours or more a month, according to a new poll.

"The parental time crunch weighs so much on moms and dads in 1996," says Sylvia Ann Hewlett, president of the National Parenting Association (NPA), the poll's sponsor. "Parents are just overwhelmed by the juggling act, keeping the show on the road."

On educational issues, the poll shows 53% would use tax dollars to help parochial schools; 55% would require school uniforms; 77% would keep schools open later; and 55% would lengthen the school year.

The last two findings indicate parents "are eager to see the school day and year mesh better with the workday," Hewlett says.

On various social issues:

► **Divorce.** More than half (55%) favor making child-custody decisions tougher on adulterers.

► **Gay marriage.** About half (51%) say banning same-sex marriages would not be helpful.

► **Welfare.** About half (52%) would not cut off payments after two years to moms who can't find work.

NPA membership is 7,000 parents who seek to influence policy. The poll of 500 parents nationwide with dependent children has a margin of error of 5 percentage points.

Los Angeles Times

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1996

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SECTION E • FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1996

Parents Want Safety, Not Family Values

■ **Research:** A survey discovers that moms and dads are far more interested in the practical matters of daily life (no guns, no violence, better schools) than a political agenda.

By ELIZABETH MEHREN
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Politicians who believe that welfare cheats, gay marriages or even abortion are high-priority concerns for American parents are seriously off the mark, a new study has shown.

Rather than espousing the abstract, ideological "family values" agenda that has figured prominently on all sides of the political debate, this country's mothers and fathers want to ban handguns, protect their kids from violence and improve the quality of public education, according to a study released today.

What's more, the survey conducted by an independent, international polling firm, Penn + Schoen, for the National Parenting Assn., shows a startling consensus among parents that crosses class, racial and gender lines.

"Parents share an urgent set of concerns and rally around a common agenda," said Cornel West, a Harvard University professor of Afro-American studies and a National Parenting Assn. board member. West called the survey results "remarkable, in that they show an unexpected unity" among parents.

The nationwide telephone survey of 500 mothers and fathers was conducted in mid-September. In hopes of attaining a

Please see PARENTS, E8

PARENTS

Continued from E1
mainstream sampling, welfare recipients were excluded. Income levels among survey respondents ranged from \$20,000 to \$100,000 per year.

Sarah Lawrence College professor Raymond Seidelman, a specialist in electoral politics who helped interpret data from the poll, described the survey as one of the first systematic efforts to find out how parents view issues affecting family life.

Nearly unanimously, parents said they wanted less rhetoric from government and business institutions, and more practical help. They also expressed widespread concern about the strain of balancing work with being a parent. Eighty-four percent of the parents surveyed said they are having a tougher time balancing work and family responsibilities than their own parents did.

But despite heavy demands from work and family, parents also demonstrated a strong commitment to activities in their communities. Rather than joining civic organizations in large numbers, however, many parents said they volunteer in their communities on an ad hoc basis—coaching soccer, collecting money for wildlife protection, shelving books at the library and so forth.

That finding, said researcher Craig Charney of Penn + Schoen—which also happens to be President Clinton's polling firm—flies in the face of "what has become the conventional wisdom about the decline of civic spirit—and clears parents of the bum rap of nonparticipation."

In another blow to certain common assumptions, the survey found that mothers and fathers want government and employers to do more—not less—to help parents. Among the policies endorsed by parents were:

■ Federal tax breaks to help parents pay for college expenses—supported by 94% of those surveyed.

■ Tax incentives to encourage family-friendly policies by employers, such as benefits for part-time workers and flexible working hours (94%).

■ Laws requiring gun makers to install devices that make it harder for children to fire weapons (89%).

■ Keeping schools open longer for classes, homework or clubs to better match the typical workday

(77%).

Crime (30%) and drugs (21%) topped the lists of worries for parents. Education was the second major theme, with 17% mentioning the quality of schooling. Only 3% of parents placed teenage sex and pregnancy as important family issues, and just 1% named TV and movie sex as a priority. Not one parent in the sample spontaneously brought up homosexuality or abortion as a major concern.

University of Texas sociology professor Norval D. Glenn, the former editor of the Journal of Family Values, called the findings a "reconfirmation" of the notion that parents are concerned with "very practical issues, not with the abstractions that are thrown around" by politicians and others.

The heated tenor of the "family values" debate has failed to concentrate on such day-to-day issues "because they are too nitty-gritty," Glenn said, "and because public figures think they can make political capital out of these abstract ideological issues—which they probably can."

Politicians who frame their discussion of family values in an archly partisan context are missing the point, Glenn said.

"I don't think for most people it's a big government-little government kind of issue. They don't formulate it in those ways. They want the government there to do things that will be of immediate assistance—that is, to make policy that helps them as families."

Economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett, who launched the nonprofit National Parenting Assn. three years ago in New York to research and represent the needs of this country's 58 million parents, said she was struck by the survey respondents' "total willingness to lean on government and the private sector for a little more help. Therefore, all this stuff about no one liking government anymore is ridiculous."

At the national headquarters of the PTA in Washington, director of governmental affairs Arnold Fege concurred.

"There's really a large group of forgotten parents—parents who are not included in the family values discussion," Fege said. "These are the mainstream parents, the folks who just want a good school for their kids. They want their kids to know how to read. They're worried about safety and high academic standards. And they are just not being heard."

Family time more critical than family values, parents say

Moms and dads worry more about guns, drugs and getting to be with their kids than about politicians' cries of moral decline, a survey says.

By H.J. Cummins
Star Tribune Staff Writer

The concept of "family values" means less to American parents than the reality of finding more time to spend together. And more of them worry about handguns than about abortion, drugs than gay marriages, and the decline of schools than the decline of moral values.

That's the gist both of a national "What families really value" poll to be released today by the National Parenting Association in New York, and of interviews this week with a handful of Twin Cities parents.

The survey by the association — a relatively new, nonpartisan group based in New York — is the first step in the group's efforts to advocate for families much the way the American Association of Retired Persons does for older Americans, according to its president, Sylvia Ann Hewlett. The independent research firm Penn + Schoen surveyed 500 parents for the group, which intends to use the findings to shape its lobbying efforts.

Hewlett founded the association three years ago after publication of her book, "When the Tough Breaks: The Cost of Neglecting Our Children." Board members and advisers include Cornel West, professor of Afro-American Studies at Harvard; David Elkind, author of "The Hurried Child," and Michael Goldstein, chief executive of Toys "R" Us.



Lena Stackhouse-Rogers, with her daughter, Alexandria, 3, worries about the same things as parents in a national survey, including affordable day care. She said the day-care bills for Alexandria run nearly \$7,000 a year.

Star Tribune Photo by Joey McLeister

Fairview Riverside Medical Center in Minneapolis.

"I don't perceive any great differences between them on family issues," said her husband, Jon Bridges, a director of finance at Northwest Airlines.

Hewlett sees the major difference in priorities as a chicken-and-egg issue, and so does Darcy Folger, a single mother from

Bloomington.

"When asked in an open-ended way what was on their minds, not one single parent mentioned abortion or even gay marriages," Hewlett said. "What does fall out of this survey is the enormous and, I think, desperate search for more time with their children."

"On their priority scale, 'values' rank fourth or fifth, because par-

ents believe that in order to get to those values they first need time with their children."

Said Folger, "I think that if parents were home at 4 o'clock and not having to work a second shift, we wouldn't be throwing our children out in the streets. I think once we start supporting our families with decent wages, a lot of problems will decrease."

Lena Stackhouse-Rogers' top issues as a parent match many of those cited in the survey. Quality affordable day care is one. Stackhouse-Rogers, a preschool teacher at the Green Central Neighborhood Early Learning Center in Minneapolis, said day care for 3-year-old Alexandria Stackhouse costs almost \$7,000 a year.

Crime in her south Minneapolis neighborhood has driven her husband to conclude they should move, but she doesn't want to give up on the city. The cost of college is one reason Stackhouse-Rogers has needed to work while studying for the teaching degree she expects to get next spring. She's nearly 40, she said, "and I worry I'll still be paying off my student loans when my daughter gets to college age."

On A18:

— In political news, Colin Powell joins Bob Dole on the trail.

What families really value

When asked which set of ideas would be more helpful to parents and families, parents nearly 5 to 1 put themselves on the side of practical and economic relief over enforcement of particular moral values.

Set 1

- ▶ Making laws to keep guns away from children.
- ▶ Letting parents work flexible hours in their jobs.
- ▶ Raising wages so all full-time workers are above the poverty level.
- ▶ Increasing tax deductions and breaks for parents.
- ▶ Making the school day and year more in sync with the work day and year.

Set 2

- ▶ Banning marriages between people of the same sex.
- ▶ Making divorce laws punish adultery in awarding support and child custody.
- ▶ Using tax dollars to help parochial schools.
- ▶ Cutting off welfare payments after two years to mothers who don't find a job.
- ▶ Making abortion illegal.

Parent response:

	Set 1	Set 2
All parents	77%	16%
Men	74%	17%
Women	79%	15%
Black	76%	17%
White	75%	13%
Income less than \$35,000	72%	20%
Income \$35,000-\$75,000	79%	16%
Income \$75,000 plus	78%	13%
Born-again Christian	68%	28%
Other Christian	84%	10%

Source: National Parenting Association

Star Tribune Graphic

Candidates' records

Hewlett said the poll found "unexpected unity" among parents and across race, gender and income lines.

"These parents all say they need help," she said. "They can't go it alone."

Specifically, parents said their main concerns cluster around their "family time famine," safety issues, and the cost and quality of education. And they want government and business to do more to help families cope.

Although this sentiment apparently bodes well for the more-activist Clinton — his Minnesota campaign expressed delight, while Dole's campaign declined to comment — Hewlett and others said the survey's conclusions may be clearer than its campaign implications.

There is much in Clinton's record to recommend him over Dole to parents who want government to be their partner. The first major bill that Clinton signed as president was the Family and Medical Leave Act, which guarantees up to 12 weeks' unpaid leave each year for family emergencies. Dole wants it repealed. Clinton has proposed tax breaks for a family's college costs. Dole's side considers that selective and heavy-handed policy. Clinton championed the new V-chip, which will allow parents to block objectionable programs from their televisions. Dole lost his fight against it.

The Republican candidate's family-friendly premise, exemplified by his 15-percent across-the-board tax cut, is consistently this: Government should keep its hands off.

But the Clinton record doesn't exactly excite family advocates, Hewlett said. For example, the Family and Medical Leave Act covers only firms of 50 employees or more. That leaves out 40 percent of American mothers.

And the Democrats sometimes don't walk the walk as well as they talk the talk, said Roxy Foster, a mother and the executive director of the Minnesota Parenting Association, an affiliate of the national group. The fault can be as basic as a lack of child care at local Democratic meetings and caucuses. "I have to say, at least the Republicans do day care," Foster said.

Also, each candidate's rush to the center has left some parents seeing little distinction between them. At the presidential debate, for example, Dole emoted support for parents — "Sometimes you can't go it alone" — and Clinton cited his role in putting more police on the streets and more welfare recipients to work.

"I'm not particularly excited by either Clinton or Dole," said Kim Bridges of St. Paul, who is the mother of a 19-month-old, Tanner, and who also works part time as a parenting instructor at

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1996

EASTERN EDITION
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

What's News—

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Business and Finance

COMPUTER ASSOCIATES agreed to acquire Cheyenne Software for \$1.2 billion in cash, in a move to continue its drive to dominate the corporate software market through acquisitions. The agreement is a turnaround for Cheyenne, which six months ago said it wasn't for sale as it fended off a takeover bid by McAfee Associates, a rival antivirus software maker. Cheyenne shares soared 34% on the news.

(Article on Page A3)

HFS agreed to acquire RCI for \$625 million in cash and stock in a bid to dominate the time-share industry.

(Article on Page A3)

Trust Co. of the West's parent is considering its strategic alternatives, including the possible sale of the firm, which manages more than \$50 billion in pension money and mutual funds.

(Article on Page A3)

Texaco, Shell and Aramco confirmed they are in talks to merge their downstream operations. The discussions spotlight the difficulty refiners are having making money even when gasoline prices are strong.

(Article on Page A2)

World-Wide

THE U.S. PROPOSED "open skies" talks with Japan on ending flying curbs.

Clinton has sent Japanese leader Hashimoto a letter seeking to lift the curbs. And Transportation Secretary Pena has requested talks on an accord in which U.S. and Japanese carriers have unrestricted freedom to operate between the two nations "with no regulations or restrictions on designations, routings, capacity, frequency, pricing or other matters." The U.S. move appears to be part of a broader effort to hammer out similar pacts with other Asian countries. (Article on Page A2)

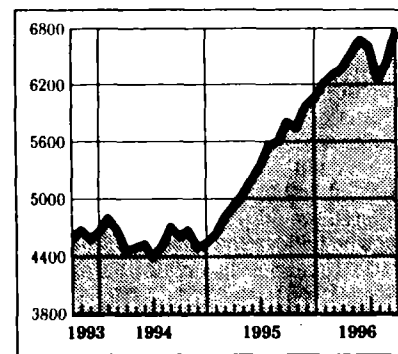
While the open-skies proposal is a bold declaration, there probably won't be much formal movement on it soon because both the U.S. and Japanese governments are locked in political races.

As Asian interests increase their campaign contributions to Democrats, some of the solicitations have come under scrutiny. It is illegal for foreign corporations and most foreign citizens to make contributions to the U.S., but the prohibition isn't airtight. (Article in Column 1)

Clinton and Dole resumed campaigning after Sunday's debate, in which voters seemed to give the advantage to the president. Dole traveled to New Jersey, where he focused on his proposal for a 15% across-the-board income-tax cut. Clinton, meanwhile, added business leaders in Connecticut. (Article on Page A24)

Wilshire Index

Index of NYSE, Amex and Nasdaq stocks.



THE WILSHIRE 5000 Index representing New York and American stock exchange issues and actively traded Nasdaq stocks was 6765.65 on Sept. 30. This was up from 6434.03 on the last trading day in August.

Annoying in the City, Cell Phones Are Hell In the Wilderness

Hikers Let Their Fingers Do
The Walking; Rescuers
Are Powerfully Perturbed

By ROSS KERBER

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
For a hiking trip in New Hampshire's White Mountains, Ari Pinski brought along the hottest gear in trekking: a cellular phone and a space-age navigation aid that

Work Week

A Special News Report About Life
On the Job — and Trends
Taking Shape There

WORKING PARENTS favor family-friendly legislation, survey says.

The nonprofit National Parenting Association says working parents everywhere are feeling the pinch. In a recent survey, the group found overwhelming support among working parents for family-friendly tax incentives.

About 77% said they favor keeping schools open longer to match a parent's typical workday; 90% favor giving tax breaks to companies that offer flex time and benefits to part-time workers; and 83% favor tax incentives for companies that pay wages above the poverty line.

"The juggling act is phenomenal," says Marcia Brier, a mother of two who runs a marketing company in Needham, Mass. While attending a child's soccer practice, she uses her cell phone to keep in touch with work.

A BAN ON FACIAL HAIR lands California employer in court.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is suing a San Jose, Calif., security firm alleging that it discriminates against African-American men by forbidding its male workers to grow beards. The firm, Healthcare Security Services, fired security guard Kirby Thompson after he refused to shave his closely cropped facial hair.

In a suit filed last month in the U.S. District Court for Northern California, the EEOC says the company's no-beard policy is discriminatory because Mr. Thompson, like many black men, suffers from a skin condi-

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Balancing the Power

A new "get out the vote" movement aims to build the political power of underrepresented communities

By Suzanne Bultmeyer

Children can't vote, so they can't defend their interests in politics. It's up to parents and other adults committed to children to force the political system to make kids' needs a priority. But parents, like people of color, lower-income people, and younger adults, are underrepresented among voters. In the 1994 election, for example, only a little more than one third of parents made it to the polls, according to the National Parenting Association.

A picture of California voters would show a group that is much older, wealthier, and whiter than the state's population as a whole. Pollster Mark DeCamillo of the Field Institute comments, "The disconnect [between the population and the people who choose the government] poses unique problems for representative democracy in California."

This year though, organizations in California and all over the country are trying to bring this picture into better focus. By registering parents and other underrepresented groups to vote and encouraging them to go to the polls, activists hope to give them a stronger voice in policymaking.

POLITICS OFF BALANCE

In California specifically, the disparity between who is eligible to vote and who is actually voting continues to grow, making political observers like DeCamillo uneasy about the resulting skewed representation.

Consider: Eighteen- to thirty-year-olds are 30 percent of the state's adults, but only 15 percent of its voters. Latinos make up one quarter of California adults, but only one tenth of its voters. More than a third of California voters live in households with incomes over \$60,000 a year, but only one-fifth of California adults do.

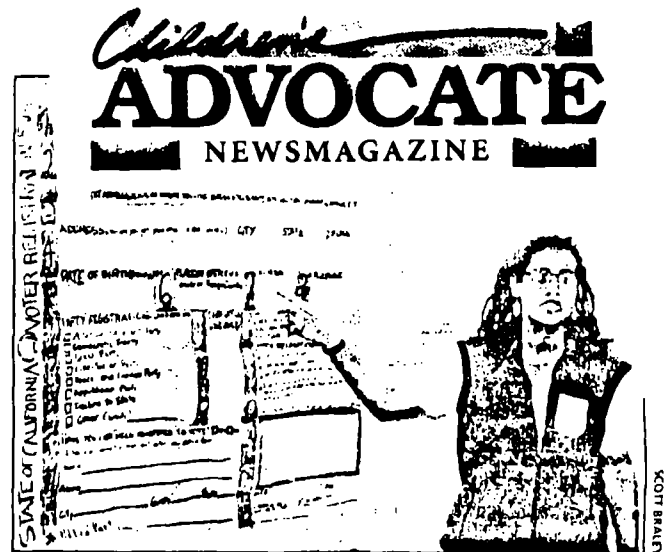
That means the electorate — those who actually decide on candidates and ballot questions — doesn't really represent the population as a whole. The electorate, in particular, is very different from California parents. "The electorate is more than three-quarters white, but a minority of adults with children are white," DeCamillo says. "That has major implications for school boards and children's services."

In 1994, the Field Institute did a special study of the differences between California voters and all eligible adults who lived in households with children. The study found that while people of color who live with children under 18 are more than half the population, they are less than a quarter of voters. Another big difference is age: Of all the adults who live in households with children, people over 50 are only 8 percent. But 43 percent of California voters are over 50.

In this year's larger-than-ever "get out the vote" campaigns, underrepresented communities are trying to close these gaps. Some of the inspiration for this year's effort comes from recent measures like Proposition 187 and the new federal welfare law that bars immigrants from benefits. Latinos and Asian Americans have been registering to vote in record numbers, partly to protect their communities against what they see as a hostile political climate. Another push to increase representation comes from the growing movement for children.

POWER TO PARENTS

The nonprofit National Parenting Association (NPA), for example, points out that if more of the nation's 58 million parents were voting, their voices would have a greater impact on the national agenda. The NPA is kicking off a new program, *Parents to the Polls*, with pilot projects in local areas around the country, including Santa Barbara County. "So many parents are busy and stressed, we're looking to create family-friendly ways of getting parents regis-



Adrienne Bloch teaches voter registration volunteers the ropes.

and awareness and get parents to be part of the NPA."

In another California county, Childcare Vote '96 is also trying to build parents' voting clout. The Alameda County Childcare Planning

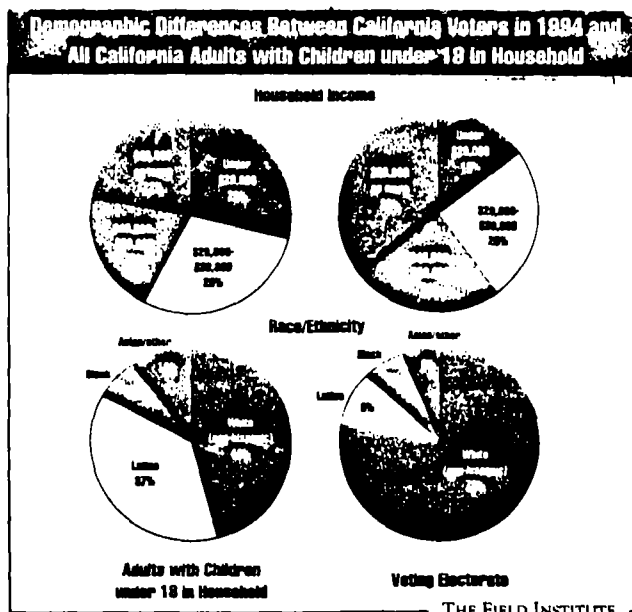
from producing public service announcements to distributing information about the new National Voter Registration Act.

A STRONGER VOICE

Perhaps the biggest "get out the vote" push this year is happening in communities that include many recent immigrants, and communities of color as a whole. In a primary election in San Diego County last winter, for example, a coalition of Latino groups pulled record numbers of Latino voters to the polls. In Los Angeles, a coalition of more than 30 organizations has set a goal of registering at least 100,000 new Latino voters this year, part of a national effort to add one million new registered Latino voters across twenty states. "This is the biggest initiative ever for Latinos," says Alfredo Cruz, director of communications for the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project (SVREP), long a leader in Latino voter-participation efforts in the Western states. Cruz says this major push is a response to anti-immigration measures that have been "so much more immediate for our community."

Because of its size, Cruz says, the Latino community is in a position to affect election outcomes all over the state of California. On its home territory in L.A., SVREP regularly sets up registration tables at commercial centers and canvasses districts with large Latino populations or Latino candidates. Before elections it sets up phone banks and sends reminder cards to everyone it has registered. SVREP, like Latino and Asian American groups in the Bay Area and elsewhere, also regularly sets up voter-registration tables outside naturalization ceremonies, where they have been very effective in registering new citizens to the voting rolls. The groups have successfully increased the number of voters in their communities by urging everyone eligible to become a citizen. "There has

Continued on page 4



tered in collaboration with other groups in the city," says Sara Moores Campbell, Unitarian minister and co-chair of *Parents to the Polls*.

Parents to the Polls will create a voting guide this fall, explaining candidates' stands on the issues named as priorities by parents in focus groups and community surveys. Then, working closely with PTAs and school districts, *Parents to the Polls* will register parents to vote at back-to-school nights and community and commercial centers, as well as through neighborhood canvassing. Campbell hopes that *Parents to the Polls* will make a dent in the fall election. After that, she says, "we're hoping to build the organization

Council will work through the county's 800 child care programs to get parents involved, registered and voting. *Childcare Vote '96* is equipped with registration materials, pamphlets, in-house displays, bilingual workshop speakers, and magnets, flyers and bumper stickers. The campaign will also provide coaching for child care staffs on how to organize, phone-bank, and transport parents to the polls.

Humanserve '96 is a national program whose mission is to help nonprofit service organizations with campaigns like *Childcare Vote '96*. Humanserve gives technical assistance and help to small groups for everything

Groups focus on signing up voters

By NORA K. WALLACE
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

Kate Faust is ready to vote, and after considering the candidates, she wants President Clinton as her leader for another four years.

There's just one problem — Kate's 10 years old.

But being too young to vote doesn't stop the determined girl from having definite opinions about politics — and voting.

As a member of Girls Inc.'s leadership class, the Monroe Elementary School fifth-grader is helping register adults to vote in the Nov. 5 election. She and other girls have registered about 70 people in the past month in their attempts.

"I'd vote for Clinton because both are not quite perfect," Kate said of the Democratic incumbent and his Republican challenger, Bob Dole. "He's (Clinton) the lesser of the two evils."

Though her mother chooses not to vote for personal reasons, Kate is determined that her own opinions will be heard.

