

## EPISODE 2: ONCE UPON A TIME: When Childcare for All Wasn't Just a Fairy Tale

### TRANSCRIPT

TRT 32:43 MIN

00:00 Opening credits and title sequence

#### 00:47 DVD Chapter 1: The State of U.S. Childcare

**MARIA LANGLEY, Director, Browne Child Development Center:** Hi Caleb! Hi Caleb! What is that? If you're able to imagine a huge 4th of July going off...that is what's happening in the brain of an infant.

*Browne Child Development Center, Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base*

**LANGLEY:** Eventually in time, he's going to be able to sit up on his own, crawl a little bit more. You know, all of those pieces are critical development with our infants.

**NARRATOR:** Years of data demonstrate that infants who receive high-quality care do better in school and in life.

**NARRATOR:** 40 years ago, our nation came tantalizingly close to making high-quality care like this available to every family who wanted it. But we didn't...

**CLARE SANFORD, Enrollment & Nutrition Manager, YWCA of Minneapolis Children's Centers:** There are so many families in general who are stuck in the situation of leaving their kids in care that they don't feel comfortable with or that they don't feel is safe, or that they don't feel is helping their child develop to the fullest because that's simply the only option they can afford.

**NARRATOR:** Unlike these children, too many American kids experience child care that is unregulated, mediocre at best, and hugely expensive—despite the fact that parents work and depend on care more than ever.

**NARRATOR:** Clare Sanford works with parents determined to find the high-quality care all children need to thrive. She's also a mother of two.

**SANFORD:** Should we take these home to show dad?

**SANFORD:** We both work full time, and our kids are actually in care, quite a bit, 50+ hours a week.

**JOE WEINER, spouse of Clare Sanford:** When tweedle beetles fight...

**02:46 SANFORD:** Our child care expenses, now that we have a second child in full-time care, I think it runs to 18 or 19% of our gross income...which seems like a lot! It's, it's way more than we spend on our mortgage.

**NARRATOR:** And it's not just the cost. In some places, dog kennels are inspected more often than child care facilities. Most child care workers are paid less than parking-lot attendants. And with few exceptions, parents are pretty much on their own.

**SANFORD:** We want to believe that every individual is able to pull themselves up with their own boot straps and there's a sense that providing for children and families in some ways is a form of government interference instead of support for families and children.

**NARRATOR:** But it wasn't always this way. Do we know the full story? How did a country that says it cares about its youngest children end up with a system that neglects the needs of so many of them?

#### **04:13 DVD Chapter 2: Once Upon a Time: The Lanham Act**

*Archival footage: Rosie the Riveters*

**NARRATOR:** World War II drastically, and suddenly, propelled American women into the workforce. Dubbed "Rosie the Riveters," they relocated to other parts of the country to work in shipyards and armament factories, many with young children in tow.

**LAURA LOVETT, Historian:** They were away from their family, they were away from the structures and networks that they could've depended on for child care, and they needed somebody to watch their children. When they didn't have any they did what they could do. They left children alone, they left children in charge of other children, they left children in often, you know, trailers.

**NARRATOR:** The government responded, and approved funding for a national network of child development centers under legislation known as The Lanham Act.

*Archival newsreel: When married women with small children have to take jobs, everything possible will be done to provide day care for the children.*

**NARRATOR:** Lanham Act programs provided care for 600,000 kids at 3000 centers across the country.

**LOVETT:** It focused not only on children's development, it focused on their health, on their education, on their welfare, on nutrition. It really envisioned an investment in the children of these workers as something that would benefit the country in the long run.

**NARRATOR:** When the war ended, the nation celebrated. But the Lanham Act was terminated—and most of the child care centers were shut down. Policymakers expected women, and childcare, to return to the home...but the number of working mothers would continue to grow.

### **06:19 DVD Chapter 3: Towards a More Inclusive America**

**NARRATOR:** After the war, Americans entered a period of hope, but great uncertainty. But again, government eased American families through this huge social change with low-cost mortgages, farm and small business loans, college tuition, job training, and tax deductions for dependent children. The result? An increase in well-paid jobs, marriages, and affordable housing.

**LOVETT:** Federal subsidies really facilitated a move on a grand scale into what we would think of as middle class.

**NARRATOR:** But post war prosperity was by and large limited to white families. The Civil Rights movement was growing. African Americans demanded the same rights and opportunities granted to white families in the booming post-war economy.

**MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN, President, Children's Defense Fund:** In many ways, the civil rights movement really was about children. I mean parents who went and sacrificed everything in order to get their children a better life. And a fair chance to realize their individual potential.

**ROBERT SELF, Historian:** It's hard to overestimate the importance of the Civil Rights Movement in establishing equality as a core value of '60s political movements. It shapes all of the subsequent movements into the 1960s.

**08:06 NARRATOR:** And it forced political leaders to confront America's inequalities.

*Archival Footage from Lyndon B. Johnson's State of the Union: "This Administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America."*

**NARRATOR:** In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson introduced the nation's Great Society legislation: Programs like Medicare and Medicaid, job training, and Civil Rights laws would enable more Americans to share in the nation's growing prosperity.

**SELF:** In the '60s, political movements are pushing a little bit closer toward a notion of a collective responsibility for the health and wellbeing of all families. The Great Society is-is an extension of that idea.

**LOVETT:** It's hard for to imagine it now, but I think the vision of the future in the 1960's and the 1970's was one that was shared. We had shared visions of what was possible. There was an optimism about what you could do in the future, and children were a central part of that.

#### **09:20 DVD Chapter 4: The Birth of Universal Childcare**

**NARRATOR:** At the same time, the lives of mothers were changing...

**SELF:** There's a really dramatic increase in the number of women in the paid workforce between the World-World War II era, and the 1970s. And that's women with younger children now for the, really, the first time coming into the paid workforce in large-large numbers.

**SID JOHNSON, Legislative Aide, 1969-1976:** We were looking at projections, and there were clearly gonna be more women working because most of them required it, men's supervisory wages were stuck, and suddenly women who may still want to stay home were required to work.

**LOVETT:** You have an economic situation which will really necessitate a return to work. Something like 50% of women, and especially working mothers, returned to the workforce. Um, and so you have to accommodate that!

*Archival Footage, interview with Walter Mondale c. 1971*  
*"A quality comprehensive child development program in this country I think would be cost-effective. I know it would be. It would be one of the best dollar investments we ever made, just in sheer economic terms."*

**NARRATOR:** In 1971, Minnesota Senator and future Vice President Walter Mondale championed an ambitious new policy to meet the changing needs of children and working families: comprehensive child care for all American families. Sid Johnson, a young government aide, ran Mondale's subcommittee.

**JOHNSON:** He told me that in the Washington Post there'd been an article about a young African-American in the second or third grade who went to school within view of his senate office building...

**WALTER MONDALE, Former Vice President & U.S. Senator:** His mother couldn't afford day care. She...single parent. The younger brother at home; no lunch. And Freddie

would go to school, take half of his school lunch and run home and share it with his younger brother. On this day he was running fast and he was killed by a truck that ran over him. I'll never get over that. Right in the nation's capitol, right under the capitol dome, good people trying under the toughest of circumstances.

**JOHNSON:** And Senator Mondale thought, "How could this happen in our country—the richest country in the world?"

*Archival Footage, Richard Nixon Presidential Campaign Ad c. 1968*

*"I see the face of a child. What his color is, what his ancestry is, doesn't matter. What does matter is that he is an American child. That child is more important than any politician's promise..."*

**12:35 NARRATOR:** Senator Mondale had every reason to believe that the richest country in the world could make life better for its most vulnerable citizens.

*Archival Footage, Nixon Campaign Ad, continued:*

*"I ask you to help me make the American dream come true, for those to whom it seems an impossible dream today."*

**NARRATOR:** When Richard Nixon took office, he promised support for children from birth to five.

*Archival footage, Nixon speech c. 1969:*

*What happens to the child from a nutritional standpoint, from an educational standpoint and from an environmental standpoint, in the years between 1 and 5 may affect that child for the balance of his life regardless of what might happen after that time.*

*Animation: Contact sheet of Nixon at White House Conference on Children, 1970*

**EDWARD ZIGLER, Director, Office of Child Development & Chief, U.S. Children's Bureau 1970-1972:** We used to have a wonderful tradition. Every ten years there would be a White House Conference on Children. In 1970, Nixon gave a presentation. I helped write his speech, and the absolute number one priority that they wanted action on was good quality, affordable child care.

**ZIGLER:** The big debate within the Nixon Administration was what was the quality of that child care going to be? A lot of the conservatives in the Nixon Administration, they wanted what we would call custodial care—just keep 'em dry and safe and that's it.

