The size of the 85 and older population is expected to increase over 125% in the next few years, and really fivefold into the 21st century.

The whole underlying theme ought to be how can we all make it across the line together? How can we, in fact, ensure that young and old receive equitable treatment?

Change is inevitable. In other words, the only thing that's true all the time is change. If you can't change, then you're done.

How will demographic health and social changes affect life in the 21st century for all of us? How will we face the challenges of an aging society? Next, on Growing Old In A New Age.

What do older adults expect of the future? Expectations vary.

Well, I'm very optimistic about the future. I think that older people will learn how to maintain healthful lifestyles, will acquire more energy, and will be able to contribute what they know, their experience.
Right now, I'm working on a credential in gerontology. And I probably will wind up with a Master's in Art. So I have a lot of plans, so I'm not ready to go yet. I have a lot things to do.

Now as I look ahead, I suppose I have to plan on living to be 90. At least I'm trying to keep my finances in such shape that I'll be able to take care of myself through 90 anyway.

I'm not looking forward to another career. I'm looking forward to continuing doing things, and particularly, if I can and I'm capable, trying to help other people. That's what it's all about.

I figure I'm going to live about 10 or 15 more years, and I hope I don't live longer than that. When you become a burden to your family, I think it's time to go. And keeping you alive that long, I can't imagine an existence that means very much, that has any kind of quality.

I just want to be happy. I still want my friends. I want to be able to love them, get love back. I don't think that's too much to ask, do you?

Can we really imagine what the future will hold?

The main thing we need to do, the main attitude we need to have, in thinking about the future, is, first of all, to think of it as alternatives. The English language misleads us into thinking of the future as a single entity out there waiting for us, somehow to be predicted. That's not the way the future is. The future is alternative.

When you talk about the future, you really can't predict in any uncertainty at all, especially the long-term future. So we avoid the term prediction. I think it's much more important to talk about forecasting or projecting from what we know today. Things we know, that's one thing we can predict, is that things will not be the same. Now, how much change there will be is the biggest issue and the most difficult thing, to look forward in terms of two, three decades away.

Population forecasts suggest that we are in the middle of a demographic revolution which will change the future of aging dramatically. By 2030, people over 65 will comprise between 20% and 25% of our population. And for the first time in history, older people
will outnumber children. Among the fastest growing groups of older persons are those over 85.

We do know that the size of the 85 and older population is expected to increase over 125% in the next few years, and really fivefold into the 21st century,

Although the demographic revolution is upon us, the exact amount of growth cannot be forecast. For example, an increase in birth rates or immigration would add more younger people to the population, while a change in illness and death rates could increase or decrease future numbers of surviving elders. Forecasts vary widely.

The over age 85 population is forecast by the middle estimates to grow from 3 million currently, based on the 1990 census, to around 17, 18 million in the year 2040. Others have forecast much higher numbers. The most extreme forecast has been made by Kenneth Manton, of Duke University. He comes to a number of something over 40 million.

One trend seems fairly certain. Life expectancy is increasing.

I would say that in the future, we would probably regard any death that occurs before the age of 80 as a premature death. We all should be able to live to be 80. At the turn of the century, it may move up to 85.

Women will continue to outlive men, though men's longevity is increasing slightly. At older ages, women will outnumber men by about three to one. This feminization of aging will demand urgent attention to the needs of older women. Growing cultural diversity will also be evident in the future.

We're going to be seeing dramatic growth amongst older people who are people of color and particularly growth in the Hispanic population and the Asian-American population. And that's going to present new challenges in terms of services that may need to be, or should be, culturally sensitive and taking account of multicultural differences.

The economic status and educational levels of each generation are rising. However, compared to Caucasian elders, minority elders will continue to have less education and lower economic status. And women are projected to remain in lower paid positions than
men well into the next century. Pockets of poverty continue to be projected for those who live alone, women, those over 85, and minorities.

When we look ahead to the year 2030 and the dramatic growth of the older population, we know there'll be implications for every aspect of our society, whether it's for the work environment and the concept of retirement, whether it's for educational institutions, because clearly there'll be more people returning back to higher education for a second or third or fourth careers, or whether it's implications for the family structure as we have more four and five generation families. And there will not be as many people in the younger ages of the families to be able to care for older people. So there will be changes in every aspect of modern society.