"This year is important because it involves us a lot," Kate said. "It's me and my life and I think I should have a part in it."

The Girls Inc. project is part of an increasing number of voter registration drives across Santa Barbara County, compared to past election years. Many

SANTA BARBARA News-Press

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS / SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1996



MIKE ELIASON/NEWS-PRESS

Waverly Paitson, standing, Nadine Regalado, 11, left, and Acok Majak, 10, of Girls Inc. watch as Jim Houghton registers to vote.

VOTERS

Continued from Page A1

of the efforts are decidedly non-partisan, although the various political parties have also stepped up their work.

For the past few months, voter registration tables and clipboards have been prominently visible around the county at farmer's markets, on busy street corners, in front of grocery stores, at schools and in the hands of candidates and their volunteers.

"We definitely have more groups from all sides of the political spectrum conducting voter registration drives," said Larry Herrera, assistant registrar of voters for the county clerk.

"My view is, with people talking about low voter turnout, it might be starting to turn around. People are taking responsibility for their government. If that means anything in terms of effectiveness, it'll show up on Nov. 5."

Joining Kate in the Girls Inc. registration drive have been Acok Majak and Nadine Regalado.

Supervised by Waverly Paitson, Girls Inc.'s offsite program director, the girls spent one afternoon in front of the Smart and Final market in Santa Barbara, trying with their tentative voices to get busy shoppers to stop and register. They were able to nab a few, and one woman who was already registered told them, "This is pretty important stuff. Thanks for being here."

"I think people should be able to vote so they can choose who they think will make the United States better, instead of wrong, like back when they had slaves," said Acok, a 10-year-old who attends Cleveland Elementary School. "It was wrong to do that to people, so we need a president to fix that."

Her friend, Nadine, wants parents to vote because the issues might involve "their son's or daughter's education."

Although the last day to register to vote is Monday, the county elections office is taking a daily count of

forms processed. Right now, that numbers 1,000 a day as the deadline nears. As of Tuesday, there were 230,400 people registered in Santa Barbara County, Herrera said. Democrats held a lead of about 9,000 over the Republicans. The biggest jump came in the "decline to state" category.

As part of the push to create a more informed electorate — especially those who actually go to the polls on Election Day — several organizations are targeting Santa Barbara with pilot registration projects.

The Southwest Voter Registration Education Project focuses on the Latino community, while Parents to

... new citizens do follow their desire to get informed and vote.

**SALUD CARBAJAL,
SOUTHWEST VOTER REGISTRATION
EDUCATION PROJECT**

the Polls has an obvious target.

Southwest Voter, with the slogan "Su voto es su voz" (Your vote is your voice) aims to capitalize on projections that 1.4 million Latinos are expected to vote Nov. 5 — a 28 percent increase over the 1992 presidential turnout.

The non-partisan coalition of Latino and community groups has almost met its goal of registering 1,000 voters, said local chairman Salud Carbajal.

Volunteers have canvassed the Latino community in Santa Barbara, and found many people who've recently become naturalized citizens.

"One of the things we encounter is new citizens do follow their desire to get informed and vote," he said.

Coalition members have yet to determine whether the efforts will continue throughout the year, Carbajal explained.

He believes the group could

increase voter participation by 3,000 to 5,000 new voters annually.

"We definitely have made an impact," Carbajal said.

The National Parenting Association picked Santa Barbara as a pilot site for its non-partisan project, which is part of a five-year plan based on the premise of "empowering" parents.

The association estimates that only 39 percent of parents voted in the 1992 presidential election; compared to 81 percent of seniors, explained Sara Moores Campbell, senior minister at the Unitarian Society. Campbell and Santa Barbara county Superintendent of Schools Bill Cirone are co-chairs of the effort. They are joined by local Parent Teacher Associations, K.I.D.S. Network, Concerned Citizens for Children and other organizations.

Parental focus groups were created, aimed at developing "a family-friendly political agenda" that turns the emphasis away from "divisive" issues such as school prayer and onto more common concerns, like whether parents would vote for extended school days.



MIKE ELIASON/NEWS-PRESS

Larry Herrera, assistant registrar, Santa Barbara.

A survey was handed out to some parents that asked them what the government could do to most help them. Those answers will be compiled and given to politicians. A voter guide will also be created, detailing candidates' issue positions.

Because the focus groups also determined that parents were most stressed about not having enough time to do things, request forms for absentee ballots were sent home with students, Campbell said. A letter reminded parents, "Kids can't vote, but you can."

County voter snapshot, 1996

POPULATION	394,000
ELIGIBLE TO VOTE	283,700
REGISTERED VOTERS	230,400
DEMOCRATS	98,480
REPUBLICANS	89,730
AMERICAN INDEPENDENT	4,771
GREEN	2,409
REFORM	1,348
LIBERTARIAN	1,083
PEACE & FREEDOM	1,067
NATURAL LAW	964
MISC.	1,976
DECLINE TO STATE	28,895

*As of Oct. 1.

SOURCE:
Santa Barbara County
elections division.

TO REGISTER

Monday is the final day to register to vote for the Nov. 5 general election. Besides the presidential campaign, a number of state propositions and local races will appear on the ballot.

To register, stop by one of the county clerk's offices and fill out the appropriate form. Those forms are also available at post offices and public libraries; they must be returned to the county clerk.

County clerk's offices are at the following locations: the basement of the County Courthouse, 1100 Anacapa St. in Santa Barbara; 401 E. Cypress Ave. in Lompoc; and at the Betteravia Government Center, 511 E. Lakeside Parkway in Santa Maria.

A support system for today's parents

By MARILYN McMAHON
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

Sylvia Ann Hewlett has it all — successful careers as an economist and a loving family. Her cosmopolitan life in a Manhattan brownstone is light years away from a childhood that can almost be described as Dickensian. The second of six daughters, Hewlett grew up in Pyle, a mining village in South Wales.

There was no telephone, television or refrigerator. By the age of 7, Hewlett had become an expert potato peeler, because that's what the family had every night for supper.

In retrospect, however, Hewlett feels her childhood was far richer than today's families with a surfeit of luxuries.

"Parenting today is much more complicated. The frame of reference is confused. Families are bombarded by a negative culture. My parents had tough times, but they knew they would be judged by their children, which gave clarity to their role," said Hewlett.

Contemporary society doesn't "value what parents do enough. We still think pregnancy is a disability. We regulate dog kennels more carefully than day care centers," said Hewlett during a telephone interview from her home.

To change this attitude, Hewlett has founded the National Parenting Association, a nonprofit membership association committed to building a "family friendly" America. Harvard professor Cornel West is co-chairman.

Hewlett will discuss "Parent Empowerment in the '90s" when she speaks to the Channel City Club at its luncheon meeting Monday at the Miramar Convention Center in Montecito.

Getting parents to the polls is NPA's top priority.

"Our aim is to unleash the tremendous



COURTESY OF SYLVIA ANN HEWLETT

Sylvia Ann Hewlett, with her husband and children, will speak to the Channel City Club on Monday on "Parent Empowerment in the '90s."

untapped potential of parents by bringing them to the polls to change the balance of power," said Hewlett. "It is our conviction that if America's 58 million parents were to participate in the voting process, their voices would be heard in the corridors of power, parents' concerns would be put at the top of the national agenda, and we can ensure that this nation creates the conditions that allow our children to thrive."

One of the major problems in today's families is "parental time famine," according to Hewlett.

"There are new time pressures on parents. With declining wages, they have to work longer hours. We have 6 million families where two adults hold four jobs. The average American Mom and Dad spend 10 hours more per week working. Jobs are more insecure. They are expected to work longer hours for more pay," Hewlett said.

"My father was a teacher, and my mother was a homemaker. My childhood may have been threadbare in other respects, but it rich in parental attention."

Currently, the NPA is refining a Parents' Agenda, a policy platform that addresses the parental time famine, and includes:

- Creating a sizable tax credit or child allowance, which will ease economic pressures on parents and allow them to spend more time with their young children.
- Instituting a period of paid leave for parents of newborns.
- Promoting workplace flexibility to help parents balance job and family responsibilities.
- Mandating release time for working parents attending school functions.
- Making the school and/or school year more in sync with the work day.
- Supporting funding for safe, supervised after-school programs.

"Over the past generation, there has

SEE FAMILY ON D6

Hewlett sends parents to the polls

FAMILY

Continued from Page D1

been a tremendous social revolution," Hewlett said. "Over one third of all children are growing up without fathers and the majority of mothers of preschool and school-age children are now in the paid labor force. But very little in society has changed to accommodate this vast shift. The result has been enormous stress on family life and inordinate time pressures on parents."

The NPA's strategy is very simple. Before November's election, each parent will receive three pieces of paper: a Parents' Agenda, a scorecard for candidates for federal, state and local offices and a voter registration card.

Materials will be distributed through a network of child advocacy groups such as the PTA, League of Women Voters, Junior League, Children's Defense Fund and National Council of Jewish Women.

Hewlett has met with groups in Sacramento and Los Angeles; and child advocates are organizing in five other states — Arizona, Michigan, Minnesota, New York and

professor, executive director of the Economic Policy Council, an author and a consultant.

Since 1987, however, Hewlett has been focusing her energy on writing about and advocating for families with children. She is the author of numerous articles and books on the topic.

Among the books are "When the Bough Breaks: The Cost of Neglecting Our Children," "Child Neglect in Rich Nations," and "Family and Work: Bridging the Gap."

"Everything I'm doing now resonates back to my childhood," Hewlett said.

Despite her family's circumstances, she and her sisters were encouraged to think big, and above all else, get an education.

"The unemployment rate was 35 percent in our town. We had to get out to make something of ourselves. Marrying a miner was no solution," Hewlett said. "My father was the strong character in my childhood. He had a feminist consciousness long before its time."

When Hewlett was 13, her father took her on a bus to see Cambridge University in England

important transition in my life." She returned to her school determined to be the first student in the school's 200-year history to enter Cambridge. The requirements were "onerous." They included 12 hours of entrance exams.

"When I was informed that I had been admitted, the entire school was given the day off to celebrate," Hewlett said.

Her years at Cambridge were the "hardest thing I have ever done in my life," Hewlett said. "Not only was I a female at a time when only 6 percent of the students were female, but I had the wrong accent because I had grown up on the wrong side of the tracks."

Hewlett credits her enthusiasm, idealism, determination and ability to get passionately involved for getting her through three years at Cambridge.

After graduation, she won a Kennedy Scholarship to Harvard University and went on to complete her Ph.D. in economics in 1973.

"My years at Harvard were wonderful. The women's movement was just getting off the ground. There was a spirit of wide open opportunity. I feel immensely grateful to be born in an era where so many opportunities are open to women. I was part of the first feminist wave. It fueled my take on feminism."

Hewlett said the values she tries to instill in her children are "a thread from my own childhood. I am tremendously appreciative of the enormous role my parents played in making things possible against all odds. They helped me overcome a lot of disadvantages. This feeds into the work I do now — helping parents with moral support. It's supremely important to show the things parents can do to inspire their children."

For more information about the National Parenting Association, call 1-800-709-8795 or write to: 65 Central Park West, Suite 1-D, New York, N.Y. 10023.



NO CLEAR CLINTON MANDATE

Soccer moms kick at political image

By TIA SWANSON
STAFF WRITER

It is not as if Dianne Meinhardt doesn't have enough to worry about.

Owner of a big old money-sucking house on a tree-lined street in Metuchen; wife to a New York City architect; mom to 7-year-old Max; substitute teacher; president of her Parent-Teacher Organization; den mother, and now this.

Political pundit.

Yes, Meinhardt is one of the supposed 8.8 million soccer moms out there who are supposed to be the arbiters of this presidential

election.

Forget angry white males. Forget senior citizens. Forget the right-leaning Southern Democrats. This time around, analysts claim, the key to the election is capturing the heart of white suburban wives and mothers who in between breakfast and bedtime spend at least a few of their precious minutes ferrying Dick and Jane (or Sam and Jessica) to soccer practice.

And despite Bob Dole's best efforts at making himself the spokesman for this generation of women, this time around President Clinton is getting their votes, the ana-

lysts claim — even though many of the moms supported President Bush in 1992.

In reality, it's not quite that simple.

A random sampling of mothers in Metuchen Thursday yielded no clear preference for Clinton; in fact, many moms didn't want to talk politics at all. It was Halloween, after all.

Then there was Janet Nacder, a full-time mother of three, who is pro-life.

Nacder regrets being a single-issue voter, she said, but believes the abortion issue is

Please see **Soccer**, page A21

SOCCKER: Club moms kick at their political image

■ Continued from page A13

important and can't stomach supporting someone who is pro-choice, despite the fact that Dole is hardly her idea of the perfect candidate. "Rather than voting for Dole, I'm against Clinton," she said, then admitted that she might not vote for president at all.

But if her political views are different from those of many other mothers', her feeling about being singled out in this election is not.

She feels insulted by the title "soccer mom," and by the claim that politicians not only understand and speak for her, but are tailoring their campaigns to woo her.

"I find it insulting," she said. "You have to look attractive and be touchy-feely. (There's an assumption) that we won't deal with where they stand on the issues."

It was widely reported, for example, that both of this year's major-party conventions were aimed at women voters. That supposedly accounted for Elizabeth Dole walking through the crowd and recounting her husband's recovery from war injuries and for Al Gore's tale of his sister's death from cancer brought on by cigarette smoking.

Jacalyn Schwartz, however, a certi-

fied public accountant and the mother of two young boys, the older of whom just started playing soccer, was not taken in by the emotive programming.

Although she admits it's easy to bring a tear to her eye, she also said she's not persuaded by politics that isn't issue-oriented. She notes, for example, that Gore's pain didn't make him give back all the money he's taken from tobacco interests.

Though Schwartz said she would have "hoped for more from Clinton and Gore than I'm getting," she also feels they are talking about issues closer to her heart, "education, women's rights ... and the growing economic class system that has developed, the haves vs. the have-nots."

Meinhardt, too, places education at the top of her list of concerns.

"Our kids are suffering so much," she said, talking about how American children's test scores continue to lag behind those of their international peers.

Like Schwartz, however, Meinhardt feels that both candidates pay more lip service than attention to education.

Clinton talks about nationalizing the school curriculum, she said, "but then doesn't go out and push it."

She feels similarly about the way he brags about guaranteeing 48-hour

hospital stays for childbirth, and longer maternity leaves.

"That's absolutely nothing," she said, adding that true fairness would be weeklong hospital stays and year-long maternity leaves, as there are in some European countries.

Still, Meinhardt notes that at least Clinton is talking about these issues. "He has reached out. He has appealed to feminine issues."

That is more than Dole's campaign has done, said Sylvia Ann Hewlett. She is the founder of a liberal activist organization, the National Parenting Association.

During the vice-presidential debate, she said, Jack Kemp said two or three times that he understood the time constraints on parents. And yet, she said, when asked what he would do about parental leave, he said he'd repeal it.

That just won't do it for most parents, said Hewlett.

Her association commissioned a national survey in September to gauge where parents stood on a variety of political topics and she said there was remarkable agreement across racial, economic and ethnic lines.

"What (parents) very much said is, 'We need help,'" Hewlett said. "They recognize if they are going to be good parents and make time for

their children, which they desperately want to do, they're going to need things like flexible hours and tax breaks so they don't have to work two jobs."

Hewlett said the study also showed that ideological issues that conservatives have addressed as involving family values are less important to parents than practical programs that can help them in their everyday lives.

When asked their top concerns in the political race, not one of the 500 parents surveyed mentioned abortion or gay marriages, she said. Instead, parents focused on crime, drugs and education.

She said an overwhelming percentage of parents agreed that the most helpful things government could do to make their jobs easier are to keep guns away from children, let parents work flexible hours, increase tax deductions for parents with children, and raise wages so all full-time workers are above the poverty level.

Hewlett believes that parents as a whole — not simply soccer moms — share enough beliefs to become a powerful political force. She hopes to achieve for parents something similar to what the American Association of Retired Parents has done for senior citizens.

"There is a unifying platform that one could put together," she said.

Los Angeles Times

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1997

Politics Aside, People Want What's Best for Children

REAL LIFE

By LYNN SMITH
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The inaugural speeches are over, the kissed babies are back in their strollers and the soccer moms have vanished from the political radar screen. Or so it seems. Down in the grass roots, the people who have been pushing for a more family-friendly government are sharpening their strategies to ensure the politicians don't forget about children's and family issues until the next election.

They say the movement is showing signs of a new constituency and new clout.

"They're more than just the liberals who are concerned about the poor children," said Sara Moores Campbell, a Santa Barbara minister and community activist. "I think that more of us, liberals, conservatives and in between, are realizing that all our children are at risk."

Last year, Campbell spearheaded the first local Parents to the Polls project, a pilot program of the New York-based National Parenting Assn., which aims to motivate parents to identify local issues and vote. Campbell said she was so excited about getting the project up and running for the November election that she didn't stop to raise money or hire any staff. Instead, she pulled together volunteer support from groups like the PTA and the League of Women Voters.

**'They're more than just the
liberals who are concerned
about the poor children.'**

Sara Moores Campbell
Minister and activist

"I never had any difficulty getting things started," she said. "There's a hunger for it. People were amazed that someone asked them to come together and talk about what they felt would help make it easier for them to be the good parents they want to be."

By avoiding divisive issues, and focusing on what Campbell called the "vital center," the activists got hundreds of parents in small focus groups to come up with an agenda of issues that included workplace flexibility, preschool child care and after-school programs; safe schools with good discipline; tax relief for college; health care for children at school; and safe public transportation to and from school. The volunteers then interviewed candidates for Congress, state legislators and local school boards and published their positions in 1,500 voters' guides for parents.

There's no way of knowing, Campbell said, how much or whether the guide had an impact. Nevertheless, they will be doing it again next year (this time with funds and a director) and, she said, "We're looking to see some other communities do this."

There's a good chance others will.

The climate for such experiments is rapidly warming, said Wendy Lazarus, co-director of the Children's Partnership, a Santa Monica-based national nonprofit organization that along with 350 other groups recently commissioned a national public opinion poll on children's issues. It showed that voters—men as well as women—rank children's issues as a top priority. Ninety percent of the 800 respondents said they would be watching elected officials to see how they vote on issues important to children.

"We asked what they most wanted Congress to address in the upcoming session," Lazarus said. "At the top of the list was education—parent involvement in schools and in what schools do. Close after that was crime and violence and health care."

"The challenge is to come up with a measurable agenda and then to really be in the faces of elected officials and say, 'We're going to be watching what actions you're going to be taking,'" she said.

The new urgency is "a recognition that what is in the community interest is in our self-interest," Campbell said. "The safety of children. The health of children. The education of children. That's what we are advocating whether they're our children or somebody else's children. We will all suffer if they're not cared for. And we will all benefit when they are."

NEW YORK WOMAN

LIFE IN THE CITY

BALANCE ACT II: IT'S FAMILY THAT MATTERS

POP. That's what the soda industry and business world did last week when one of the highest-ranking women in corporate America announced that she'd had enough and was choosing her family over them.

After 22 years at Pepsi-Cola



— and far too many missed birthdays and school plays — Brenda Barnes, president and CEO of North America operations, is stepping down at the end of the year to devote herself "100 percent" to her hus-

Women professionals redefine their identity

band and children, ages 7, 8, and ten.

The turning point? When one of her kids during a family confab about whether she should continue in her job told her, only "if you can keep working and promise to be at home for all of our birthdays."

Still, it's a decision she said she struggled with "for a long time."

I can sure see why.

We're all struggling with this. There isn't one working woman I know today who isn't.

Either we're racing the clock to get in a little "QT" before

junior goes off to sleep, or like me, we're racing the clock by putting off having kids altogether, despite our mommy desire.

As the daughters of the first wave of feminism, we've been socialized to want to achieve in the professional world, and yet, we've also been socialized to want to be a nurturing parent. And both in equal numbers.

Call it our defining conflict. It has enough tragedy to make Shakespeare proud.

According to Fortune magazine's controversial March article "Is Your Family Wreck-

ing Your Career?" we've gotten to a point where our children (and their teachers) are questioning the value of homework, since parents rarely have time to go over their children's work after school.

And a 1996 poll of parents sponsored by the National Parenting Association (NPA) found that more than one third, or 36 percent, of parents don't give any time to their kids' extracurricular activities, 77 percent would keep schools open later, and 55 percent would lengthen the school year.

What that proves, according to Sylvia Ann Hewlett, president of the NPA, is that "parents are eager to see the school day and year mesh better with the workday."

Clearly, something isn't working.

"None of the women I represent and deal with [all around their mid-forties with little kids] want to do this anymore," says Terri Mandell, a public relations consultant. "We don't have to be workhorses like we were in the '80s."

Mandell was one of them, but no more. Now she works from her home. She makes less money but she's part of her kids' lives.

Sadly, not many of us have done a brilliant job — words we were weaned on — meshing our two worlds.

Brenda Barnes is the first to admit it. And she's a lucky one. She can afford to check out permanently.

For those who can't afford such a luxury (and remember, for 22 years Barnes did the juggle) the pickin's are still slim.



BRENDA BARNES
Wants time with family.

"For all its politically correct talk, the corporate world seems strangely impervious to the pressures on working families," warned the *Fortune* March cover story.

Perfect example: the attitude of John Clendenin, chairman of BellSouth who was quoted as saying, "People have always had to make choices about balancing work and family. It has always been a personal issue, and individuals have to solve it."

The message: It's every woman for herself.

For Barnes, that meant switching gears entirely. For others, it's joining the growing ranks of women starting home businesses.

That's what Jennifer Rosky, president of Solutions Marketing did. And she's trying to bring others on board.

The Los Angeles-based Rosky, formerly a bigwig in marketing at Nestle, started a company that matches freelance working moms with companies in need of fill-ins for employees on maternity leave.

"We all have two things in common," she says of her temp battalion. "We want to be good professional people and excel at what we do, and we want to be good mothers and wives and want to take care of our own bodies."

"This is not a compromise," she offers. "We're redefining what home and balancing of work are."

Trend spotters like Faith Popcorn, author of "Clicking" (Harper Collins), believe that women will ultimately redefine the work world from within.

And Barnes' imminent departure has already led some experts to predict that corporate culture will have to change if companies expect to hold onto their top performers.

Certainly, that's what the chief of Worldwide Beverage (PepsiCo's parent company), Craig Weatherup, said of Barnes' recent announcement: "I think the time is here when all of us are going to have to think about better ways to do things, so that we don't have to lose valued employees."

Hopefully that will happen. But in the meantime, most of us will still be grappling with life as time-deprived working women.

You know what that means — pre-cut salad and Chinese takeout. Phone calls that start with, "I can't talk to you." And a perpetual harried expression.

And that, my friends, is just as scary as not being able to support oneself.

NATIONAL PARENTING ASSOCIATION

CONCEPT PAPER

SYMPOSIA ON "NEW SOLUTIONS FOR A NEW CENTURY"

Project Overview

Focusing national attention on solving the parental time famine is a central aim of the National Parenting Association (NPA). Today's working families struggle to make time for their children as they wrestle with workplace and school routines designed for a bygone era. This is especially true for low income parents who experience the time crunch in particularly brutal ways. Lower income parents tend to hold jobs with little or no paid leave and little flexibility or control over how they organize their work. And unlike stressed but better paid parents, they lack the resources and back-up systems to deal with their children's needs. (See paper prepared for the NPA by Dr. S. Jody Heymann of the Harvard School of Public Health).

