

A CRITICAL PROBLEM...FATHERLESSNESS

It's 4:00 A.M. and I am in my office, sitting in front of my computer. I am trying to focus on the thoughts of the night but my mind is alive, stimulated by the computer screen in front of my eyes. What I see is the unbelievable fact that America leads the world in Fatherlessness.

Here is an interesting fact: In our country nearly 40 percent of all U.S. children under the age of eighteen-more than twenty-seven million-now live apart from their fathers. In a typical year, well over one-third of those children won't even see their dads. In too many homes, Daddy isn't there. Of course, there's more than one way for a father to be absent, more than one way for a child to be fatherless. That figure of over twenty-seven million children does not include those whose fathers are emotionally or mentally absent (distant, we say) which would surely add several million more.

What I am sure is that Fatherlessness is a crisis. Years ago, the Health and Human Services Secretary Louis W. Sullivan called it "the greatest family challenge of our era." The crisis crosses barriers of race and class to touch each of us.

I realized a new day had started. I thought to myself, "We're in big trouble as a community and country if we don't find ways to restore our fathers and families."