

RD CONFERENCE OPENING INTRODUCTION 1/28/11

By Elizabeth Bartholet

WELCOME

EB: On Faculty here at HLS & Faculty Director of our Child Advocacy Program (CAP)

GRATEFUL: you all are here

- extraordinary group
- impressive range & depth, of knowledge & experience
- I think all have lots to learn from each other
- I'm hoping to learn from all of you

SPECIAL THANKS TO THOSE WHO HELPED MAKE THIS HAPPEN

- Sponsoring & Participating Organizations:
 - Chapin Hall at the Univ. of Chicago
 - National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges
 - National Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- Also the small Planning Group key to shaping Agenda, key to getting you all here:
 - Fred Wulczyn, from Chapin Hall
 - Rick Barth, Dean Univ MD School of Social Work
 - Judge Cindy Lederman, of the Miami-Dade Juvenile Court
 - Jessica Budnitz, key to all CAP does
 - Fred & Rick known to many of you for their superlative research on RD & related issues
 - Judge Lederman famous for her long-time commitment to making empirical reality central to policy

PRACTICAL NOTES:

- After our Opening Panel (here immediately next) DINNER in Pound – see map & staffers

- Tomorrow am EARLY HERE: 7:30 Breakfast, 8:30 Substantive Start – Have to start then to fit all in

GOALS & DESIGN OF THIS CONFERENCE – a word on these

- Starting point for much RD discussion: Large number of Black Children – compared to Population %age -- in Foster Care. Most of us – maybe all of us -- think this represents *some kind of problem*. Our Goals here:
 - ONE: Explore in depth *What Kind of Problem*: Look at the *Facts* in depth to see what factors best explain why black kids *removed to foster care* in such large numbers, what are the actual facts re *their length of stay in foster care*: One key question posed by the literature & debate to date: *Is Child Welfare System Bias a major factor, or NOT – are there other factors we should be primarily focused on as look for Explanations?*
 - TWO, in terms of Goals & Design: the additional focus is on *Policy Directions*: Given our best understanding of the Facts, what kinds of Policy Responses should we consider/pursue?
 - Putting these ideas together : Our OVERALL GOAL at this Conference is to take seriously the idea that Empirical understanding should Guide Policy
 - Tomorrow: Focus on Specifics, Facts & Policy
 - Tonight: *Historical & Social Context*: We thought would help in our understanding of RD issues today if back off and look at in larger Historical & Social Context – very Grateful to Prof Charles Ogletree, Moderator for this Panel, & our Distinguished Speakers
 - A FINAL GOAL: Broad Participation: This is an awesome group, and includes very diverse views
 - Want to get reactions to presentations, & thoughts on the issues, from as many as possible
 - Limiting Speakers to short, summary presentations
 - Q&A built in after every session. Committed to sticking to Schedule. That’s why 7:30/8:30 tomorrow start

I now present to you: FRED WULCZYN, already known to many of you:

- Research Fellow at Chapin Hall at the U of Chicago
- Special Advisor to Commissioner for Children, Youth & Families in HHS

CHARLES OGLETREE, who will Moderate next session & Introduce Speakers:

- Jesse Climenko Prof of Law at HLS
- Founding & Exec Director of the Charles Hamilton Houston Inst for Race & Justice