Aging is a worldwide phenomenon. In the industrialized nations, low birth and death rates are yielding a growing percentage of older persons in the population.

Western Europe, Japan, are rapidly aging because of low fertility rates. And frankly, they don't have enough people to produce the goods or the services that the society needs. So it's a dramatic change. The median age of the whole world's population is advancing at a rapid pace.

The number of countries with 20% of their population as older adults will grow rapidly over the next 25 years. Developing nations faced increasing population pressures with rapid aging, in addition to high birth rates.

If we look to the future, though, to the year 2025, the projections of the United Nations show us that by then, we will have 800 million people over age 65. Over 70% of the elderly will be in the countries that today we define as the less developed countries. And if we look at the absolute numbers, we can see that these numbers will double in the less developed countries over the next 20 to 25 years. And then they will double once again.

The demographic revolution has opened up debate on whether extended life will yield healthy old age or increased disability in the future. Alternate scenarios are projected.

Researchers have actually suggested that there may be a bimodal distribution of elderly, that is, a group of people in the future who are 80 plus who are very frail, who have multiple chronic conditions, who are on multiple medications, and another group that will be very active, very healthy, no medications. Other chronic conditions are either
nonexistent or very mild. So that we will experience some morbidity, but at declining levels.

I really do think, though, as we move into the 21st century, the number of people who are healthier for a longer period of time will increasingly outpace the numbers with disability. I think that the knowledge is growing so rapidly, the tremendous advances in such a short time. Aging is still a brand new field, and the advances have been so pronounced in such a short period of time.

There is some evidence that a health revolution is accompanying the demographic revolution. Dr. Harootyan calls his synthesis of trends in health a quiet revolution. He forecasts three major factors.

One is behavior and lifestyle. Most of that has to do with knowledge given to us as individuals, and then the popularization of that information, through the mass media primarily. There isn't a talk show that doesn't talk about the diet or exercise or some other thing to make your life or your health better, is having an impact. And it's going to have a generational impact over time.

The second arena of that quiet revolution, I think, is the biomedical arena. There's noninvasive surgery. There's laser surgery. There's all kinds of new-- and no one should underestimate this component-- all kinds of new diagnostic procedures that promote early detection of killer diseases. And even though the disease rates may still be here, the severity won't be as great, or they'll be treatable to an extent they're not treatable today.

The third is the newest and probably the most important in terms of impact area of genetic knowledge and genetic engineering in the future, where all of the thousands of genes that affect our physiology can be understood. And where there are defects in those genes that cause disease and illness and death, those genes can be, in the future, not only detected, but altered and then, in a sense, replaced and corrected in the human body, to ward off or prevent various kinds of diseases and illness. The implications of all of that in terms of a much longer living and healthier population in the future are immense, as most anybody would guess.

But how far can we expect our lives to be extended in the future? Opinions vary.

More and more people are beginning to look at death as a curable disease, to say that it is not inevitable that we die. And there's a great deal of controversy about whether it's even
possible to move in this direction. Now, that doesn't mean the people that have this view
say that we are going to become progressively decrepit. But rather, the healthy lifespan
will be extended until that so far inevitable, but perhaps not ultimately inevitable, end of
death.

There are an enormous number of ethical, social, and economic problems that would be
created by our ability to understand the aging process efficiently to be able to manipulate
it. I also think that the complexity of the problem is such as to make it probable that we
won't have the power to manipulate the aging process for several more generations.
Hopefully, during that period of time, we'll come to grips with the social and ethical
issues.

Against this backdrop of demographic and health revolution, our nation is facing a social
revolution of immense proportions. Rapid population changes will require new attitudes,
new family considerations, new work lives, and new social policies. Monsignor Charles
Fahey is exploring the meaning of the third age, the period after age 65, which will be
extended in the future.

The third age is a period of interiority, of making sense out of my own life, but also
making sense out of life generally. And it's also facing the reality of loss and of suffering
and of death and dealing with it. So interiority would be one side of it. The other side of it
is greater exteriority. Now, this may sound strange. What am I talking about?