**MONDALE:** We had a big fight over that. We wanted quality care. And I think all the evidence shows that's what works. As a matter of fact, just custodial care—a child stacked with other children with no help—could be harmful.

*Still: John Brademas with children.*

#### **14:15 DVD Chapter 5: A Bill Whose Time Has Come?**

**NARRATOR:** Indiana Congressman John Brademas co-sponsored the bill, which would be called the Comprehensive Child Development Act. The legislation aimed to make high-quality child care and early education available to ALL American families.

*Archival footage: Head Start program in Mississippi c. 1965*

**NARRATOR:** It would be modeled after Head Start, an early childhood program that was part of the Great Society vision. Like other Great Society programs, Head Start sought to promote social equality and national prosperity.

*Archival footage from Head Start: I want everybody to write, AB. Everybody.*

**NARRATOR:** Marian Wright Edelman, a young lawyer just out of Yale Law School, worked with Head Start in rural Mississippi during the summer of 1965 when it first began.

**EDELMAN:** That was the largest Head Start program in the nation. 13,000 children, it created 3,000 new jobs. It was real parent participation, it was hope, it was health care. And Head Start was comprehensive so that you got to deal with all the needs of the child. And it was a beacon of what should be for every child.

**NARRATOR:** But funding for Head Start was limited, and only available to a fraction of children. Edelman saw the child development act as a way to provide the Head Start experience to all children, and organized a coalition to help draft, and push through, the legislation.

**15:54 EDELMAN:** The unions were the first place I went. I went to the teachers. Feminism was robust then, and they became a part of the coalition.

*Stills: Labor Unions, Feminists*

**EDELMAN:** It was pretty clear to me early on that you had to build self-interest into doing good for children as a way of moving forward.

**LOVETT:** Groups like the National Organization of Women, or the Women's Action Alliance really understood that, in fact, if you wanted to make a difference, a tangible difference, you had to give women access to child care. The Women's Movement affected the way that we could imagine what half of our population could do. But also there was a narrative that framed this re-imagining of gender roles as an attack on the family.

## 16:45 DVD Chapter 6: Roots of the Opposition

**NARRATOR:** In 1971, Phyllis Schlafly was a political activist in Alton, IL. She, along with a growing number of conservatives, fiercely opposed the child care bill, and framed it as an attack on families.

**PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY, Founder & President, Eagle Forum:** The Mondale-Brademas bill was a very radical piece of legislation. It was really for the government to take over the raising of children. That was not what we wanted and not the kind of country that we wanted to live in.

**NARRATOR:** Schlafly and her allies staunchly defended their idea of the family—where mothers would stay home to care for their children—and asserted that with hard work and determination alone, all families could prosper without government programs.

**SELF:** And so when they look at Civil Rights and all of these, kinds of, you know, social programs that are attempting to support the American family, in their minds they—they see that as benefiting immoral families. Families that have bad values. Families that don't work hard enough.

**NARRATOR:** Schlafly's ascent in conservative circles had been propelled by *A Choice, Not an Echo*, a self-published book that she sold out of her garage—three million copies. The book was written in support of Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater's 1964 Presidential campaign.

*Archival footage, Goldwater nomination c. 1964:  
South Carolina 16 votes would put Barry Goldwater over the top.*

**NARRATOR:** Although Goldwater suffered a landslide loss to Lyndon Johnson, his campaign galvanized hardcore conservatives like Schlafly, who had the knowledge, resources and patience to build their political following.

**SCHLAFLY:** I had been very active in the Federation of Republican Women, so I had contacts all over the country of Republican women who knew the political process and who knew how to contact their congressmen and tell them what we wanted them to do.

*Archival footage: Capitol building*

## 19:03 DVD Chapter 7: What the Legislation Covered

**NARRATOR:** But Schlafly's movement was still underground, and the Comprehensive Child Development Act was moving through Congress with strong bipartisan support.



*Animation: Highlighted Legislation book*

**NARRATOR:** In addition to child care and preschool, the new program would include after-school care for older children, meals, medical treatment, dental checkups and counseling that would be made available to the poor for free and to everyone else on a sliding scale.

**JOHNSON:** It was locally controlled, it was totally voluntary, limited to children whose parents requested it.

**NARRATOR:** The Comprehensive Child Development Act was budgeted at 2 billion dollars for the first year, the equivalent of 11.5 billion dollars today.

