

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

Clinton Library

DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
001. bios	Mothers Day Adoption Event Discussion Participants (2 pages)	nd	P6/b(6)
002. letter	Roshann Parris to FLOTUS (partial) (1 page)	05/13/1996	P6/b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
First Lady's Office
Domestic Policy Council (Nicole Rabner)
OA/Box Number: 15409

FOLDER TITLE:

Mothers' Day Discussion with Adoptive Mothers and Children, 05/09/96

2012-1035-S

kc994

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
b(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
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b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

May 9, 1996

MOTHER'S DAY DISCUSSION WITH ADOPTIVE MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

DATE: Friday, May 10th
LOCATION: Roosevelt Room
TIME: 11:15 - 12:30
FROM: Nicole Rabner

I. PURPOSE

To highlight adoption on the occasion of Mother's Day, listen to a wide range of stories from adoptive mothers and their children and demonstrate the Administration's commitment to promoting adoption.

II. BACKGROUND

As you know, this is a particularly appropriate time to focus attention on adoption, both because of Mother's Day and because of the legislation pending in the Congress. For this listening session, we have assembled six mothers and their children whose adoption stories reflect the wide range of adoption experiences - from adopting a newborn to transracial adoption to special needs adoption to older-child adoption.

Program

You will first have a chance to greet the discussion participants informally in the Map Room. While they proceed to the Roosevelt Room and are seated for the discussion, you will have some briefing time. You will then proceed to the Roosevelt Room and take your seat (you are seated between Carol Adams, 26, and Margaret Fitzgerald (with 4-year-old William on her lap)). Following your opening remarks, you will initiate the discussion and act as moderator. The mothers will each tell her unique adoption story. You will close the discussion.

III. PARTICIPANTS

Discussion

-HRC

-Six adoptive mothers and six children (see attached annotated list)

Observers

-Ann Rosewater, DHHS

-Carol Williams, DHHS

-Karen Dorsey, DHHS

-Carol Johnson, President, National Adoption Center

-Gloria Hochman, Director of Communications and Marketing, National Adoption Center

-Reginald Fitzgerald, husband of Adrienne (discussion member)

IV. SCENARIO

-HRC proceeds to Map Room to meet and greet discussion participants

-While discussion participants proceed to Roosevelt Room, HRC has briefing time

-HRC proceeds to Roosevelt Room and is seated for discussion

-HRC makes opening remarks and initiates discussion

-Discussion continues for approximately 45 minutes

-HRC closes discussion.

V. PRESS PLAN

Open Press.

VI. REMARKS

Opening remarks provided by Jen Klein. Sample questions also provided.

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SEATING CHART

X HRC

X Carol Adams

X Margaret and William
Fitzgerald

X Lorraine Adams

X Jeremy Lincicome

X Joey Stinger

X Jude Lincicome

X Julie Stinger

X Keith Antrobus

X Duncan Ward

X Pat Antrobus

X Adrienne Ward

Potential Questions

Mother's Day Event

1. Tell me about your child(ren)?
2. What have been the major joys?
3. What have been the major challenges?
4. What led you to decide to adopt?
5. What was your child's life like prior to coming to you?
6. How have you seen your child grow?
7. For you, what are the major differences in parenting by adoption and parenting by birth?
8. What has adoption meant to your family (immediate and extended)?

ADOPTION

THE FACTS:

- ▶ In December 1993 (the last year for which data are available), there were approximately 21,000 foster children in the U. S. waiting to be adopted.
- ▶ Of the children awaiting adoption at the end of 1993, approximately 41 % had already waited two years.
- ▶ Eight out of ten waiting children have special needs (e.g. special medical, developmental, behavioral or psychological needs; minority children; older children; or sibling groups).

THE RECORD:

HR 4, the welfare reform bill vetoed by President Clinton would have impeded Federal efforts to find safe, loving, adoptive homes for children caught in the foster care system. For example, HR 4 would have:

- ▶ **Eliminated funding for one-time adoption costs** -- Under current law, families that adopt eligible children with special needs are entitled to reimbursement for their one-time adoption costs. HR 4 would have eliminated funding for these payments, potentially making it impossible for a willing family to adopt a foster child, because the family could not afford the one-time adoption costs.
- ▶ **Curtailed recruitment and training** -- Currently, states are guaranteed partial reimbursement of their expenses for recruiting and training foster and adoptive families. HR 4 would have ended this guarantee, and capped and cut funding, making it harder for states to find adoptive homes for children with special needs.
- ▶ **Repealed the Adoption Opportunities program** -- The Adoption Opportunities program is a targeted program that facilitates national and community-level innovations to overcome barriers to adoption and to find adoptive families for special needs children. HR 4 would have repealed this important effort, and folded it into a large block grant.

In addition, the version of HR 4 originally approved by the House Ways and Means Committee and passed by the House of Representatives in March of 1995, would have repealed the current federal entitlement for adoption assistance payments for children with special needs (Title IVE of the Social Security Act) and replaced this essential program with a block grant to the states. Under the current IVE program, families that adopt children with special needs (children with special medical, developmental, behavioral or psychological needs; minority children; older children; or sibling groups) are entitled to receive ongoing subsidies to help them support these children. The repeal of this guaranteed assistance would have made it even more difficult to find loving adoptive homes for these children. Both the Senate and the Conference Committee rejected this House proposal in HR 4.

ADOPTION Fact Sheet

How does the adoption system work?