But you know, in another way, the real art of friendship is in the 50s and 60s. And how
do I reach out to develop a series of new relationships? If I just let it happen, my world
would narrow, and I'll become more involved with things.

That's a tendency of older people, to make things become very important. They used to
shop once a week. Now they shop three times a day. They get involved with a whole
series of sustaining things that are relatively unimportant, because it's filling up vacuum
of space, where there isn't a sense of engagement and involvement with other people. So I
think the third age is a time for more involvement.

Personal involvement with others and involvement in socially significant issues are
increasingly the hallmarks of the third age. Today's elders are paving the way for
increased engagement in society by older people.
Volunteers at the Gerontology Center believe very strongly in intergenerational relationships. And by working very frequently with the students and establishing very warm rapport, there's a mutual satisfaction that is insurmountable. And we would like to spread this throughout the entire population. One of the recent projects the volunteers have with the Los Angeles City Schools is to establish courses from elementary school on up to try to eliminate, not only ageism and discrimination against older people, but racism, sexual orientation, and other forms of discrimination.

Something that's very exciting that's happening is you're seeing the empowerment of older men and women as they see, not so much power over, the power with people in accomplishing change for a more just and equitable society. So what I see as positive is our elderly, not even so much looking at just ageist issues, but looking at life issues, looking at issues that impact on equity for all.

We need older people to be-- they have a conscience, and to be a memory, and to be excited about life, and to be engaged with others, and to be present to them.

These characteristics may describe the maturing baby boomers.

I'm quite optimistic about the future cohorts of elderly. I think that they will achieve greater optimal aging and quality of life that is wanting to be, not just living longer, but wanting to be healthier, socially involved, socially in control of their lives, certainly financially in control of their lives. I think all of those things are going to be much more prevalent in the 21st century or in those future cohorts of elderly.

I think there will be real changes in women of the future in comparison to women of my generation and my mother's generation. Younger women will have, one, be better educated, have better health. They expect to live longer, and they probably will have been in the workforce much longer than my generation. As a result of this, such women are not going to be put off easily by the same kind of put-downs that I may have experienced.

We do expect that the women who are older, 10, 20, 30 years from now, will be more determined, more aggressive, and less satisfied with the status quo. And I believe that that is very hopeful.

Well, there's nothing wrong--
The future will bring changes for four and five generation families, where women are working for economic necessity.

I think what we may be seeing in the future is a mushrooming of what we call the sandwich generation, or the women in the middle, who are simultaneously caring for an elderly relative and children. And the complexities and the burdens of these joint responsibilities, I think, will really become an issue probably within the next 20 to 30 years.

We really have to be careful falling into the assumption that families can do it all. They've got to have relief. They've got to have respite care and adult daycare. They've got to have information. They need to have a wide variety of services. And as we look at tighter federal and state resources, this is an area where the private sector does have to move in and begin to help fill the gap.

There is a growing recognition on the part of many in the private sector that the corporations need to address family issues, and family issues across the board. Consequently, what we've seen happening in the past few years is an emergence of a new area called elder care, which within that rubric falls a variety of programs ranging from the development of information and referral programs, where working caregivers who need to get assistance in finding services and other kinds of information related to caring for their disabled relative, all the way to actually setting up work site adult daycare.

An alternate future suggests that the information society will provide us more time for elder care.

It is still possible that, freed of the necessity of the sort of labor that the industrial era required of us, freed through automatic technology, through automation, through robotization, through artificial intelligence, and so forth, of that kind of labor, we might, with our leisure, turn to the care of all of older people in general, perhaps of our own parents and grandparents.

The pressures of caregiving will affect families around the world in the future.

In developing countries, there's virtually no infrastructure of retirement homes and nursing homes, and almost all care takes place within the family. Now, the Chinese policy of families having one child is going to create an immense problem as the parents of these one-child families age. There's a situation in which there's almost a pressure to
have more children to take care of one in old age. And I don't know how that's going to work out.