*Animation: Logos in support of the CCDA*

**NARRATOR:** The League of Women Voters, American Home Economics Association, Parent Teacher Association, the National Conference of Catholic Charities, all endorsed the bill, as did the United Methodist Church, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, American Academy of Pediatrics and a legion of others.

**MONDALE:** There was an overwhelming consensus that this was a sensible, reasonable bill. We were close to getting something that would give young Americans in that situation a better chance.

**NARRATOR:** In the fall of 1971, the child development bill passed both houses of congress.

*Archival footage, interview with Walter Mondale:  
It is, in my opinion, the most single important new public policy needed in America today.*

## **20:56 DVD Chapter 8: The Opposition Plots Power**

**NARRATOR:** But to become law, it would need President Nixon's signature, and opposition forces had reached the white house. A young conservative White House Aide named Patrick Buchanan was putting a different spin on the child development bill.

**PATRICK BUCHANAN, White House Adviser 1969-1974:** I did call it the most radical piece of legislation to come out of this Congress of the United States. And we saw that over in the Soviet Union. Taking kids from their parents and putting them into these institutions and having them educated there rather than at home, didn't seem to me to be traditionally American.



*Animation: Buchanan Contact Sheet*

**BUCHANAN:** I was very close to the President, and he'd look to me to tell him what the thinking and feeling was of the Conservative Movement. All these group were basically the elite, if you will, the political elite of the right.

*Still: Buckley's Manhattan townhouse on Park Ave.*

**NARRATOR:** One group of powerful, elite conservatives known as the Manhattan 12 was so incensed by Nixon's tilt towards the center they planned to introduce a right-wing republican challenger to Nixon in the '72' primary.

*Still: Nixon White House*

**BUCHANAN:** Nixon had imposed wage and price controls, he had announced he was going to China. So he had a real problem with the Conservative Movement.

*Archival Footage: Buchanan putting memo on Nixon's desk.*

**22:14 NARRATOR:** The child care bill became a lightning rod for conservative attacks. With Buchanan's support, the Manhattan 12 launched a campaign of editorials attacking the bill, and demanding a presidential veto.

**BUCHANAN:** If I saw editorials on this issue, I could write a memo to the President of the United States saying: "This is developing, this is building, we're up for re-election and we've got a problem here."

**NARRATOR:** Buchanan made sure that Nixon could see there was a real political threat—and a political opportunity. The solution? Nixon would veto the bill, and Buchanan would write the message himself, in language so strong it would not only extinguish the idea once and for all—it would electrify his right wing base.

*Archival Nixon audiotape*

*NIXON: We're going to take a little heat from the left, so we might as well get credit from right.*

*AIDE (Charles Colson): Well we discussed that last night Mr. President, and of course I asked Pat Buchanan to get in because the words we use are very, very important. We want to be sure we're against certain principles—the conservatives are more interested in philosophy.*

*NIXON: I know. They're more interested in philosophy than the programs.*

**BUCHANAN:** I said I want to write a veto at the same time which is political and

ideological and which hits the Child Development Act at its core.

**JOHNSON:** And that's exactly what he did, and he hit a grand slam.

**23:48 NARRATOR:** On Dec 9th, 1971, Nixon released his veto message.

*Archival footage, Dan Rather news broadcast 12/9/71:  
The President says the two billion dollars that would be spent in the first year for  
child care would be, as he put it, a long leap into the dark. One of his other objections  
(trails off)...*

**BUCHANAN:** (Reading) This is the heart of it: for the federal government to plunge headlong financially into supporting child development would commit the vast moral authority of the national government...

**SCHLAFLY:** ...to the side of communal approaches to child rearing over and against the family centered approach.

**PRODUCER:** Do you agree with that?

**SCHLAFLY:** Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, it's great.

*Archival footage, interview with Rep. John Brademas (D-Indiana 1959-1981)  
12/9/71:  
With one stroke of the pen, President Nixon has broken his own promise to support  
child development, and he has greatly damaged the chances for the children of work-  
ing families as well as poor children to have an opportunity for the kind of healthful  
and stimulating development which the President at one point in time pledged his  
administration to support.*

*Archival Footage: Nixon at podium, speech about children*

**EDELMAN:** The veto really did hurt. It said it was undermining the family when the family and parent role was central to everything we'd talked about. It said it was going to communalize family life.