We are proposing a two-stage effort to address this set of problems. In Year One (1999) we would host a 2-day symposium, *New Solutions for a New Century: Changing the Family-Work-School Equation*. This conference would bring together business leaders, school administrators, parents and policy experts to rethink outdated structures and devise models that make sense for contemporary families. We would showcase progressive, parent-friendly initiatives that are succeeding in schools and businesses around the country. And we would generate new ideas for structuring our work lives and our educational systems so that our children are not short-changed. A symposium at the national level is needed to raise public awareness of what is possible and to build support for change. In Year Two (2000), as the second phase of work, we would engage diverse pilot communities in taking the next steps in developing concrete solutions and pushing for implementation locally. We envision working with 2 cities (initially New York and Los Angeles with the possibility of West Palm Beach and/or Minneapolis-St. Paul in the future) to help them convene *Community Forums on Changing the Family-Work-School Equation*. Ideally, these would not be one-shot meetings, but rather a commitment to an on-going local partnership among leaders from businesses, schools, parents and community funders to promote institutional change.

The idea for a national symposium linked to community forums grows out of the NPA's 3-year project: *The Task Force on Revitalizing Parenting for the 21st Century* and would be an integral part of this larger effort. Co-chaired by NPA President, Sylvia Hewlett, and Harvard Professor, Cornel West, this round table panel of distinguished policy-makers, business and religious leaders, academics and parent activists aims to spark a national conversation on revaluing parenting in America. The Task Force began its work by looking at the role of parents as it has evolved and challenges facing parents today. The second session focused in depth on the family time famine, particularly as it affects low income parents. At our next session we plan to develop a new paradigm for parenting. What should we expect of mothers and fathers as we enter the next century? Given what we know about children's needs, what are the critical roles parents must play? The fourth session would address institutional changes needed to enable

parents to fulfill this new vision of parenting. At this point we would host the national Symposium to widen our net to reach beyond Task Force members. By inviting practitioners, experts and parents that are developing cutting edge school and workplace solutions to present their experience, we can learn what works, what doesn't and why. In addition, a high profile event would enable us to generate more widespread media coverage and attention, setting the stage for the follow-up local forums.

The NPA Task Force is funded by a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We are currently seeking to expand our funding base and are talking to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Open Society Institute, the MacArthur Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation and Scholastic Inc., among others.

Objectives

The aims of the national symposium will be

- to give new visibility and validity to the time pressures on parents,
- to showcase best practices in the private sector, with special attention given to small businesses — as examples of workplace policies that give parents more time for their children,
- to showcase best practices in the educational system — as examples of school schedules and programs that help parents cope with balancing work and family responsibilities,
- to serve as a catalyst for the more widespread adoption of proven models,
- to propose new ways of organizing our work lives and school schedules that do not shortchange our children, and
- to contribute to a national conversation on practical ways to support parents.

Our aim in phase two will be to bring the lessons learned from the national level to the local level and in turn to feed grassroots thinking and realism back into the NPA. These forums, co-sponsored by community funders, schools, workplaces, religious institutions and neighborhood centers would bring parents and local leaders together to talk about ways their institutions and the community can give parents greater practical support in the workplace and in the school system.

Specifically our objectives in phase two will be

- to share what we learn from the national symposium and to showcase best practices at the local level, and
- to serve as a catalyst for bringing together business, school, and parent leaders to implement change.

The NPA is ideally positioned to sponsor this project. We bring a profound understanding of the time constraints undermining the ability of parents to give their children the attention and care they need. Much of our recent work has focused on the importance of the huge societal investment that parents make in caring for children. Yet our research — and that of others — reveals a nation of undervalued and overworked parents, working longer and harder, struggling to guide their children through a world that seems fraught with difficulty and danger.

In little more than one generation social roles have changed radically in America. Twenty years ago 70 percent of mothers of children younger than 1 year were at home, today, less than half are. The vast majority of mothers of school-age children, K through 12th grade, are now in paid employment. Mothers on welfare are told they now have to go out to work. Expectations about male roles are also slowly beginning to change. A growing number of today's fathers want to be more involved in raising their children. Yet the inflexible worlds of work and school have adjusted relatively little to accommodate these dramatic shifts. Schools are still geared to a nineteenth century agrarian ideal. The constraints of a 2,000 hour work year stack up against a 1,260 hour school year. Career paths are easy to get off, and difficult to get back on, with no recognition given for the value of time spent caring for children.

While other organizations focus primarily on either workplace or school policies, the NPA addresses both. We recognize the need to look at the total constellation of work, school and family life to rethink how the pieces fit together. For example, strengthening afterschool programs produces a dual payoff for employers. They benefit first from decreased disruption during the late afternoon hours when parents worry about their children. Second, enriched programming and an extended school day will contribute to a better workforce in the future. If we can tap this self-interest of employers, we have the potential for building a strong alliance among parents, the business community and schools to expand and upgrade afterschool programs.

We seek to be a catalyst for institutional change to lessen the daily struggles of parents. Our search for solutions is deeply rooted in a commitment to honoring the parent-child bond. So we approach our examination of workplace and school policies through that lens. Our ultimate objective is not to free parents to spend even more time at work, nor to off-load parental responsibilities onto schools, but rather to restructure the way the worlds of work and school are organized so that parents can do their best for *their* kids and for *our* future.

Background: Evidence Supporting the Need for This Project

Over the last 20 years stagnant wages and increased job insecurity have forced parents to spend more and more of their waking hours on the job. Harvard economist Juliet Schor estimates that compared with twenty years ago, women — many new to the paid labor force — are working approximately 300 additional hours per year, while men are working nearly 100 more hours a year. Over the same period much of the job growth in the U.S. economy has been in small companies that typically offer little in the way of family support. The 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act, for example, exempted companies with fewer than 50 employees thus excluding 40 percent of working mothers.

In surveys and focus groups parents express deep concern over this family time famine. In a 1996 national survey conducted by Peim + Schoen for the NPA, fully 81 percent of all parents saw

the time crunch as the most serious problem in their lives. A 1998 survey by the National Partnership for Women & Families found that by a margin of three to one, Americans say that time pressures on working families are getting worse (64%), and that finding time for both work and family responsibilities has gotten harder (59%) over the past five years. A recent Economic Policy Institute release notes that the typical married-couple family worked 247 more hours (over six weeks) per year in 1996 than in 1989. As the number of dual career couples has grown, so has stress in family life. In search of balance, parents are looking for more flexibility and fewer hours on the job. The *New York Times* reports that the majority of Americans — over 60 percent — now say they would like to cut back on work hours ("Part-time Work for Some Adds Up to Full-time Job," *New York Times*, Nov. 2, 1998, p. A18).

While middle-class parents struggle hard to balance their home and work responsibilities, the obstacles facing single parents, those in low wage jobs, and mothers leaving welfare, make it nearly impossible. Twenty percent of mothers hold jobs that offer no paid leave for sickness or vacation. That figure rises to 40 percent of working mothers who received AFDC for more than 5 years in the past (Heymann paper cited above). Out of 152 nations, the United States is one of only 6 that fail to provide paid maternity leave by law.

Family-friendly work policies, as traditionally conceived, are at best a partial solution. They tend to free a parent to put in more hours at work, as opposed to spending more hours with their children. Moreover, programs like subsidized child care or emergency care for sick children carry a hefty price tag and have become benefits for Fortune 500 firms rather than for the smaller businesses that fuel our economic growth and employ an increasing proportion of parents. And many mothers and fathers are reluctant to take advantage of the flex-time provisions that some firms do offer because these options bear hidden costs and can be hazardous to a career. In a study conducted by the Ford Foundation, employees who used such programs as flextime, job sharing, telecommuting, and part-time work suffered career consequences, even though they were typically more efficient and productive than their colleagues. Even employees who work full time but put in slightly less "face time" because of outside obligations may suffer.

By and large, the debate on balancing family and work has focused on parents of very young children — as have the proposed solutions — parental leave, child care, and the like. Yet, in many ways, the challenges get more difficult as children reach school age and adolescence. How does a parent balance the demands of an all-day, 12-month job with the 365-day, 24 hour demands of children who need after-school supervision, someone to help with homework, something to do all summer and some unstructured time to just be a child?

It is important to realize that when parents are not available in the late afternoon and early evening hours the consequences can be disastrous for children. According to FBI data, the peak hours for violent juvenile crime are now 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. This can be attributed to a huge drop-off in the number of parents available to supervise their children after school. In 1970, 57 percent of school-age children had at least one parent at home on a full-time basis; by 1995, this figure had fallen to 29 percent. Experts estimate that somewhere between 5 and 7 million latchkey children go home to an empty house after school and that fully a third of all twelve-year-olds are regularly left to fend for themselves while their parents are at work. These children are at significantly greater risk of truancy, school failure, substance abuse, and violent behavior than children who have a parent at home.

Intended Outcomes

The symposium and community forums will promote new solutions to the family school-work equation. Specifically we will target:

- solutions that make sense for small businesses — by emphasizing flexibility and imaginative management rather than costly benefits,¹
- solutions that extend a floor of basic time-enhancing benefits to those in low-wage jobs,
- solutions that tap the potential of schools as a resource for families and promote greater parent involvement, and
- solutions that don't just substitute for parents — but enable mothers and fathers to devote more of their time and energy to their children — and send a loud message that doing so is more than socially acceptable, it is socially valuable. We are talking about policies like resources to fund after-school programs, rethinking school schedules, flex-time and place, trade-ins of pay for extra leave, part-time jobs with pro-rated benefits, the "four-thirds" solution in which two parents each work 2/3's time, alternatives to lock-step career paths that reward stay-at-home parents and ease labor market re-entry, expansion of the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act, and tax incentives to encourage businesses to adopt such initiatives.

We intend to publicize the ideas generated by the symposium and community forums through press coverage, featuring successful models on our web site, parentsunite.org, and through other means to reach the broadest possible audience.

Rev. 11/2/98

¹ Toni's of Maine and The Benjamin Group are examples of smaller businesses with innovative family-friendly policies.

PARENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

from Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West's *The War Against Parents*

In October of 1995, authors Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West organized a "Task Force on Parent Empowerment," which aimed "to gather the testimony of experts and parents from diverse communities across America." The Task Force deliberated for two years and developed "a set of policies capable of relieving the parental time famine, lightening the intense economic pressure on parents, and rewriting our cultural script to give new value and dignity to the parental role."

The resulting Parents' Bill of Rights parallels the GI Bill of Rights: it deals with generous universal benefits, is enabling and empowering, adds to our economic well-being, and rests on the same ethical foundation -- service to our country. The development of the Parents' Bill of Rights was interactive, involving not only scholars and policy analysts, but also input of parents across the country.

A PARENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

Mothers and Fathers are entitled to

1. TIME FOR THEIR CHILDREN

- Paid Parenting Leave
- Family-Friendly Workplaces
- A Safety Net

2. ECONOMIC SECURITY

- A Living Wage
- Job Opportunities
- Tax Relief
- Help with Housing

3. A PRO-FAMILY ELECTORAL SYSTEM

- Incentives to Vote
- Votes for Children

4. A PRO-FAMILY LEGAL STRUCTURE

- Stronger Marriage
- Support for Fathers
- Adoption Assistance

5. A SUPPORTIVE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

- Violence-Free Neighborhoods
- Quality Schooling
- Extended School Day and Year
- Child Care
- Family Health Coverage
- Drug-Free Communities
- Responsible Media
- An Organizational Vote

6. HONOR AND DIGNITY

- An Index of Parent Well-Being
- National Parents' Day
- Parent Privileges

A PARENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

Mothers and fathers are entitled to

1. TIME FOR THEIR CHILDREN

The survey revealed a "Parental Time Famine" -- that is, parents across the country want to spend more and better time with their children. 90% of the parents polled felt that a time crunch exists because of their work.

Paid Parenting Leave

If parenting leave is not paid, those who need it the most -- overburdened low-income parents -- are least likely to take it. European childbirth privileges include prenatal care, obstetrical care, generous hospital stays, five months' leave at full pay, home visits, and baby equipment subsidies. Such benefits are unparalleled in the United States.

Recommendation: ***government-mandated, paid, job-protected parenting leave for twenty-four weeks*** (significantly expanding the scope of Family Medical Leave Act of 1993)

- Workers who cannot obtain income replacement through company benefits policy or disability insurance would be entitled to the minimum wage for this six-month period
- The Social Security Trust Fund should cover the wage replacement costs, thus ensuring that employers would not suffer financial hardship or be tempted to discriminate against young parents
- For small firms (<50 employees), government would pick up the expenses involved in carrying health insurance and other employee benefits while a worker is out on parenting leave.
- Paid parenting leave could be used entirely by one parent or shared between them. Furthermore, it can be used to stay at home full-time, or it can be combined with part-time employment. The 120 days (24 weeks) can be taken until a child's sixth birthday.

European parallel: since 1974, when parenting leave was first introduced in Sweden, paternal leave rose from 3% to 26%. Researchers anticipate that this policy could lead to the breakdown of sexual stereotypes in the United States.

Family-Friendly Workplaces

To encourage paid parental leave, the government should create incentives for firms to provide time-enhancing policies as part of a family-friendly benefits package.

Recommendation: ***carefully tailored tax incentives for companies*** that offer flexible hours, compressed work weeks, part-time work with benefits, job sharing, career sequencing, extended parenting leave, and home-based employment opportunities.

Recommendation: ***the four-thirds solution*** (developed by child psychologist Stanley Greenspan): each parent works two-thirds time to pursue career goals, and together they provide four thirds of a single income. 1/3 of each parent's time is left for direct baby and child care.

A Safety Net

The authors believe that the Parents' Bill of Rights will create a scenario in which many fewer families depend on welfare to make ends meet

Recommendation: ***government reinstate the right to income support*** for poor parents with children under six, with the provision that ***unmarried teenage mothers be required to live in a home*** under the strict supervision of experienced mothers.

- This involves amending the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, which capped lifetime cash benefits at five years per recipient, whatever the age of the child.

2. ECONOMIC SECURITY

According to the survey, economic security is the second most worrisome problem facing parents today (after the parental time crunch). Unfortunately, it is impossible to provide parents with "the gift of time" without directly confronting the terms and conditions of employment. Thus, the PBOR emphasizes more direct measures toward economic security than in GI Bill.

A Living Wage

Recommendation: Government and the private sector should underwrite a series of ***subsidies that bring wages up to at least \$7 an hour***, a level that would enable every full-time worker to keep a family of three above the poverty line.

- Columbia University economist Edmund Phelps has proposed subsidies for low-wage workers: subsidies would be limited to full-time jobs for low-wage employees, and they are graduated -- the lower the wage, the higher the subsidy.
 - Wage subsidies should be paid for by a tax on companies in the sector receiving them.
 - Estimated initial cost: \$100 billion/year.
 - Phelps theory: family breakdown, social decay, welfare dependence, and crime "can be traced to economic forces that have deprived a great many less advantaged workers of much of the power of their labor."
 - Large-scale wage subsidies would reduce the income gap between managers and employees and would lessen managerial greed, as corporations would have to cut into executive compensation to remain competitive.

Job Opportunities

Recommendation: government, along with schools and the private sector, should support and underwrite ***programs that improve the chances of students*** -- particularly disadvantaged

students -- *navigating the path to productive and decently paid jobs.*

- Framework for this is already in place: the May 1994 School-to-Work Opportunities Act provides seed money to states and local partnerships to develop programs that emphasize more work experience in high school and more on-the-job training in the workplace.

Tax Relief

Tax burden currently falls more heavily on low-and middle-income working households, where most children live, and much less heavily on wealthy households, which are mostly older and without children. Four proposals will remedy this situation:

1. ***Eliminate payroll taxes for working parents*** who have children under six.
 - Suggested funding: make earnings above \$65,400 subject for FICA, which would raise an additional \$53 billion.
2. ***Extend the recently enacted child tax credit*** (\$500 per child per year) to low-income families who already benefit from the earned income tax credit, and allow them to offset this credit against their social security taxes.
 - Low-income families are liable for payroll taxes even if they benefit from EITC and already pay very low federal income taxes, but they may not necessarily benefit from the May 1997 child tax credit if their incomes are not high enough.
3. ***Create a \$2000 per child family allowance.***
 - Such an allowance would apply to children under six and would be limited to families whose annual income is less than \$50,000.
 - Allowance is to be paid for by the Social Security Trust Fund and could be underwritten by pushing the retirement age from sixty-five to sixty-seven.
4. ***Eliminate local sales taxes on children's necessities*** such as diapers, school supplies, learning tools, and car seats.

Help with Housing

In recent years, the price of housing has risen much faster than wages. In 1996, 5 million American households paid more than half of their pretax income for housing. The housing crunch today is worse than the crunch following WWII (in the late 1940s, the United States had 5 million homeless or near homeless families; today, 6 million such families exist).

Recommendation: the government should ***create a mortgage subsidy*** to make home ownership a realistic ambition for many more young families.

- The subsidy would be limited to families with incomes below \$100,000/year.
- The program would be partially funded by limiting the tax deductibility of mortgage payments for wealthy homeowners (those earning \$200,000+/year).

Recommendation: government should ***increase the availability of section 8 rent vouchers*** for low-income families.

- Vouchers give mobility and choice to low-income families -- i.e. do not

- necessarily confine the poor to “blighted ghettos.”
- Vouchers are scarce as per demand. This plan of subsidies and vouchers “would underwrite family homes as the GI Bill did.”

3. A PRO-FAMILY ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The authors propose a reform of the voting system so as to give more clout to mothers and fathers. But to do this, the government must lure more people to vote.

Incentives to Vote

Government should increase voter turnout not by subsidies or fines, but rather by benefits, e.g.:

- Waive the application fee for a driver’s license if the applicant could prove that he had voted in a national or local election.
- Render a welfare applicant eligible for a small bonus if she had proof that she had voted in the last election.

Votes for Children

Recommendation: consider that *parents be given the right to vote on behalf of their children.*

- “Today’s elections will affect today’s children well into maturity, and they should have an opportunity to influence that future, if only through their parents.”

Ideas for increasing the parent vote:

- Parents should be encouraged to register to vote when they register the birth of a child or when they register a child for school -- a voter registration form could be attached to such other forms.
- Designate election days as national holidays (this is done in most other countries): this eases time constraints on parents, who now must vote either before or after work.

4. A PRO-FAMILY LEGAL STRUCTURE

Stronger Marriage

Recommendation: the government should *give more weight to the act of getting married.*

- e.g. some state laws allow couples to choose a more rigorous marriage, such as Louisiana’s “covenant marriage” pledge: couples enter marriage after serious deliberations, including premarital counseling. They can divorce only after a mutually agreed-upon two-year separation, excluding extraneous circumstances.

Recommendation: *make it more difficult to get a divorce*, especially when children are involved.

- Mandate a three-year waiting period for parents wishing to divorce, during which time they be obliged to seek marriage counseling.
- Parents should be legally obligated to safeguard their children’s financial future

before they are granted a final divorce decree.

Recommendation: ***eliminate the marriage penalty*** in our tax code.

- Lower taxes on two-earner couples until these couples no longer pay more in total taxes than they would have paid if they had remained single.
- Restore income splitting, permitting all married couples to share their joint income equally for purposes of taxation.

Support for Fathers

40% of children currently live apart from their fathers. To reduce this statistic:

Recommendation: the federal government should ***mandate a special ten-day parenting leave for new fathers*** that is both paid and compulsory.

- Compulsory leave would help get rid of the stigma attached to paternal leave in many contexts.

Recommendation: state laws should guarantee ***generous visitation rights for non-custodial parents*** and reinforce them by an appropriate set of sanctions.

- If a noncustodial parent has not seen his/her child in a prescribed amount of time (e.g. 3 months), that parent should be fined or put on notice that such conduct is unacceptable.

Recommendation: federal and state benefits should ***restructure our system of welfare benefits to privilege two-parent families***.

- Set aside half of all additional section 8 rent vouchers and half of all mortgage subsidies for two-parent families.

Adoption Assistance

Children who are adopted fare as well as biological children in terms of self-esteem, mental health, and school achievement.

Recommendation: replace the current emphasis on foster care with an emphasis on adoption. To do this, ***reconfigure the legal system to make it much easier to adopt a child***.

- States should be required to find adoptive homes for children within thirty days of the termination of parental rights.

5. A SUPPORTIVE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Violence-Free Neighborhoods

Juvenile crime has quadrupled since the 1980s. Between 5-7 million latchkey children go home from school alone each day.

Recommendation: that school districts around the nation *provide students with an extended school day and extracurricular activities after school.*

Recommendation: school districts should *encourage the formation of parent safety patrols* to create a safety zone around each school.

Recommendation: that the government *band the sale of handguns to all young people* under the age of twenty-one; *enact "safe storage" laws* which make adults criminally liable for failure to take specific precautions in making guns inaccessible to children; and *mandate the installation of trigger locks on guns* to make it harder for children to fire them.

- In September 1997, President Clinton called on gun manufactures to voluntarily install trigger locks, but they are currently not mandated.
- 89% of the adults polled think trigger locks should be mandated.

Quality Schooling

The federal government and individual school districts should significantly increase educational investment. Public and private spending on preschool, primary, and secondary education is lower in the United States than in most other countries (Economic Policy Institute). America ties for twelfth place in secondary educational rank among sixteen industrial countries. To reach par with other countries, we would need to increase spending by more than \$20 billion annually.

Furthermore, of all federal, state, and local money spend on education, less than half of one percent goes to those aged five and younger. Fewer than half of our three-to-five year olds attend preschool programs.

Recommendation: tilt the balance of educational expenditure to *spend relatively more in the early years.*

- Fully fund Head Start. For just under \$2 billion more a year, this program could be expanded to cover all eligible children.
- Make the newly created HOPE tax credits available for preschool education.

Extended School Day and Year

Longer hours would help to create the framework for a more rigorous education for American youngsters. (In Japan and Germany, schools are in session 30-40% longer than in the United States, and students routinely outperform American students.) An expanded school day would also ease the problem of latchkey children.

Recommendation: that the regular *school day run from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and that schools offer an enriched program of extracurricular activities until 6:30 p.m.*

Recommendation: that the *summer vacation be pegged at five weeks* rather than its current length of nine weeks.

Child Care

Recommendation: that government and businesses ***significantly increase the quality and affordability of child care for working parents.***

- Of the 13 million children who are now in day care, somewhere between 12 and 21 percent are in care that could be considered dangerous, and another 50 to 60 percent are in care where they are safe but not really learning.
- Support for out-of-home care should go hand in hand with policies (such as the family allowance) that enable more parents to look after their own children, especially in the early years.

Recommendation: ***tougher regulation*** of the child-care industry, including background checks on workers, enforcement of licensing requirements, and so on.

Recommendation: government should provide ***subsidies that underwrite training and much higher salaries for child-care workers.***

Recommendation: ***federal funding should be restructured*** so as to cut back the dependent care tax credit for affluent families and increase child-care block grants to the states.

Recommendation: ***paid parenting leave should become a central component of child-care policy.***

Recommendation: a special set of ***tax credits and subsidies should target full-time moms and dads.***

- The Minnesota At-Home Child Care Credit Bill, established spring 1994, provides a credit of \$720 per child (for up to two children) for married couples who take care of their baby at home. The Minnesota At-Home Infant Child Care Bill (January 1998) establishes a subsidy for a parent who provides full-time care for an infant child in lieu of day-care assistance (the subsidy is 75% of the established rate for infant day care).

Recommendation: we should ***integrate child care into our schools.***

- School of the 21st Century proposal (Yale psychologist Edward Zigler): comprises school-based, year-round, all-day care for children aged three to five; before- and after-school and vacation care for school-age children; family support and guidance through a home visitation program for new and expectant parents; and support and training to family day-care providers in the school's neighborhood.

Family Health Coverage

Recommendation: ***expand family health coverage provisions to all uninsured children, and expand them so that parents are also covered*** (i.e. cover even those children who are omitted from the expanded 1997 health insurance coverage).

