

UPF Office of the Family: Family-centered Initiative at UN Addresses Social Ills

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New York, United States – UPF's Office of the Family sponsored an event, "Failing Our Children, Eroding Our Society: Family-centered Initiatives and Solutions" on March 12, 2025, at United Nations headquarters in New York. This session was part of the Conference on the State of Women and Family which coincided with the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

CSW seeks to ensure that all women and girls are given dignity, rights and opportunities. However, global emphasis on women's employment, sexual freedoms, and individual rights has had some detrimental impacts on women and the family. Research consistently indicates that as the family has weakened, the mental health and well-being of girls and boys has declined, and society has deteriorated.

The speakers at UPF's event brought out what is glaringly missing in the UN CSW debates and resolutions: the family, marriage, the critical bond between mothers and their infants, and the role of fathers. They also stressed the need to educate children about agency and moral discernment, both in the family and in the schools.

The first speaker was **Ms. Erica Komisar**, a clinical social worker, family therapist, parent coach, child development expert, contributing editor to the Institute for Family Studies, and author of "Being There: Why Prioritizing Motherhood in the First Three Years Matters" and "Raising Adolescents in the New Age of Anxiety." She said the devaluing and decline of the family are related to a rise in individualism and self-orientation, as well as increased financial pressure, and the conflict between pursuing career and material success and sustaining a marriage and family. She added that feminism has brought many important changes for women, but has also been debilitating for women and children.

Currently the United States has a divorce rate of around 40%, high numbers of single parent families, about two-thirds of mothers going to work just three months after giving birth, large numbers of children receiving institutional childcare, a majority of adolescents reporting lack of emotional support, and more elderly people receiving institutional care than family care.

Ms. Komisar's research shows that family breakdown has alarming impacts on mental health. In the United States, 20% of young children and adolescents are diagnosed with a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder. Loneliness is prevalent, with one-third of adults reporting anxiety and lack of connection to others. There are also high rates of adolescent and adult depression and addiction. The data indicate an epidemic of emotional distress, loneliness and absence of supportive social cohesion, from childhood through old age.

Ms. Komisar recommended strengthening the family to turn the situation around. She stressed the need for an intimate parent-child relationship, even into adulthood. She also stressed the need for family-friendly policies such as generous parental leave and flexible work hours. Much can be done to improve our culture, policies, and environment to reposition family at the center of what makes human life most fulfilling, meaningful, and worth the sacrifice.



Mr. Ian Rowe, the second speaker, holds a master's degree in business from Harvard University and is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. He is the cofounder of Vertex Partnership Academies, a network of character-based International Baccalaureate high schools, and author of "[Agency: The Four Point Plan \(F.R.E.E.\) for All Children to Overcome the Victimhood Narrative and Discover Their Pathway to Power.](#)"

Mr. Rowe has researched what produces upward mobility, especially for Black American children. Raised by married parents who immigrated from Jamaica, he explained the critical emotional and moral foundation he received from a stable and loving home. From his parents' model he learned to rely on faith, and to face challenges with hard work, sacrifice, commitment, and diligence.

Research repeatedly confirms that family, faith, and education are key for life success. US schools have been failing all children, but the gap in educational performance between Black and White children has been persistent. Today, 37% of Black children are living in a home headed by their own two biological parents, 48% are living in a home headed by a single parent, and 4% are living in a stepfamily with one biological parent and one non-biological parent. Mr. Rowe stressed that Black children raised by their married parents academically outperform those from single parent homes.

Mr. Rowe's deep concern for the underprivileged led him to create his charter schools. He recognized that Black and Hispanic youth were saturated with a debilitating message that they were hopeless victims of forces beyond their control. Mr. Rowe worked to instill personal agency in his students, and the ability to apply themselves. His schools stress the cardinal virtues of courage, justice, temperance and wisdom. His students learn personal empowerment, discipline, and moral discernment – and they flourish.

Mr. Rowe has shown that upward mobility is accomplished by family, religion, good schools, and entrepreneurship, as his schools have transformed thousands of young peoples' lives into stories of accomplishment. Understandably, many see Ian Rowe as a hero.