

Notes on Gaucher: idea of small actions built large ideas, movements; etc;

open with salute to Gaucher, for tackling what everyone, certainly the president, believes to be one of the greatest barriers to progress in this nation: the issue of race. He's committed to this for many reasons..... And there's no lack of evidence: the latest report on hate crimes: ... for religion... for: overwhelmingly, hate crimes are race driven; but it's much more than that

A few days ago, we celebrated the birthday of MLK: it's always a time to look back at that time; remember the extraordinary acts of courage and determination -- against what seemed unmovable odds; enormous tension in those times; a new image of America: that we acknowledge and celebrate our diversity -- and that it's our responsibility to

To me, one of the most extraordinary tests of courage during that time was not only the facing down of police dogs and fire hoses; the abuse; the spitting; it was the determination, by civil rights workers to face into the eyes of their adversaries: engagement with the other was that was at the heart of what civil rights movement was all about: and in that effort, to look into people's eyes, to face them, to engage them, they were expressing an abiding sense of hope in the future; that equality, and reconciliation, and peace was possible.

When I went with the President down to Central High this past year. It was a great moment, when he stood in the door that had tried to bar them so many years ago, to welcome them. There was a woman there who had spat At this year's commemoration, this same woman sought out Elizabeth; apologized; they reconciled; it's a great story;

Yes, that was an historic time; and we will draw on it, as individuals, and as a nation, as both a time of commitment to our highest ideals -- and a time of raw exposure, when all of us, and the world, were shown the fruits of hatred, and racism, and inequality.

Today, we face a much different world: so much progress, in terms of ... and ;; the legal barriers are torn down; and much of obvious ... is gone. But as you here at Goucher know, there is so much work ahead of us.

There's a lot of talk these days about how -- even when our economy is booming; there are more jobs than ever before; etc. -- that people still feel unsteady, and precarious. That can be explained in many ways -- the market dips, the globalization of ... technology that seems to distance us from each other; the growing disparity between rich and poor; crime, etc. even El Niño seems to be blamed for everything from ... but I believe that this sense of anxiety comes from another source as well: a concern over our personal lives, own dreams, our sense of being overwhelmed by the extraordinary changes around us. People feel good about the economy, but not about their lives.

And I'm sure that is true for the students here today. There's a huge push to work hard; to get good grades; to get into the best graduate school, or land a plum job. It's all a big race. It's all too much. Believe me, I sometimes feel that way myself.

Today, I'd like to talk to you about some of the ways this Administration is dealing with the huge issues facing this country today -- but more importantly, what I believe all of you can contribute to this broader mission of

As many of you know, we started out big. Our first major initiative during the first term was health care. We wanted every American to be guaranteed health coverage; And we worked very hard to make historic changes so that every American would be covered in the way people are cared for, and ... Well, guess what. Congress wasn't ready for such sweeping changes. Nor were many American Citizens. We had to go back to the drawing boards.

So over the past few years, we've been working on smaller, but no less significant initiatives to improve the quality of life for Americans and families. Step by step, we're moving forward -- and changing people's lives in real ways.

Just a few examples of these small things that have made such a big difference:

- school uniforms;
- allowing women to stay 48 hours in the hospital;
- cellular phones for citizens patrol;
- encouraging students teach 3rd graders to read;
- expanding medical leave so people can visit their aged or sick parents/grandparents;
- lock on hand guns;
- keeping liquor advertising off the airwaves;
- suspending drivers license for deadbeat dads;

someone said: why is the president and the first lady so concerned with kitchen table, household issues? My response is: those are the issues that count; that affect us all; that help us do our jobs, as students, as parents, as citizens. These issues loom large in dinner tables, in classrooms; in hospitals;

.... Just this past week, we announced an initiative to make child care more available, safer, and more ... for our children. Some people say, this is piecemeal. But to me, these are the issues that directly affect people's lives; they add up to They may be small; they ..but slowly, we believe we're earning back the trust of the American people that government -- as big as it is -- can positively touch our lives, and empower our families. And when I or the president go around the country -- we get the same response. Thank you for ... we've really appreciated expansion of medical leave act...

