

FOR RELEASE AFTER 4:00 P.M.
THURSDAY, AUGUST 12, 1965

EXCERPTS FROM MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON'S
REMARKS AT MORVEN, PRINCETON, N.J.

Let me say how grateful are the President and I to you who serve on the frontlines of the war on poverty.

You do not do battle alone.

I would like to share with you the experiences of some of your counterparts in other states who have written me this summer.

A Head Start teacher in Tennessee wrote: "Nineteen Head Start children have been "mine" for the summer. Through it, they have acquired a surer grasp on their sometimes-shaky heritage which promises them the right to the "pursuit of happiness". They are poor; their families are large; there is usually one or no parent. But this summer they have come to life. They have learned to be helpers instead of grabbers."

A Head Start teacher working on the Texas border wrote: "In all these years of teaching I have taught the culturally advantaged. My very favorite people are pre-schoolers and even though I love them so I was not too enthusiastic about Project Head Start. I wondered at the expense and worthiness of the project.

"Now we are in the sixth week and I wonder no longer. I have fifteen little Latin American children whose whole world has been changed. It has been slow and I feel eight weeks is woefully inadequate but I am so grateful they have had this much. They come to school so starched and clean from homes that are often unbelievably dirty. They are shy and do not respond as quickly to any stimuli as our more culturally advantaged but slowly, I feel, we are broadening concepts and giving them a freedom with which they can move and express themselves. Can you imagine a child who has no concept, in any language, of what a corner is. (We planted a garden with potatoes in each corner.) Or a child who has no idea what an elevator is? (We went down and used the one in the bank.) Perhaps you recognize these two references are from one of the excellent and helpful tests given to these children.

MORE

"We have Juanita, the most anemic of the fifteen in our class, who is the middle one of nine children living in a small apartment in a housing project. Is it any wonder that a few short weeks ago she pushed to be first at doing anything? It is something close to a miracle today to feel and observe that Juanita realizes that she will have her turn to ring the clean-up bell, her turn to serve the milk, or to paint at the easel or take her time to finish any project she starts because it is hers and no one will touch it. At the art table today one child looked wistfully on and it was Juanita who moved her chair over and said, "Here, there is room by me." There are not words to express how I felt on hearing these words. Juanita has indeed started to take her place as a proud member of society.

"I would like a whole year to use the tools of good nutrition, educational practices I so strongly believe in, good common sense, and tender loving care heaped on fifteen little ones and I can give our country fifteen who will glow with the pride of their own individuality and to be truly ready for the first grade world and life with the HEADSTART they will have had."

Still another personal story is that of a small child named Shirley: "Shirley is the littlest of all my children. She talks at a phenomenal rate of speech in her efforts to share with the other children. She is the picture of confidence as she leads a long line of children down the hall to the lunchroom. She is all innocence as she sleeps on her little rug during rest time. She is a happy child. She smiles brightly as she draws, paints, colors, sings, runs, listens to stories, and eats good lunches. She expects happiness and she has not yet been disappointed."

Let our resolve be that the children of this country can, like Shirley, have a fair chance to expect happiness. And because of you -- and people like you, they will not be disappointed.

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