- ▶ Under state and federal laws, before exploring adoption possibilities, state child welfare agencies are required to try to reunite children with their parents when a child's safety can be assured. States are required to make a determination regarding reunification or adoption within one year.
- ▶ Between 50 and 70% of all children initially placed in foster care eventually are returned to their parents.
- ▶ When reunification is not possible, state and federal laws require efforts to find a permanent home for a child, preferably through adoption. All state laws require that, before an adoption can take place, the legal rights of the biological parents be severed through a state court proceeding.

Who are the children who need adoptive homes?

- ▶ One group consists of children, primarily infants, whose parents voluntarily relinquish them for adoption; little is known about these children or the nature of their adoptive placements because their parents generally deal with private adoption agencies or make private placements with adoptive families.
- ▶ A second group of children are those who have been placed in foster care based on court determination that they were abused or neglected, and for whom reunification efforts have been unsuccessful.
- ▶ In December 1993, there were approximately 86,000 foster children in the country for whom state agencies had determined that adoption was the appropriate goal. Approximately 21,000 of these children were legally free to be adopted (their parents' legal rights to ever regain custody had been terminated) and were waiting to be adopted.
- ▶ Thirty-Two (32.4%) percent of the children awaiting adoption were white, 52% (51.8%) African American, 5.5% Hispanic. Only two percent of these children were under age 1; 28% were between the ages of 1 and 5; 45% were 6-12 years of age; and 25% were over the age of 12. The median age was 9 years.
- ▶ Eight out of ten waiting children have special needs: medical, developmental, behavioral or psychological.

How long do children wait for adoption?

- ▶ Of the children awaiting adoption at the end of 1993, approximately 41% had already waited two years.
- ▶ It takes substantially longer to find homes for minority children. Older children and sibling groups irrespective of race also have longer waits.
- ▶ Many children are never adopted, even though their biological parents' parental rights have been terminated.

Why does it take so long and why do so many children go unadopted?

- ▶ Finding adoptive homes for older children and those with emotional or physical problems requires aggressive action by agencies, and most of the children waiting for adoption fall into these categories.
- ▶ In 1993, 45% of the children waiting for adoption were 6 to 12 years old; only 2% were infants. Eight out of ten children -- nearly a 75% increase since 1984 -- had some special need: they were disabled, older, had siblings, or were minority.
- ▶ Lengthy processes to terminate parental rights, lack of financial resources for adoption, excessive caseloads and difficulty in recruiting foster and adoptive families contribute to the slow adoption of many of these children.
- ▶ There is some evidence that the adoption of minority children is being slowed because some foster care and adoption agencies are unwilling or reluctant to place these children with non-minority families. Some state agencies have followed explicit or implicit policies that make race or ethnicity the primary consideration in placement thus reducing the pool of available families.

What is the Clinton Administration doing to increase adoptions?

- ▶ The Administration is ensuring that states make full and effective use of the Adoption Assistance program, which provides critical economic support to families who adopt special needs children, since they may have large medical and other expenses. Under the Clinton Administration, the number of children for whom adoption subsidies are provided has increased by about 60%.
- ▶ Grants have been provided to public and private agencies to develop successful models for recruiting families, provision of post-legal adoption services, support for parent groups, and the development of training curricula.
- ▶ The Administration has conducted national and regional leadership conferences to build the capacity of public and private agencies to facilitate the adoption of minority and special needs children.
- ▶ The Administration provides support for the National Adoption Exchange, the Adoption Clearinghouse, the National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption, and the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance.
- ▶ The Administration is committed to fully enforcing the Multiethnic Placement Act, whose non-discrimination and recruitment provisions should increase the number of children who are adopted.
- ▶ The Clinton Administration has expressed strong concerns about "welfare reform" proposals that would jeopardize these programs and eliminate the guarantee of federal funds to help support adoptions.
- ▶ November is National Adoption month. The Administration is providing national leadership in showcasing America's waiting children and the need for stable, permanent, nurturing families.
- ▶ Under the Clinton Administration, the Children's Bureau is developing a National Strategic Plan for Adoption with the input from States, national organizations, adoptive parents, foundations and adopted children.

ADOPTION: HELPING CHILDREN AND PARENTS

Promoting adoption is one of the most important things we can do to strengthen American families and give more children what every child in America deserves — loving parents and a healthy home.

--President Clinton

For many children in the United States, adoption is their only opportunity to become part of a permanent and loving family. Adoption assistance programs help thousands of children and parents each year to form new and happy families.

Adoption enriches the lives of adults by enabling them to become parents and share their love with children who desperately need the support that can only be provided by nurturing parents. Because strong, loving families are the cornerstones of stable and caring communities, adoption also strengthens our nation.

Today, there are tens of thousands children in the nation's foster care system who can not return safely to their homes, who need permanent placement in new families and for whom adoption is a goal. Almost one third of these children are legally free and are waiting to be adopted. Almost half of these waiting children had been waiting for more than two years. More than half of waiting children have special medical, developmental, behavioral or psychological needs; they are minority children, older children and/or sibling groups.

President Clinton has taken key steps to encourage and increase adoptions of special needs children and to support the families that choose to open their hearts and their homes to these children. He has championed programs that find and assist adopting families, and is committed to breaking down barriers, including high adoption costs and complex regulations.