These efforts truly touch people's lives in real ways.

And today, I want to urge you -- in this time of extraordinary change and transition in this nation, and in your own lives, to not mistake small steps for insignificant steps. They will add up to a march for

We live in leading democracy in the world -- and while it's been a struggle, and we have often

not lived up to our highest ideals, we continue to lead the world in our efforts to meet that challenge. To work, Democracy demands a free and open market; and it demands the institution that protect us from ... But there is a third, and essential part of that concept: the civil society. It's what holds us together, it's the glue of democracy: communities, families; clubs; etc; it's how we translate those ideas to our children; it's how we transform our own lives for the better; it's our interconnectedness. It's our interdependence.

To work, we need all three legs of this stool to be vibrant. And today, perhaps even more than ten or twenty or thirty years ago, we need people to be engaged in that civil society.

I spoke earlier about how the civil rights crusaders would look into the eyes of their oppressors; and attempt to engage them in a dialogue -- or at least a recognition of mutual humanity and value. And that is what many of you here at Goucher are in the process of doing.

There's no question it takes an effort --

to walk into the cafeteria and instead of staying with your roommate or someone you know, to go over to someone who isn't like you --

to sit down with them for a meal. It takes an effort to go up to someone in the hall -- It takes an effort to

But those seemingly small measures -- crossing the boundaries of what is safe and easy, and reaching out to others in a spirit of -- is really what it takes to begin making headway on this extraordinary challenge of our time.

I've participated in some of these discussions myself, and I know they're not easy. A few weeks ago, I was up in Boston, and spoke with a lot of kids who were part of Teen Challenge. We talked about ... and ... And I believe they were able to be open and honest on a more public stage because they had -- through this program -- done so in a safe place, at their homes or schools.

Let's face it. We all want to feel safe. But at a certain stage, our efforts to insulate ourselves from others just doesn't work. Too often, people are joining clubs where people look the same; listen to TV and radio of people who talk the same and espouse the same ideas; but that is not what this nation is about. We fought for freedoms, like freedom of assembly; but what good does it do if we don't once in a while assemble together? We fought for freedoms like freedom of speech, but what does that do if we're all staying with those who talk like us? Let's use these freedoms; let's welcome them; use it or lose it.

We've just beginning to elevate to a public discourse what has been talked about, or mumbled about, for decades. And I applaud your efforts to begin what's always going to be a tough conversation.

But until we begin ..

Until we begin ...

Until we begin

We won't be able to overcome ...

We live in a time of great prosperity and peace. But it's also a time of great transformation and change. To strengthen ourselves, we must strengthen the ties that bind us together. That means ties among schools, communities; ties among families; and recognize our interdependence. We have the opportunities: let's use them.

Today, we are about to step off into a new millennium. But the only image of that future world seems to engender fear; star wars; alienation; odd shaped heads; mass destruction; evil automotons who can peel their bodies off the road and keep coming after you. we need all of you to change that image of the story of our future; it's not yet written; you can make it story of hope; of reconciliation; of strong families; of open, civil society; ties; of a sense of an ever widening circle of opportunity that doesn't let any one fall behind, or get lost, or get hurt.... Let's start writing that story today. You are new authors of that story. Let's start writing it.

Thank you.

King spoke about meeting physical force with soul force.

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HEADLINE: How a Presidency Was Defined By the Thousand Parts of Its Sum

SERIES: ON THE RECORD -- Second of two articles.

BYLINE: By JAMES BENNET and ROBERT PEAR

DATELINE: WASHINGTON, Dec. 7

BODY:

By legislation, regulation and exhortation, President Clinton has generated a remarkable number of seemingly modest initiatives.