As Japan's population ages, it's labor force is aging. And Japan is having to rely more and more on women workers. If women go out and work, then they're not going to be able to stay home and take care of the elderly. We're finding that increasingly, governments are worried that maybe the family can't do as much as they had hoped.

In the context of caregiving and in other ways, society will need to face the issue of elder abuse and exploitation.

Now, we may think that elder abuse means the actual hitting by an adult child of a parent. But it can also mean neglect. It can also mean psychological abuse. It can also mean self neglect and violation of rights.

Now, the most common form of abuse that research has found-- and again, I should preface this to say this is a quiet crime that occurs in homes, so our data is certainly, probably quite conservative. But what we can say is that it looks that most of the abuse that is occurring between child, adult child, and parent is psychological abuse. And in terms of prevalence, it looks like it may occur in 1 out of every 10 households that are caring for an aging parent in that home. Again, there's caution with these statistics.

Now what needs to be done about elder abuse? A few things. One is to educate society in terms of violence at large. And that goes to the broader issue of how we look at power and dominance in our culture, and how we treat the so-called underdog. So it's a very large issue that certainly does not just impact on older adults. But there's things we can do as well. For example, if research is showing us that is the increased stress of caregiving makes one more prone to psychological abuse of an elder, then we need to strengthen the supports of that family so that doesn't happen.

Another form of elder abuse is financial exploitation. Physical handicaps, such as a vision or hearing loss, can make older people easy prey for con artists and criminals. Sylvia Davis experienced financial exploitation after her brother died. During a time of vulnerability, when she was ill and faced an out-of-state move, a young man offered to arrange storage for her possessions, because she had to move quickly.

This young man said, I'll put the rest of the things in storage, and I will sell the things and send you the money. I wrote to him and asked how things were going, and he called and
said, by Christmas, I'll be sending you a check for at least $3,000. I still haven't heard from him. So I guess everything that was left there is gone. I don't know. If he sold it, he probably is keeping the money.

People who fall victim to exploitation often feel they've lost control over their lives and decline to report the incident. Police estimate that more than half of such crimes go unreported. To combat the problem, a number of senior groups have organized crime prevention services. And many local police and sheriffs' offices have designed programs to assist victims of crime. As we approach the 21st century, rapid and comprehensive change is affecting the way we view our working lives and retirement plans.

I would project, by 2030, 1/2 of somebody's adult lifetime, if you look at the way people live today, will be out of the workforce. What does that mean? To me, it means what do these people do? And how does our society respond? Do you have the carrying capacity in our society? Can we afford to have adults out of the workforce for half of their average lifetimes? I think not.

Nations around the world are grappling with questions about older workers and the age of retirement.

In Italy, there's been discussion about raising the retirement age from 60 to 65, because the pension programs that a lot of corporations and the government offered their retirees in the 1970s and '80s have really started bringing tremendous pressure on the government's economic well-being. Now, this is in a situation about 15% elderly. In Germany, where the birth rate is one of the lowest in the world, there are problems with new generations coming into society and supporting the older generations.

Remaining independent and productive will also be of growing concern to individuals.

We're strong believers that people should not be pushed out when they're 65 years of age, that they should be able to continue to work in terms of some kind of capacity if they want to. On the other hand, we feel that if people can find ways to retire at 50, they ought to be able to do that. So there has to be-- in this country, we have to have a flexible strategy, a flexible approach, in terms of providing employment and economic opportunities for people.

Technology may create new work opportunities. Computers may allow older people to work at home.
They don't have to be sitting in the office. They can be sitting at home, putting in three hours a day, not commuting, not using up fossil fuels, et cetera, and doing work and getting paid, and also having more leisure time to pursue other interests; not a bad lifestyle to me. I can't afford to do that right now. But in the future, especially with people in their 60s and 60s, who will be better educated than ever, we're going to have people who are better able to have that kind of knowledge and use it in the workplace as well as in their personal lives. So there's this greater flexibility in one's lifestyle that I see.

With the declining birth rates in the population, in another 20 years, the number of people coming in to the labor market at the bottom end of the age range is not going to match in any way, shape or form the number of baby boomers going out the top end of the age range in the labor force. And so I think, at that point, there's going to be a lot more motivation to figure out ways to retain older workers in the labor market.