Removing Barriers to Adoption

The Administration supports Titles I and II of the Adoption Promotion and Stability Act of 1996. Title I provides an adoption tax credit for families who want to adopt and Title II is consistent with current law, the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1995 (MEPA), and with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act which prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin in all federally funded programs. This policy will alleviate a significant barrier to adoption and allow middle class families, for whom adoption may be prohibitively expensive, to adopt children to love and nurture. It will put parents seeking to build a family through adoption on a more equal footing with other families. In October 1994, President Clinton signed the Multiethnic Placement Act, which helps increase the number of adoptions by prohibiting discrimination based on race or ethnicity, and by increasing recruitment of parents. Forty-seven states and the District of Columbia are now in compliance.



Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20447
Phone: (202) 401-9215 \ May 1996

Increasing Special Needs Adoptions

During this Administration, the number of children with special needs who have been adopted with Federal adoption assistance has increased by over 50 percent.

Improving Court Operations

The Administration is working with state courts in 49 states to improve the timeliness and quality of decision-making that leads to adoption. More timely decisions will ensure children do not languish in foster care and can more quickly be placed in permanent, stable families that can nurture and protect them.

Preserving Critical Supports

The President has also stood firm throughout the budget debate to protect funds for key supports such as Medicaid benefits for special needs adopted children, SSI for children, and adoption assistance -- these services are critical for many adoptive families and children. The President vetoed the Congress's welfare reform legislation because it did not provide enough incentives and support to help parents move from welfare to work and the bill would hurt children. The bill dissolved the guarantee to states for open-ended funding for foster care and adoption assistance which might have been put the most vulnerable children at risk of danger and harm.

Supporting Parents

This Administration has championed the Family and Medical Leave Act, the first bill signed into law by the President, which enables parents to take time off to adopt a child without losing their jobs or health insurance.

Strengthening Families

The Family Preservation and Support Act, passed in 1993, provided almost \$1 billion over five years for the development of community-based preventive and supportive services for families with children. States can use these funds to support and alleviate the crisis in adopting for families.

Increasing Public Awareness

Both President and Mrs. Clinton have made it a priority to increase the public's awareness about the importance and benefits of adoption. Through speeches, radio addresses, public service announcements and special events, the First Family has spoken out about adoption. The First Lady dedicated two of her nationally syndicated columns to adoption and included the importance of adoption in her recently published book.

National Adoption Month

In November 1995, the First Lady held a moving and memorable event at the White House to promote adoption during National Adoption Month. The event featured Dave Thomas of Wendy's, HHS Secretary Donna E. Shalala, adoptive parents, a community organization recruiting adoptive parents and children awaiting adoption. A public service announcement featuring Mrs. Clinton was aired in over 50 major cities across the country.

Focusing on Outcomes and Accountability

The Administration is shifting the Federal government's role from a focus on how well forms are filled out to a focus on how well children are doing. Permanent placement is a critical outcome. States have been given increased flexibility and technical assistance so that they can reform their child welfare systems. We are working with 48 states to automate their child welfare systems and reduce the paperwork burden on caseworkers.

Working Women Count Honor Roll

The Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor enlisted honor roll pledges from corporations and state and local governments to encourage and recruit parents to adopt and make adoption easier for workers and their families.

Expediting Adoptions from Foster Care

The Clinton Administration has provided every state with technical assistance to speed the adoption of children in foster care. This help comes through the National Resource Center on Special Needs Adoption and regional adoption conferences. In April, HHS brought together state foster care and adoption managers and court officials to work in partnership to designing systems that work better for children and families.

Statistics

During 1993 (most current data available,) an estimated 18,000 children who had been in foster care had their adoptions finalized. Another 86,000 children in the foster care system had the goal of adoption, 21,000 of whom were legally free (i.e. parental rights had been terminated.)

In 1996, about 120,000 children are expected to receive adoption assistance which is the federal subsidy to encourage and support the adoption of children with special needs. Eighty percent of children in the foster care system have special needs including physical or mental disabilities, older children and sibling groups.

For more information

To get more information on how to become an adoptive parent, interested persons and the general public can call the National Adoption Center at 1-800-TO-ADOPT.

**Background for
H. R. 3286 "Adoption Promotion and Stability Act of 1996"**

The Act contains two principal substantive provisions relating to nondiscrimination in adoption and foster care placement to further its objective of increasing the number of children who are adopted.

- The Act prevents discrimination in the placement of children on the basis of race, color, or national origin by prohibiting states or public and private foster care and adoption agencies from delaying or denying the placement of any child solely on the basis of race, color or national origin.
- The Act promotes the recruitment of foster and adoptive parents to meet children's needs.

Any violation of the Act's provisions would trigger a process that can result in financial sanctions.

- o The pending legislation (H.R. 3286 "Adoption Promotion and Stability Act of 1996") introduced by Congresswoman Susan Molinari would tighten the anti-discrimination provisions of MEPA, impose financial sanctions to states in non-compliance with the bill's provisions and provide a \$5,000 tax credit to families adopting children.
- o The Clinton administration supports Titles I and II of H.R. 3286. Title I will provide an adoption tax credit and allow middle class families, for whom adoption may be prohibitively expensive, to adopt children to love and nurture. Title II, the interethnic provision, removes barriers to interracial adoption and is consistent with the Administration's policy and longstanding goal to end the historical bias against interracial adoptions. (H.R. 32286 is scheduled for discussion on the House floor on Friday - May 10th)
- o The Clinton administration is very supportive of any and all efforts that encourage adoption and make it easier for states and parents to strengthen families by providing a safe and nurturing home for children. In particular, the administration believes the bill strengthens the anti-discrimination prohibitions.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 6, 1996

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I am writing to express my strong support for The Adoption Promotion and Stability Act of 1996. Today, families seeking to adopt children face significant barriers, including high adoption costs, complex regulations, and outdated assumptions. I am committed to breaking down these barriers and making adoption easier. Promoting adoption is one of the most important things we can do to strengthen American families and give more children what every child in America deserves -- loving parents and a healthy home. This legislation will help children in need of adoptive homes to be united with devoted parents.