Though often derided as political gestures, some of the little ideas, from advocating school uniforms to insuring overnight hospital stays for new mothers, have had significant influence around the country. Taken together, Mr. Clinton's initiatives have produced coherent and substantial changes in health care, and to a lesser extent in education and social services.

His ideas are screened by pollsters and picked in part to enhance his popularity. But brick by brick, Bill Clinton is proving himself to be the incremental President, accomplishing piecemeal some of what he cannot do all at once.

Having defeated him in some head-on fights, the President's political opponents now worry that he is achieving his goals by other means.

"President Clinton is still trying to get his health care plan into law, piece by piece," said Representative Dick Armey, the Texas Republican who is House majority leader. "President Clinton would like nothing more than a triumph of incrementalism whereby he enacts his entire Health Security Act before he leaves office."

In an interview last Thursday, the President became most animated when it was suggested that many of his policy initiatives seemed small-bore. Leaning forward in his yellow armchair, he began scooping the air with his hands as he repeatedly stretched out the word "bi-i-ig" to describe his supposedly little notions.

"A lot of these so-called small ideas make a big difference," Mr. Clinton said. He and his aides maintain that, while many of their initiatives are ridiculed as piddling by politicians in Washington, they loom large in classrooms and at dinner tables everywhere else.

Dealt a series of legislative defeats at the end of Congress's last session, belittled as a lame duck and beset by allegations of campaign finance abuses, Bill Clinton is trying to retain the political initiative in Washington and

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his grip on the public's attention. To do so, he is relying on an approach he developed from hard experience in his first term.

In September 1993, President Clinton brandished a red, white and blue "health security card" before Congress and proposed to reshape one-seventh of the nation's economy. But after the crushing defeat of his health care proposal, Mr. Clinton found himself the first Democratic President since Harry S. Truman facing Republican majorities in both houses of Congress. His commitment to reducing the Federal budget deficit -- which his aides are coming to view as one of his foremost accomplishments -- further restricted his freedom to propose costly programs.

But Mr. Clinton remained absorbed by domestic policy and eager to prove his political relevance by making it, his associates say. As a result, since 1995 the President has continuously experimented with the powers of his office to generate initiatives, relying more on executive orders and the bully pulpit.

"We developed a process by necessity in the wake of the '94 elections where we had to spend a lot more time focusing on executive action," said Bruce Reed, the director of Mr. Clinton's Domestic Policy Council. "And I think, you know, we have the drill down now."

Many outside the Administration mock the slender ideas, and they have become fat political targets. In a speech last Tuesday, Richard A. Gephardt of Missouri, the House minority leader, who has been positioning himself as a Democratic alternative to Vice President Al Gore in the next Presidential race, declared, "Too often, our leaders seem enamored with small ideas that nibble around the edges of big problems."

Prof. Charles O. Jones, a political scientist at the University of Wisconsin, offered a more nuanced view. He said that the "trivialization of Presidential power" under Mr. Clinton had enabled the President to define a role for himself when, by his own admission, the era of big government is over.

"Here is a guy on a lifetime search for issues, a policy-ambitious President who would like to see himself in the tradition of great Democratic Presidents," said Mr. Jones, a former president of the American Political Science Association. "But he is hemmed in politically. Clinton has found a way to be an activist President in political conditions that would suggest inactivity by the Government."

"Why should the President be interested in these common, ordinary household issues?" Mr. Jones asked. "They show his empathetic quality, his understanding of the little problems that people truly face. And they show there is still a critical role for national political leaders to play when we don't have great big thundering economic or international crises."

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Mr. Clinton's approach to policymaking is proudly derivative. He and his aides say that almost every idea they propose has been developed and tested elsewhere, usually at the state and local level. The ideas are culled from newspapers, television, letters from the President's high school classmates, bills pending in Congress and memorandums submitted weekly to Mr. Clinton by Cabinet secretaries and White House officials.