We need to ask ourselves, will we be able to actually generate new programs that will permit older workers and even younger workers to retrain and retool, so that they can move from one profession or one occupation to another. The reality of a person being with one company for a lifetime, like my dad was, I think that's something that perhaps was a reality of the past. But what I see with people living longer is that we're going to see people going in and out of different professions, in and out of different companies, in and out of different jobs. I think our older adults are going to require that, and I think our population in the future is going to demand that.

In an information society, literacy and ongoing education and training will be vital for everyone. Cycles of work, education, and leisure throughout the lifespan may provide more flexibility and choices for individuals. Flexible work choices and lifelong learning might create growing numbers of older workers in the future, whose productivity may help to balance the cost to society of an older population. Connected to the creation of new flexible work options and lifelong learning opportunities is another important key to creating a future pro elder environment, technology.

I think as we talk about the next century, we're talking about a technologically-oriented society, people who were going to be users of technology.

There's a potential to use the technology to really compensate for some of the age-related changes in health and vision and hearing with age, voice activated computers, memory devices to help people schedule their medications or social schedules, or whatever. But I
think as we see future generations that have used this technology in their work lives, they'll expect to use it to question how it can be used to help them in their retirement.

One of the major driving forces of the future is changing technology, which can be viewed either optimistically or pessimistically as an opportunity for human transformation, as a threat to humans as they are currently constituted, but nonetheless is probably one of the major arenas of change, in which we will be able to, through genetic engineering, through prosthetics, through artificial intelligence, to live in a very, very different world from the one we live in now, different economically, different in terms of the culture of robots who will grace our landscape and be intelligent beings along with us, and so forth.

In the future, people will seek ways to tailor their environment, which will improve function for those of all ages and ability levels. Many of these devices are already on the market for those who can afford them. Communications devices, health monitors, and voice-activated computer-controlled appliances will all make up a part of the smart houses of the future. Such user friendly homes and devices will enhance the quality of life for older and younger people, insuring a better person environment fit.

Person environment congruence suggests that as the individual declines, whether by illness or by the normal processes of aging, the environment needs to also change in order to adapt to that person's changing needs. If it does not change, it becomes more burdensome and more difficult for the older person to manipulate or control.

If you look at our transportation systems, if you look at our buildings and our architecture, there are tremendous changes that need to actually be introduced. You could have a wonderful transportation system the elderly can't make use of, because one can't get into the train, or one can't stand in the train without some safety being compromised. So if we look at transportation systems, department stores, you look at the architecture of homes and buildings, even the way that we talk about and think about products and things that we need just to make life better, I think all of that is going to have to be much more each sensitive. We're really on the verge of a very different kind of world, if we permit ourselves to set it up so people can, in fact, enjoy a good life.

As better person environment fit is desired for older people in the future, innovative living arrangements will become more common. For example, various forms of shared or congregate housing offer independence and support. Marriott Corporation has developed senior living services as an extension of their hotel and food businesses. Different levels of support are provided to people in their own apartments, in assisted living units, or in the skilled nursing facility. A full range of dining, recreation, social, personal care, and
health care services is available. This catered living approach suggests the dignity and service which seniors may expect in the future.

I think one of the important trends in the person environment approach is to look at who is going to become elderly in the 21st century. Increasingly, it will be people from the baby boom generation who are going to be the senior boomers and who will be placing more demands on the system, on the federal government, on the health care system, on their health care providers, on the private sector, to provide them with the services that they need and demand. There's a greater sense of control. There's a greater sense of manipulating that policy environment, as well as the physical environment, to fit in with their needs.

The state the world environment raises the specter of resource depletion as the population increases.

There are the environmental problems, the greenhouse effect, the possibility of temperature and increase of sea level rise, of climate and weather modification, of the spread of new diseases as a consequence, and of the growing population of the world as a whole on top of this already threatened environment. The technological and the environmental, each offering hope and dangers, I think suggests that the future in which we will live, our children, our grandchildren, and so on, is very substantially different from the one we live in now.

As the older population grows, people fear age wars, or fierce competition between the generations for scarce resources. Many serious policy questions will confront us in the next century.

