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Keynote speech to the National T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Institute

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AVAILABILITY

Speech in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts:

So what does the field need from me and those of us, many of whom are in this room, who set out decades ago to transform the value placed in our country on the work of caring for and educating young children and have committed our lives to that task? The vision of affordable, high quality options for all children—options that meet the needs of working mothers in particular—and that provide respect and good pay to early educators was first articulated during WWII. (If you don't know this history, I refer you to a wonderful account of the fight to establish publicly funded child care during the war and to keep it going after President Truman announced he was eliminating funding six days after the hostilities ended. (See *Caring for Rosie the Riveter's Children* review of "Demanding Child Care: Women's Activism and the Politics of Welfare, 1940-1971, Fouesakis, 2011.)

Alas, such services and jobs remain out of reach for most of us in the 21st century. Mothers are still struggling for child care, worrying about the quality of what they can afford, and good teachers still leave, or don't enter, the field because of salaries that make it impossible to meet their own families' needs. And each year, in most states, we are fighting to hold on to what we have. It's been 70 years since WWII and we have yet to realize the vision of accessible high-quality early care and education for all children provided by well-respected, well-rewarded, and well-educated teachers.

We have to face that our vision—to which we still hold—remains just that. And it's our responsibility to grapple with some hard realities as to why this is so. We can't just grumble in frustration. We need an analysis of what has gone wrong that can inform new strategies and tactics. It's our legacy to those following us in this quest.

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To those ends, I am currently spending my time on three main interrelated issues:

- 1) Leadership Learning Gap
- 2) Higher Education for Early Childhood Teachers
- 3) Adult Learning Environments in Early Childhood Settings

Region: United States ^[3]

Tags: advocacy ^[4]

staff ^[5]

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