My Administration has worked hard to promote adoption in general, and adoption of children with special needs in particular. We championed the Family and Medical Leave Act which enables parents to take time off to adopt a child without losing their jobs or their health insurance. We strongly supported the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act to help increase the number of adoptions by prohibiting discrimination based on race or ethnicity, and we remain committed to enforcing that law vigorously. As part of our 1993 deficit reduction package, I signed into law a provision that requires ERISA plans to provide the same health coverage for adopted children as for biological children of plan participants. We have worked to preserve Federal support for adoption of children with special needs, and increased by 60 percent the number of children with special needs who have been adopted with Federal adoption assistance.

But together we can and must do more. I strongly support the adoption tax credit in this bill. It will alleviate a significant barrier to adoption and allow middle class families, for whom adoption may be prohibitively expensive, to adopt children to love and nurture. It will encourage adoption of children with special needs. It will put parents seeking to build a family through adoption on a more equal footing with other families.

I believe that the bill is consistent with the Administration's policy and my longstanding goal to end the historical bias against interracial adoptions, which too often has meant interminable waits for children to be matched with parents of the same race. The Administration also has some concerns regarding some of the provisions used to offset the cost

The Honorable Newt Gingrich
Page Two

of the bill and would like to work with the Congress on these provisions. In addition, we need to ensure that unnecessary provisions are not included in the legislation.

The Adoption Promotion and Stability Act is an important first step toward meeting the challenge of removing barriers to adoption. I look forward to working with you so that the dreams of the waiting children in this country to have permanent homes and loving families can become a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tim Clinton" with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

The Honorable Newt Gingrich
Speaker of the
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

MULTIETHNIC PLACEMENT ACT

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

Since the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) was enacted in October 1994, the Department of Health and Human Services has taken aggressive actions to ensure that states comply with the Act's prohibition against delaying or denying the adoption of children on the basis of race, color or national origin.

- ▶ **HHS quickly sent information to the states about the new law, issued guidance to the states to ensure full and prompt compliance, and reviewed state laws, regulations and published policies on adoption and foster care.**
- ▶ **Twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia were notified that their statutes, regulations or policies were not in compliance with the new law. Many of these states were operating under preferences for race-based placements, while others were allowing delays for purposes of making same-race placements -- impermissible policies which imposed barriers to the timely adoption of waiting children.**
- ▶ **HHS required states to take immediate action to comply with the letter and spirit of MEPA and provided training, technical assistance and extensive materials to assist state efforts.**

Numerous states changed statutes, regulations and policies to eliminate the impermissible use of race, color or national origin in foster care and adoption placements. By January of 1996, 47 states and the District of Columbia were in compliance with HHS' strict enforcement of MEPA.

- ▶ **For example, New Mexico put new regulations, policies and procedures into effect in October 1995, after HHS identified impermissible procedures establishing same race/ethnicity placement and time periods to search for same race/ethnicity foster care and adoption placements.**
- ▶ **Two of the remaining four states (KY and MN) are expected to make the changes required to ensure compliance with MEPA's prohibitions by July 1996. Because of its bi-annual legislative calendar, the remaining state (AR) is expected to be in full compliance by April 1997.**
- ▶ **HHS is also working closely with states to comply with MEPA's additional requirement that states provide for the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who are capable of meeting the needs of children with various cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds.**

The aggressive implementation of MEPA is one of many steps HHS has taken to promote the adoption of children, especially children with special needs.

5/7/96

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
TALKING POINTS FOR MOTHER'S DAY ADOPTION EVENT
THE ROOSEVELT ROOM
MAY 10, 1996**

- Welcome to the White House. I'm so glad you could join me today in honor of Mother's Day to talk about the joys and challenges of adoption.
- Mother's Day is a wonderful time to remember that each of you have given the most important gift an adult can give to a child -- loving parents and a healthy, stable home. And I know they have given you all of the rewards and richness that come with raising children.
- Often when we think of adoption, we have a picture in our mind of infants being welcomed into a family. But adoption today involves children and teenagers of all ages, backgrounds and circumstances. Adoption has provided a new beginning for school-aged children, for adolescents, for children with physical and emotional disabilities, for children of different races and cultures, and for brothers and sisters who want to stay together. As I look around the room, I see families that represent the range of adoptive experiences. You are living proof that adoption can be successful and emotionally rewarding. We need more of you.
- Far too many children are waiting for permanent homes. Almost half of these children have been waiting more than two years. More than half have special medical, developmental, behavioral or psychological needs. They are minority children, older children and siblings.
- In November, we celebrated National Adoption Month at the White House by highlighting the waiting children and the importance finding them permanent homes through adoption. These children deserve what your children have. That's why the President and I are committed to encouraging and easing the adoption process.
- The Administration has worked hard to promote adoption, especially for children with special needs. We championed the Family and Medical Leave Act -- which enables parents to take time off to adopt a child without losing their jobs or their health insurance. We launched a public education campaign about adoption. We strongly supported and remain committed to enforcing vigorously the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act to end discrimination based on race or ethnicity in adoptions. We have increased by 60 percent the number of children with special needs who have been adopted with Federal adoption assistance. We have voiced our strong support for a bill in Congress right now that would give a tax credit to families wanting to adopt. And we have created an honor roll of private companies who have pledged to make adoption easier for workers and their families by paying adoption benefits, offering leave time after adoption, or other programs.