I think that we're likely to see some new forms of intergenerational conflict as a consequence of global overpopulation and global struggle for control over very rapidly diminishing natural resources within a generally more polluted environment. And so the ability of the younger generation to command the resources for their education and their nurturance are going to be demanded by this large and relatively politically sophisticated older generation. And so a generation fight between the two for these scarce resources is most certainly very likely, both within the United States and between the industrialized world and the developing world.

Already in this country, there are problems that we're seeing in terms of scarcity of resources, scarcity of, certainly, health resources and the dollars to provide for these health care programs. Medicare is often attacked for costing the US taxpayer a lot of
money. Social Security system has been attacked for costing a lot of money. Any time there's a discussion about the deficit, one suggestion that comes up is the need to reduce cost of living allowances for Social Security.

Japan is the country in Asia that is going to face the most rapid aging of its population. Projections indicate that by the year 2025, almost one quarter of the population in Japan will be over age 65. Not surprisingly, Japanese policymakers are extremely concerned about what are the implications of having such a large proportion of its population in the 65 and over group.

When we think about Africa, where every few years, there's a significant problem of famine and war, then there's going be a tremendous prioritization of who gets the food, who gets the services, who gets health care, when it's a battle between a young child and an older, 75-year-old person and a young mother. And these problems I see as really continuing and not abating in the next several years, well into the 21st century.

Debates over the cost and rationing of health care will play out over the next decades in the United States.

As we confront the escalating costs of our health care system and particularly, services for older people, and the tremendous amount of services people may use in the last few months of their lives, it's inevitable that practitioners and policymakers alike are raising questions about access to services and whether there is need to ration services available to older people. It raises ethical questions about quality of life, versus quantity of life, the number of years. And it raises questions that society has got to come to grips with in terms of given limited resources.

Who should have access to these resources? As we debate, and moving towards a national health care system, these questions are going to become even more salient. And I think it's important that older people be included at every point of that debate.

Will rationing determine who should live and who should die as the older population expands? Opinions vary, and alternate futures are suggested.

What I am concerned about is that we are developing technologies and in particular, computer-based technologies that will be able to actually give us mortality rates, predicted mortality rates, for certain kinds of conditions. And that if, in fact, a person, and likely an elderly person, has those set of factors that predict a very high rate of mortality,
that the plug will be pulled. I think this is a critical issue. It is clearly something that policymakers have not wanted to deal with. But I think that it is something that we are not going to be able to avoid in the future.

Well, I don't think there's going to be greater pressures for the old to get out of the way or to go on an iceberg and float off into the distance. I think that most people will take the opportunity if life has become so difficult and burdening, and they will welcome the choice to say, this is what I want, not that this is what you must do. I don't think our policies are going to go in that very oppressive and frightening direction.

Issues surrounding death will present a challenge.

In the 1990s, we've seen an increasing number of older people saying that they want to have control over their dying as well as their living. And this has often been called the right to die movement, where the legislation has been passed in some states, and there's been the Patient Self Determination Act, that was passed nationally, which are giving people more control over the conditions and the way in which they die.

I would hope that if I get to the point where I am so burdensome, both financially and physically, that I would have one lucid moment in which I could take some pills that would put me to sleep forever.

We may get the day when you can prevent a lot of disease and illness. And then you get to a point where a senescence, fundamentally aging, has gotten to be the issue at hand. And people just can't function anymore very well. And they may have their own means available to them to just say, it's time for me to leave. Now, that's getting a little very futuristic, in a sense. And I don't know to what extent our philosophy, our Judeo-Christian ethic would permit it.

In a climate of scarce resources, will Social Security, Medicare, and other programs for older people to be available in the future?

When you talk about whether Social Security will be there in the future, you're really asking the question, what would the American voter's opinion be about removing this set of supports that affects almost every family in America? Now, my take on that is that it's very unlikely politically that the American public would say, no, we don't want to take care of these older members of our family. We can do that on our own. We don't need any help from Social Security. I don't think that that would be very likely. The reason I don't
think it's very likely has to do with the independence of the older generations in the family.

