

MEMORANDUM

TO: TOM FREEDMAN
FROM: JULIE MIKUTA
RE: KIDS THESE DAYS
DATE: JULY 2, 1997

Copy to give out
Family Report

SUMMARY

Public Agenda surveyed 2,600 adults and 600 youth across the country on their views of young people. The survey found that most adults believe parents need to work on their child raising abilities. Adolescents say nice things about adults and their parents, but also report that people of their age do not act respectfully to their peers or adults. This memo summarizes the major findings of the study and the solutions to the problems concerning young people that the public favored.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Americans define the youth problem as one of a lack of values and morals.
2. The public views children (aged 5- teenage years) almost as negatively as it views teenagers.
3. Americans acknowledge that it is difficult to be a parent today, because of the need for both parents to work, and the dangers of drugs and crime.
4. Most people believe that young people can be "redirected" with sufficient guidance and attention.
5. Government programs miss the mark in these three ways. Americans see the problem as moral in nature, not one of money or health. The public believes the crux of the problem is parents, not a lack of government programs. Welfare has created a skepticism about government intervention on behalf of the family.

SOLUTIONS VIEWED AS EFFECTIVE BY RESPONDENTS

1. Increasing the quality of the public schools was the top choice of a way to help young people.
2. *Character education* --Schools should teach basic values, such as being responsible, on time and disciplined. Americans want schools to supplement and reinforce values that parents teach, not replace parents.

3. More after-school programs should be created to keep kids busy and give them something constructive to do at a low-cost to parents.
4. More employers should enable employees to follow flexible work schedules so that kids are not left alone after school.
5. Young people need to be kept off the streets where they can cause or get into trouble easily. Fifty-three percent of respondents approve of nighttime curfews. Almost half (48%) support tougher punishment for young criminals. Instead of prison, young offenders should be sent to boot camp or made to do community service.

BARRIERS TO ADULTS HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE

Many Americans seem to be hesitant about helping others. They fear that their intentions may be misread or even turned against them, and they will be sued. They are uncertain about correcting other people's children for fear that the child's parents will curse them or reject their help in other ways. People also want to be shown that their efforts are appreciated.

Young people appear willing to help others. The report praises the idea of encouraging young people to give to others for three reasons: the potential resonance fits nicely with the notion of reciprocity about helping that the public has; it contradicts the spoiled-kids image; and it meshes perfectly with the public's focus on teaching children character and responsibility.

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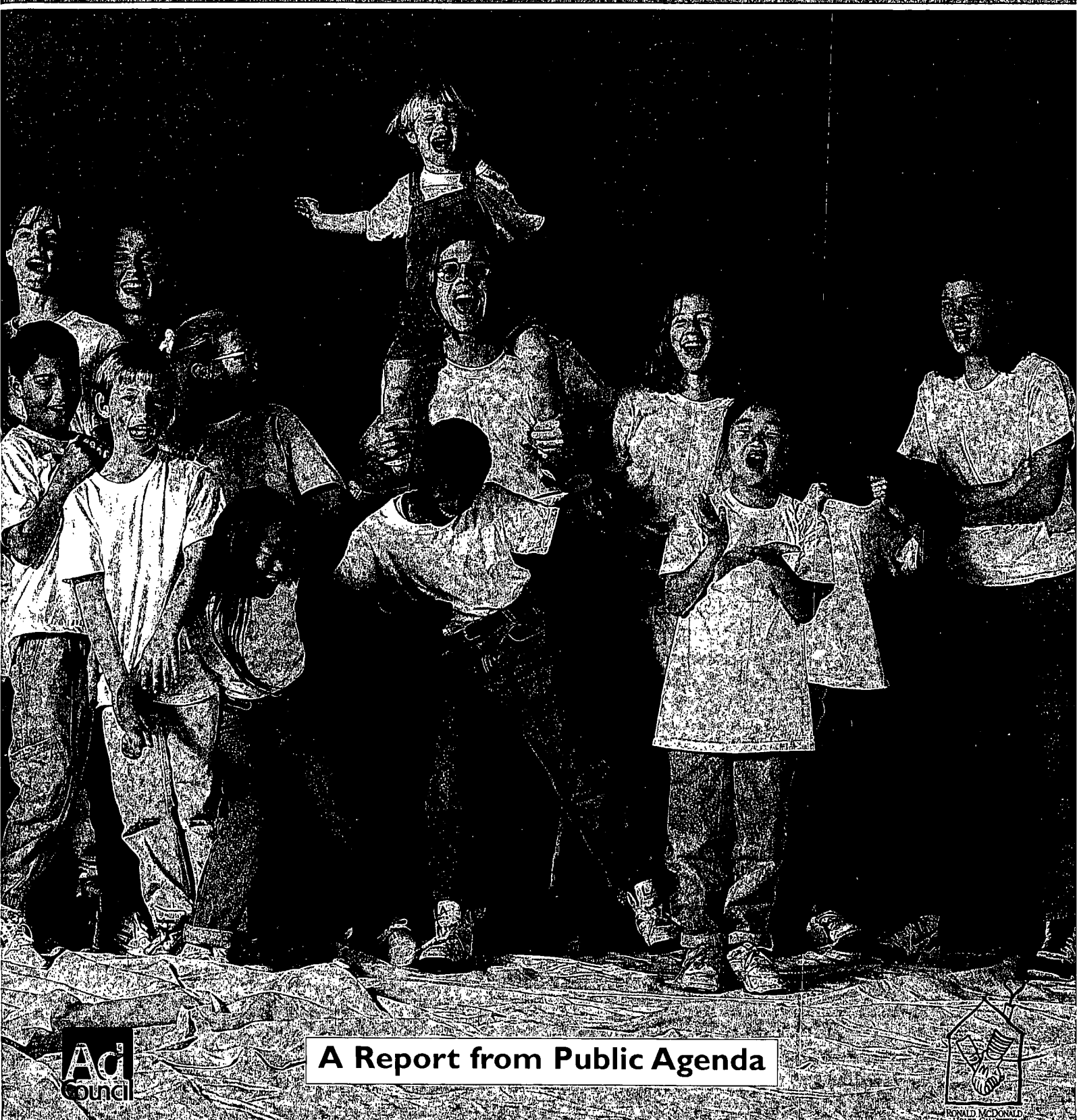
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KIDS THESE DAYS:

WHAT AMERICANS REALLY THINK ABOUT
THE NEXT GENERATION

*Family
Report*



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A Report from Public Agenda