Drug-Free Communities

Recommendation: *an extended school day and flextime for working parents* should be an integral part of drug prevention policy, since the mere physical presence of a parent in the home after school significantly reduces drug use among adolescents.

Recommendation: rigorous programs of *drug education and prevention should be mandatory in every school*, starting in the early grades. Such programs also should involve parents.

- Communities should make a commitment to creating *Drug-Free School Zones* extending 1000 feet in every direction from the edge of a school's property.

Our war on drugs should focus on prevention. Additionally, we should *eliminate the disparity in mandatory sentences* between crack cocaine and powder cocaine, and require racial/ethnic impact statements for all sentencing policy legislation.

Recommendation: government should *ban alcohol and cigarette advertising* on billboards and in magazines, and the media should be encouraged not to *glamorize smoking, drinking, and using drugs*.

- The entertainment and advertising industries should support the *Partnership for a Drug-Free America*.

Responsible Media

Recommendation: the government should dramatically *increase its support of public broadcasting*.

Recommendation: the creation of a *Children's Hour* on network television.

- The FCC should require all commercially licensed stations to broadcast an hour of children's programming each weekday from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. as part of the implementation of the 1990 Children's Television Act.
- Programs must not be mere cartoons; they must have real educational value.

Recommendation: *our movie and CD rating system should be made stricter* and enforcement should be more rigorous.

Recommendation: the *adoption of a television rating system designed for parents by parents* (e.g. KidScore).

Recommendation: *urge parents to get involved* in monitoring television.

An Organizational Vote for Parents

Recommendation: *the creation of an AARP-style organization* that speaks to the concerns parents share across the usual divides of race, income, and gender and seeks to produce new

clout in the public square.

6. HONOR AND DIGNITY

An Index of Parent Well-Being

Recommendation: create such an index to counter the Dow Jones and other Wall Street indicators, displaying measures of parents' average weekly earnings, time available for children, access to affordable housing, health insurance coverage, and the divorce rate.

National Parents' Day

The government should encourage communities around the nation to support this day, as it speaks to a "we" consciousness rather than an "I" consciousness, emphasizing families over individuals. Schools, churches, synagogues, and mosques should be encouraged to celebrate National Parents' Day and explore a series of lectures and classes on preparing for marriage and parenthood.

Parent Privileges

Recommendation: allocate *a specially designed education credit*, worth approximately \$2000/year for a maximum of three years, which would enable a parent who stays at home with a young child to go back to school or college to complete his or her education (this closely parallels the educational provisions of the original GI bill).

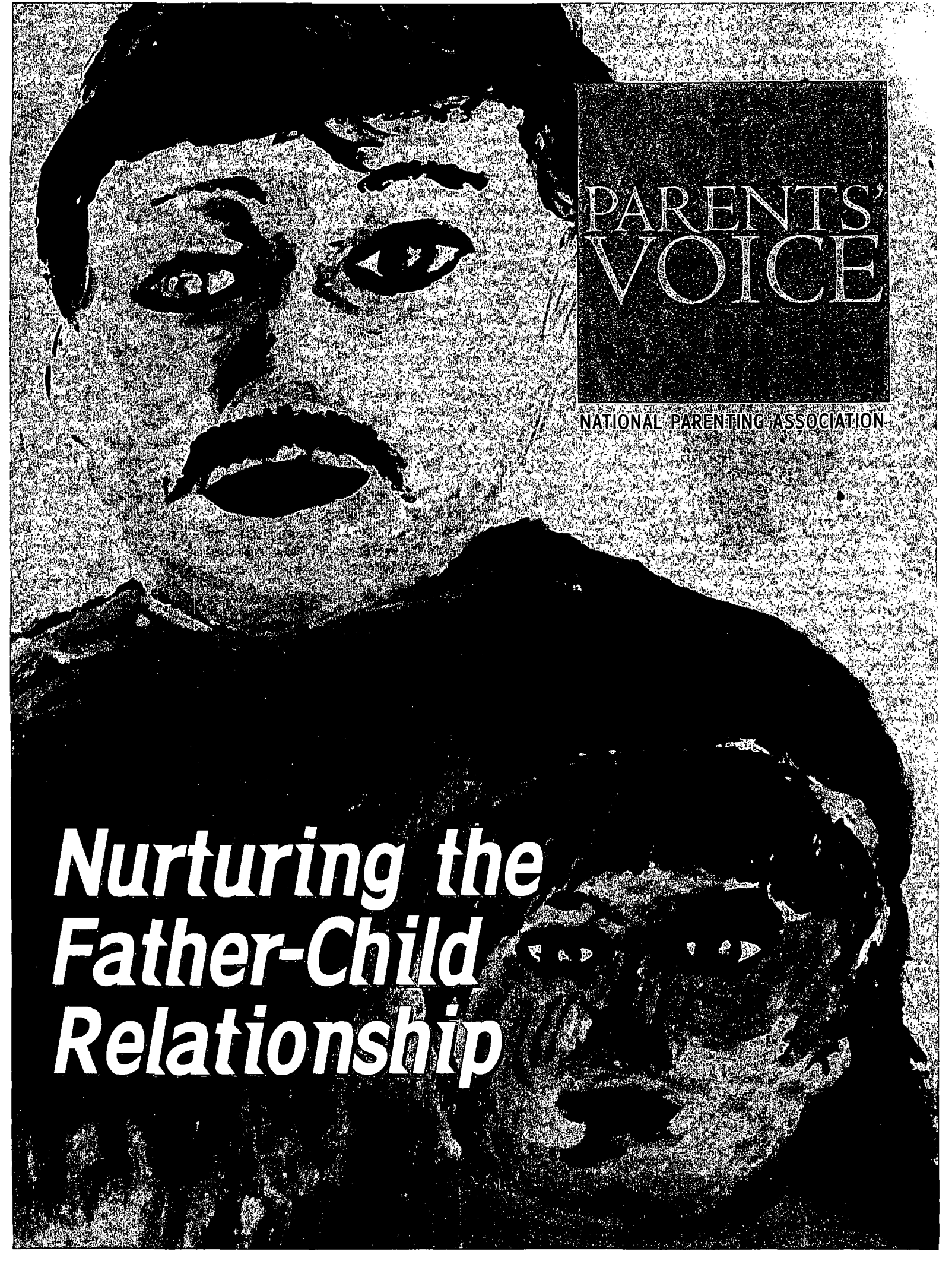
- State and city governments as well as schools and businesses should be encouraged to make our public spaces more welcoming to parents and children (e.g. offer discounted admission charges to national parks and monuments, discounted "family day" admission to museums).

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PARENTS'
VOICE

NATIONAL PARENTING ASSOCIATION

Nurturing the Father-Child Relationship

Media Reprints

**“The
War
Against
Parents”**

Sylvia Ann Hewlett
Cornel West

National Parenting Association

Social Issues

WORK & FAMILY

PARENTS OF THE WORLD, UNITE

A national organization aims to mobilize moms and dads

Millions of Americans share common ground rooted in a singular and life-changing experience. Chances are good, in fact, that you're one of them. But this massive minority has no real political voice and no legislative agenda. Can they unite?

Economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett thinks it's about time they did. Her fledgling National Parents Assn. (NPA) seeks to organize the nation's 62 million parents of children under the age of 18 who, she says, face stressful lives with little cultural or social support from business and government. "Parenting is the ultimate nonmarket activity," she observes. "We've had a hard time giving it stature and standing."

CONSPIRACY. In their new book, *The War Against Parents* (Houghton Mifflin), Hewlett and Cornel West, professor of philosophy of religion and member of the African-American studies department at Harvard University, describe the ways in which they believe parents are conspired against. It starts with the time and money crunch wrought by inflexible work hours, insufficient and unpaid family leave, a marriage tax penalty, and for some, low wages. It extends deep into popular culture, which often denigrates parents and parenting in vapid sitcoms, among other arenas. The role of fathers has been especially underrated and misunderstood, they contend.

Recalling the 1944 GI Bill of Rights, which helped launch a period of postwar growth by giving returning military veterans financial and educational aid, Hewlett and West propose a "parents' bill of rights" (table, page 60). It would provide generous allowances for families—from 24-week paid parenting leaves to subsidies for low-wage workers. They urge a lengthening of the



school day and the school year to better reflect a changing society in which the majority of families are dual earners.

To help make it all happen, Hewlett and West have created the national organization with nearly 9,000 members in six states. Working with school boards and businesses and at the local, state, and federal levels, the NPA will mobilize parents across the political and racial spectrum and eventually do for parents what the American Association of Retired Persons has done for seniors, Hewlett and West hope. The NPA, headquartered in New York City, has membership dues of \$25 a year.

Hewlett, 51, gave birth to her fourth child just over a year ago, and also has a stepchild. West, 45, has a 20-year-old son. They emphasize that they don't

want parents to be viewed as yet another interest group. "Nonparents have a stake in all citizens of the future ending up in good shape," Hewlett says. Parents invest upwards of \$150,000 to raise a child, she notes, but many of that child's contributions as an adult may accrue to society at large.

Hewlett's and West's concerns are not unfamiliar, of course: For all their lack of explicit representation, parents have a host of surrogate advocates. Con-

servative politicians and legislators, recently joined by politicians of nearly all stripes, have long embraced the fuzzy cause of family values. Women's groups, children's advocates, and research organizations have long fashioned agendas to help children and families. The National Partnership for Women & Families—formerly the Women's Legal Defense Fund—did pioneering work 14 years ago

THE NEXT AARP?

The National Parents Assn.'s Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West could wield enormous clout

to promote family-leave legislation that finally became law in 1993; it now is working to expand coverage to smaller companies and helping some states find new ways to fund family leave. The Children's Defense Fund is pushing an initiative to make child care more affordable and more widely available.

Such groups believe a parents' movement would only complement their efforts. "Rarely before in American history have we expected parents to do this challenging job totally on their own as a private matter," observes Wendy Lazarus, director of the Children's Partnership, a Santa Monica (Calif.) nonprofit, nonpartisan group that researches children's issues. "We need to once again establish that parents are doing something that is of civic value."

"LIVING WAGE." Numerous research groups churn out ever more compelling data confirming the demands of parenthood in the two-income-family era. On Apr. 15, the Work & Families Institute released a major study on the changing workforce in America. Among its key findings: Employed married fathers spend more time with their children

Social Issues

PARENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

An agenda for reform from Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West

TIME-BIND RELIEF Provide paid parenting leave, flexible workplaces, part-time career ladders, and tax breaks for at-home parents.

ECONOMIC

SECURITY Guarantee parents a living wage, introduce a family allowance for families with children under six, eliminate sales tax on children's necessities such as diapers and car seats.

LEGAL STRUCTURES Promote premarital counseling and make it harder to divorce. Restructure welfare to favor two-parent families.

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Create a lobbying group to represent parents. Extend the school day and year, and increase spending on early childhood education.



DATA: SYLVIA ANN HEWLETT, CORNEL WEST,
NATIONAL PARENTING ASSN.

than fathers did 20 years ago, while mothers spend about the same amount—but 70% of all parents feel they do not have enough time with their children.

Hewlett and West's proposals are ambitious. Providing wage subsidies to guarantee all workers a "living wage" of \$7.00 or so an hour—a proposal based on work by Columbia University economist Edmund Phelps—would cost \$100 billion a year initially. Representative Lynn Woolsey (D-Calif.), who hopes to introduce an "income-protected leave" bill at the beginning of the next session of Congress, concedes that mandating paid time off for new parents will be a tough battle.

The authors know that their proposals are expensive. But their parents' bill of rights is, they say, a starting point, something to be refined and debated as parents around the country unite to make schools, communities, businesses, and government more responsive. Hewlett and West are on a mission—a mission to give parents a voice. Given full expression, that voice could one day prove the loudest and most powerful in the nation.

By Karen Pennar in New York

☆ **THE WAR AGAINST PARENTS:
What We Can Do for America's
Beleaguered Moms and Dads**

Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West.

Houghton Mifflin, \$24 (320p) ISBN 0-395-89169-8

This strongly polemical book does what books can do best: it offers a strong, well-reasoned position on an issue of national importance, and calls for action in a sober but compelling way. Hewlett (*When the Bough Breaks*) and West (*Race Matters*) are experienced and eloquent advocates, and in making their case that current American political and economic policy, as well as the popular media, discriminate severely against people trying to bring up children, they draw effectively on their own experiences. Hewlett, who grew up in a poor Welsh mining valley, was the beneficiary of a Labour government that made child support a keystone of its policies; West, who grew up in the Eisenhower 1950s, recalls with amazement the liberal social and educational policies of the time that made it possible for a generation of Americans—including blacks—to own their homes and raise children on a fraction of today's incomes. The authors note a number of factors that have made bringing up children an extraordinarily difficult uphill struggle: corporate greed and Washington fealty to the same; a reluctance on the right to confront the ravages of unrestricted capitalism, and on the left to honor relationships of duty rather than simple convenience; and a "hip" media playing to the youth market. They call for an organization of politically concerned parents that can be as effective as the American Association of Retired Persons, and point to, despite reservations, the Nation of Islam and the Promise Keepers as worthy efforts to rebuild the shattered psyches of so many American fathers. A survey of parents' concerns also inspires what they call a "Parents' Bill of Rights." This salutary jeremiad should be required reading in Washington and Hollywood. *Author tour.* (Apr.)

Publishers Weekly
March 30, 1998

KIRKUS REVIEWS

In quoting or excerpting, please refer to
KIRKUS REVIEWS
Date of Issue: April 1, 1998

Hewlett, Sylvia Ann &
Cornel West
THE WAR AGAINST
PARENTS: *What We Can
Do for America's
Beleaguered Moms and
Dads*
Houghton Mifflin (320 pp.)
\$24.00
Apr. 20, 1998
ISBN: 0-395-89169-8

A powerful call for parents to organize and fight back against a society that pays lip service to family values, then abandons mothers and fathers to an economic and political swamp.

Both active in the National Parenting Association (Hewlett was a founder), the noted African-American studies and religion scholar West (Harvard; *Race Matters*, 1993, etc.) and economist Hewlett (*When the Bough Breaks*, 1991) make an eloquent case that since the 1960s, "big business, government, and the wider culture have waged a silent war against parents." Beginning with reviews of their own childhoods—working class, with close family and community ties—Hewlett and West go on to point out how attitudes toward parents have changed since then. If the 1950s was a time of too-good-to-be-true Ozzies and Harriets, it was also an era of strong government and community support for families: The G.I. bill offered money for education and housing plus a subsidy for the families of veterans in school; jobs were plentiful and paid well; and workers were supported by strong labor unions. Beginning in the early 1970s, attitudes began to shift, with business and government taking a harder line toward workers and benefits. Tax breaks for families eroded; today, they claim, horses are more tax-deductible than children. Liberals come under fire for a commitment to "untrammeled individualism" that undermines the collective concern and self-sacrifice necessary for raising children. The authors also criticize the media (primarily television) and the child-welfare bureaucracy that finds it easier to take children away from their parents than to deal with the families' problems. West and Hewlett hope to spark a parents' movement that will lead to implementation of a "Parents' Bill of Rights," including such items as paid parenting leave, a "living wage," legal and moral support for fathers (for instance, in child custody disputes), and family health coverage.

A potent presentation that may energize legislators and policymakers to end the "war" and reassess the needs of families. (*Author tour*)

Money & Business

Sect

3

FROM THE DESK OF

SYLVIA ANN HEWLETT and CORNEL WEST

A Parents' Bill of Rights Would End a 30-Year War

FOR the last three decades, a silent and undeclared war has been waged against parents. The major culprits are myopic big businesses (fueled by managerial greed), parent-hurting Government policies and mass media that ridicule the parental role. These forces are undermining the most precious nonmarket activity in our market-driven society: the caring and nurturing of our children.

Some of the hostility has been deliberate, some inadvertent. But whatever the motives, one thing is certain: fatherhood in particular has been left twisting in the wind by a society intent on other agendas.

Men have been devalued in the workplace. Beginning in 1973 inflation-adjusted wages for production workers — those 80 percent of workers who hold nonsupervisory jobs — started to sag and have continued downward since. The wage squeeze first affected blue-collar workers, but it gradually fanned out across the work force so that by the early 1990's, wages were falling in all occupational categories except for management.

Wages have fallen much faster for men than for women, and young men have suffered disproportionately. Since 1973, wages are down 25 percent for men aged 25 to 34, and the pace of decline has quickened since 1990. According to the economist Alan Kreuger, wages for workers who cluster around the median wage have eroded particularly rapidly in recent years, falling 5 percent from 1989 to 1997.

The implications for family life are dire: more work, lower pay and less time for children. Thirty-five

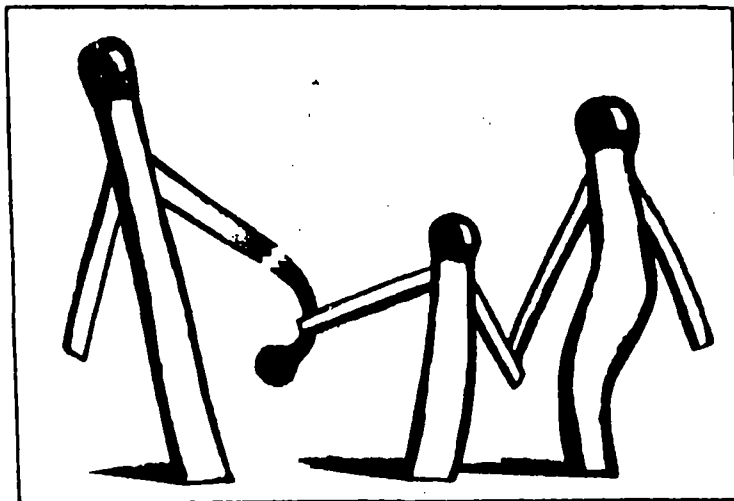
percent of men aged 25 to 34, when working full time, now earn less than what would be needed to keep a family of four above the poverty line.

If mainstream workers are increasingly squeezed, poorly educated black and Latino men are failing to find a foothold in the labor market. For instance, according to recent figures from the Bureau of the Labor Statistics, 36 percent of black men aged 16 to 64 were jobless in 1997 — either unemployed, not looking for work or in prison. This extraordinary rate of joblessness has led to a drastic fall in the number of black men who can reasonably expect to be married and support their children. There are now only 40 employed black men for every 100 black women.

Since the mid-60's, meanwhile, Government policy has moved against fathers. Aid to Families with Dependent Children, the program that provided the lion's share of income for poor families for three decades, was set up to exclude fathers. For 20 years welfare agencies staged raids to make sure that there was no man in the house. If a man was found, the mother lost her benefits. The effect was to push men out the nest.

NOT only did these regulations create a huge disincentive to marry, but they also made it extremely difficult for poor men to act as fathers should. These rules help explain why out-of-wedlock births in the black community leaped from 21 percent in 1960 to 69.8 percent in 1996. Without decent-paying jobs, recent welfare policies leave poor men and women in even more dire straits.

Much more recently, the Government has aggressively cracked down on fathers who fail to pay child support. This is despite the fact that 38 percent of absentee dads have neither custody nor visitation rights. It is difficult to imagine that men will pay for children they have no right to see. But rather than encouraging loving contact between fathers and



Igor Kupchinsky

their children, the Government simply goes after the paycheck, driving many more dads underground.

And popular culture increasingly demoralizes husbands and fathers. Portraying men as redundant to family life must be good for the box office. Movies like "Thelma & Louise," "Boys on the Side" and "Waiting to Exhale" show strong, vital women battling the odds and, in the process, shedding a series of unappealing, inadequate men.

African-Americans are still living in the shadows of slavery, which demolished the male parental role and the dignity and strength that came with it. And in the late 1990's, as pay cuts and single parenthood increasingly threaten the security of middle-class life, white men are also beginning to understand what it means to be seen as irrelevant and redundant. Perhaps the time has come for fathers to ask for the honor and support they so desperately need if they are to create egalitarian families and loving environments for our children.

That is why we are calling for a parents' bill of rights, inspired by the G.I. Bill that supported so many parents of the postwar era. It would encourage more time to be spent with children as well as economic security for working people. It would seek to create an electoral and legal system that promotes healthy parenting and a supportive environment while celebrating the honor and dignity of the parental role.

The squeeze on parental time would best be addressed by providing up to 24 weeks of paid parental leave with job protection after the birth or adoption of a child, tax incentives for companies that offer flexi-

ble hours, compressed work weeks and a safety net for poor parents. Economic security requires a living wage for workers and wage subsidies for low-income employees, school-to-work programs for students, tax relief for working parents and mortgage support and rent vouchers for young parents.

The electoral system must provide stronger incentives to vote, such as waiving the application fee for a drivers' license if one voted in a past election and designating Election Day as a national holiday. The legal structure should give more weight to marriage, provide more obstacles to divorce, eliminate the marriage penalty in our tax code, mandate parenting leave, guarantee generous visitation rights for noncustodial parents, restructure welfare benefits to accommodate two-parent families and make it easier to adopt.

School days and school years, meanwhile, should be lengthened. Parent safety patrols should be established near schools, and there should be strict enforcement of prohibitions against selling guns to young people. We should spend more on the early years of education and increase the quality and affordability of child care.

Comprehensive family health coverage, responsible media and programs to prevent drug and alcohol abuse can help create healthy parenting. If we can honor the precious nonmarket activity of parenting — and only a full-fledged parents' movement can achieve this — the democratic process would be revitalized and our children would get the future they deserve. □

Sylvia Ann Hewlett, an economist, is founder and president of the National Parenting Association; Cornel West is a professor of philosophy of religion and African-American studies at Harvard University. Their book, "The War Against Parents" (Houghton Mifflin), will be published next week.

NO. 1 IN THE USA... FIRST IN DAILY READERS

MONDAY, APRIL 13, 1998

HEALTH AND BEHAVIOR

Two parents work to write wrongs

By Karen S. Peterson
USA TODAY

When Sylvia Hewlett and Cornel West thought they had finished *The War Against Parents: What We Can Do for America's Beleaguered Moms and Dads* (Houghton Mifflin, \$24), the intellectual heavy hitters wrote what eventually became their first chapter: a compendium of their personal backgrounds and their failings as parents.

"We decided we couldn't be these two Teflon-coated experts," says Hewlett, an economist, founder of the National Parenting Association and author of the award-winning *When the Bough Breaks*. "We wanted to show we also struggle to get our priorities right."

So before their plea for more family-friendly government and business policies that would give moms and dads time to be better parents, before their call for fewer "parent-bashing" TV shows, they share personal experiences.

Hewlett, now 51, writes of pain and guilt in 1979 when she lost twins 23 weeks into her pregnancy. An assistant professor of economics at Barnard College at the time, she chose staying on the tenure track rather than "taking time off from work to grow my babies."

West, now 45 and professor of philosophy of religion and Afro-American studies at Harvard University and author of the best seller *Race Matters*, says he had to "cope with an almost impossible set of barriers" as a noncustodial single dad. His ex-wife moved away with his 2-year-old son after a divorce in 1979. He managed summers with his son, but "the rest of the year was a struggle. I maintained regular telephone contact with Cliff, calling him several times a week just to hear his voice and shoot the breeze."

They mourn the passing of a central tenet of their childhoods: "We had absolute confidence in the fact that we were the guts of our parents' lives." They suggest that contemporary life has changed even for their children, in the crush of careers and family.

Although born in Oklahoma,



Parental priorities: "Across racial lines, you find deep, deep concern, love and support for children," says Sylvia Ann Hewlett. She and Cornel West have written a 'What We Can Do' book about parenting.

