

**Joseph B. McNeely, the founder of the Development Training Institute.**

*(Unedited Transcript)*

Thank you very much, Senator. I'm a little afraid of, in this presentation, first of all to follow Joe Duffy, being so erudite. And very conscious that in the celebration of the quintessential ethnic, I'm the third in what Geno would call the "Irish Mafia," this morning.

(Laughter.)

Following O'Rourke, Duffy, and McNeely, we need some people with true vowels at the end of their names and not "Y" sometimes.

(Laughter.)

I'm also afraid because I was the deputy Geno at HUD, who he turned to to get things done. I wasn't the one that he called at one o'clock in the morning when he had just gotten the Chicago Tribune, to rant and rave about something he saw in the news. I was the one who was summoned to the meeting with the ever-diverse constituency that Geno had across the country, to make it happen.

I did, and he spoke. And I'm one of those people who is noted in Larry O'Rourke's fine biography, who totally failed substituting for Geno when he couldn't make an appearance, finding that as I carefully finished my sentences, something totally boring and 32anesthetic was happening to the audience, compared to Geno's captivating.

I miss the courage of his insecurity, to go outside the box -- in fact, to totally ignore the box, how he'd operate as if the box did not exist, and then just when you'd thought he'd forgotten that the box was the topic he was supposed to be covering, how he'd return from some distant point in space, and be critical of the very existence of the box.

I miss how he'd take a little slip of paper with a couple of notes on it, and a magic marker, and stand up and grab a piece of newsprint and say, "I'm a little afraid this morning that public morality is another discussion in which the liberals will join with their concern for the poor, to criticize people who didn't vote with us the last time.

"I'm a little concerned the term, 'high public moral ground' will mean a chance to stand up and denounce people who aren't listening at the moment, that it will be another exercise in which we blame these people."

Geno understood the deep morality of the working-class. He understood the deep morality of ethnic groups. He understood the deep morality out of the diverse populations, and he chose to frame his public 33morality by listening and going where they are.

And I think we've got to learn to frame our morality again by listening and being with people who we seek, rather than yielding them to people whose superficial rhetoric appears to reach the dreams and hopes and fears of these people, but whose actual political agenda is very much to their detriment.

I'm on a quest, a personal quest, very much like Geno's quest when he talked about family members who were going to vote for Bobby Kennedy, and wound up voting for Wallace after Kennedy was assassinated. I'm the oldest of 10 children from an Irish Catholic Democratic urban family. And only one of my siblings votes in agreement with my political agenda.

And I am on a quest to find out how we lost them. What happened? We had a framework that everybody seemed to understand who worked, and they moved with us. It was a framework that said, "We're all in this together, we are all in this together. And that larger forces have victimized all of us. Larger forces in corporations, larger forces controlled by the super wealthy, and that our only alternative is to organize, gain our voice, form coalitions, and claim government as the place in which we gain, redress, and find solutions to those issues which undermine us."0034

And when we get to that last point, we seem to have lost these people. We've lost my sister Jeannie, who says to me, formerly a HUD executive, "I don't think government should do anything about housing," and who spends 10 or 20 hours a month as chair of the interfaith housing committee in Morristown, New Jersey, using McKinney funds -- government money -- to address the issues of the homeless, by organizing the church. But to whom government housing means those boarded-up projects in Newark.

We lost people because we haven't listened and encouraged them to speak from the values of caring and unification, and being all in it together. We have often chosen a morality that denounces the very people we want to join with us.

We lost my brother Michael, who calls me after voting for Bush, and says, "Joey, I'm sorry, but this is not my permanent position. I want you to know, I just couldn't take Kerry, and I couldn't take all those Democrats who would come in and start all these programs." This from a guy who is on his second job in a company who has been ruined by executive exploitation and merged, whose wife is 25 years with United Airlines and just lost her pension. Who doesn't think government has anything to say to Mike.0035

The ground that Gina tilled us in the seventies was in the outer ring neighborhoods, and the neighborhoods next to the inner city, in whom we needed to form a coalition between urban white ethnics and urban African-Americans and Latinos, are now in the suburbs.

This population is only marginally urban. Grandma didn't even live in the city. You don't have to go to the city to go to the movies, or shop, or even see the circus. But these are the working people of today. These are the emblematic Catholic vote. And these people are increasingly black and Latino, who have a suburban orientation that doesn't hear what we think is public morality. Why don't we listen? Why don't we know?

Part of it is, we don't think and recognize that these people have fears, these people have fears and pain that is as real as Joe Duffy's father's leg. As Geno would say, We have a variety of people with a variety of needs, and we need a policy that recognizes that "Yes, your mother has a broken back and needs a lot of help, but my mother has a broken leg and need some help, too."

We have to stop making policies that are so targeted that they'll all the last five years and then be thrown out because they're so limited to a constituency that is not connected to others that share their deep causes. We need to honestly reach out and listen here, to deep

pain. To my sister who is worried that her daughter who teaches public school will never be able to afford a home. To my brother who has been downsized out of two jobs, and had to move to an area in Pennsylvania that was an area of vacation and second homes, because it's the only place he could afford a home, and now commutes unconscionable amounts of time, and can't spend the very time with his family and his children for which he moved to those places.

We need a public morality that reaches out and binds people together. We need a public morality that is the morality of the public. Geno was more a moralist of the New York Times, Joe said, than he was of dogma. He was not about having the right answer as much as he was about having the answer that would mobilize and bring people together. We need a public morality that unites. I'm more concerned that rather than a high public morality that looks down on people, we have a deep public morality that cuts across divisions, that has the courage to say we need to look at causes and cure the diseases, and stop handing out Band-Aids. And that the disease is not just here, but 37it's here. And that there's a cure that you need here, and we need a public morality that is less about being right that it is about coming together for action.

The morality is not about dogma for belief. The morality is about common principles for action, and we desperately need to be looking back to the people who we want to move to action, to find the morality which motivates them. Because beyond their fears and pains, they have dreams, they have hopes, and they have values that are moral, profoundly moral. And the most profoundly moral commitment is to act. That's what we need to be looking for in a public morality.