Current projections describe Social Security trust funds as solvent for the next 75 years in terms of ability to pay benefits. Health care and long-term care debates are predicted to rage over the next decade. The outcome of this debate will be crucial for our society.

When people see that their stake is similar to everybody else's stake, in terms of providing some basic levels or basic rights for individuals' access to health care, a minimum income level, et cetera, that that kind of policy will evolve.

The state of the economy could also be critical to the future of aging.

The growth rate of the economy between now and 2040, 2030, is going to be a far more important factor than simply the numbers of the old and very old.

From my own point of view, I really don't believe there is much need for human labor now and don't think there will be much need in the future, given automation, given robotization, given artificial intelligence. In fact, one of the reasons we're having economic recession, perhaps depression, at the present time is that we don't need the labor, but we do need the consumers. And we keep people working, not for their labor, but for their purchasing power. I think if we can recognize that this transition to a society in which the goods and services that everyone needs can, in fact, be produced automatically without much human labor, then the crisis in the Social Security and so forth will, in a sense, vanish.

Is generational competition for resources an imperative for the 21st century?

There are, in fact, good signs that we can avoid generational conflicts, or conflicts between those constituency groups of different ages who have pressing needs. A few years ago, for example, the National Council on Aging got together with the Children's Defense Fund, one of the leading representatives for young persons. And they formed a coalition called Generations United. Their purpose was to support as a coalition legislation which benefited both groups. So the issue here is, and our hope is, that groups such as Generations United will look more to the family and the generations within the family and determine what their needs are across the board.
Awareness is growing that the needs of young, middle-aged, and old are all important, and that by working together, all generations can be heard.

The Older Women's League has been working very closely with many women's organizations, young women as well as our own group, especially around problems of women's health. This includes, then, consideration of the priority needs of women who are pregnant, women who are at menopause, and then the women who are aging. We believe by coalescing, by working together, that we can be more powerful in impressing the policymakers and the decision-makers on where we ought to be going in this country on addressing the health needs of women.

Younger groups and older adults have similar needs. These groups may forge new alliances in the future to meet shared needs.

In Florida, you'll have Hispanics, and you have elders. In California, you'll have blacks, Hispanics, and elders. The real question, then, comes in, will those groups work together as political alliances? And if they do, where can they work together? Or will they work at odds with each other? Will they compete for votes and resources and legislation that will either benefit them or bring them apart.

We hope that around such issues as health care, for example, that seniors and blacks and Hispanic political leaders can come together. Seniors have a desperate need for better health care coverage. Minorities have a desperate need for health care, for health care promotion, for prenatal care, and other types of health care services. So if their political leadership can come together, they can develop a political alliance that will be very difficult to defeat.

Awareness is growing that long-term care is not an elder issue, but a family and societal concern.

At any one time, we're estimating that there are approximately 9 to 11 million persons who have long-term care needs. And I want to emphasize here that it's not just the elderly. About 1/3 of that population is under the age of 65. And so when we talk about long-term care, I think we have to recognize that it's a problem that goes across the lifespan and that it is an issue that everybody in society needs to pay attention to.

We are now finding that organizations not only representing younger persons, but organizations representing minority groups are developing alliances with senior citizen
groups to push for long-term care insurance, long-term care legislation, since in the final analysis, it is a family that will be responsible and will have to take the burden of providing, not only for the needs of their younger members, but also the needs of their elders.

Legislators are listening to the generations.

There are some who blame the elderly, because they have been the principal recipients of the government's largess over these last 12 years. This, of course, is completely shortsighted and mistaken. Yes, we have done an excellent job making sure that the elderly are kept from the ravages of poverty and that the elderly have a rudimentary health insurance system, called Medicare and also Medicaid, if they need it. That's great. We've done a good job with the elderly in that respect.

What I would like to see us do is replicate what we've done for the elderly and do it for children as well. And we shouldn't think, well, we'll take some money from these elderly programs and apply it to kids. First of all, we wouldn't do that. And secondly, we'd wind up with two problems, a problem for the elderly and a problem for children, neither of which would be adequately addressed.

