

HRH the Princess of Hanover's Acceptance speech
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston - May 20, 2006

Honored guest, ladies and gentlemen, good evening...

May I first express my gratitude to President Chip Lyons (of the United States Fund for UNICEF) and to Sally Cottingham, as well as to everyone here in the New England chapter for all their hard work in making arrangements for this evening's program. I'm sure the horrendous weather and flooding has greatly complicated your task. My heart goes out to all the people in wonderful New England who have been, and still are, suffering through this ordeal.

Nelson Mandela, Harry Belafonte, Roger Moore and Jordan's Queen Noor have all been at this podium before me. I'm humbled. (And in the case of Queen Noor clearly outranked.) The only thing that is more daunting than to receive an award whose past recipients are such monumental humanists and child advocates, is to confront the painful truth that all our efforts, and the generosity and commitment of everyone here and so many thousands of others around the world, continue to be woefully inadequate. It's a bit strange to be named a "champion" in the early stages of an endless marathon. I'm reassured to know that all of you are just as committed to victory as I am - the victory of our common future: the world's children, our children.

I am very pleased and proud to accept this award on behalf of AMADE, created by my mother in 1963. Our organization is served by extraordinary volunteers around the world under the direction of the no less extraordinary Mr. Francis Kasasa, whom I'd like to thank for being with me here this evening.

Theirs is a daily, often incredibly frustrating and thankless struggle to advance the programs and projects you got a small glimpse of in the video. They are the recipients of this award, true "champions of children". I know they are deeply touched and delighted by the recognition you bestow tonight on their tireless efforts. This award will enhance our ability to access and influence world governments and lobby their leaders to find positive approaches and solutions to vital political, economic, environmental, religious and humanitarian issues.

At AMADE we have had many successes of which we can be justly proud. And of course UNICEF dwarfs our achievements with its myriad activities across the globe. But there is so much still to do. This award will be something for us to live up to. Less a prize than an inspiration, and a permanent reminder of what's expected of us.

While I'm glad to see success, however small, what interests and motivates me more is all that hasn't been done. I think optimism is a choice one makes. For me, the cup is half full. Or maybe a quarter full. Or at least there is a cup. Or there could be a cup... In child advocacy, that's the only attitude to have.

Recently there has been extensive media coverage of a program in the beleaguered kingdom of Nepal that really inspires me. In a remarkable campaign supported by

UNICEF and an alliance of many other organizations and the Nepali Health Ministry, a virtual army of 50,000 volunteer Mothers has trudged through fiercely challenging mountain terrain to deliver measles vaccine across the nation. These mostly illiterate women, trained in only the very basics of primary healthcare and injection technique, managed to reduce measles related deaths by 90% last year, saving as many as 5000 lives.

In you I see dedicated men and women representing a vast spectrum of talent and expertise. To know that such an amazing resource is serving the cause of positive change fuels and reinforces my optimism. If the Nepali Mothers can eradicate measles, imagine what YOUR volunteer army can do !.

Again, success falls in the shadow of what still needs doing. More than four million infants, about the number of babies born in the US, still die each year for lack of incredibly simple and cheap healthcare materials. So much to do...

Like many of you, I'm sure, I have had first hand experience seeing short-sighted national governments, self-aggrandizing local authorities, and powerful corporate interests, interact with distressed citizens, dedicated NGOs, and passionate activists on virtually every continent. There is no shortage of good, even great ideas. But they all too often languish for years in reports or commissions, or are damned by the faint praise of non-binding declarations, buried in paper, lost in deliberation. Fundamental changes that are critical to ensure a thriving human future seem to move further and further away even as they become more and more urgent.

In our struggle we, like the women of Nepal, face Himalayan challenges. But we're a strange breed-exhilarated by challenges, energized by obstacles. Like alpinists, we climb each mountain to get a look at the next mountain! This evening I feel I'm surrounded by remarkable mountaineers.

Along with specific program activity, our mission is to mobilize the conscience of the world on behalf of children.

Our task is to look beyond the selfish interests of governments, corporations and ideologies to the broader interests of the planet itself and the well being of its six billion citizens. Our guiding principle is the quality of the legacy we shall leave to those who will inherit this ever smaller planet of ours. And the scope of the mission is vast, unlimited. It encompasses virtually every area of endeavor. Because rescuing children only to hand them a world in turmoil and the bleakest of futures is morally intolerable.