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His final campaign is behind them, but the President's aides still seize ideas for political purposes, to advance his chosen themes: community, opportunity and responsibility. They still commission polls to test the popularity of new ideas. But the aides argue that the ideas also make good policy, furthering his efforts to improve education and training, cut crime and protect children.

Consider a sample of the initiatives Mr. Clinton has generated: providing cellular telephones to citizen patrols, keeping liquor advertising off the airwaves, establishing a television rating system, restricting tobacco sales, blocking importation of modified automatic weapons, suspending the driver's licenses of deadbeat dads, encouraging college students to tutor third graders, creating a national registry for sex offenders, holding a White House conference on the brain development of babies, holding another one on child care, subsidizing tuition for people who agree to teach in poor communities, putting safety locks on guns, fighting truancy. And so on. A A

After Mr. Clinton, in his 1996 State of the Union Message, endorsed school uniforms as a way to promote discipline, cartoonists nationwide mocked the idea as insubstantial. But since then, prodded by the Department of Education, hundreds of schools in big cities and small towns have adopted uniforms and praised them for encouraging school unity and civility. A

Mr. Clinton returned to a related theme in his radio address on Saturday. In response to the fatal shootings of three teen-age girls at a Kentucky school, he ordered his Attorney General and Education Secretary to produce "an annual report card on school violence."

Mr. Clinton argues that the little things mean a lot. "For all those kids that aren't going to jail, and for all those people that are safer now, the expansion of curfews or the expansion of school uniforms is not a small thing," he said in the interview. "It is a big thing."

Birth of a Tactic

Health Care Tests Policy-by-Increment

No field of domestic policy illustrates President Clinton's revised approach better than health care. Having utterly failed in his efforts to guarantee insurance coverage for all Americans, he has made substantial progress in subsequent efforts to secure coverage step by step, for children and for many adults who switch or lose jobs.

And in the coming year, he appears likely to achieve another goal: Federal regulation of health insurance to protect the rights of patients.

"President Clinton has never changed goals, only strategies," Mr. Arney said.

The stepwise strategy has certain advantages for the President. Mark W. Isakowitz, director of Federal relations at the National Federation of Independent Business, said: "These incremental proposals can fly in under the radar on Capitol Hill. They do not present a big fat target as the Clinton health plan did."

Mr. Clinton showed no desire to return to the health care issue in 1995 and fought Republican proposals to make sweeping changes in Medicare and Medicaid,

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the Federal programs for 70 million people who are elderly or poor, calling them Draconian.

On Dec. 6, 1995, he vetoed the Republicans' bill to balance the Federal budget, citing "extreme cuts" in Medicare and Medicaid as the main reason.

But Mr. Clinton altered the political dynamic when, in his State of the Union Message in January 1996, he endorsed a low-key effort to make health insurance more readily available to millions of people who change or lose their jobs. The proposal, advanced by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, and Nancy Kassebaum Baker, then a Republican Senator from Kansas, had stalled in Congress, although it was extremely modest by comparison to Mr. Clinton's scheme to redesign the entire health care system.

The endorsement illustrates one of Mr. Clinton's favorite tactics. By embracing a bill, even an obscure one, he can raise its visibility and increase its chances of becoming law.

The Kassebaum-Kennedy bill followed a tortuous path through Congress, but ultimately proved irresistible in an election year. The measure, signed in August 1996, set a significant precedent for Federal regulation of health insurance, an industry long regulated by the states.

Congress followed that precedent a few weeks later by passing a bill that requires health plans to cover at least 48 hours of hospital care after a baby is born. Mr. Clinton had used a Saturday radio address in May 1996 to endorse such legislation, condemning what he called "drive-through deliveries."

The bill became law in September 1996, over the objections of insurance companies and employers, who said it would open the door to Federal mandates for coverage of specific services. Mr. Clinton is now pushing a bill to guarantee overnight hospital stays for mastectomy patients.