Parental rights: Time, security

Sylvia Hewlett and Cornel West advocate a "parents' bill of rights." Among their proposed entitlements:

► **Time for children.** Twenty-four weeks of paid parental leave after a birth, flexible work schedules, part-time career ladders and a special tax break for at-home parents.

► **Economic security.** A minimum wage of at least \$7 an hour, subsidized help with housing, a family allowance for those with kids under age 6, no payroll taxes for those with small children and no sales taxes on children's necessities such as diapers and car seats.

► **Pro-family legal structure.** Strengthen marriages by promoting premarital counseling and making divorce difficult, guarantee generous visitation rights for noncustodial parents and change welfare benefits to favor two-parent families.

► **Supportive external environment.** Extend the school day and year, fund higher salaries for child-care workers and mandate a children's hour on network TV.

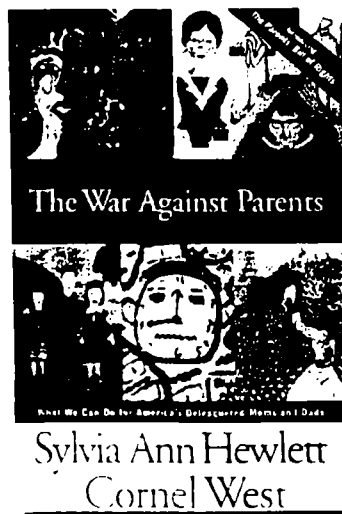
West was raised in the suburbs of Sacramento, in a black, working-class enclave created by racism but still a closely knit haven of families with employed, on-the-scene dads.

"The priority that Mom and Dad gave all four of us children is such a high standard compared to the priority I've been able to give my own son," he says. "There's was a difficult standard to meet."

Hewlett was one of six

daughters raised in a poor south Wales mining town. She writes of the endless hours her mom spent walking her to and from school four times a day. There was no car, no school bus, no school lunch. "I am staggered at the magnitude of the time commitment and the relentless rhythm."

She has four children of her own, ages 1 to 20, plus a stepdaughter. When Hewlett was younger, she "was still trying to



do everything." Now, especially with a baby, "I understand that you cannot."

The authors believe the key for time-pressed parents is more support from government and business, including subsidized housing for families with children and 24 weeks of paid parental leave at the birth of a child.

They do not, however, supply either a total cost for all the new perks for parents or a way

to pay for them, other than re-ordering national priorities.

West says their "parents' bill of rights" is more a set of talking points than a blueprint. "It is a call to arms, a framework for a parents' movement."

Their polemic gives short shrift to the responsibilities that parents must assume. Hewlett says moms and dads noticed that absence when the authors brought the finished book to focus groups.

As a result, the two created a list of parental responsibilities, not in the book, calling for actions such as removing the TV set from a child's room.

Those TV sets are part of "a poisonous popular culture" that undermines parental authority, they say in the book. "On television, parents tend to be blustering bores, miserly boobs, overprotective fools or just plain dopey and twerpy," they write. Fathers are often portrayed in the media as "deadbeat dads or as obsessed

with themselves and their careers," West says.

Feeling marginalized, fathers have been drawn to organizations such as Promise Keepers and the Nation of Islam "because they feel nobody is listening except God," they write.

The two lash out at government for abandoning programs that have helped families and at big business for favoring "corporate greed" and "market capitalism." Liberals may be shocked by their social agenda. The authors believe that divorces should be much harder to get

to protect children.

"We don't want to prevent divorce," West says. "We just want parents to give more weight to that family bond."

This black man and white woman decided to be partners in part "to help heal racial wounds," Hewlett says. Adds West: "Our society is still so balkanized, so segregated along racial lines. A parenting movement can find some multicultural common ground."

JOAN RYAN

America's War Against Parents

Sometimes I've wondered why we don't seem to be as adept at parenting as our parents were. Why do we feel more squeezed for time, less sure of ourselves? And why do we seem to be raising a nation of lost, out-of-control kids?

An eye-opening book that hits the bookstores tomorrow delivers 320 pages of answers. Cornel West ("Race Matters") and Sylvia Ann Hewlett ("When the Bough Breaks") make a convincing argument that today's society — from long work days and punishing tax codes to pop psychology, the media and welfare reform — undermines parenting to

*We seem
to be raising
a nation of
out-of-
control kids.*

an extent never before experienced in America.

"In the late 20th century," the authors write in "The War Against Parents: What We Can Do for America's Beleaguered Moms and Dads" (Houghton Mifflin), "parenting has become a countercul-

tural activity of the first order. . . . In truth, the whole world is pitted against (parents)."

Consider the workplace. Thirty-two percent of all male full-time workers between ages 25 and 34 earn too little to keep a family of four above the poverty line. Thus, more than 7 million Americans now hold two or more jobs, up nearly 65 percent from 1980. Downsizing has made many parents work longer hours in hopes of bolstering job security. The average worker is now at work 163 hours a year more than in 1980 — short-changing their children an entire month of time they could have spent with them.

Sagging wages, rising divorce rates and climbing housing costs have driven more mothers into the workforce, though only 13 percent of those with preschool-age children say they wanted to work full time. Today, 71 percent of school-age children have no parent at home full-time, as compared with 43 percent in 1970. Prime time for juvenile crime now is the after-school hours between 3 and 8 p.m.

The tax code has also tilted against parents. Between 1969 and 1983, the average tax liability for single people and childless couples showed no real increase. But the tax rate rose 43 percent for married couples with two children — and 223 percent for a couple with four children.

The authors also blame the "dominant narcissistic individualism of contemporary America" for devaluing the job of bringing up children. And they criticize pop psychology for "virulent parent-bashing," citing such popular titles as "Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life."

The mass media reinforces the negative images. On TV shows, movies and music CDs, parents are portrayed as idiotic, neglectful or abusive. We've gone from "Father Knows Best" to "Married With Children."

The price? "When (the parent-child bond) weakens and frays, devastating consequences ripple through our nation," the authors write. They cite jaw-dropping statistics:

Teenage suicide rates have tripled since 1960. The number of homeless children has tripled since the late 1980s. One-fifth of all children are growing up in poverty, a 36 percent increase on the figures for 1970. Between 1985 and 1994, arrests for murder among 14- to 17-year-olds increased 172 percent. Since 1971, the number of adolescents admitted to private psychiatric hospitals has increased 15-fold.

While so many critics say bad parenting is to blame for much of what's wrong with society, West and Hewlett argue powerfully that society is to blame for much of what's wrong with parenting. At the book's end, the authors include a Parents' Bill of Rights, and they urge the formation of a parents' movement on a par with the women's movement and civil rights movement.

I have just one question: Where do I sign up?

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 1998

The Value of Valuing Families

ON the plane to L.A. last week, I witnessed one small salvo in "The War Against Parents" — the name Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West give their just-released book (Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

A baby in first class, mostly well-behaved, would occasionally let out an ear-piercing shriek. That was unpleasant, but the unnerving thing was the behavior of my seat-mate, a grown woman, who screeched "Jesus!" in my ear every time the baby yelled. She kept asking the flight attendant, "Can't you get them to do something about that baby?" as if the parents were playing a boom box too loudly.

It's the kind of thing that happens in a society where parenting is viewed not as the central and most important contribution adults make, but as a choice, a hobby, an avocation instead of a vocation. Why should your (noisy, smelly, expensive) child be allowed to inconvenience me in any way?

Don't look now, but a new family-values movement is building. Two avowed progressives — a white feminist and a black Harvard professor who is one of America's most prominent public intellectuals — have taken dead aim at the low esteem in which parenting is held today. They have joined forces to write a brave, passionate, personal, moving book calling for new respect, new power and a new movement for parents in America.

This is a book born of the authors' very personal struggle to reconcile the heady goals of the '60s — sexual freedom, choice, self-realization, ambition and career success — with the enduring realities of parenting: Children need enormous amounts of (unpaid) time, energy and devotion from two parents to prosper. It is an attempt to respond to the painful reality that, as Hewlett puts it, "the needs of children often run full-tilt into adult agendas."

Reweaving the "web of care," they believe, will require corporations, gov-

ernment and popular culture to show new respect for and support of the work of parenting. Even more daringly, they want to persuade the left that a new respect for marriage itself must be at least part of the political and cultural equation.

"Progressives do not have to adopt a morally relative stance" toward marriage, they write. "Government should get back into the business of enforcing the value of marriage as a long-term commitment." Their proposals include requiring a three-year waiting period for a no-fault divorce, eliminating the marriage penalty in the tax code and setting aside half of all low-income housing vouchers (as well as mortgage subsidies) for married parents.

"The fragility of marriage has much to do with the agony of children and adults feeling as if they may not be up to the task of parent-

ing," Cornel West tells me forthrightly, representing, I think, a new generation of African-American men insisting that black kids need fathers just as much as white kids do (or more). "We have to address the father hunger among so many young people in the black community as well as the white."

Some parts of their proposed Parents Bill of Rights strike me as misguided — a \$7 minimum wage is as likely to fund \$200 tennis shoes for teens as help hard-pressed families. And short parental leaves, research shows, actually push mothers back into the workforce faster, accelerating the conflict between the demands of the market and the demands of small children.

But about one thing, I think, Hewlett and West are sadly right: Conservatives have yet to unite behind an effective pro-family platform of their own. Vigorous new proposals from the left to promote married parenting will certainly help push the GOP past platitudes toward real pro-family action.

(Parents who want to join the fight can contact Sylvia Hewlett's National Parenting Association at 800-709-8795.)



**MAGGIE
GALLAGHER**

Parade

PARADE MAGAZINE • APRIL 26, 1998 •

Fight for Parents' Rights

If America's working parents (including 26 million mothers) acted together like the seniors in AARP, they'd have more clout in Congress and in boardrooms and could press for more parental leave and flexible hours. So say the economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Prof. Cornel West of Harvard, authors of the new book *The War Against Parents*. In 1979, Hewlett—having a difficult pregnancy with twins—asked for unpaid leave. Her boss said no. In her sixth month, she went into labor at work.



Cornel West
and Sylvia
Ann Hewlett

Both twins died.

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 has helped, but 30% of women are not covered because they work for small businesses,

which are exempt from the Act. And there are 6 million families where both parents must hold two jobs to make ends meet. "Without flexible work hours," said Hewlett, "they can't be there for their kids."

Hewlett now has five children; West has a son. They have developed a *Parents' Bill of Rights and Responsibilities*, which outlines political action parents can take, plus ways to be a better parent, such as reading to the kids. For information, write: National Parenting Association, Dept. P, 51 W. 74th St., Suite 1B, New York, N.Y. 10023. Or call 1-800-709-8795.

Boomers' ultimate baby-sitter: Good, old Uncle Sam

The Baby Boomers are the biggest, best-educated, most assertive generation this country has ever seen and from the White House to Microsoft, in politics, jobs and entertainment, they increasingly control the levers of national power.

So why can't millions of them figure out how to balance work and family without so much stress, hassle, guilt and chronic fatigue?

Why do so many families lead lives of quiet desperation, where a sitter's tardiness or a child's flu can create chaos, where dinner is take-out, day care is an uneasy necessity and time for the kids, for each other and for one's self are tired rarities? Why can't this generation of parents—so smart, so skilled, so hard working—figure out better ways to have it all?

One answer, says a new book, may lie in a powerful, new National Parenting Association that could wield the political and economic clout of 62 million fathers and mothers and would push for a sort of parents' GI Bill full of benefits for those who are raising children.

The authors of *"The War Against Parents"* are Sylvia Ann Hewlett, an economist and author, and Cornel West, professor of philosophy of religion and Afro-American studies at Harvard University. Both of their lives were shaped by strong, empowering, blue-collar families. And both have experienced the difficulties of combining work with parenting.

Hewlett and West blame almost everyone in sight for the problems of raising children today: Liberals who preach individual interests at the expense of family interests. Conservatives who balk at more government involvement and trust in free markets. The media which denigrate parents and glorify anti-social behavior. Marketplace values that encourage downsizing, lower pay and longer working days. CEOs who get 200 times the pay of average workers. A tax code that doesn't help families. Schools whose schedules are out of sync with parents' lives.

What Hewlett and West want the fledgling National Parenting Association to accomplish has many echoes of a European socialist agenda. Their Parents' Bill of Rights calls for major changes in government

Steve Chapman



regulations, marketplace values, taxes, schools, entertainment, culture, even voting rights.

Parents have a right to time for their children, the authors insist. That means paid, job-protected parenting leave for a minimum of 24 weeks with wage replacement costs covered by Social Security. There should also be tax incentives for employers to create family-friendly workplaces with flexible hours, compressed work weeks, part-time work with benefits, job sharing, career sequencing and home-based work opportunities. Poor families with children under age 6 should have the right to income support from the government, although teenage mothers should be required to live in a supervised home.

To provide families economic security, Hewlett and West want minimum wages of at least \$7 per hour, underwritten by government and private-sector subsidies. They want better job opportunities for young people. They say payroll taxes should be eliminated for working parents with children under age 6. They would eliminate local sales taxes on children's necessities such as diapers and school supplies. And they push for mortgage subsidies for families.

To boost parents' electoral power, the authors propose eliminating all age restrictions on voting and allowing parents to cast votes on behalf of their children, which would essentially double parental clout at the polls. They also advocate making divorce harder to obtain, eliminating the marriage penalties in the tax code, requiring a compulsory 10-day parenting leave for new fathers and changing welfare

and housing benefits to encourage two-parent families.

The authors want to expand Medicaid coverage of children to include their parents. They push efforts to make communities drug-free, with stepped-up education programs, better supervision of children after school and bans on advertising for tobacco and liquor. They would work toward making the media more supportive of family values with increased government support for public broadcasting, stricter ratings systems for movies and CDs and a parent-run rating guide to TV programs.

Finally, Hewlett and West urge more recognitions and perks for parents: A National Parents' Day. An education credit of about \$2,000 a year to help a stay-at-home parent go back to college, paralleling the GI Bill.

Hewlett and West give no estimates of what their agenda would cost in new taxes, although they propose raising the Social Security retirement age. They don't see their ideas as a major new intrusion of government into family life or worry about the notorious inefficiencies and strangling red tape of government mandates and regulations. They show no concern for the new burdens they would place on employers trying to cope with global markets and compete with lower labor costs in other countries.

But even with the projected budget surplus, it's hard to see much new government spending by the federal government to benefit parents directly. Even the relatively modest proposal by President Clinton for more funds for day care won't get an automatic OK from Congress. And a child's flu or a school's snow day will continue to create chaos in many families—unless Hewlett and West can catch a nation's attention and spark radical change.

Manuscripts may be submitted to the Op-Ed Page by mail, fax (312-222-2598) or e-mail (Comment435@aol.com). Because of the volume of submissions, we acknowledge only those that we intend to use. Manuscripts sent by mail will be returned only if they are accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Parenting is most important, and least appreciated, job

MARY JO KOCHAKIAN HARTFORD COURANT

Why should I get special treatment just because I have a 2-year-old?" a colleague said, admitting his ambivalence.

No, no, no, no, no, Dan.

You are, by being a good parent, doing society's most important job.

"Using up resources," another colleague said, meaning Dan's 2-year-old.

But who will be paying her Social Security? Dan's kid. And that is hardly the whole of it.

That a smart guy like Dan hasn't noticed that parents deserve consideration and far more respect, shows just how short-sighted and self-centered we are on this issue.

Sorry. Leaving work at 5 to get to the day care that closes at 5:30 is more important than leaving at 5 to

get a spot in a heavily attended aerobics class.

Penelope Leach is right — we regard children more as pets than as people. They're considered a hobby, a discretionary activity. They are another person's lifestyle choice, which has no more importance to you than the neighbor's Beanie Babies collection.

The fact that our national future depends on how each individual kid grows up has not made much of a dent.

There is already rampant evidence of what happens when kids aren't properly cared for: violence, drugs, crime, teen pregnancy, mental illness, despair.

Some notable authorities point out that it is wrong to figure there always will be enough parents doing a decent-enough job.

Child psychiatrist Stanley Greenspan writes in "The Growth of the Mind": "The assumption that there will be enough reflective adults to maintain a free society is

not to be taken for granted.

"We can no longer afford to view the rearing of the next generation as parents' private concern. The work of conscientious parents struggling to provide love and care and to impart values deserves recognition as a contribution to the common good."

"The common good." Quaint.

Put another way: "We are in this huge leaking boat together," in the words of Dr. David Hamburg of the Carnegie Corporation (in "Today's Children," an examination of research in child development and of social programs.)

"We have to move beyond the easy and pervasive recourse of passing the buck. It is our responsibility — each individual, each institution and organization, every business, every level of government is responsible."

ing the time crunch for parents, strengthening marriage and providing economic security.)

In the meantime, kids are still considered a liability in what is the most important aspect of Western life — making money.

Child-rearing should be seen "not as a distraction from work, but as the gravest, most challenging, and most socially useful task an adult could undertake," Greenspan argues.

In 1994, Leach wrote "Children First." Put the interest of kids first when considering a problem — child care, welfare reform, homelessness — and you will get new answers, she says. (For example, the issue of day care is focused on making it easier for parents to find, without much attention to whether the care is going to be truly appropriate for the children.)

We're still far from that. We can't assume that even the parents among us will think to challenge the status quo.

That is why, as a parent of a 2-year-old, you should get "special treatment."

▼ CONTINUED FROM 18

In the forthcoming "The War Against Parents," Harvard Professor Cornel West and economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett argue that all of contemporary culture and society is pitted against parents.

They write: "How do you bond with an infant if you are constrained to be back at work 10 days after birth? How do you enforce a curfew or insist on homework when the soundbites of our culture undercut parental authority in myriad ways? Sometimes it feels as though we are swimming upstream, cutting against the current of all that is valued in our market-driven society. In late 20th-century America, parenting has become a counter-cultural activity of the first order."

Their "Parents' Bill of Rights" calls for elevating the role of parent. (It also advocates relief-



PARENTING

Benefits for Mom and Dad

She comes from a ramshackle Welsh mining town, one of six sisters. He was raised in a segregated, blue-collar community outside Sacramento, Calif. Yet economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Harvard University Prof.

Cornel West found common ground in their up-brings. "Our parents were simply available and on call, day in, day out, year after year," write the pair, whose struggle to do the same for their own children helped inspire their new book, *The War Against*

Parents (Houghton Mifflin, \$24). Hewlett and West's call for more family-friendly policies is vague on funding, other than to endorse a wholesale reordering of tax and budget priorities. Among the proposed entitlements in their "Parents' Bill of Rights":

■ **Time for children.** Twenty-four weeks of

paid leave after birth or adoption; tax benefits for firms that offer flexible work schedules.

■ **Economic security.** Raise the minimum wage to at least \$7; eliminate Social Se-

curity and Medicare payroll taxes for parents with children under age 6 and levy it instead on income above \$65,400; don't tax sales of such children's necessities as diapers.

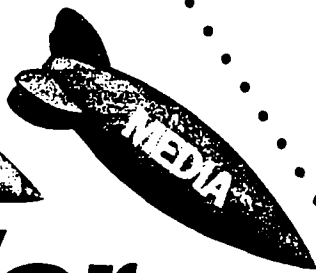
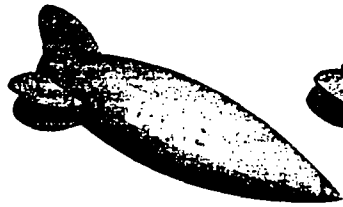
■ **A pro-family legal system.** Promote premarital counseling; make divorce harder; change

welfare benefits to favor two-parent families; eliminate the marriage penalty in the tax code; provide generous visitation right for noncustodial parents.

■ **Community supports.** Extend school day and year; provide decent pay for child-care workers; mandate more children's programming on television. —Mary Lord



Hewlett, West on parental rights

LACK
OF TIME

It's time families

launched a counteroffensive
against a culture that assaults their
basic needs, a new book declares.

The terms of engagement are
proposed in a Parents'
Bill of Rights.

The War Against Parents

By H.J. Cummins
Star Tribune Staff Writer

This country is at war with its parents, a new book declares, and the casualties are the children. Families have to mobilize in their own defense, the authors declare. And their demands are consistent with their combat metaphor: Instead of pummeling parents, this nation should offer them the same support it did another group who ensured its future — the soldiers of World War II.

The time has come for "A Parents' Bill of Rights," say Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West in their new book, "The War Against Parents: What We Can Do for America's Beleaguered Moms and Dads." Their idea is inspired by the "GI Bill of

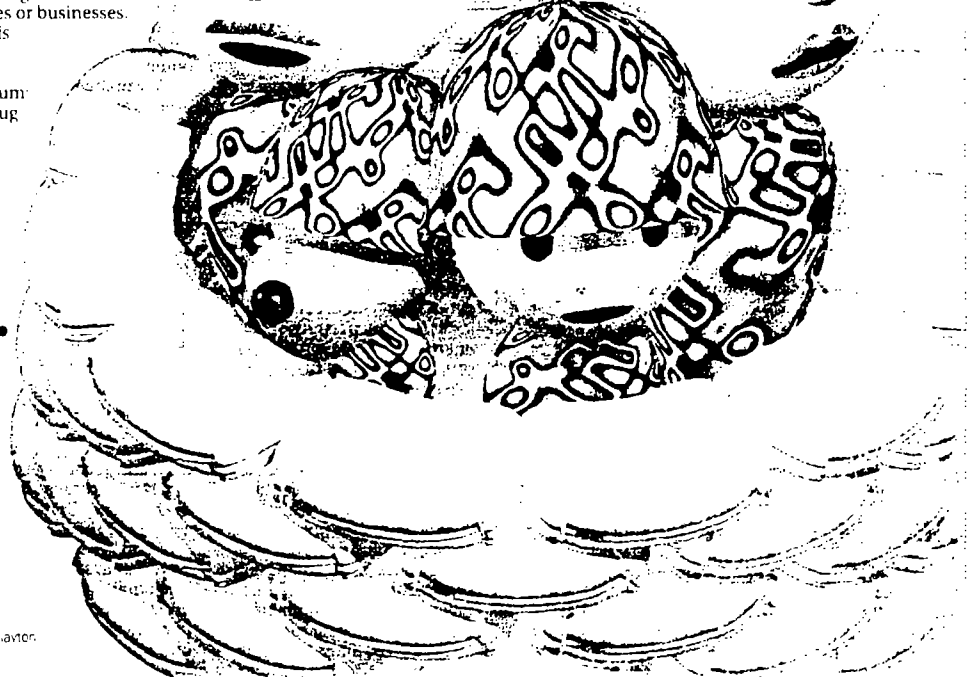
Rights," the amalgam of federal supports that helped 2.2 million returning veterans go to college and 12

million Americans buy homes or businesses.

Their evidence of assault is grim and barely challenged by any commentator on the conservative-liberal continuum: Murder and suicide rates, drug use, poverty and ill health are worse than ever among American children.

The glitch, all sides say, is getting America's 62 million parents to agree on solutions. Parents agree they want better schools for their children, for example. But in both Congress and in Minnesota's Legislature, parent groups are fighting about whether the answer is more money for public schools or vouchers for private schools. Instead of a unified front parents are picking off one another in a version of friendly fire.

Turn to WAR on E2
Also on E2
— Parents' Bill of Rights

HEALTH
CARE

Author urges wide range of services to aid busy parents

In fact, earlier efforts to create a unified, national parents' lobby have failed, among them Parent Action, whose founders included pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton and activist Bernice Weissbourd.

Still, Weissbourd is optimistic about this new effort. She believes that some of the organizing strategies are smarter, she said, that the time is right.

"I think maybe we were too early on the scene," she said.

What's going on?

