

Indiana has the 19th highest birth rate among unmarried teens ages 15 to 19 in the country. Total births to women aged 10 to 19 reached 11,842 in 1993. Of those births, 77% were out-of-wedlock, a 28% increase since 1983. 450 teenagers under the age of 17 gave birth to a second child in 1993.

PROBLEMS FOR TEEN FAMILIES

Teen families confront numerous difficulties. Mothers and babies face serious health risks. Teenagers engaging in premature sex expose themselves to the risks of sexually transmitted diseases, and teen pregnancy too often leads to abortion. Babies born to teen mothers often are premature and underweight. Teen parents are less likely to finish high school and gain the skills necessary to secure employment, resulting in a dependency on welfare that is hard to break. Nearly half of long-term welfare recipients are women who gave birth before the age of 17.

Studies also suggest that the children of teen parents fare worse than those from two-parent families on measures of health, education, and emotional and behavioral adjustment. Childhood abuse and neglect—which children of teens often are victims of—increases the odds of future delinquency and adult criminality by 40%. And children of teen parents are far more likely to become teen parents themselves.

WHY TEEN PREGNANCIES ARE RISING

There is no easy explanation for the rising number of teen pregnancies. Many teen parents were born into a world of poverty, teenage parenthood, and welfare dependency that they have difficulty escaping. Few teen parents have the same hopes, dreams and aspirations as the average American teenager, or the self-confidence and feeling of self-worth necessary to set goals for the future. Many see having a child as a comfort in a difficult life.

Broader social factors also contribute to this problem. We live in a more permissive culture, where teen parenthood and out-of-wedlock births carry less of a social stigma than they once did. We read every day about celebrities and star athletes having children out-of-wedlock, and we see the same thing in movies and on television programs. We also don't educate young people about the risks associated with teen parenthood.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

First, we must work to bring down the number of teenage pregnancies. We must persuade teens to abstain from sex, to not give in to peer pressure, and to accept the traditional values in their lives. One of the most valuable things we can do is instill in young people feelings of self-confidence and self-worth, help them set goals for their future and help them achieve these goals. All teenagers must realize they have many options in life—to go to school, to work, to contribute to their communities, and in all this to make responsible decisions. If teens feel that their future goals would be jeopardized by becoming a parent too early, they will have real incentives to delay parenthood.

Second, we must find more effective ways to support families of teenage parents without creating incentives for out-of-wedlock births. Fathers must be held responsible for the support of their children; about 60% of teen births are fathered by older men on average five or six years older than the mother. I support efforts to establish paternity at birth and to strengthen child support collection. Furthermore, teen parents should be encouraged to live at home and stay in school whenever this is an option. President Clinton recently unveiled a plan to make federal assistance contingent on such living arrangements.

Third, for those teen parents whose households are abusive or unstable, we should es-

tablish community-based facilities to house and support young families while the mother completes school or job training. Much of the national discussion about teen pregnancy has highlighted the success of these "second chance homes." Places like St. Elizabeth's in New Albany have high success rates in teaching teen mothers how to provide safe, loving, and stable homes for their babies.

CONCLUSIONS

Raising children today is extraordinarily difficult, even for mature adults. For young people, who themselves are still growing up, the issue is much more complicated. We must do what we can to prevent young people from entering parenthood too soon, to help them realize their full potential as individuals with promising futures, and to accept the responsibility and the consequences of their actions.

Governments can also work in partnership with private groups, charities and churches to help young parents create a healthier environment in which their children can grow. Many teenage parents try very hard to be good parents, but the challenges are daunting. Community-based programs have proven successful at helping these teenagers become more responsible parents and more productive citizens, and we should continue to encourage these efforts.

CPM'S CONGRESSIONAL TRIBUTE TO DR. WILLIAM R. PERRY, JR.

HON. CARRIE P. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 22, 1996

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a distinct honor to pay tribute to one of Miami's unsung heroes, Dr. William R. Perry, Jr. His retirement from the Dade County public schools on May 30, 1996 will certainly leave a great void in our community.

He truly epitomizes the preeminence of a gentleman, as well as the virtues of a scholar. Having attended Coppin State College and Loyola College for his undergraduate studies, he obtained his doctorate degree from the University of Massachusetts. He served as a classroom teacher and later on as administrator with the Baltimore City public schools. He was subsequently awarded a Rockefeller Foundation Superintendent Fellowship in 1976, one of the Nation's most prestigious honors given to postdoctoral scholars.

Ever since I have known Dr. Bill Perry, he has always been at the forefront of ensuring equality of opportunity for everyone in our community. At the same time, his forceful advocacy in adhering to the tenets of equal treatment under the law not only in the halls of academia but in every segment of government agency has become almost legendary. In fact, countless others have been touched by his genuine commitment, especially toward those who could least fend for themselves.

Dr. Perry is the consummate community activist who abides by the dictum that those who have less in life, through no fault of their own, should be helped by the Government, regardless of their race, creed, gender, or political affiliation. In fact, countless others have been touched by his unique sincerity and his unrelenting penchant for "stick-to-itiveness" to any cause he takes up or any crusade he embarks on. The numerous accolades with which he

has been honored by various organizations represents an unequivocal testimony of the utmost respect he enjoys from our community.

Blessed with a down-to-earth common sense, he is also imbued with the rare wisdom of recognizing the strengths and limitations of those who have been empowered to govern. This unique leadership was tested to the hilt when he took over the presidency of the Greater Miami NAACP, after his stint with the Miami-Dade Operation PUSH and the George Washington Carver YMCA.

The acumen of his intelligence was felt at a time when Miami needed someone to put in perspective the agony of disenfranchised African-Americans and other minorities yearning to belong. When government and community leaders met to douse the still-burning embers of the Miami riots in the early 1980's, his was the firm voice of reason, wisely articulating his credo that one has got to learn and live with one another in the global community, or shamefully reap the grapes of wrath from those who have been left out.

He thoroughly understood the accoutrements of power and leadership, and he sagely exercised them alongside the mandate of his conviction and the wisdom of his conscience focusing all their elements upon the good of the community he learned to love and care for so deeply.

His undaunted efforts shaped and formed the agenda of community organizations, such as the Miami-based Haitian Refugee Center, the Women's Welfare Coalition, and the Overtown Advisory Committee, to name but a few. His word is his bond to those who have dealt with him—not only in his moments of triumphal exuberance in helping our wayward youth turn the corners around, but also in his quest to transform Dade County into a veritable mosaic of vibrant cultures and diverse peoples converging in the great experiment that is America.

Dr. William R. Perry, Jr. truly exemplified a one-of-a-kind leadership whose courageous vision and wisdom appealed to our noblest character as a community. He will certainly be missed.

ESPERANCE, NY CELEBRATES 150TH BIRTHDAY

HON. GERALD B.H. SOLOMON

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 22, 1996

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I have always been proud of the heritage and physical beauty of the 22d Congressional District of New York which I have the privilege of representing. It is for this reason, to savor the history and character of the picturesque towns and counties, that I return home every weekend.

We often forget, Mr. Speaker, that the real America is not Washington, but the small towns and villages where real people live and work. I would like to talk about one such town today.

Esperance, NY, located in beautiful Schoharie County will be celebrating their 150th birthday on this Memorial Day, Monday, May 27, 1996. And what a fitting time for a celebration of history and community. It could not be more appropriate considering people all across this Nation will be paying tribute to