No matter how laudable and important it is to attack disease, famine, the devastation of war, illiteracy, and the host of other ills that assault so many millions of the world's children, if we don't equally commit ourselves to bettering the world they will live in, our efforts are reduced to mere "first aid". First aid is a good start. Period. There are so many areas where we can and must commit ourselves to improvement or radical change. They may seem to be far out of the box of child-advocacy, but I believe they are critical to it. A few spring to mind.

- Monetary and tax reform to energize entrepreneurship in developing countries. Here I think of debt restructuring and forgiveness. And the exciting possibilities of micro-financing, where remarkably small investments can produce truly significant results.
- Responsible commerce and equitable capitalism. There are so many initiatives in this direction, some excruciatingly small and fragile, others quickly growing stronger. The simple premise that a "fair deal is a good deal" is, I believe, truly gaining ground.
- Trade and tariff reform. We all know how third world farmers and growers are shut out of the world markets. With a direct and dire effect on their families' wellbeing. Progress is slow here, and complicated, but there is progress nonetheless.
- Sustainable uses of forests and oceans. We, the developed world, with our insatiable demand, are responsible for the pillaging of resources that leave wastelands behind. Each of us can help make changes here by simple consumer discipline.
- Clean water for all. We possess the technology and resources to make huge contributions in this direction. UNICEF is very active here. But it's an area of great opportunity for innovative solutions.
- In health and medicine, there is enormous potential for generic medicine development and patent liberalization for third world manufacturers. I don't call for condemning Big Pharma. Rather, we can encourage and applaud results.
- Multi-culturalism and the media. With notable exceptions, we export images of a world of white heroes and colored villains. Violence is called "excitement", vulgarity reigns. Our producers claim that's what the people want. Let's encourage our producers to stop underestimating their audiences...
- Women's rights. Don't get me started...

My list goes on and on- to conflict healing, real energy economy, sustainable and livable cities, general arms de-escalation and relentless suppression of arms trafficking, reform of international institutions, human rights. Each of these areas directly affects the lives of children and the adults they will become.

Oh, dear...I guess now you know why my Mother once introduced me as her "daughter the communist !" But no. I was her daughter the citizen, devoted to the values she herself instilled in me and that she developed right here in the US.

A friend suggested that my message is that the only way to really help children is to cure all the world's ills. Well...yes. I guess that is my message. Each of us, in unspectacular ways, can be an agent of positive change by making simple disciplined choices every day. By remembering that in the age of globalization, it doesn't just take a village to bring up a child. It takes a world.

Today we're at war on terror, as we must be. Especially against the terror in the eyes and hearts and minds of millions of children worldwide. Children who face the world alone after losing parents to AIDS. Children at risk of starvation or a host of

preventable diseases, living conditions and social situations. Children who live in the crossfire of war and suicidal madness.

We want to eradicate crimes against children, from slavery to sex trafficking, to forced recruitment into guerrilla armies to child labor, and more.

But we live in countries whose official policies directly or indirectly destroy more children's lives than we can ever hope to save. We can't be child advocates and feel comfortable with that.

People often point to regimes in the world who's tyrannical, corrupt, or simply incompetent governments deserve far more of the blame that I seem to heap on our Western democracies. But I hold our societies and ourselves to a higher standard. Partly because I know that in our societies we can actually get things done! Our freedom gives us power, and a duty to use it to make essential changes.

I suppose I hold America to the highest standard. The daughter of an American, I have very deep ties to this country. I believe its core values are the same as mine. And like the rest of the world, I admire and appreciate American ingenuity, energy, and can-do attitude. So please forgive me if I seem to be preaching. I think that holding someone to the highest standard is the sincerest form of flattery.

When people are encouraged to think as parents and grandparents instead of as corporate leaders or politicians- when they are prompted to be motivated by who they are rather than what they do- there is a quite amazing agreement about human values and about the priorities of those values.

Churchill declared that "politicians think of the next election. Statesmen think of the next generation." It's too easy to complain about or denigrate politicians, no matter how deserving or maddening they may be. It's our job to require our politicians to act like statesmen. We must keep reminding all decision makers of who they are. And remind them who WE are! The people they're accountable to, at the ballot box and the cash register.

So much to be done. That must be done. That can be done. So that the children we rescue from abominable conditions don't have to face an empty future. So that our children can point proudly to the example we set for them, and continue the work we, inevitably, will never get near finishing.

Your presence here tonight bears witness to your active belief in the cause of child-advocacy and to your exceptional generosity. I offer you my deepest thanks. Many of you are very involved in outreach activity of your own. I'm honored to be in your company. AMADE and I shall do our best to be worthy of the honor you have bestowed upon us this evening. We look forward, with optimism and energy, to working with UNICEF and with you toward filling the cup. See you in the mountains !