- But we need to do more. We should redouble our efforts. We should make it possible for thousands and thousands more children to be adopted by Mother's Day next year. Because there is no more important task than trying to do everything in our power to ensure that every child has a family.
- [OPEN DISCUSSION.]

###

A Good Mother's Day Gift: Pass the Adoption Bill

Howard Metzenbaum did something this week that should qualify for "Ripley's Believe It Or Not." The former liberal Democratic senator endorsed a Republican measure to overturn a bill that he pushed through two years ago and that even bears his name.

Specifically, Sen. Metzenbaum embraced legislation that would prohibit racial discrimination in adoption. This is an issue Howard Metzenbaum cares about so deeply that he has taken on both the Na-

Politics & People

By Albert R. Hunt



tional Association of Black Social Workers and the Clinton administration's Health and Human Services bureaucrats. He feels his bill has been undercut, so he's supporting House Republican efforts to achieve the same goal.

This is part of a broader pro-adoption bill that the Republicans are bringing to the floor next week, not coincidentally only a few days before Mother's Day. The legislation is laudable and Democrats and the Clinton administration should join Sen. Metzenbaum and get behind it.

Adoption isn't a panacea for abortion or child abuse or foster care. But a more aggressive pro-adoption policy, involving both the public and private sectors, would help. (The youngest of our three children is a seven-year-old—as of yesterday—adopted daughter from Korea, so absolutely nothing in this column is dispassionate.) The House bill, led by House Rules Committee Chairman Gerald Solomon (an adoptee), Rep. Susan Molinari and Rep. Clay Shaw, proposes a \$5,000 tax credit to help defray adoption expenses. Adoption can be prohibitively expensive; the National Council of Adoption figures the average cost of a do-

mestic adoption is \$20,000.

This has made it impossible for many middle class parents to adopt. Under the House bill, tax write-offs would be available for incomes up to \$115,000; in addition there would be an income tax exclusion for employer-provided adoption benefits. This provision is relatively cheap, costing the federal treasury less than \$2 billion over seven years, and has only one flaw: It isn't refundable. That's a retreat from the Republicans' Contract With America. Refundability ought to be restored to facilitate adoption for some lower-middle income families.

The most emotional provision concerns transracial adoption. This would prohibit states or anyone receiving federal assistance from discriminating against prospective parents because of race. If everything else is equal, preference may be given on the basis of race, but adoption agencies would not be allowed to delay the placement of a child for reasons of "racial matching."

The need here is clear. Of the almost half-million kids in foster care, about one-third are African-American and, on average, they wait for adoption more than twice as long. A University of California at Berkeley study found that 42% of African-American children wait more than four years to be adopted but only 17% of white children wait that long.

This is a conscious policy of many black social workers, who have assailed interracial adoption as "racial and cultural genocide." Sen. Metzenbaum, with the support of President Clinton, moved to change this in the last Congress. But despite denials by the Department of Health and Human Services, he says that agency "pulled the rug out from under my bill."

The politics of adoption unfortunately get twisted. Too many liberals, in particular, have a blind spot. One reason is abortion. Some pro-choice advocates mistakenly see adoption advocacy as undercut-

ting them. "This is an issue that should unite both sides of the abortion debate," correctly argues Rep. Molinari, who is pro-choice. In his 1992 acceptance speech at the Democratic Convention, Bill Clinton promised to make abortion "safe, legal and rare." One small way to make it rarer is to facilitate adoption.

A more fundamental problem may be an ideological attachment to the landmark

Children in Jeopardy

	CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE	CHILDREN ADOPTED FROM FOSTER CARE	CHILD ABUSE FATALITIES
1985	276,000	16,000	810
1993	445,000	18,000	1,166

Sources: Administration for Children and Families (HHS); American Public Welfare Assoc. and the Nat'l Committee to Prevent Child Abuse

1980 Child Welfare Adoption and Assistance Act. This mandates states to make "reasonable efforts" to keep or reunite children with their biological parents under the laudable notion that intact families are better for children.

Unfortunately this well-intended effort may be harming more children than it's helping. Compared to the mid-1980s there are many more children today in foster care, and a much smaller percentage of them are adopted, while reported child abuse is soaring. The files are full of recidivist child abusers, yet as Michael Wald, a law professor and former top HHS official notes, all the research "indicates low levels of success in rehabilitating parents who seriously abuse very young children."

The horror stories are omnipresent. Tuesday's New York Times, for instance, had a front page piece on recriminations following the death of six-year-old Elisa Izquierdo, whose badly beaten body was discovered last November; her mother is charged with the death. Next to that ac-

count is a story about two little children testifying how their mother and father brutalized and killed their four-year-old sister—including beatings, tying her to chairs and burning her with cigarettes and hair curlers.

Eight years ago we had to hospitalize our oldest child. For four days his roommate was a 14-month-old boy who was tossed into a scalding hot tub by his mother's boyfriend because he was crying. The mother, apparently on drugs, visited the little guy only once. Yet in a few days he was slated to go back to that home.

This law needs to be changed. The emphasis on "preserving family" outrages Carol Statuto Bevan, a child welfare and adoption expert: "This risks the safety and welfare of too many children." Instead, she says, the focus should be "on preserving the child's welfare." Such a child-centered approach raises tough issues, especially how to take kids away from abusive parents and make them eligible for adoption. But it needs to be done.