### **25:08 DVD Chapter 9: America Changes Course**

**SELF:** Nixon's veto message is really the first time that an American President, the leader of one of the national parties reaches out and takes that-that rhetoric and nationalizes it, this rhetoric about the threat to the American family.

**JOHNSON:** And suddenly the right wing had a new and powerful organizing tool.

**NARRATOR:** Mondale and Brademas tried to revive their child care legislation, but conservative forces were growing even stronger.

**MONDALE:** We decided to go back at it again. We changed some of the wording that the right wing had used. We took the word “comprehensive” out of there. We, we emphasized the control that rested in the parents, the voluntary nature, nature of the program. But the opposition was building...

**NARRATOR:** An anonymous flyer was rippling through the country, with misleading and false accusations against the new bill.

**JOHNSON:** It alleged that parents cannot require their children to go to church or Sunday school or the synagogue. It said further that if a government official found that in his or her judgment the parents were not doing an adequate job rearing their children they could come in and take the authority away from the parents.

**NARRATOR:** The flyer ignited a firestorm of editorials. Letters poured into to Washington.

**JOHNSON:** I got dozens of calls from my colleagues, staff members, Republican and Democratic, saying, “How do we respond to this?”

**MONDALE:** Some of the attacks were so unhinged from reality and honesty.

**27:06 JOHNSON:** The veto message and the unsigned flyer had touched emotions, and fears. It turned out to be a very effective organizing tool for the right wing. Fear in politics almost always triumphs hope.

**BUCHANAN:** That was one of the last great attempts of the Great Society Democrats to basically recreate America and we stopped that piece cold. And I’m glad we did.

**MONDALE:** They did find a golden vein of anxiety in America that they, that worked, and they knew it worked. And I think they’ve kept it up.

**NARRATOR:** Similar legislation didn’t breathe in Washington for over four decades.

**SELF:** What Nixon’s veto of the child care development act symbolized, was that the American social contract would really not extend to in a broad way, to help American families.

**NARRATOR:** During the 40 years since the veto, politicians, many calling themselves “pro-family” have continued to chip away at programs that actually helped children and families, and helped our society build its middle class. They’ve target them as unaffordable, not the government’s job, and an intrusion on families.

**LOVETT:** When we bail out banks, or when we allow resources to be garnered by the top 1% of population and we forget that have an investment in the entire population we really set a different kind of value system.

*Archival footage of Dan Rather news report 12/9/71:  
The President says he vetoed it mostly because of its provisions for child care. Services ranging from prenatal care to counseling for teenagers would have been established. Mr. Nixon says, and I quote from his veto statement: “No immediate need has been demonstrated” unquote for these centers. Dan Rather CBS News, Washington.*

**SANFORD:** Did you know about that?

**WEINER:** I didn’t.

**SANFORD:** I didn’t. Can you imagine if there was a federal program with sliding fee childcare—would that be fantastic or would that be fantastic?

## **29:40 DVD Chapter 10: The Military Gets Smart**

*Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base*

**LANGLEY:** Hi Caleb! Are you looking for Mama Lisa? Hi Caleb!

**NARRATOR:** There *is* a federal child care program for one of our nation’s largest employers.

**BRIG. GEN. VINCENT COGLIANESE, Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base:**  
If our families are taken care of, there’s a sense of security out there that we don’t have to worry about them and we can concentrate on the mission.

**NARRATOR:** The military’s child care was once as abysmal as the rest of the country’s. But in 1989, 18 years after Nixon’s veto, congress mandated that they provide high-quality care to any of their families who wanted it.

**LANGLEY:** That’s our future. That’s tomorrow’s, you know, scientists. That’s tomorrow’s educators. What we do is absolutely critical.

*Camp Pendleton, California*

**NARRATOR:** Today, the U.S. Armed Forces offers some of the best child-centered care in the nation. It’s affordable, and strictly regulated. We were once achingly close to extending this kind of care to all of America’s children. We know how to do it. We’ve enacted effective family policies in past times of need. Will we do it again?

**EDELMAN:** We've got to figure out how to sound the sirens, and then give people ways of being effective in a democracy that really has been hijacked by money, to such a large degree. And how do you do this for a vote-less, voiceless constituency, but who are going to be the determinants of what in the world America is going to be in the future.

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