The Administration's efforts to expand health insurance for children provide an even more revealing example of its incremental strategy. In February, the President offered a grab bag of proposals -- Federal grants to the states and changes in Medicaid -- costing \$5 billion over five years. With encouragement from the White House, Congress transformed that medium-size proposal into a big new health program for children, costing \$24 billion over five years.

As part of the budget agreement, Congress also made vast changes in Medicare, broadening coverage of preventive services and creating a supermarket of insurance options for older Americans. The Medicare changes included many of the Republican proposals from 1995, but Mr. Clinton forced the Republicans to add protections for beneficiaries.

The next step in Mr. Clinton's incremental strategy is a "bill of rights" for health care consumers, guaranteeing access to data on the quality of health plans and the right to appeal a denial of care or reimbursement. "I'm going to fight very hard for it," he said in the interview.

Mr. Clinton used a Presidential commission to forge a consensus. Bypassing Congress, he immediately ordered Federal agencies to comply with the standards, putting pressure on health plans and private employers to do the same.

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The Follow-Through
For Many Initiatives, It's Show, Tell, Do

Mr. Clinton's small initiatives inevitably reach the public through photo opportunities, contributing to a sense that they are strictly for show. Further, Mr. Clinton has sometimes abandoned them. A \$5 billion school repair program, announced with fanfare in the 1996 campaign, vanished during budget negotiations after the election. Mr. Clinton has said he plans to revive it.

But the President's aides have regularly followed through on his small ideas to see that they are put into practice.

For example, in his re-election campaign, Mr. Clinton appeared at a women's crisis center in Sacramento, Calif., to propose that law-enforcement leaders and the telecommunications industry establish a nationwide telephone number for nonemergency calls. That, he said, would free overburdened 911 operators to handle more serious calls.

Mr. Clinton directed the Attorney General, Janet Reno, to see the proposal through, and in February, the Federal Communications Commission set aside a number -- 311 -- for nonemergency calls nationwide.

The Justice Department, to test the number, has been helping pay for a pilot project in Baltimore, where calls to 911 have dropped 25 percent. Dallas and San Jose, Calif., have adopted the 311 system, and other cities and states are considering it.

Questioned about the 311 number, Rahm I. Emanuel, Mr. Clinton's senior adviser, began reeling off the names of cities that were considering using it. Asked why he was up to date on the subject, Mr. Emanuel said that a weekly memorandum to the President summarizing agencies' programs had recently described the system. Mr. Clinton, Mr. Emanuel said, had written on it, "Where is the F.C.C. on expanding this to other communities?"

Mr. Clinton often melds politics and policy by appearing with children to announce new initiatives. In August 1996, the President's campaign train stopped in Wyandotte, Mich., where he read "The Little Engine that Could" with two towheaded children. He also announced that he would seek \$2.75 billion from Congress over five years to teach third graders to read.

Mr. Clinton's aides immediately tried to give the program heft. Education Secretary Richard W. Riley waived a requirement that colleges pay a quarter of a student's work-study wages, provided the student agreed to tutor elementary school students. Other White House officials began calling on college presidents to line up commitments to the program.

On Oct. 21, Mr. Clinton appeared in the White House East Room to read "The Carrot Seed" with a child -- and to announce that 790 colleges had pledged tutors to America Reads.

"It's a broader way of thinking about the Presidency," said Gene Sperling, the director of the National Economic Council, "not just what you can do legislatively, but the full panoply of what you can do with the office."

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During budget negotiations over the summer, Mr. Clinton secured about 70 percent of the money he wanted for the program's first year.

Similar follow-through, on a larger scale, has characterized Mr. Clinton's approach to changing the welfare system. Over the fierce objections of most of his Cabinet, Mr. Clinton in 1996 signed a Republican bill radically reducing the Federal role in providing welfare. Since then he has taken several steps to soften its effects.

This year, Mr. Clinton ordered Federal agencies to set an example for private employers by hiring welfare recipients. At a more substantive level, he persuaded Congress to reinstate benefits for some legal immigrants. Congress also agreed to provide money for work programs and to establish a new tax credit for employers hiring welfare recipients. All told, the changes restored more than a quarter of the cuts in welfare spending made by the 1996 law.

