



AMERICANS ALL A National Multicultural Education Program

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A Program of
The Coordinating Committee
for Ellis Island, Inc.

Good morning, my name is Ted Danson.

I am sorry that I cannot be here with you today but a scheduling conflict has kept me in Los Angeles. However, this Press Conference is very important to me and I would like to tell you why I have become one of the National Chairmen of this program.

My first exposure to Americans All came through my father, one of the founders of the Coordinating Committee. Because I have two school-age daughters, I am naturally concerned about our nation's educational system. But my personal energy has been directed toward our environment, especially to preserving the safety of our oceans.

However, once I read and understood the purpose and goals of Americans All, and what it can mean to our nation's youth, I began to relate its purpose to those of the organization I founded, the American Ocean Campaign. I saw by helping Americans All reach our nations classrooms and teachers, an important step in creating awareness for our environment would also be gained.

Let me explain.

The AOC disseminates information about the dangers to our oceans and one of our most important population groups is our nation's youth. We all know that the environment can no longer protect itself. It may require legislative action and those

bills will be voted on by the people of this nation. I am beginning to realize that if the main concern people have is for food and shelter, then concerns for their own survival will overshadow any possible caring about the physical world they live in. And, even after survival issues have been resolved, if our citizens have a difficult time relating to and accepting one another, they certainly will not band together to protect their environment. Staying in school to develop skills to earn a living and get along with one another becomes a critical first step toward appreciating their surroundings.

The Americans All program plays a very big role in that education. It has four goals: to provide appreciation for self and a sensitivity to others; to provide knowledge of the history of diverse groups as they came to and moved through the nation; to have students operate effectively in diverse cultural groups and settings and to develop critical and creative thinking capacities needed in today's information age and global environment.

For me, it is very clear that these are the skills that everyone will need to be an effective citizen. As an example, lets look at one issue. The battle lines are now being drawn on drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. As an environmentalist, it is obvious where my vote lies but I know that the final decision on this question will not be made by me or the Alaskans but in Washington, in the halls of Congress.

This is a decision that deeply affects all of the people of this country and one on which they should all vote. But first, they have to understand all the issues--both pro and con--and all the consequences. For this they need insight and the ability to analyze what they learn. Americans All provides them with this opportunity. When children read in the Native American booklet that our government helped destroy 50,000,000 bison to drive the Indian Nations off their lands, they get an opportunity to see the impact of politics on the balance of nature. On the other hand, they also learn that many immigrants

came here and moved west to settle what they felt to be unowned territory because they had run out of land to farm in Europe and that for centuries, those European families had a cultural responsibility to provide a homesteads for their children. Classroom discussions on what other actions might have been taken provide the framework for learning to deal with the issues of the 1990s.

And, once children gain a respect and appreciation for each other, they will have the opportunity to think about other issues. We know that stereotypical behavior declines as knowledge of the history and contributions of diverse groups increases so it seems obvious that the more people can think clearly, critically and analytically, the more we can trust and even depend on them to make important decisions in a fair way.

For me, the battles of the environment should be decided by the electorate and not by a few lobbyists in the back halls of Congress. It needs to be a priority for all people, regardless of race or ethnicity because the environment itself is color blind--it is there to serve everyone. Americans All represents a new, major step in helping our young people become prepared to face these critical issues by preparing them to become solid citizens and appreciate how our nation was founded and its responsibility in our global society.

I deeply appreciate your being here to learn about the successes of Americans All. As the program developers say: "By celebrating our heritage of diversity, Americans All responds to today's demographic imperatives for multicultural education by focusing on factors that help to unite, rather than divide, the American people." I sincerely hope that this new unity will promote a consciousness that will benefit our physical environment once we have all learned to live in harmony and peace.

Thank you.