First government and the marketplace make life hard for parents, and then blame them for the sad shape of America's youth, argue Hewlett and West from their different perspectives. Hewlett is author of "When the Bough Breaks," an earlier accounting of childhood distresses in America, and founder of the National Parenting Association in New York. West is a professor of Afro-American Studies at Harvard University.

Some of their findings:

- Families have been the "shock absorbers" in the hyper-competitive push of contemporary business: Americans are working an average of 163 hours a year more than they were 15 years ago, but middle-class wages are dropping.

- Families, especially poor families, get socked by taxes. The federal tax exemption for a child, now \$2,650 a year, is worth only half what it was in the late 1940s. Also, some of the nation's most fundamental tax policies, including Social Security taxes and mortgage deductions, are regressive. For example: A family in the 15 percent tax bracket, paying \$5,000 in mortgage interest a year, gets a \$750 tax break. A family in the top tax bracket (39.6 percent), gets a \$1,980 tax break.

- A "virulent strain of parent bashing" runs through pop psychology today. Titles like "Toxic Parents" and "How to Avoid Your Parents' Mistakes When You Raise Your Children" are demoralizing parents. Parents are told they love too much. Then they're told they love too little. They can't win.

- The entertainment industry invades and degrades families. Besides longstanding concerns about sex and violence in mainstream entertainment, there's also growing concern about the countless images of inept or evil parents: "I Stole My 12-Year-Old's Boyfriend" on the Jerry Springer talk show, for example; and the movies "Home Alone" and "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids."

Welcome to my life, said Joann Ellis when she heard the book's inventory of parents' problems. "There are many things I feel I'm in an us-them thing," Ellis said.

Who is "them"? "Them" are designer labels. The mother of four in St. Paul, Ellis and her husband strictly regulate what movies and TV shows her children can watch. Still, those compelling ads for \$150 Nikes reach them somehow.

"Them" are grocery stores. Ellis walked out of one recently, \$200 poorer and with little to show for it.

"Them" is the federal government. The Ellises had to send a check along with their tax return to the IRS on April 15. "You get so little break for your children," she said. "It feels like you're penalized for being a parent."

And "them" is whoever is supposed to make health care less a burden to the un-rich. Her family pays \$300 a month for coverage; her husband's employer insures only him. He teaches at a Catholic school.

United can we stand?

"Very centrally placed in this book is the notion that parents are indispensable," Hewlett said in an interview. "Because if you want to teach a child ethics, compassion, all those deeply important dimensions to life, that has to be done within the family by the parents."

Hewlett and West propose a national movement patterned after the American Association of Retired Persons which, they say, managed to pull together a huge but heterogeneous force around a common interest — safeguarding their retirement benefits.

But can parenting groups pull together on "family-friendly" policies?

"A friendlier workplace?" said Tom Prichard, president of the Minnesota Family Council. "Of course we want that. But I think many of us would disagree on how to get there."

For example, the council opposes more generous child care credits — popular among some groups — because it believes the credits discriminate against couples who have a parent at home.

"We probably have some overlap and some disagreement over the right remedies," Prichard said of his group and the one Hewlett wants to create. "What we would do is work with them on particular issues, if we saw common ground."

The longer view

Family historian Stephanie Coontz takes exception with some elements of the book. While she agrees today's culture is harsh toward families, she sees the same toll on others, including the old and the infirm.

"We are living in an economy, and generally a culture, that is winner take all, devil take the hindmost," said Coontz, author of "The Way We Really Are" and "The Way We Never Were," both studies of American families. "And in that kind of economic and cultural setting, anyone who's not stripped down to racing mode, anyone who needs a hand up, has problems."

Coontz also sees the various metamorphoses of families as not all decay but in fact a series of tradeoffs. "If you have a disabled child there certainly has been no better time to be around than now," she said.

She also faults the Hewlett-West book on a couple of statistics: It's true, as they say, that parents now spend about a dozen hours a week less in childrearing time, she said. But that's because people are having fewer children. Also, parents are spending as much time as parents ever did with their adolescents, she said: the time loss is between teens and other adults.

What Coontz most liked about the book is its call to turn life from a sprint to a long-distance race, "and to the extent that West and Hewlett talk about rebuilding our social safety net and investing in our future, I think that's wonderful."

Parents' B of Rights

Parents are at war with a culture that is attacking their families, author and advocate Sylvia Ann Hewlett says, and nothing less than this nation's future is at stake. As such, the time has come to offer parents the same kind of supports this grateful nation offered its World War II veterans. Her platform, summarized here, comes out of two years of research and parent interviews.

Mothers and fathers

are entitled to . . .

- **Time for their children.** To this end: Government-mandated, job-protected, paid parenting leave of 24 weeks. Employer tax incentives for family-friendly policies such as flexible hours, compressed work weeks, part-time work with benefits. Income support for parents of preschool children, eliminating the federal government's current five-year lifetime cap.

- **Economic security.** To this end: A \$7 minimum wage, to lift a family of three with one full-time worker above the poverty line. Expanded school-to-work programs, to help young people navigate the path to employment. Tax relief, including no payroll taxes for working parents of preschoolers, and a \$2,000 annual allowance per preschooler for families earning less than \$50,000. A program of mortgage subsidies for families earning less than \$100,000 a year. Rent support for more low-income families.

- **A pro-family electoral system.** To this end: One vote for every American, with a parent voting on behalf of all their children up to age 18. Voting incentives, such as waiving driver's license fees to anyone who voted in the most recent national election.

- **A pro-family legal structure.** To this end: Weightier marriage laws, possibly along Louisiana's new option of a "covenant" marriage that is legally more binding than standard marriage. Tougher divorce laws, with required marriage counseling and a three-year waiting period. Eliminating the marriage penalty in tax codes, which now means married people pay more tax on their earnings than if they were single. More support for fathers, including special 10-day paternity leaves and generous visitation rights for noncustodial parents.

- **A supportive external environment.** To this end: Violence- and drug-free neighborhoods. Quality schools, including extended days and more commitment to the earliest years of a child's life. Quality child care and a shift in financial support for it. Now, close to half the \$7 billion government spends on child care is in the form of dependent care tax credits to families earning more than \$50,000. Expanded health coverage, to all uninsured children and their parents. A responsible entertainment industry. A political voice for parents, in an AARP-style organization.

- **Honor and dignity.** To this end: A special education credit worth \$2,000 to \$5,000, so parents who stay home with a young child can return to school to prepare to work again. An "Index of Parent Well Being," fashioned after such financial measures as the Dow Jones averages, that will record crucial indicators over time, such as parents' average weekly earnings, time available for children, access to affordable housing, health coverage and divorce rates.

— H. I. Cummins

The Parent



Consider the plight of those who rear kids in an anti-family culture

Could it be that we are finally done with Mommy-blaming? Probably not, but this month two powerful voices unite in taking a stand that says, yes, the kids are not all right, but no, parents are not at fault. This is revolutionary thinking and a big first step.

In the "War Against Parents: What We Can Do for America's Beleaguered Moms and Dads" (Houghton Mifflin, \$24), noted authorities Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West make a case that this is a culture that undercuts parents at every turn and then blames them for the inevitable outcome.

"We are living in a society that understands itself to put child and mother on a pedestal," says West, professor of philosophy and religion at Harvard University and author of "Race Matters." "But the truth is, we are very much a child-hurting, parent-hurting and parent-bashing culture."

In this country the tax code punishes the family, corporations willfully ignore its needs, schools disguise their failings by scapegoating parents and the social-service system seems designed more to exploit a family's weaknesses than to work toward making it stronger.

Overburdened and unaided, the family can no longer do its job.

As the authors point out, in a market-driven society, parenting is the ultimate nonmarket activity. In a materialistic society that celebrates the individual, parents sacrifice both material gains and individual pursuits for the sake of their children. The family, then, is counterculture.

And as many a minority voice will testify, when you are not what the culture is all about, life can be difficult.

"Modern-day mothers and fathers, like those before them, struggle to put children at the center of their lives," the authors write. "But . . . from early in the morning till late at night, America's parents are battered by all kinds of pressures, most of which are not of their making. The truth is, the world is stacked against them. If parents cannot give a childhood to their children, it is not their fault."

Doing more with less?

Ironically, while studding the road with insurmountable obstacles, we've also raised the standard. American parents are no longer expected merely to bring their kids up alive but to child-proof them against neurosis while positioning them to snare an Ivy League education or its equivalent.

This, while they earn less money, pay more taxes and put in longer hours than their parents did. Never mind that the schools don't work.

Of course, society makes a lot of noise whenever it confronts evidence of the new, nastier reality — whether it's a statistic showing more children living in poverty, another drop in SAT scores or, currently, the rise in violence perpetrated by kids. Though the problems vary, the solution is always the same: castigate parents.

"Parents have no influence on what's going on — if they did, things would be different — but they are still viewed as the culprits," says Hewlett, an economist and author of the highly influential "When the Bough Breaks," which exposed family patterns of child abuse.

To put it simply, parents are expected to do the nation's work — rearing the next generation — alone and unaided in a hostile climate.

How does society get away with this? First, blame Freud and Einstein.

Freud for introducing psychology to a culture that then popularized it in a virulent form: wrongly assigning mothers the sinister power to ruin their children's lives by simply doing those things that most mothers do. Many more adults than justified feel entitled to claim irreparable harm

from mother-inflicted wounds.

And Einstein for the work he did that led to the invention of the television, our most powerful tool of mass communication and the conduit through which much of the thinking that undermines parents and hurts children finds its way, unchecked, into the home.

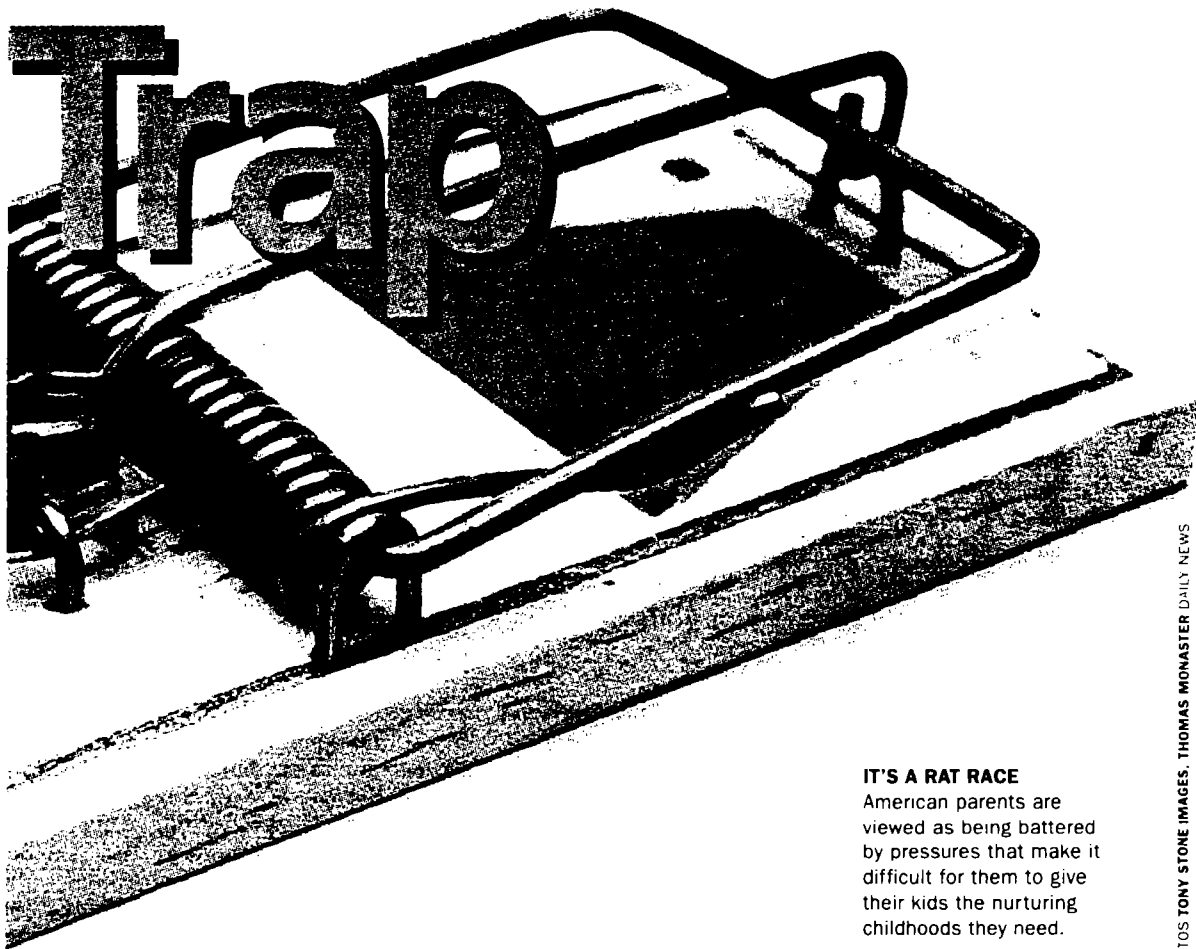
Psychology's siren call was its promise that if a mother properly sacrificed her adult needs to enslave herself to child-rearing — using only expert-approved techniques, of course — her children would flourish.

The real culprits

Our children aren't flourishing, though. Yet rather than look at all the forces bearing down on the family, our psychologized society chooses to fault Mom, and when it can get at him, Dad. Which is both the easy answer and the wrong one.

"Always there in the media is the credentialized, professionalized expert who can blame parents for something that is so much more complicated and more terrifying than what happens in the home," says West. "The problem isn't with the individual, and it can't be solved by individuals."

Still, instead of making the phone call to arms for far-reaching political changes that would revolutionize the



PHOTOS TONY STONE IMAGES, THOMAS MONASTER DAILY NEWS

IT'S A RAT RACE

American parents are viewed as being battered by pressures that make it difficult for them to give their kids the nurturing childhoods they need.

family by giving parents time to parent — "Child-rearing isn't some mysterious process; at the heart of the matter is time, huge amounts of it, freely given" — we tell each other stories about bad mommies and fool daddies.

Very few television shows feature strong, capable parents striving to make a difference in their children's lives. "Party of Five" has done away with them entirely, showing the struggle of orphaned kids to bring themselves to maturity — or at least today's version of maturity, which seems to mandate, or so we tell our young, a bout of promiscuity or a battle with drugs and alcohol.

More commonly, though, we get parents like Angela's in the widely praised "My So-Called Life," whose understandable adult concerns — he's job-hunting; she has difficult family relations; there are issues in their marriage — are portrayed as narcissistic diversions that leave Angela swirling in the dangerous eddies of teenage life.

More truly feckless parents can be seen in teen-angst shows like "Dawson's Creek" and "Beverly Hills 90210," and their comedy counterparts "Step by Step" and "Something So Right."

The culture itself, though, has adopted an angry adolescent's view of parents: Whatever they do, they're doing it wrong. And everything is their fault.

June Cleaver has given way to Peg Bundy in "Married . . . With Children," and while no one could live up to June, parents shouldn't have to live down Peg.

"What is rarely shown is the very creative compassion and sense of moral conscience that is parenting at its best," says West. But portraying parents as

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inept or ruthlessly pursuing their own interests at their children's expense allows us to scapegoat them for society's ills and its failure to act.

"We have this really punitive attitude toward parents. We refuse to see their struggle or their heroism," says Hewlett. "In this market-driven society, it is an incredible drain to have children. Yet

against the odds and in the face of many of the motivations that drive our society, most people continue to have children and make them the central passion of their lives."

Parents need to organize

Of course, trivializing parents in popular culture and using psychology as a stick to whip them are merely the means we use to disguise what is at best shabby support of families and, most prevalently, aggressive disavowal of the need for society to organize itself around nurturing its young.

In "The War Against Parents," Hewlett and West present a "Parents' Bill of Rights," which includes a broad statement of entitlement to everything from family-friendly workplaces to good schooling. Such measures can only become a reality, though, if parents apply organized pressure. The model the authors point to is the American Association for Retired Persons, which has done much to make a difference in the lives of the elderly.

Militancy isn't naturally associated with parenthood, but if it's what it takes, then a Mom's gotta do what a Mom's gotta do. ■

The Washington Post

MONDAY, MAY 4, 1998

William Raspberry

The Parent Trap

Picture a desperate parent reaching up from an earthen pit, barely able to touch the child she loves, feels responsible for and yearns to take care of. Now picture a society that offers this deal: We'll lower down to you a basket of money with which to meet your parental obligations, but you must send up a basket of dirt in exchange.

This, I think, is a fair analogy of the trap in which more parents find themselves. They know they need to spend more time nurturing their children. And yet they don't see how they can; the providing-for takes so much of their time, energy and emotional resources they can't quite manage the nurturing.

But suppose the dilemma is not their fault—not the result of bad choices, unaffordable lifestyles or false priorities but of forces beyond their individual power to resist. That's the comfort and promise of an ambitious new book—one is tempted to call it a manifesto—by Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West: *"The War Against Parents."*

What has happened, according to these two academics, is that in some unacknowledged ways, the American society has abandoned its parents—undercut their authority, straitened their economics and made it unnecessarily difficult to raise healthy and happy children.

"At the heart of the matter," the authors assert, "is the fact that from a purely economic standpoint, raising a child has become the ultimate nonmarket activity, as various types of market logic have moved against mothers and fathers. . . . None of the economic reasons for raising children (help on the family farm or in the family business, support in old age) holds true today. On the contrary, in the modern world children are hugely expensive and yield little in the way of economic return to the parent."

One result of this economic disutility is that child-rearing is not much valued by the society at large—which means that many parents (particularly those who have college or professional training) learn to seek their rewards in outside careers. This isn't mere "self-actualization," by the way. Fewer couples are able to give their children what they think they need on a single income. Some six million American homes have two adults holding *four* jobs, leaving the parents with precious little time for supervising homework or even talking to their children, no matter how important they know these things to be. The baskets of money are nice, but the hole keeps getting deeper.

Economics are only part of the matter. West, a black American from Tulsa, and Hewlett, from a mining valley in Wales, say they were surprised to learn how similar were the support systems of their childhoods. "Everybody had dads, and the dads had jobs," Hewlett put it. And not just jobs, West added, recalling the intense 11-year involvement of his father with a father-son baseball league during his boyhood.

In those days, they agreed, parenting was valued without regard to its economic utility, which meant that the vital role of home-staying mothers was valued as well. And until 30 or 40 years ago, children were the greatest tax shelter most Americans had.

Nowadays, child exemptions are a trivial consideration in a federal tax scheme which actually penalizes marriage. And our most powerful cultural influence—television—no longer portrays parents as wise and protective but (particularly fathers) as ineffectual fools.

The result, says Hewlett: "Parents, depicted as either fools or monsters, feel they've been cut down, that they are without honor or worth in our culture."

It is, as their book is at great pains to show, a war. But it's a peculiar sort of war, one in which they propose—through a grand parents' movement they hope to launch—to enlist everybody to their side. After all, they argue, parents everywhere, across all divisions of race and class, share their misgivings. If they could only unite. . . .

The problem, of course, is that parents are not *merely* parents. They are also shopkeepers, manufacturers, CEOs hoping for an improved bottom line. They are both the warriors West and Hewlett would enlist and the enemy against whom they would battle. They make a strong case for America's need to change the way it deals with children and families. I wish I could be more hopeful that they've figured out how to bring that change about. The pit is getting deeper.

People weekly

May 4, 1998 Vol. 49 No. 17

talking with . . . **Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West**

Both scholars, Cornel West and Sylvia Ann Hewlett share a deeper bond—as working parents who grew up in caring, two-parent families. “I am who I am because of the unconditional love of Mom and Dad,” says West, 44, a Harvard professor and author. Says the Welsh-born Hewlett, 51, an economist, mother of four and founder of the 9,000-member National Par-

enting Association: “My mother was a very hardworking lady, but she had one focus—her family.” These days, as West and Hewlett argue in their new book *The War Against Parents: What We Can Do for America’s Beleaguered Moms and Dads* (Houghton Mifflin, \$24), even the most well-intentioned parents, with little outside support, are struggling to find the right balance.



Hewlett and West urge parents to organize like the AARP.

Something that West—who often played baseball with his father growing up near Sacramento—had only the summers to achieve after losing custody of his son Clifton, now 20. “It’s like trying to write poetry after Shakespeare,” says West. “You do the best you can.”
Tom Duffy

PHOTOGRAPH BY

Skip the sentimental card

By Sylvia Ann Hewlett
and Cornel West

The angel theme is big this year. "Mothers are God's Earthly Angels" says one Mother's Day card. "Angels can't be everywhere ... that's why God created mothers" says another.

This weekend our nation will be awash in sentimental tributes as we collectively spend \$150 million on Mother's Day cards, a figure that has more than doubled over the last decade. We seem to find it much easier to come up with flowery accolades than anything in the way of concrete support. Even the few public policies that profess to help mothers are very limited in their impact.

Take the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act. This much-celebrated law provides 12 weeks of unpaid parenting leave, while the average maternity leave in Europe is five months at full pay. Thirty-one percent of working women in America have no right to this unpaid leave because they work for small companies. The 1993 law exempted organizations with fewer than 50 employees. Thus, the United States is the only rich nation where you can find 3-week-olds in day-care centers because hundreds of thousands of working moms have no right to unpaid leave to be with their newborns.

Or take the Child Tax Credit of 1997. The problem with this tax break (worth \$500 per child) is that low-income families — the ones that need it most — don't qualify because they already get the Earned Income Tax Credit. As a result, 25 million families — mostly single-mother families — fail to derive any benefit from this much-ballyhooed measure.

Finally, consider the bundle of policies — the Equal Pay Act is one good example — that supposedly boost the earning power of American women. It is true that the gender gap has narrowed in recent years: Women earn 74 percent of the male wage, up from 67 percent 15 years ago. But the closing of the wage gap can be explained better by falling male wages than rising female wages. On average, men's wages have fallen 5 percent since 1989 while women's wages have risen a mere 0.3 percent over the last nine years, despite many more hours spent on the job. Women are at work at least 10 hours more per week than in 1980.

It seems that our earthly angels are having a difficult time of it. Many struggle heroically to come through for their kids while coping with stagnant earnings, lengthening work weeks and extremely little in the way of social support.

On the symbolic front, our nation does a poor job of affirming the importance of mothers. Next time you see a young mother on a city bus wrestling with a squirming baby, a stroller, a diaper bag and sundry other paraphernalia, take a look around. There is no place to put the stroller, no convenient place for the mother and child to sit down. This is in sharp contrast to the prior-



ity seating provided for the elderly and the handicapped. Over the last 20 years, we have learned to acknowledge the special needs of seniors and the disabled, but mothers and babies are left to fend for themselves.

Recently, the National Parenting Association launched a Parent's Bill of Rights and Responsibilities that seeks to give a significant level of new support and honor to moms and dads across the board. We show how we can boost wages and create flexible workplaces so that children are not left home alone. And we show how to reconfigure our laws so as to strengthen marriage and give greater electoral clout to moms and dads.

One thing we guarantee: Joining our campaign to promote this bill of rights will do more to celebrate our earthly angels than buying the most expensive card. It is time to join together and acknowledge that the work mothers — and fathers — do is indispensable. For if we can create the conditions that allow parents to cherish their children, we will ensure that the next generation is both competent and compassionate, and this great nation will thrive.

Hewlett is an economist and founder of the National Parenting Association. West is a professor of African-American studies at Harvard University. For more information about the NPA and its bill of rights call 1-800-709-8795.

**SYLVIA ANN HEWLETT
and CORNEL WEST**

For mothers, it's no paradise

The angel theme is big this year. "Mothers are God's earthly angels," says one Mother's Day card. "Angels can't be everywhere . . . that's why God created mothers," says another.

