

Michael Jackson: Healing the World

Much has been written in the last several weeks about Michael Jackson, millions of records have been sold again, and the checkout lines are full of tabloid tales. Buried in the midst of this is the fact that Michael Jackson used his success to give back to those less fortunate -- apparently to a record number of organizations. We hope that you'll agree that one of the best ways to acknowledge and celebrate the art and goodworks created by this extraordinarily talented individual would be to contribute to some of the charitable organizations he supported over the years. We've provided a selection of them below to get you started:



AIDS PROJECT LA

AIDS Project Los Angeles is dedicated to improving the lives of people affected by HIV disease, reducing the incidence of HIV infection, and advocating for fair and effective HIV-related public policy. www.apla.org



BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS

Big Brothers Big Sisters is the oldest, largest and most effective youth mentoring organization in the United States. They have been the leader in one-to-one youth service for more than a century, developing positive relationships that have a direct and lasting impact on the lives of young people. Big Brothers Big Sisters mentors children, ages 6 through 18, in communities across the country- including yours. The Big Brothers Big Sisters Mission is to help children reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one relationships with mentors that have a measurable impact on youth. www.bbbs.org



CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

CDF is the foremost national proponent of policies and programs that provide children with the resources

they need to succeed. They champion policies that will lift children out of poverty; protect them from abuse and neglect; and ensure their access to healthcare, quality education, and a moral and spiritual foundation. www.childrensdefense.org



END HUNGER NETWORK

Hunger is one of the most devastating problems facing humanity today. It claims the lives of 40,000 of our children worldwide every day and

affects the physical and educational growth of one out of every six children in the United States. The End Hunger Network is a non-profit organization working with the entertainment community to encourage, stimulate and support media projects, programs and events aimed at involving people in ending childhood hunger. www.endhunger.com



JANE GOODALL INSTITUTE

Founded by renowned primatologist Jane

Goodall, the Jane Goodall Institute is a global nonprofit that empowers people to make a difference for all living things. Their work builds on Dr. Goodall's scientific work and her humanitarian vision. www.janegoodall.org



MAKE A WISH FOUNDATION

Since 1980, the Make-A-Wish Foundation has enriched the lives of children with life-

threatening medical conditions through its wish-granting work. The Foundation's mission reflects the life-changing impact that a Make-A-Wish experience has on children, families, referral sources, donors, sponsors and entire communities. The Make-A-Wish Foundation was founded in 1980 after a little boy named Chris Greicius realized his heartfelt wish to become a police officer. Since its humble beginnings, the organization has blossomed into a worldwide phenomenon, reaching more than 174,000 children around the world. www.wish.org



THE PRINCE'S TRUST

Around one in five young people in the UK are not in work, education or training. Youth unemployment costs the UK economy 10 million pounds a day in lost productivity, while youth crime costs 1 billion pounds

every year. The Prince's Trust addresses this by giving practical and financial support to the young people who need it most. They help develop key skills, confidence and motivation, enabling young people to move into work, education or training. www.princes-trust.org.uk



UNITED NEGRO COLLEGE FUND

To close the educational attainment gap between African Americans and the majority population, UNCF helps promising students attend

college and graduate by:

- Providing operating funds for its 39 member colleges, all of them small, liberal arts institutions, making it possible for them to offer their students 21st century academic programs while keeping their tuitions to less than half the average of other private colleges;
- Administering 400 scholarship and internship programs;
- Serving as a national advocate for the importance minority higher education by representing the public policy interests of its students and member colleges. www.uncf.org

These are just a few of the causes he supported, as noted on the website www.looktothestars.org. Check it out for more on these and other charities.

Profile Editor Adrienne Papp, who lived near and knew Michael Jackson, shares her personal reflections on this page about his passing and the resulting media storm.

MICHAEL JACKSON: Hurt By The World

by Adrienne Papp

"I know the creator will go, but his work survives."

Michelangelo

We all know how extraordinary, legendary and almost supernatural Michael Jackson was with dance moves, a style that nobody else could mimic, much less reinvent. Jackson was not trained in dance or singing, yet has changed pop culture forever. That is God sent. That is the expression of a man who wanted to transcend death by attaching his personality to his art, which will then live forever. He said in his last interview: "... to escape death I attempt to bind my soul to my work." As a true icon and legend, he has forever engraved his legacy in the history books as the greatest performer ever.



But, what we did not know about Michael Jackson or care

to understand,

was that he was deeply hurt by the world. He lived a very isolated and lonely life despite outside appearances. His soul struggled daily to overcome the pain that was constant throughout his life in one form or another. First, as a child with no childhood at all, then as a grown up attacked by the public and media equally, calling him "Wacko Jacko" and many other derogatory adjectives...

...Michael worked to "repair" the missing elements in his own soul by giving -- a beautiful way to support the world and those in need. Yet, he was grossly misunderstood and obviously taken advantage of. The events in his life should shed a light on the less evolved side of human nature: greed, speculation and underhandedness from those who attach themselves to successful and unsuspecting kindred spirits only to advance themselves by twisting the truth any which way their interest dictates.

Jackson is not the only victim to such behavior in polite society. This is a phenomenon that happens not only in Hollywood, but most everywhere successful people try to lend a helping hand. And, then comes the media with its sensationalism. The combination of the two is enough to break the toughest of spirits...

...Genius is often accompanied by an elusive and quirky nature. That combined with the shyness and sensitivity Jackson had made him an enigma that the average mind had a hard time understanding. Topping all this was the endless speculation about Jackson changing his appearance frequently, as if it was anybody's business but his own. Constant dissatisfaction is a trait of a perfectionist and a habit of an artist ever wanting to express himself. The constant reinvention of himself and his perfectionist tendencies are the very same traits that made him the single most creative artist of our time. His mere presence on stage defined a new era in entertainment and influenced the entire world. Ironically, just as his fans made him successful by their support, the very same outside world devastated him to the degree that he was close to a nervous breakdown more often than not, becoming a fragile man with a broken spirit and frequently lonely existence.

Jackson's tragic death made me compassionate and angry at the same time. Two questions are definitely raised by his sudden passing and the way he was forced to live. First, when will the medical community realize that the solution does not lie in prescription drugs? Hanging around celebrities for recognition and giving them drugs in order to get into their good graces is not helping their health but rather hastening their death.

Secondly, when will the media finally back off? Why is it necessary to delve into the very private lives of celebrities and not only dig until they hit the kidneys, but cover a story (whether true or not) until the audience gets sick of it? Then, move onto yet another one, again, until we all get sick of it? In the meantime, the world is falling apart and there is more than enough to talk about besides gossip and one celebrity or another without a break. I sometimes wonder how one topic can be talked about for days or weeks from so many angles yet with one meaning.

Michael Jackson was undoubtedly the most talented performer of his generation and will be remembered forever. But his music and talent may be overshadowed by the grotesque caricature of him that was perpetuated in the media. Now that he is gone, it is time to appreciate him and his talents for what they really are, and not what a fashionable and sensational interpretation describes them to be.

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Take a nostalgic trip back to 1985, and watch again the incredible gathering of your favorite stars in the "We Are The World" video.



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