These are issues that President Clinton cares about, and he's actually considering backing the current legislation. And the skepticism that more than a few in the adoption community express about Hillary Clinton is misplaced; in her speeches, her newspaper columns and her recent book she is a strong adoption advocate.

But the Clintons need to be more visible in marshaling support for more public resources (tax breaks and subsidies), reforming the legal system (changing the child welfare and family preservation standards and expediting adoption procedures), improving the private sector (pressure for more expansive employer adoption benefits) and increasing public awareness. It may be impossible in an election year, but here's a terrific idea: Bill Bennett, the conservative Mr. Virtues, and Mrs. Clinton team up to lead a nationwide campaign for adoption.

The Wrong Way to Encourage Adoption

By David S. Liederman

President Clinton is supporting the House Republicans' plan to give a \$5,000 tax credit to many families that adopt a child. In flush times, such a middle-class subsidy might make sense. But today the Government would do much better to

David S. Liederman is executive director of the Child Welfare League of America, an association of public and private groups that place children in foster care and with adoptive families.

use tax dollars to help families that adopt children who are otherwise unlikely to find a permanent home.

Few healthy infants of any race "languish" in foster care. Most are adopted straight from the hospital. So few healthy American infants are available that prospective adoptive parents frequently go abroad to find a child. With infertility on the rise, we don't need tax incentives to encourage people to adopt healthy infants.

But there are 21,000 children with special needs waiting to be adopted, and about 65,000 more are in the care of welfare agencies and awaiting legal clearance to be made available. Most have been placed in foster care because of parental neglect and abuse. Many have serious emotional

A tax credit won't help children who are hard to place.

and physical disabilities. Some have been exposed to drugs or infected with H.I.V. by their mothers. Most are of school age, and many are part of sibling groups that must be adopted together.

Fortunately there are people who want to adopt many of these children — usually the foster parents, nurses and special education teachers who

have fallen in love with the children they have been caring for.

But such children, especially those with physical disabilities, are often very expensive to raise. The small state and Federal adoption subsidies do little to offset the costs.

In Ohio, for example, the typical family that adopts a child with special needs has an annual income of less than \$40,000, has several children in the household, and the mother works at least part time. The average monthly adoption subsidy for such families in Ohio is only \$250.

The Government should use the \$1.7 billion that the tax-credit plan would cost over the next seven years to help families that adopt children with special needs. This would mean increasing their monthly adoption subsidies, guaranteeing health coverage for as

long as the child needs it and broadening services like day care and transportation.

The Government could spend a lot more money on these children, and it would still be cheaper than keeping them in foster care. In 1993, the average monthly subsidy for a child in foster care was \$468, while the average adoption assistance payment nationwide was only \$292.

The Government should also encourage adoption of children with special needs by running public-service announcements, counselling good foster parents and helping churches and other community groups find suitable families among their members.

A simple tax credit has the advantage of being easily understood by voters. Unfortunately, the problems that children and adoptive families confront are complex. Congress and President Clinton deserve praise for their attempt to help adoptive families. Now they should direct Federal aid to the children who need it most. □

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Adoption Bill Facing Battle Over Measure On Indians

By ERIC SCHMITT

WASHINGTON, May 7 — When the House this week considers a major adoption bill that President Clinton supports, lawmakers will also consider a very emotional question: Who decides if someone is an American Indian?

The answer carries sweeping consequences not only for the nearly two million Indians nationwide, but also for thousands of non-Indian couples whose ability to adopt Indian children is limited.

At issue is the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act, which says tribal courts, not state ones, have jurisdiction over cases involving the custody of Indian children. The law gives priority to placing Indian children with Indian families whenever possible.

Critics say the tribal courts are interfering in the adoption of children and cite several cases where tribes are trying to reclaim Indian children, sometimes years after adoption.

The adoption bill before the House will exempt custody proceedings from tribal court jurisdiction if they involve children whose parents do not maintain "significant social, cultural or political affiliation with the tribe." The bill does not define what that means.

"The law's original intent was to protect Indian children and culture," said Representative Deborah Pryce, the Ohio Republican who has sponsored the measure, "but over the last 20 years it's been misapplied."

Indian leaders argue that the measure will create a giant loophole that will undermine tribal sovereignty and let state courts, which may have little understanding of Indian culture, decide who is affiliated with a tribe.

"This would be devastating to Indian tribes," said Terry Cross, executive director of the National Indian Child Welfare Association, a tribal welfare group in Portland, Ore.

Conservative groups like the Christian Coalition and the Heritage Foundation, as well as the National Council for Adoption, have lined up behind Ms. Pryce's measure.

President Clinton has endorsed the adoption bill's other provisions, including a tax credit for most adoptive families, but the White House has voiced concern that Ms. Pryce's measure could violate tribes' self-governance.

Moreover, many Republicans are angry that Ms. Pryce and the House leadership inserted the measure into the adoption bill without first holding hearings. Representative Don Young, the Alaska Republican who heads the House Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over Indian affairs, said he would offer an amendment to kill the provision.

The Indian child welfare law was passed after hundreds of Indian children were removed from their homes by social agencies and put up for adoption in the 1960's and 1970's, often without their parents' con-

It was a horrible, shameful practice, what happened then, Ms. Pryce said.

But Ms. Pryce's support for the law soured after she became involved in an adoption case involving two constituents. The adoptive parents, Jim and Colette Rosta of Columbus, Ohio, are fighting for custody of 3-year-old twin girls, Bridget and Lucy, who are three-fourths and Pomo Indian.

