

My "At Least Ones," - a short reflection.

June 2019

Yesterday I had the privilege of visiting Shelburne Farms for the annual Turell Fund Day as a representative for the Committee on Temporary Shelter. The morning began wet and soggy with a steady rain pounding on the roof of the Coach Barn venue as we sat amongst friends and colleagues from organizations across the state. The Turell Fund is a national foundation devoted to serving children across our nation. The theme of the day centered on “the importance of love in early childhood,” and celebrated fostering affection, compassion, and understanding in children’s earliest years. Speakers and guests drew inspiration from the late Fred Rogers of ‘Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood’ who spent his life teaching children about love and kindness, while also sparking conversations about some of life’s darker moments.

The annual Turell Fund Day gives us time to step back from our work to remember our purpose and place in a child’s life. Keynote speaker, Dr. Junlei Li, a Senior Fellow at the Fred Rogers Institute and faculty of Harvard Graduate School of Education, discussed the concept of “at least one.” That in a child’s life, there must be “at least one” committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult in order to create stability for children during early development. It is human relationships that are the “active ingredients” that help children grow best, learn best, and trust others.

Fred Rogers often told us to look for the helpers in our lives. He said that whenever bad things happen, you must always look for the helpers. Dr. Li asked us to consider that nobody became who they are today without the helpers in their lives. Throughout his life, Fred spoke at many ceremonies and events, and in many of his speeches he gave his audience an invisible gift; a chance to honor the helpers in our lives. Those who sung us into singing, and who loved us into being. He says, “I’d like to give you all an invisible gift. A gift of a silent minute to think about those who have helped you become who you are today. Some of them may be here right now. Some may be far away. Some may even be in Heaven. But wherever they are, if they’ve loved you, and encouraged you, and wanted what was best in life for you, they’re right inside yourself. So, let’s just take a minute, in honor of those that have cared about us all along the way. One silent minute.”

Yesterday I had the chance to reflect on this for the first time, and it was a profound moment. I realized that my Mom, Andrea Bard loved me into being. My kindergarten teacher Mrs. McHugh loved me into being. My daycare provider loved me into being. My Grammie Bard loved me into being. They were my “at least ones,” and I am grateful to them, today more than ever.

And so I ask you to take one silent minute today and think about who your helpers were.

Who sung you into singing? Who loved you into being?