When we look towards the next century, I think one of our biggest challenges is going to be how to develop intergenerational programming that benefits both young and old and that also makes the most of the limited resources that will be available. The elder care and child care need to be seen as two different ends of the continuum, not as polarities, not see them as in one building, we have child care, and down the street, we have elder care. There certainly are ways to combine the two.

Ruth [? Sifton ?] directs an adult daycare center.

We have a preschool next door that is really wonderful. Most of the time, the elderly people love to sit and watch them play in the afternoon. But we do have programs with them. Like Halloween, we share the whole day with them, with our party. And we share other party days with them.

One time, one of our Alzheimer's got lost. And he wandered over, and it was really cute, because all the little kids came over and grabbed his hands. And he [INAUDIBLE] for him. He was over there with all these little children holding onto their hands. And they were just having a great time together. It really is warming when you see that.
If we are to create a society where all generations effectively work together, then intergenerational understanding will be imperative in the future.

Somehow in our society, we've come to believe that if you are different from me, somehow we have no way of communicating. There's no way in which we can meet. And of course, we've done this with race, and we've done this with sex. And now we're doing this with age, that if someone is 70, and I'm 30 or 40, how can we possibly have anything to share with one another? And there is a great deal of learning that can be done intergenerationally. So that's one thing we have to begin with, a reconceptualization of difference, to look at difference not as negative, but as a very creative force.

Older adults are providing a vision for younger generations of what the third age can be.

We've had Thomas Jefferson and Ben Franklin and certainly today, Maggie Kuhn, people who are vibrant, contributory, really showing us, I think, what the Carnegie Foundation has referred to as the new pioneers. And in fact, this is so true, that getting older, you really are new pioneer, because you're forging a new role for the future aged. You're really saying, I can do anything I want to do, and I am going to take advantage of my later years. And they're doing just.

So we've got to get--

As a resource to society, older adults are providing increasing leadership in uniting the generations for the future.

The National Academy of Sciences suggests that there are 275,000 retired mathematicians and scientists who are older, who could, if properly channeled, make an enormous difference in the school systems across this country. So we need to tap the great reservoir of talent, of love, and wisdom that exists among the elderly and channel it through to our children, so that we are a society that is a bit more civil about itself and also recognizes that the future of America rests not just on the opportunities of our children, but also on the wisdom of the elderly.

If it is characteristic of our world that it is one of tremendous and continual change, one thing that older people, especially very older people, can tell young people is look at the changes I have been through in my life. Look what it was like when I was young and grew up, and the things that I have gone through. I have gone through many changes, not the changes necessarily you're going through, but many changes. You can cope. You can
survive, have a vision, have a purpose you will be able to see through. I think it is a very different type of resource that older people are now and will increasingly be.

The concept of older people as a resource is especially important to help move us away from the notion that older and younger generations are competing against one another for limited resources. Unfortunately, this has been a notion perpetuated by the media. But I think if we can work hard to identify areas of common concern, such as environmental issues, there will be ways to bring older and younger people together around those issues.

Older people have tremendous concerns about the environment and what kind of environment there'll be for their grandchildren. Younger people have concerns about the environment. And the coalitions between young and old around environmental issues could have a very powerful effect.

We, as we get older, will look to our past experiences and will want to leave a better society for our children and grandchildren. We will want to ensure that in the year 2020, 2030, we have a prosperous economy, we have a good and great nation, and that life will be better for all concerned.

I think if we look at the strength of American society and the strength of humanity, the whole underlying theme ought to be how can we all make it across the line together?

It is not so much what the future will be, but how we want the future to be. The future is the arena of possibilities. It's said there are no future facts. There are no past possibilities. The future is the arena of possibility of hope of invention.

Our capacity to invent the future of aging will depend on our perspective and vision. Already the foundations for future aging research are taking shape. Studies exploring developmental changes over the entire life cycle tell us much about the aging process and hold great promise for resolving unanswered questions about aging.

The natural experiments in aging continue, too. Today's older adults are pioneers, pointing the way to a new view of aging. If they have taught us anything about aging, it's this. There are many different keys to aging well. Old age exists in infinite variations, and old age in the future will express itself in as many ways as there are people.

[MUSIC PLAYING]
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