The Rostas adopted the girls from an unmarried couple in Southern California who gave up the twins at birth. Six months after the adoption, the girls' paternal grandfather, with the Pomo tribe's support, said she wanted the children. The Rostas learned belatedly that the girls' father, to spend final placement, had not disclosed his Indian background as the law requires.

In January a California appellate court reversed a lower-court order that the Rostas return the girls. The tribe has appealed to the California Supreme Court, which is to decide by the end of the month whether it will bear the case.

Indian leaders acknowledge that the law has flaws, but they insist that unfortunate cases like the Rostas' are an exception that can be avoided by punishing lawyers and other people who violate the statute.

No agency has kept track of the number of Indian children put up for adoption since the bill became law in 1978, but Mr. Cross estimated that of "thousands" of adoptions, about 40 had been contested. Ms. Pryce said the number of "horror stories" was much higher and often involved cases of children having only minute traces of Indian ancestry.

Each of the nation's 564 Indian tribes sets its own standards on membership and when a person can be enrolled, a prerogative that Indians hold dear.

Henry M. Cagoy, chairman of the Lummi nation, a 6,000-member tribe in Washington State, said, "Congresswoman Pryce is listening to a small minority of voices who want to adopt Indian children without consideration of our heritage, traditions and extended families."

Clinton Backs Tax Credit For Adoption

GOP Bill Is Endorsed; Interracial Placements Could Be Expedited

By Barbara Vobejda
Washington Post Staff Writer



In a letter he will send to House Republican leaders today, President Clinton will endorse Republican legislation that would allow most adoptive families to claim a \$5,000 tax credit and penalize states whose adoption agencies delay placement of a child to find a family of the same race, White House sources said yesterday.

The president will embrace provisions that have traditionally been in the Republican domain. The adoption tax credit was part of the House GOP's "Contract With America," and Republicans have been most vocal in opposing racial matching in adoption placements.

"Promoting adoption is one of the most important things we can do to strengthen American families and give more children what every child in America deserves—loving parents and a healthy home," the president says in his letter, a copy of which was obtained by The Washington Post.

It will be the second time in three days that the president has gotten involved in measures affecting families, a topic likely to play a major role in this year's presidential election. And both times, the president staked out positions likely to alienate some liberals.

On Saturday, he announced he would require states to end welfare payments to teenage parents who refuse to stay in school or to live with a parent or guardian.

In endorsing the adoption bill, Clinton said he "strongly supported" the tax credit—which would be \$5,000 for families earning up to \$75,000 a year. The size of the credit would gradually decline for families earning between \$75,000 and \$115,000; families earning more than \$115,000 would not be eligible for a credit.

Also, he goes further than he has in the past to interject himself directly into the emotional and divisive issue of interracial adoption.

The bill, slated to go to the House floor this week, would prohibit states or adoption agencies from discriminating on the basis of race

See ADOPT, A8, Col. 1

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against families who want to adopt. Agencies could consider race in placing a child if there are two or more qualified families, but may not delay placement while waiting for a parent of the same race.

That language, Clinton says in his letter, is consistent with "my longstanding goal to end the historical bias against interracial adoptions, which too often has meant interminable waits for children to be matched with parents of the same race."

Republicans said they welcome the endorsement, but pointed out that the president had vetoed a welfare bill last year that contained similar language on interracial adoptions.

"We're happy to have it," Rep. Susan Molinari (R-N.Y.) said of the endorsement. "I know he had tentative problems with trans-racial adoptions in the past. . . . I hope this signals to Democrats to join with us."

More than 400,000 children are in the foster care system, about half of whom are minorities. Minority children wait longer to be adopted than do white children, according to studies.

Among children in foster care, only about 21,000 are legally available for adoption, according to the Department of Health and Human Services. And of those, two out of three have "special needs," including emotional or physical disabilities or the need to be placed as part of a sibling group.

Many Republicans and some Democrats, including former senator Howard M. Metzenbaum (D-Ohio), have contended that the policy of race matching has kept thousands of African American children languishing in foster care for years. But social workers say that the high number in foster care stems from the difficulty in placing children with special needs.

Legislation was adopted in 1994

with the intention of banning race matching, but Metzenbaum and others were dissatisfied with Clinton administration regulations interpreting the law because they allowed agencies to consider race. Administration

*"The only reason
the president's
doing all of this is
... because he wants
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not opposed to
interracial
adoption."*

— Rep. Charles B. Rangel (D-N.Y.)

of say the law aggressively enforced, reducing the number of states that give an automatic preference to black families in the adoption of black children.

Still, Republicans have pushed for a new law that would ban racial placement outright, essentially establishing a colorblind system that would match children and families without regard to race.

While that was the original language in the bill when it went before

the Ways and Means Committee, it was amended to allow race to be considered when there is more than one qualified family seeking to adopt a child. The bill, which was approved by the committee on a voice vote, would also go further than current law to penalize states that do not comply.

Rep. Charles B. Rangel (D-N.Y.), who has argued vociferously against a "first-come, first-served" approach, said the new language does not change the current law. "The only reason the president's doing all of this is . . . because he wants to make it clear he's not opposed to interracial adoption. . . . But if he feels good saying it, okay."

David Linderman, executive director of the Child Welfare League of America, called the tax credit a "misdirection" of resources in a tight fiscal climate, essentially helping middle-class families while other proposals would cut funding for programs meant to help those willing to adopt special-needs children.

"I would have hoped the president would have spoken to that," Linderman said.

It is estimated the credit would cost the government \$1.7 billion over seven years, and the GOP bill would offset the revenue loss with income gained in enforcing new anti-fraud provisions on foreign trusts and from repeal of a tax exclusion for businesses purchasing energy conservation measures.