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Take the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act. This much-celebrated law provides only 12 weeks of unpaid parenting leave. The average maternity leave in Europe is five months at full pay. Even more serious is the fact that 31 percent of working women in America have no right to even this unpaid leave because they work for small companies — the 1993 law exempted organizations with fewer than 50 employees. Thus the United States is the only rich nation where you can find 3-week-olds in day-care centers because hundreds of thousands of working moms have no right to be with their newborns.

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Finally, consider the bundle of policies (the Equal Pay Act is a good example) that supposedly boost the earning power of American women. While it is true that the gender gap has narrowed in recent years — women now earn 74 percent of the male wage, up from 67 percent 15 years ago — the closing of the wage gap can better be explained by falling male wages than rising female wages. On average men's wages have fallen 5 percent since 1989, while women's wages have risen a mere 0.3 percent over the last nine years despite many more hours spent on the job. Women are at work at least 10 hours more per week than in 1980.

It seems that our earthly angels are having a difficult time of it. Many struggle heroically to come through for their kids while coping with stagnant earnings, lengthening work weeks, and extremely little in the way of social support.



BARRIE MAGUIRE ILLUSTRATION

**The 'earthly angels' of our lives need
a lot more than hearts and flowers.**

We are not just talking about economic support. On the symbolic front our nation also does an exceedingly poor job affirming the importance of mothers. Next time you see a young mother on a city bus wrestling with a squirming baby, a stroller, a diaper bag, and sundry other paraphernalia, take a look around. There is nowhere to put the stroller, no convenient place for the mother and child to sit down.

This is a sharp contrast to the priority seating provided for the elderly and the handicapped. Over the last 20 years we have learned to acknowledge the special needs of seniors and the disabled, but mothers and babies are left to fend for themselves.

This week we launch a Parent's Bill of Rights and Responsibilities that seeks to give a significant level of new dignity and support to moms and dads across the board. We show how to boost wages and create flexible workplaces so children are not left home alone. And we show how to reconfigure our laws to strengthen mar-

riage and give greater electoral clout to mothers and fathers.

One thing we guarantee: Joining our campaign to promote this Parent's Bill of Rights will do more to celebrate our earthy angels than buying the most expensive Hallmark card. It is time to join together and acknowledge that the work that parents do is indispensable — that by nourishing those small bodies and growing those small souls, they create the store of social and human capital that is so essential to the health and wealth of our nation.

Simply put, by creating the conditions that allow parents to cherish their children, we will ensure our collective future.

Sylvia Ann Hewlett is an economist and founder of the National Parenting Association. Cornel West is professor of Afro-American studies at Harvard University. They are the authors of "The War Against Parents."

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Tuesday, May 12, 1998

David Boldt *Alarms and Diversions*

A square old message gains voice in a hip, scholarly, new quarter

The older generation always tends to believe that the younger generation is headed for hell in a handbasket. But does that mean the older generation is always wrong?

Take the present, for instance.

Most Americans think teenagers today are "wild, rude and irresponsible," according to a poll done last year by Public Agenda for the Advertising Council.

This perception is backed by reams of statistics on rising juvenile crime and teenage suicide and declining school achievement.

And all of this has been spelled out in a recent series of books with titles such as *The Assault on Parenthood*, *The Abolition of Marriage* and *Posterity Lost*.

The authors differ on their prescriptions for reform but share the conclusion that America at the end of the 20th century has become a family-hostile society that goes out of its way to make it hard to be an effective parent.

What makes these analyses — with their similar attacks on the media, schools and government policies — particularly interesting is that they do not flow from conservative circles.

They are written for the most part by centrist Democrats who follow in

the path of Barbara Daboe Whitehead's famous Atlantic Monthly article, "Dan Quayle Was Right," which argued that the former vice president's much-reviled views on single parenting were, alas, accurate.

The evidence is in, these authors say. No longer is there a question as to whether families that include a father and mother are better for children than single-parent families. They are.

No longer is it a matter of debate as to whether we are experiencing a breakdown of morals and values that is wreaking a devastating effect on children. We are.

But so far, these books and articles have not opened up what you might expect: an intense, society-wide debate. How to reverse the anti-family bias that keeps parents from spending enough time with their children, that penalizes parents at tax time, and pollutes the nation's playrooms with toxic television programming?

Now, we have a book that might just spur that much-needed debate. That book is *The War Against Parents* by Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West, who have come to basically the same conclusions about the pernicious effects of American culture on the well-being of our children.

As credential-toting leftists, Hewlett and West represent a political cohort that has been largely absent from the family-values wars. West, a professor of African American studies and the philosophy of religion at Harvard, professes an economic theory that can be fairly described as near-Marxist. Hewlett grew up in the socialist traditions of working-class Wales.

Their book, understandably, lays much of the blame for deteriorating family life at the door of rampant capitalist greed. But they break new ground when they go after their colleagues on the left with the forensic equivalent of fire axes.

"An important strand

of liberal thinking is deeply antagonistic to the parental role and function," they write. "Scratch the surface and you will find at least some folks on the left who don't particularly like marriage or children."

The authors attack no-fault divorce laws; welfare laws that encourage teenagers to bear children out of wedlock; and celebrities such as Madonna and Rosie O'Donnell, who make single motherhood seem chic. Feminists who see "motherhood as a plot to derail equal rights" are treated to the rhetorical equivalent of a drive-by shooting.

From there, the authors blast inept government programs in which bureaucrats seek to supplant parents, often with disastrous results. The foster-care system, they say, works mainly "to enrich an entrenched and expanding bureaucracy."

West probably flabbergasted many in the large audience that turned out to hear the authors at the New York Public Library last month when he told one questioner that parenting classes probably did not constitute a complete answer to the current crisis.

Hewlett and West have accomplished several things. First, they have identified an area of common ground on which Americans from across the entire political spectrum can safely gather.

Then, drawing on their leftist traditions, they have also put forward — what else? — a manifesto.

Their "Parents Bill of Rights" may not gain immediate and universal approval, but it could provide a useful starting point for their ultimate proposal: a political movement to push family-related issues higher on the national agenda.

They foresee, in short, a nationwide organization of parents built on the super-successful model of the American Association of Retired Persons. And who knows? It just might work.

West and Hewlett will be speaking Thursday evening at the University of Pennsylvania. For information, call 215-898-4967.

David Boldt's column appears on Tuesdays and Fridays.



DONNA MARIE GHIE-TEN-TONG

Parents Face 'Hostile' Policies in Raising Children

By Marilyn Gardner

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

LOS ANGELES

LATE one night in 1992, when Sylvia Ann Hewlett appeared on Larry King's radio show to talk about American families, a young father in Phoenix called to tell a sad story.

Gary explained that he and his wife were parents of a three-week-old daughter. Although both worked full time, he as a maintenance man, she as a checkout clerk, their combined income was only \$23,000. Neither qualified for health insurance or parental

FAMILY

leave. And the only child care they could afford was unlicensed family day care, run by two elderly women with 18 babies and toddlers to watch over.

"Dogs and cats have a better deal," Gary said, explaining that kennels are tightly regulated and must meet standards of cleanliness and care. Why, he wondered bitterly, is it so difficult for hard-working parents to do the right thing for their children?

That question haunted Dr. Hewlett, an economist and a long-time advocate for families. It also eventually served as one catalyst for her new book, *"The War Against Parents"* (Houghton Mifflin), written with Cornel West, a professor of religion and African-American studies at Harvard University.

"The unsung heroes and heroines, those who nurture children, feel profoundly demoralized," Hewlett says.

This distress has its roots in what Professor West calls "a silent, invisible, and undeclared war" that makes childrearing an uphill climb for many of the nation's 62 million parents. Hewlett and West see America as a society that pays lip service to abstract family values but reneges on its obligation to offer tangible economic and community support to families.

West and Hewlett identify culprits on three fronts. The first is managerial greed in the workplace that leaves employees overworked, underpaid, and lacking enough time with their children. The second involves a government "bitterly hostile" to parents, creating tax and housing policies that fail to give families the economic support they received in the 1950s when, as Hewlett puts it, "the biggest tax shelter in this country was a child." The third attack on families stems from what West calls "a poisonous popular culture," sending forth what he sees as a flood of entertainment programs that frequently cast parents as "ineffectual fools."

Hewlett and West draw some of their findings from a first-ever national survey of parents. They also spent three years crisscrossing the country, talking to parents. They view their professional pairing of a white woman and a black man as emblematic of the broad-based work to be done to help families - work that cuts across race, gender, and class divisions.

Between 1989 and 1997, the authors report, families with children experienced a 3-percent drop in income. In 6 million families, two adults hold four jobs to stay afloat. Ninety percent of par-



'The question is, Who are we as a people? What are our priorities in relation to our young people and our future?'

- Cornel West

ents in their poll cite a time crunch as "the worst thing in their lives." These parents rank wage and tax squeezes as their second most worrisome problem.

Noting that horses receive more tax breaks than children, Hewlett says, "If you own a horse, you can deduct from your tax bill the cost of food, stabling, training, vet and stud services, transportation to and from horse shows, insurance, and a host of other expenses." Comparing that with rearing children, she adds, "Can a parent deduct from his or her

'So much of the public agenda gets defined by how we view children. This is a healing agenda.'

- Sylvia Ann Hewlett



tax bill the cost of a child's food, housing, medical care, or preschool education? Of course not."

Now West and Hewlett are urging beleaguered parents to launch a counterattack, mobilizing their voices and votes to improve economic and cultural conditions for families. To that end, they have drawn up a Parents' Bill of Rights, a blueprint for "parent empowerment" and a call for change.

Among its many provisions, some practical, others idealistic, the manifesto includes such op-

tions as paid parenting leave and tax incentives for companies that offer flexible hours and telecommuting. It proposes eliminating the marriage penalty in tax codes and creating tax credits and subsidies for at-home parents. It also calls for mortgage subsidies to make home ownership possible for more young families. In addition, the authors suggest increased government support for public broadcasting, as well as parental involvement in monitoring television.

But will busy parents take time to fight back?

Emphatically yes, insists Hewlett. Just a week after the book's publication last month, she says, more than 1,000 parents called to join the National Parenting Association (800-709-8795), a fledgling group modeled after the American Association of Retired Persons.

"One of the secrets of AARP is that you don't attend meetings," says Hewlett, one of the association's founders.

West and Hewlett admit that their broad-based proposals will require a "tremendous infusion of funds." But West offers a context for those expenditures. Noting that President Clinton frequently talks about "good times for the nation," West says, "Good times, yes, in terms of relative peace and relative prosperity. We've got surpluses. But the question is, Who are we as a people? What are our priorities in relation to our young people and our future? These questions have weight and gravity."

Adds Hewlett, "So much of the public agenda gets defined by how we view children. This is a healing agenda."

Honey, the American



ate our authority

('90s moms and dads can't get respect)

By Peggy O'Crowley
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

Sheila Connelly used to listen to WPLJ-FM in the car. She's switched to another station because she doesn't want her children to hear the sometimes salty language of the on-air patter.

She used to watch "The Nanny," but all the sexual innuendo in a show about child-rearing makes her uncomfortable with the kids around.

In terms of the media, TV and even radio now, it's really hard, even when you're flipping through commercials, to avoid hearing words you don't want your kids to hear. I feel constantly on guard," said the Somerset mother of a 3-year-old and a 16-month-old.

A "poisonous" popular culture, a society driven by big bucks and the bottom

line, and a government that doesn't do enough to help kids has turned child-rearing into a battlefield, according to the authors of "The War Against Parents: What We Can Do For America's Beleaguered Moms and Dads" (Houghton-Mifflin, \$24).

And if you're a parent in the trenches, they want to recruit you to counterattack. Together, the nation's 62 million parents can generate the kind of political clout that the American Association for Retired Persons has for the elderly, said co-author Sylvia Ann Hewlett, an economist and founder of the National Parenting Association.

The idea of a lobbying group for parents appeals to Linda Principe of Cranbury, an interior designer and mother of an 8-year-old.

"It sounds like an excellent idea. We're raising the next generation and we need to

do things to preserve the rights of our children," she said. "Having a child is a life-altering event that everyone has struggled with."

Hewlett and Cornel West, a professor of philosophy and African-American studies at Harvard University, teamed up to write the book because they feel now is the time for action.

The situation is critical, they say. Just look at the "parent-bashing" in television shows, movies and pop psychology books that treat parents like ineffectual fools or evl abusers.

Jerry Springer hosts shows about mothers having sex with their teenage daughters' boyfriends. In sitcoms like "Unhappily Ever After" and "Married ... With Children," parents are portrayed as clueless, crude or dead. In "Party of Five," parents are done away with entirely, with

the older children ably taking over their roles.

Hewlett and West even have it in for kids' movies like "Home Alone" and "Honey, I Shrunk The Kids," in which parents are portrayed as silly and incompetent.

Popular entertainment also undercuts the values parents try to teach, instead glamorizing sex and violence as portrayed in the movie "Natural Born Killers," about teenage lovers who go on a killing rampage.

"On the cultural level, we have a bombardment of hedonistic and narcissistic images," said West, author of the best-selling "Race Matters."

While they admit old-time shows like "Father Knows Best" and "Ozzie and Harriet" were sexist and all-white, at least

PLEASE SEE PARENTS, PAGE 38



Positive media images of parents, as depicted on "Leave It to Beaver" (top) and "Little House on the Prairie" (second from right) are being superseded by images of parents who are bumbling or absent. Negative portrayals include "Home Alone" (with Macaulay Culkin, left), "The 1" (second from left), "Party of Five" (right).

Parents

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37

Culture ate authority

they portrayed positive messages about parents.

"When we were growing up, I watched family-oriented shows with wholesome themes. I look at old 'Andy Griffith' reruns and there are always good parenting lessons in it. We need to have good role models," Connelly said.

Hewlett and West are not content to complain. They propose some changes like a "children's hour" on television from 4 to 5 p.m., stricter rating system for movies and CDs, and a television rating system designed by parents for parents, instead of the networks. They also call for a ban on alcohol and cigarette advertising.

"There's really common ground there, and if parents can rally round a program of action, we could produce a lot of political clout," Hewlett said.

The cultural reforms are just one part of their bill of rights. They'd like to see Americans become more responsible and more committed to kids, and they've got some ideas on how to achieve that.

They want to see stronger legal supports for marriage, like a three-year waiting period for couples who want to divorce and more states adopting a form of covenant marriage similar to Louisiana's, in which cou-

ples agree they will seek counseling and must have grounds for a divorce before they split up.

They would penalize custodial parents who interfere with visitation, to keep fathers in their children's lives, and they support men's movements like the Million Man March and the PromiseKeepers.

Pretty conservative stands, but to West and Hewlett, these are "common sense" solutions that do not fit any political profile, the real family values politicians are always talking about. Many of their ideas come from surveys and focus groups conducted by the National Parenting Association.

For example, said West, why not acknowledge that children are better off with two committed parents than one, without worrying about offending single mothers who are doing their best to raise their children alone?

"Let's cut through the ideological haze and put forth common-sensical ideas. We've lost sight of the plight of the children. They (single mothers) would be the first ones to say they wish they had support from a significant other, a husband," said West, a noncustodial father who said it was a challenge to maintain a close relationship with his son.

"The same is true of divorce. Everybody knows if a divorce takes place, a narcissistic divorce, the needs of child are tertiary. Their needs should be at the center of things — how are we going to come up with the money, how are we going to keep the emotional connection? It's just common sense."

Conservatives who champion

what they call traditional family values — restrictions on abortion, or a ban on same-sex marriages — are simply out of touch with most of today's families, they argue.

In fact, conservatives bear some responsibility for the family's predicament because they have abandoned parents — whose job consists of nurturing and caring, skills that don't have a market value — in favor of a free enterprise system that only rewards skills with a price tag attached.

"Wall Street and the White House are saying these are good times, the best in 35 years. But wealth is still not being distributed," West said.

A free market benefits a relative few at the top, they maintain. Everyone else must work harder to keep up, with both parents holding down at least one job and squeezing the time parents get to spend with their children.

"Parents see the time crunch as the No. 1 problem in their lives," Hewlett said.

And yet, she said, nearly one-third of female workers don't qualify for the popular Family and Medical Leave Act that allows parents to take off 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a newborn or sick child.

Hewlett, the mother of four, and West have come up with a slew of government reforms to make life easier for parents, including:

- Raise the minimum wage to \$7 an hour.

- Eliminate the marriage tax penalty and payroll taxes for poor families.

- Provide six months of paid leave for new parents, as well as an additional, compulsory paid leave of

10 days for men

- Amend welfare reform to allow mothers of very young children to stay home with them.

All these changes can be paid for with federal and state surpluses, according to Hewlett and West.

While Pat Perrillo of Roseland, the mother of a 19-year-old college student, doesn't agree with all of the platform, including allowing welfare mothers to stay home with their kids, she is in favor of their proposal to increase the tax deduction for children.

"They don't give you enough tax deduction for children. Look at the cost to clothe them and feed them. It's ridiculous. Go to a supermarket and look at the price of a box of cereal that they'll eat in one day," she said.

Finally, they offer a radical idea guaranteed to alarm everyone, especially those with no children — allowing a parent an extra vote for each child.

West acknowledges the proposal serves more as a "provocative" attention-getter; he and Hewlett believe non-parents have nothing to lose from supporting families.

"Kids are not some special interest group, some bit player. They're 100 percent of the future, workers of the future, citizens of future, the folks who will be paying our Social Security," Hewlett said. "We often lose sight of the fact that not only is it in everyone's self interest if we don't do that, we'll be paying some pretty hefty bills."

Anyone interested in learning more about the National Parenting Association can call its toll-free number, (800) 709-8795.

Parent Power

THE WAR AGAINST PARENTS: What We Can Do for America's Beleaguered Moms and Dads, by Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West. Houghton Mifflin, 302 pp., \$24.

By Cynthia Leive

IMAGINE A GROUP of American voters who are vast in number and mad as hell. Over the last 30 years, this group has seen its rights eroded, its influence curbed, its work mocked. Now its members want respect — and they ought to be able to command it, since there are 62 million of them.

The group? Parents — who, argue Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West, have been taking it on the chin for decades, watching as society in general and government in particular mouth cheap clichés about family while doing less and less to support the actual act of child-raising. Despite parents' potential muscle at the polls, they have been treated like a despised minority, say the authors. "The War Against Parents" is intended to change that — to get parents acting like the 800-pound gorilla they are.

Hewlett, the Wales-born economist and author of "When the Bough Breaks," and West, the Harvard professor of religion and Afro-American studies — parents both — start from an assumption that "the parent-child bond is the most fundamental building block in human society." When women and men have the time and energy to nurture their children, the authors argue, our world blooms: Rates of violence, depression and school dropouts fall; productivity and intellectual capital rise.

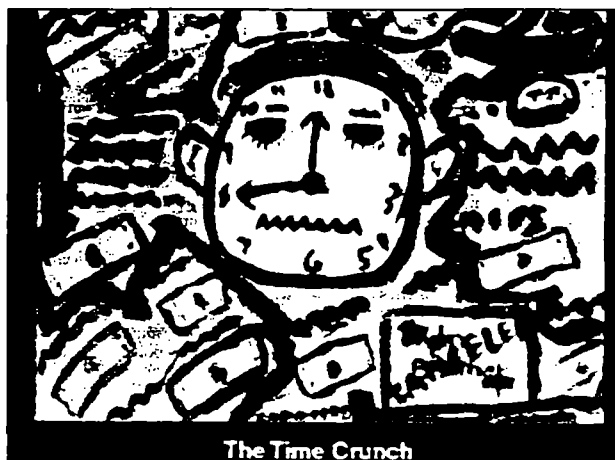
Who could argue with that? Plenty of

Cynthia Leive is senior editor at Glamour magazine.

people, actually, for while "The War Against Parents" contains elements to satisfy both conservatives and liberals, its findings and recommendations are by no means the watered-down mush of compromise. This is a fierce, ambitious, passionate, frustrating book, with its eyes trained not only on illuminating parents' problems but on fighting for solutions.

Hewlett and West, who surveyed an unspecified number of parents across the country, make a damning case against our culture for failing to walk its family-values talk. Despite the strong economy, wages for most Americans are stagnant or falling, they charge; that financial pinch, combined with declining tax privileges for families with children, conspire to make parenting a job that simply does not pay — and consequently gets little respect. ("In late 20th-Century America, parenting has become a countercultural activity of the first order," the authors note.) If you own a horse, you may deduct the cost of its care and feeding from your taxes; not so a child, and Hewlett and West see the resulting money troubles parents experience as cataclysmic. "Out-of-control kids in Oakland or the Bronx do not fall out of the thin blue sky," they write. "Their distressing circumstances are a direct consequence of the increased inability of moms and dads to earn a living wage." This money crunch (and its cousin, the time crunch, which has Americans working a full month more a year than 15 years ago) is relatively new: The stable families of the '50s, the authors point out, were made possible by an invisible network of generous government programs, among them the GI Bill, which supplied education and housing benefits for millions of young Americans.

While workplace pressures leave parents scrambling to find time to spend



The Time Crunch

By Angela Williams, 9th grade, Brooklyn. From the book.

"My Mother as a Clock Face"

with their children, popular culture is busy deflating mothers' and fathers' images. In film and on TV, Hewlett and West write, "parents tend to be blustering bores, miserly boobs, overprotective fools or just plain dopey and twerpy." Learning to question parents' authority, of course, was part of the healthy legacy of the '60s, but Hewlett and West are right that regularly ridiculing the people who bring up children isn't exactly a smart idea. (Pop psych's obsession with "toxic parents" seems equally cruel: Why castigate Mom and Dad for screwing up when they get so little support to begin with?) While "The War Against Parents" cites some predictable media demons — think Marilyn Manson — the overall point is dead-on: "The roles of mom and dad have been stripped of most kinds of respect and status, and parents' work has been debased."

How did the act of child-raising come to be such a low national priority? Hewlett and West excoriate conservatives,

who scorn government intervention and prefer to leave everything to the free market — an approach that's proven devastating for kids. The authors also chastise liberals for insistently putting adults' fulfillment before children's and failing to acknowledge that "at least for the sweet, short years of childhood, everything else in a parent's life should be negotiable." But as Hewlett and West themselves acknowledge, women, at least, have had good reason to resist the idea that kids come first, accustomed to centuries of coming in a very distant second. (Hewlett's description of how her own mother had to escort her children to and from school eight times a day, often in the driving Welsh rain, will serve as effective birth control for the female reader.)

"The War Against Parents" will not completely assuage women's fears. Although the authors carefully stress the need for fathers, too, to be more in-

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Parent Power

WAR from Page B13

involved in children's lives, this book concerns itself more with fathers' dilemmas than with mothers'. Hewlett and West — the latter a noncustodial father — address the current epidemic of fatherless families almost completely from the male point of view, arguing that dads have been "disabled" by a custody system that favors women, a welfare set-up that snatches away a family's benefits if a father lives at home, and movies and TV shows that deem men irrelevant. (Men irrelevant? Try finding female heroines at your multiplex.) These charges have some truth to them, but their one-sidedness is galling. What of the many mothers who wish desperately for their children's fathers to be more involved, to no avail? And what of working mothers' many other concerns: dads who don't pull their weight around the house, for instance, or the pernicious gender gap in wages, which keeps women from getting the workplace leverage they need in order to bargain for more family-friendly policies? One message of "The War Against Parents" is that that war has been waged more viciously on fathers than mothers, but many working moms will disagree.

Hyperbole of tone also gets in the authors' way. In their desire to drive home the importance of a caring, committed, two-biological-parent family, they tell us that stepfathers are danger-

ous, foster parents "do a lousy job," no-fault divorce has led to child neglect and the welfare system is a descendant of slavery.