Ideas for Tomorrow
A Dry Well? Never, Clinton Insists

In the 1996 campaign, Dick Morris, Mr. Clinton's political strategist, grilled Cabinet members and other officials for ideas, consulted outside experts and scoured the news -- and then slashed through layers of bureaucracy to take suggestions directly to the President.

Now, Mr. Morris, who resigned in a sex scandal a year ago, said Mr. Clinton seems to have run out of ideas. "As far as the bite-size ideas," he said, "that pipeline's dry and there's no one to generate them, and on the major ideas, he just doesn't have them anymore."

The President says he has no such problem. "We all read everything that's in print all the time, trying to come up with new ideas," Mr. Clinton said. He said that "probably three times a week I read a story in the paper or I see an article in a magazine or something" that prompts him to tell Mr. Emanuel, "We need to have somebody start working on this idea."

President Clinton likes to develop national policy from local success stories. Last Wednesday, at a town meeting on race in Akron, Ohio, Mr. Clinton announced that he would seek money from Congress to create 15 to 25 "educational opportunity zones" in poor urban and rural areas. Through such zones, the Federal Government would assist school districts that agree to make radical changes, like allowing students to choose among schools and making it easier to get rid of bad teachers.

The initiative was prompted by some press clippings about Chicago's success in changing its schools. Mr. Clinton forwarded the clippings to Mr. Reed, the director of the Domestic Policy Council, who began looking for ways to encourage other cities to adopt the same practices.

With his proposal to create a national dialogue on race under fire as insubstantial, Mr. Clinton made the idea an immediate priority for his aides planning next year's budget.

"The President wanted to show that he had a serious school improvement proposal as part of the race initiative," Mr. Reed said.

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Mr. Clinton's aides are preparing a series of other small initiatives, together with some larger proposals, for the President's State of the Union Message early next year. Mr. Clinton dropped some hints about those ideas, including one to help provide health insurance to people 55 to 64 years old.

"I got a letter just the other day from a woman who was in my high school class," he said. "Her husband got sick and took early retirement. He's got a pretty decent retirement but they can't afford health insurance.

"And this is a bigger and bigger problem for Americans."

GRAPHIC: Photos: After the crushing defeat of his health care plan early in his first term, President Clinton began to try to accomplish piecemeal some of what he could not do all at once. He has applied the tactic to an array of initiatives. (Photographs by Associated Press) (pg. A21)

Chart: "A CLOSER LOOK: Footprints Left by a Lot of Baby Steps"
Some of the ideas and projects pushed by President Clinton:

POLICE -- The President promised to put 100,000 more officers on the street under the 1994 crime law. Local police departments have received money for 63,500, of whom 30,000 to 40,000 have been hired and trained.

SCHOOL UNIFORMS -- Uniforms have become common at public schools in Miami, Cleveland, Chicago, Boston and New York.

AMERICA READS -- Almost 800 colleges have made commitments to find reading tutors for hundreds of thousands of children.

CHILD SUPPORT -- The 1996 welfare law requires states to have procedures to suspend driver's licenses, occupational licenses and recreational licenses of those violating child-support orders.

WELFARE -- Federal agencies have achieved 20 percent of the President's goal of hiring 10,000 welfare recipients by 2000. The Administration has commitments from 2,500 employers to hire and retain welfare recipients.

TV RATINGS -- Most networks have adopted a new, more informative ratings system that uses letters like V for violence and S for sex.

SEX OFFENDERS -- Mr. Clinton ordered the Federal Bureau of Investigation to develop a national registry to track sex offenders and child molesters, just three months before Congress in 1996 passed a bill requiring such a data base.

HEALTH CARE -- Among many proposals, the President pushed for a children's health insurance program, enacted this year, that provides money to states to buy private insurance or expand Medicaid for children. (pg. A21)

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