THE WASHINGTON POST
MONDAY, MAY 6, 1996

TO: THE FIRST LADY
FROM: NEEL LATTIMORE
RE: INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA HARRISON
DATE: MAY 9, 1996

You are scheduled to do a fifteen minute interview with WRC-TV's Barbara Harrison following the mother's day adoption event tomorrow morning. Barbara Harrison will attend the event. The interview will focus on the work you have been involved in regarding adoption. As you may be aware WRC-TV produces a segment called "Wednesday's Child" which is designed to identify adoptive families for special needs children who are in foster care. Children are featured during the broadcasts and viewers are provided with resources to call for more information regarding adoption. (See attached materials.)

I believe that Ms. Harrison will also ask you a mother's day related question. She has been interviewing prominent Washingtonians asking them about their most fond memory of their mother.

What is Wednesday's Child?

The Wednesday's Child program is a public-private partnership between WRC-TV News 4, the Freddie Mac Foundation and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG). COG is a voluntary regional coalition of local governments in the Washington metropolitan region. The goal of the Wednesday's Child program is to identify adoptive families for special needs children who are in foster care. Children are featured during the local news broadcasts and viewers are provided with resources to call for more information regarding adoption.

The segments featuring children are broadcast on WRC-TV during the 5:00 p.m. news on Wednesdays and are repeated during the 9:00 a.m. news on Saturday mornings. The segments are approximately two to three minutes long. General information about the child(ren) is given during the Wednesday's Child segment. In addition, a local number to call to receive details about the adoption process and additional information about the children is provided.

Children featured on "Wednesday's Child" have special medical, physical or emotional needs which require services such as physical therapy and counseling. Many of the children are over age two or members of a sibling group. All of these characteristics make it difficult to locate families willing to adopt these children.

With the help of the "Wednesday's Child" program, local Departments of Social Services are able to reach out to the community and identify families who are interested in adopting a child.



Freddie Mac Foundation
Helping to brighten our children's future



Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Introduction to Adoption Process

Each week on Wednesday's Child we introduce you to a child who is waiting to be adopted. We would like to show you little bit about the adoption process and explain what is required of families and individuals to adopt children. Just last year alone, more than 400 of our viewers called to inquire about adopting children who had been featured on the program.

What happens after you make that call? You may have many questions when you see a child who is waiting to be adopted. What will it be like once a child is placed in my home? What about the child's biological parents? How long will it take to adopt a child? We hope to answer some of those questions for you.

Who can adopt?

To begin, there are lots of different types of families. In most locations, you may be married or single, own your own home or rent an apartment and you may or may not already have children. What the adoption process does is lead a person or family through a series of steps that help a family to decide if the decision to adopt a child is the right decision for them and their family.

Who are the children?

The children are from all across the Washington metropolitan region. They may be very young, like Ty who was four when he was first featured on Wednesday's Child, or they may be teenagers, like Nicole who was 13 when she was introduced on Wednesday's Child. Most children who are waiting are school-age.

The children on Wednesday's Child are often the most difficult for social service agencies to place with adoptive families. This may be because the child has many special needs, like Clarence who is physically handicapped. Some children have learning disabilities or have experienced such abuse and neglect, that they have emotional problems that require special time and attention. Many children are part of sibling groups. We have even featured families of three children all brothers and sisters hoping to be placed together with an adoptive family. Support is available to help families and children deal with difficult behaviors and issues.

Closing

Although the policies and laws to adopt children vary from state to state, there are many common similarities. We encourage any one who would like to learn more about adoption to call their local department of social services. You may have already done that and are attending a class right now. Orientation sessions are held frequently, in some jurisdictions once per month, and they are open to the public.

We hope this information will be helpful to you as you begin to explore adopting a child and giving the gift of hope and love and family and a secure future to a child.

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
002. letter	Roshann Parris to FLOTUS (partial) (1 page)	05/13/1996	P6/b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
First Lady's Office
Domestic Policy Council (Nicole Rabner)
OA/Box Number: 15409

FOLDER TITLE:

Mothers' Day Discussion with Adoptive Mothers and Children, 05/09/96

2012-1035-S
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RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

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RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

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b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
b(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
b(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
b(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

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May 13, 1996

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mrs. Clinton:

I had to miss the last 15 minutes of your adoption event on Friday to catch a plane in time to intercept the kids at the end of the school day. I had barely walked back in the door of my office in Kansas City when my pager went off. It was Neel.

"Did you hear what she did?" I've been on a plane, came the response. He proceeded to tell me that you had closed the program by reading the poem Tom and I had used at baby naming ceremonies for both of our adopted children, Justin and Tessa.

Early that morning, Nicole and I had a very casual exchange about the poem; it lasted maybe 20 seconds and took place in between phone calls and the usual distractions. To say I was surprised and moved that you chose to later use it is a vast understatement. I hung up the phone with Neel and surprised both myself and my staff with eyes that welled up with tears and deep emotion.

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As I stood in the Roosevelt Room listening to the extraordinary stories of those extraordinary adoptive mothers, much of my own experience bubbled up. By sharing that poem, you also graciously allowed me share a piece of my own adoption experience in the room that day -- an experience that brought unimagined hope and joy where both had eluded us.

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Now, thanks to you, he and his sister will have a remarkable videotaped chronicle of just how deeply their adoption touched our lives. There are no words to express how much that will someday mean to them -- or how much it meant to me on Friday.

With heartfelt thanks,

Roshann Parris