Such generalizations are a shame, since this is an otherwise powerful collaboration. Hewlett and West cap their book off with a "Parent's Bill of Rights," a radical, thought-provoking plan of action. Some demands are revolutionary: no more payroll taxes for working parents of children under six; longer school days and shorter summer vacations, to minimize children's unsupervised time; subsidies to raise overall wages. Some ideas are smaller-scale: mandatory trigger locks on guns; tax incentives for companies to institute family-friendly policies. A few measures sound downright loopy: Should parents of kids under 18 really get an extra vote?

Hewlett and West make a bold, compassionate case that putting our nation's resources behind the work parents do will pay off. Will voters agree? Not immediately. Even the most modest of the authors' suggestions have already met with resistance in Congress. But the idea that parents start to see themselves as a unified bloc — not Democrats, not Republicans, not rich, not poor, but parents, with an AARP-style lobbying group to wage their case — is a tantalizing one. The great strength of "The War Against Parents" is that it gives people a new lens through which to see the familiar struggles of their lives — and that, after all, is how all political movements begin.

Houston Chronicle

Tuesday, June 2, 1998

a war against parents?

Authors
say
Bill of Rights
needed
for
nation's
moms
and
dads



Illustration courtesy of Houghton Mifflin

By JEANNIE KEVER
Houston Chronicle

Paid time off to care for a newborn baby, newly adopted or seriously ill child. A minimum wage of at least \$7 an hour, enough to allow a full-time worker to keep a family of three above the poverty line.

No payroll taxes for working parents with children under the age of 6. A mortgage subsidy for families with incomes below \$100,000 a year.

Sound good? You must be one of America's 62 million parents.

Parents make up an unwieldy, disorganized force — a paltry 35 percent of parents voted in 1995 — but their sheer numbers could give them clout.

It hasn't happened yet. In fact, economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett and historian Cornel West argue in their new book, *The War Against Parents/What We Can Do for America's Beleaguered Moms and Dads* (Houghton Mifflin, \$24), that American business and government, as well as the entertainment industry, have become so pervasively anti-parent that having kids has be-

come an expensive hobby, to be indulged in at your peril.

"There's not the understanding that parenting has civic and social importance," West said in a recent telephone interview. "The notion of parenting as a private and expensive hobby is still so strong."

He and Hewlett propose a Parents' Bill of Rights, an ambitious agenda they say could be pushed by the National Parenting Association, which Hewlett founded in 1993.

The group is modeled upon the American Association of Retired Persons, the 3 million-member organization that helped turn seniors into a potent force, both in politics and, increasingly, the marketplace.

"There's an enormous sense of shared struggle," Hewlett said recently. "Parents feel isolated and cut off, and they would very much welcome pulling together."

The group had 9,000 members before *The War Against Parents* was released in April; Hewlett said she hopes to have 50,000 members and partnerships with 15 national organizations by the end of the year.

So far, there are only a few hundred members

from Texas, but she said the group may make a push here soon because Texas' youthful population means "there are an enormous number of young parents in need of this kind of affirmation there."

Hewlett, a native of Wales, said she was warned that America is too deeply divided for a movement that cuts across racial and class lines.

"The most powerful finding of our work is, none of that's true," she said. "The parent-child bond is probably the deepest of all human connections. You unleash enormous energy when you tap into it. ... We hope this will be a healing movement."

Hewlett and West come from strikingly different backgrounds, but by early adulthood, they were on similar paths. She is a white woman who grew up in a Welsh mining village, the daughter of a teacher and a homemaker. After graduating from Cambridge University, she earned a doctoral degree at Harvard University. Following a career in academia and as executive director of the Economic Policy Council, a New York-based think tank, she is a writer and poli-

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Parents

Continued from Page 1D.

tical advocate.

West is a black man who grew up in a working class neighborhood near Sacramento, the son of a civil servant and school teacher. He, too, went to Harvard, later completing a doctoral degree at Princeton University. He is professor of Afro-American Studies and of religion at Harvard.

Both credit their success to the amount of time their parents, and especially their mothers, devoted to raising children, noting that their parents' devotion was undeterred by career ambitions or marital break-ups.

But that is not the life they chose for themselves.

West was divorced from his son's mother when the boy was a toddler, and Hewlett suffered a miscarriage of twins in 1979 when she remained on the job at Barnard College after being told that she would lose her job if she stayed home during a difficult pregnancy. She and her husband now have five children; West recently became a grandfather.

They credit the unpaid labor of women with holding families together in the past but say the gains of the feminist and civil rights movements can't — and shouldn't — be undone.

They met in 1992 as members of a bipartisan panel convened to explore social problems before that year's presidential election.

The panel fizzled, but West and Hewlett later created the Task Force on Parent Empowerment, pulling together scholars, policy makers, business leaders and parent activists to start building their nascent movement.

The book, and its Parents' Bill of Rights (which has already been



West

Hewlett

retagged to include "... and Responsibilities" in its title), is a politically charged indictment of social and political policies that Hewlett and West say have combined to devastate family life.

They bash both liberals — too committed to the cult of the individual, when raising children often calls for self-sacrifice — and conservatives, who are accused of ignoring the damaging effects of unbridled market competition and resulting low wages, especially for young adults of child-rearing age.

Government is criticized for welfare laws that, in effect, promote fatherlessness by generally denying financial help to two-parent families. It also gets slapped for cuts in student loan and public housing programs, along with tax policies that offer a lower per child deduction, in constant dollars, than in the past and that put a higher tax burden on many married couples than they would pay if they were single.

Those things matter, Hewlett and West say, because 87 percent of American adults become parents.

Among their statistics:

■ Children who watch an average amount of TV see 8,000 murders and more than 100,000 other acts of violence during their elementary school years.

■ Just four videos — *Total Recall*, *Robocop 2*, *Rambo III* and *Die Hard III* — show 525 deaths.

■ The average American CEO earns 209 times the average worker's

salary; the \$1.3 trillion paid to management employees in 1994 was four times the bill for Social Security and 50 times greater than the bill for welfare payments.

■ In 6 million American homes, two adults held a total of four jobs in 1997.

Some of those statistics haven't made the authors especially popular in management circles, West admitted. "All we say is, 'show us we're wrong.' ... All this wealth being produced and hemorrhaging at the top has certain consequences for any democratic society."

Business would surely pay for much of the proposed Parents' Bill of Rights, although Hewlett declined to give the total price tag, saying only that many portions wouldn't cost anything and others would save money in the long run.

But initially, it would be hugely expensive. One provision, for example, calls for government and the private sector to subsidize bringing the minimum wage to at least \$7 an hour for full-time jobs. One plan for doing that predicts an initial cost of \$100 billion a year.

But West said the document is just a starting point.

"There will be things people agree with, and things they're leery of," he said. "We're just trying to get people to think about reshaping our priorities and how important parenting is."

Other provisions in the Parents' Bill of Rights include:

■ Paid leave for 24 weeks to care for a newborn baby, newly adopted or seriously ill child. Workers whose employers don't cover that would be entitled to the minimum wage, paid from the Social Security Trust Fund.

■ Tax breaks for companies that offer flexible hours, compressed work weeks and other ways to give parents more time with their children.

■ Lengthening the school day and the school year, to allow for a more rigorous education and to more

closely align school schedules with working parents' schedules.

It's an ambitious agenda, but West is optimistic that at least some of it can be achieved, including paid parental leave, more flexible work schedules and an increase in the minimum wage.

The book's critics have included non-parents, West said.

"We try to tell them that ... the behavior of children in our society affects non-parents in significant ways," he said. "Their tax dollars are being used to support prisons and other things that relate directly to how children are being raised."

Perhaps predictably, conservatives have rallied around the book's themes of a pop culture run amuck.

"These children killing children, everyone says it's the gun manufacturers' fault, or it's the parents' fault," said Crystal Roberts, a policy analyst with the Washington D.C.-based Family Research Council. "But children aren't born knowing how to kill."

"People say just turn off the TV. But other kids don't turn off the TV, and they're emulating what they're hearing and seeing. It's like telling a child to take a bath in a tub full of sharks," Roberts said. "You can only maneuver your way around so long before it gets to you."

High-profile liberals such as Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and Marian Wright Edelman, president of The Children's Defense Fund, have offered their endorsement of the book, too.

Hewlett said the most likely next step will be at the state level, allowing action to be tailored to different parts of the country.

"It has to be a little bit of a moving target," she said. "It has to be parent-driven. No one can sit around in New York or Washington and imagine they have the last word."

For more information on the National Parenting Association, call 800-709-8795.

E. J. Dionne Jr.

A Parents' Manifesto

CAMBRIDGE, Mass.—Were stereotypes always true, this would be the last place you'd come to hear passionate talk about the importance of parenting.

But stereotypes are often wrong, and the times are a changing. Just listen to Cornel West, a professor of religion and Afro-American Studies at Harvard. "Parenting has been so taken for granted, it's almost an invisible activity," he says. "Parenting is a precious act of nurturing and caring."

Doing your own thing and finding yourself were highly popular on campuses three decades back. When a professor here wrote in 1969 that the family needed "a decent burial," he wasn't far from the prevailing spirit.

Yet West, whose politics are firmly on the left, seems as far removed from the spirit of the counterculture as Jimmy Stewart. "We cannot talk about adult self-realization without talking about the deprivations of children with regard to time, attention and resources," he said in an interview.

A cynic might say that the baby boomers simply settled down, had kids and started thinking like parents. "A social conservative," says Allan Carlson, a conservative writer about family issues, "is a liberal with a daughter in high school."

I've heard too many liberals laugh knowingly at that line to deny its validity. What's interesting is that after years of ceding family issues to the Christian Right, progressives such as West are saying if you care about families and the struggles of parents, you also have to care about social justice. And ask whether our workplace and government policies work against parents.

West has teamed up with economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett to produce a book-length manifesto for those who take this view. It's called "The War Against Parents," and its agenda mixes traditionally liberal ideas (paid parental leave, living wages, job creation and child care) with some ideas Bill Bennett might like. They propose a television rating system "designed by parents for parents" and a mandatory weekday children's hour on all commercial stations.

Republicans in Congress trying to end the marriage penalty in the tax code will be able to cite these two progressives. But Hewlett and West endorse a return to "income

splitting" to permit married couples "to share their joint income equally for the purposes of taxation." They are adamant, however, that an end to the marriage penalty not tilt the tax code toward the wealthy. Republicans will not like their spending programs or their critique of the 1996 welfare bill.

Hewlett says she and West would not mind mixing the current family debate up a little: "We saw gridlock in the discussion of family and over the last 20 years, family has become a political football. Values belong to one camp, the economic concerns to the other camp and the two never meet at all." The debate over family had become "almost tainted and very polarized" with "different code words for different camps."

In trying to avoid code words, Hewlett and West make some fresh points. For example, they criticize television not simply for gratuitous sex and violence but also for so often portraying parents as a bunch of clowns. Television shows, says Hewlett, "show parents to be stupid fools or a passel of neurotics." Often, she notes, parents aren't even on the scene in contemporary television shows.

And instead of heaping scorn on Ozzie and Harriet, a common tactic in discussions of the "outdated" '50s family, they argue instead that government programs, notably the GI Bill and federal policies to encourage home ownership, made the couple's life possible. "Ozzie and Harriet were bolstered by public policy," they write, "and depended on the public purse."

These authors make a point of talking about who they are—a black man active in the cause of racial justice and a white woman who is a feminist. In the parenting movement, they see a highly practical way of bridging "the deep divides of race, gender and class."

They write that "our 'blackness' and our 'femaleness' pale in the light of an even more fundamental identity: that of being a parent. After all, we share the bedrock stuff: We are crazy about our kids."

Hewlett and West have not worked out all their answers, and despite their very specific "Parents' Bill of Rights," they do not pretend to have solved all the problems. But their collaboration is a hopeful sign, and their effort to link values and economics is a needed tonic.

The Boston Globe

THE BOSTON GLOBE • WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 1998

Rediscovering parenthood

E. J. DIONNE JR.

Were stereotypes always true, Cambridge would be the last place you'd come to hear passionate talk about the importance of parenting.

But stereotypes are often wrong, and the times are a changing. Just listen to Cornel West, a professor of religion and Afro-American Studies at Harvard. "Parenting has been so taken for granted, it's almost an invisible activity," he says. "Parenting is a precious act of nurturing and caring."

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PAUL SZEPE ILLUSTRATION

E. J. Dionne Jr. is a Washington Post staff member.

Home Is Where the Parent Should Be

How to resist a society that pulls parents in every direction but home.



It's 4:00 P.M. Do You Know Where Your Children Are?" asked *Newsweek* in its April 27 issue. Late afternoon—not late night—is when kids are most likely to get into trouble or be victimized by others, said the magazine as it tried to provoke concern for kids who are home alone after school with little or no adult supervision. "Three out of four mothers of school-age children work outside the home. So it's not so surprising that by the time they are 12 years old, nearly 35 percent of American children are regularly left on their own," the report said.

Many kids fill this time alone by watching TV—1,500 hours a year, on average, compared to 900 hours a year spent in school. Good parenting includes passing on our faith and values, but where is support for biblical values on TV? The entertainment media teach our youth that sex outside marriage is routine, and homosexual relationships are normal. In films and news shows our children see violence used to resolve conflicts or to get one's own way—and senseless violence is glamorized. They learn from advertising that happiness can be found through acquiring material things. These messages eat away at the foundations of our culture like termites, and our young seem to be especially vulnerable to the appetites of these voracious insects. Media critic Michael Medved

goes further, arguing that TV as a medium (never mind the content) inculcates short attention spans, encourages a gloomy outlook on life, and teaches self-gratification by projecting fun as the highest goal of human existence. There is good reason for the uneasy conscience of American parents.

Lack of adult supervision is just one deprivation that plagues our children today. Just as frightening is a lack of moral guidance. *Chicago Tribune* columnist Eric Zorn, who usually champions liberal causes by scorning conservatives, now lauds social conservatives for "leading the current renaissance in character education—those [school] programs . . . that emphasize the development of virtue, ethical thinking and moral behavior. Children don't magically acquire such things any more than they magically learn long division." Writes Zorn, "A kid who grows up without a good moral education is disadvantaged, too, just like a kid who grows up poor, who gets lousy medical care, who attends shabby schools."

Tough job assignment

There never has been a Golden Age of Parenting. Yet our culture seems particularly unfriendly to families and children. "One of the best-kept secrets of the last thirty years is that big business, government, and the wider culture have waged a silent war against parents, undermining the work that they do," Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West argue in their recent book, *The War Against Parents*. This is especially true because our society measures everything by the bottom line. Children don't earn their keep as they did in an agrarian society. Instead, they cost money and threaten personal liberties and career goals in an age of individualism. As a result, Hewlett and West conclude, parenting has become a countercultural activity.

It would help, of course, if the culture supported our values. We wish for government leaders to emulate biblical virtues, for schools to teach our children right from wrong, and for mass media to portray positive role models of people who *really do* work hard and play by the rules. But we haven't time for that kind of cultural turnaround. It will take a generation or more, waiting and working, for that to happen. Christian parents must do something for their children now.

Should we even expect our culture to prop up our values and serve as moral nanny for our kids? The

biblical way, from Israel to the church, runs in the opposite direction—the people of God are a light to the world, salt and yeast in the dough of our culture. We are to influence the world and its structures positively, not clamor for government or the public schools or the dollar-driven media industry to be a light to us. Ironically, this disparity of values is an opportunity, as Rodney Clapp put it, for “the Christian family to be Christian, to live freely and unabashedly out of its particular story.”

Job description posted

Christian parents who want to swim against the tide need to be especially intentional in several areas:

Time in. Values are like viruses: they are caught in the environment in which they reside. But how are children “catching” Christian values if the significant adults in their lives have so little time for them and with them—after school or any other time?

Newsweek's interest in the kids who are home alone after school seems aimed at creating public interest in after-school programs that engage children in wholesome, safe activities. But *Newsweek* did not ask the more radical questions that Christian families should be asking themselves: Is it really necessary in all cases that both parents work outside the home? And if so, is it because we are chasing the American dream of a big home in the suburbs with two late-model cars in the driveway?

This is not to argue that a woman's place is only in the home. In a child's earlier years, Mother usually has to be the primary nurturer; but many couples find creative ways of sharing responsibility after their children's infant years. While some couples must have dual incomes just to put bread on the table and a roof over their heads, Christian parents who are willing and able to live on less than two full salaries are to be commended for putting family ahead of career or lifestyle.

Preach what we practice. Besides spending time with their children, Christian parents also need to *teach* them to discern right from wrong and the biblical reasons behind the differences. Our children need more than injunctions; “Just do it” is not sufficient motivation for doing the right thing. As they grow older, children must have explained to them the biblical logic of the commands to love God, neighbor and enemy, the common sense of the Golden Rule, and the sanctity and sanity of sex within a lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual relationship. The commands of God are not just law; they are also grace, for when we live within the ways of God we grow and thrive, personally and together. No wonder David said that God has placed the boundary lines at pleasant places (Ps. 16:6). He should have known since he transgressed them numerous times (see “Bathsheba-Gate,” p. 38).

Extend the family. Aristotle believed that the good society was one in which the moral education of the young was shared by the whole society through its laws, practices, and mores. It was a task too important and too encompassing to be left to schools or families alone. If it doesn't take a village to raise a

child, it at least takes a church.

In the absence of a supportive society, Christian families need this communal effort in the corporate life of the church. Parenting cannot be left to two adults, much less to one in the case of single parents. Children need the mentoring of other adults in their lives, while parents, too, need the support of older adults who can pass on their wisdom about parenting or give them respite from the strains of child care.

Most evangelicals do not name godparents—sponsors who take a special interest in the growth and development of those being baptized. Yet something like that is happening with congregational mentoring programs that match children with adults who commit themselves to relating one on one to a particular child, giving him or her another adult model to emulate, someone to whom the child can turn when communication breaks down between parent and child. Perhaps churches also need to consider “godgrandparents”—senior adults who can provide support and relief to parents.

In our mobile society, when so many nuclear families are removed from their extended, biological families, the community of faith must function as an extended family. Through this family of God—through its corporate worship and service and nurture—children take on an identity and choose a God-oriented way of life.

Time spent well

“Child rearing is not some mysterious process,” write Hewlett and West. “At the heart of the matter is time, huge amounts of it, freely given.” Based on national research they conducted, they claim that a majority of parents realize that most of what their children need, such as love and character development, cannot be delegated to others.

Lamin Sanneh, professor of missions and world Christianity at Yale University, understands this well. As an African living in Western culture, he senses very keenly the tension between child rearing and professional involvement. In a recent dinner-table conversation, he told CT what “family values” have meant for him and his wife: “We believed two things were necessary in raising our children: showing them unconditional love, no matter what. And being there for them. One of us always arranged to be home after school, not just to look out for them, but also to talk with them about their day, to process what went on at school.”

That is parenting worth emulating. And it's an investment of time that no government or private funding can buy. 

**Parents
realize that
what their
children
need most
cannot be
delegated
to others.**

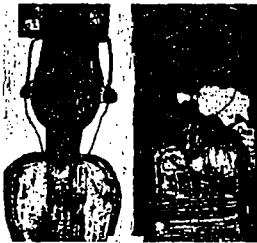
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SPECIAL INFORMATIONAL ADVERTISEMENT

"I try to instill good values and character in my son. But he tunes me out whenever I try to talk to him."



"With both of us working, I feel like I don't have enough time to be a good parent. Help!"



"It seems like kids are more destructive now. There is anger inside them."

"I don't want to spank my kids the way my parents spanked me, but I don't know how else to control them."

THESE ARE THE VOICES OF JUST A FEW AMERICAN PARENTS. But they speak for all of us when we consider the challenges facing our children today. Even those of us who don't have children can't help but be concerned. Sylvia Ann Hewlett, founder of the National Parenting Association, and Cornel West, professor of Afro-American Studies at Harvard University, in The War Against Parents, cite sobering statistics:

- Homicide rate for children 14-17 has risen 172% since 1985.
- Suicide rate for teen-age males has risen 30% since 1980.
- Illicit drug use among high-school seniors is up 44% since 1970.
- SAT scores have slipped 27 points since the early 1970s.

IT'S NO WONDER that in a recent survey by Public Agenda, in partnership with the Ad Council and Ronald McDonald House Charities, 83 percent of kids aged 12 to 17 said it's harder than ever to be a child growing up in America these days — and 81 percent of parents say it's harder to be a parent.

PARENTING IS A TOUGH JOB. "People no longer live near their extended families and most neighborhoods aren't set up for people to be neighborly," explains Ruth A. Wooden, a single mother of a teen-age son and president of the Ad Council, a group that uses free advertising to shine a spotlight on children's issues.

"Gone is the front porch where you could sit with your own parents and neighbors and talk about how to raise your kids. Gone, too, is the feeling that you always had someone you could turn to for advice." The result, she says, is even those moms and dads trying their hardest to be good parents often feel overwhelmed, frustrated, confused and helpless.

Experts also say diminishing wages and heightened job insecurity contribute to more parents working longer hours, leaving more children home alone, according to Hewlett and West. Working parents must then work even harder to provide their children with a nurturing home environment.



THAT'S WHY THE AD COUNCIL sponsored this special report as part of its nationwide initiative that focuses on children and families. This report will tell you some of the many things you can do to help kids and parents.

ADVERTISING INFORMATIONAL ADVERTISEMENT

bEING A GOOD PARENT REQUIRES PROVIDING A child with the gifts of love, attention, energy and resources – generously and unstintingly over a long period of time. It involves nourishing a small body, but it also involves growing a child's soul, sharing the stories and rituals that awaken a child's spirit, and nurturing the spiritual bonds that create meaning and morality in that child's life.

Children thrive on huge amounts of irrational, emotional attachment; most often the gift of a mother or father, but in exceptional cases the gift of a devoted grandparent. This is the magical force that produces the basis for self-love and self-respect. And once children learn to love themselves, they develop a conscience and care deeply for others. Parental love then not only contributes powerfully to the development of a fully realized human being, it also nourishes and nurtures the larger community.

How to be an empowered parent

SPEND half an hour every day reading to your child. Studies show parents are almost twice as powerful as teachers in determining success in school.

GET INVOLVED in your children's education not only by helping with homework, but by voting in school board elections.

PARTICIPATE in parent patrols to create a safe zone around your children's school.

ASK your boss for a more flexible work schedule, or inquire about paid parenting leave, so you can spend more time with your children at home.

Sylvia Ann Hewlett, founder of the National Parenting Association, and Cornel West, professor of Afro-American Studies at Harvard University, are the authors of The War Against Parents, a new book published by Houghton Mifflin.

Advertisement

GOOD parenting



TODAY'S REALITIES CONFIRM THAT

SIMPLE TRUTH. Increasingly, we recognize that good parenting is an essential positive force in homes, communities, and the wider society.

That's the message of pictures such as the one on this page. This student art is produced and exhibited under the aegis of the National Parenting Association, an organization that promotes renewed recognition and practical support for parents while working to recreate a society that cherishes children.

The American Express Foundation proudly contributed to two consecutive touring exhibits of "Children's Voices: Images of Mothers and Fathers." The pictures describe the young artists' concerns more eloquently than any words can.

We are happy to announce our additional support of the National Parenting Association, with a grant toward its interactive web site that will help parents stay informed, make their voices heard, and link them to other organizations across the country that serve parent constituencies.

The American Express Foundation recognizes the importance of helping parents balance work and family concerns. That's why we provide tangible support to expand quality day-care and school-to-career education, as well as to the programs of the National Parenting Association.

For more information about the National Parenting Association, please write to, National Parenting Association, 51 West 74th Street, Suite 1B, New York, NY 10023-2495