

Einstein's Mother

"When I was a child, my mother said to me, 'If you become a soldier, you will become a general. If you become a monk, then you will end up as Pope.' Instead, I became a painter, and wound up as Picasso." Famous quote from Pablo Picasso. What did Einstein's mother say to him?

Recently, I found a yellowed volume of Jawaharlal Nehru's (First Prime Minister of independent India) letters to his daughter, Indira Priyadarshini, at the Fort Mason used bookstore in San Francisco. These letters were written from prison, and as you read them, you would feel a father preparing his beloved daughter for becoming a world leader. Indira Gandhi, of course, went on to also become a Prime Minister of India.

I have always been intrigued by the question: What is the model for raising a high-performance child?

Some of Howard Gardner's (development psychologist at Harvard) books *Creating Minds* and *Leading Minds* throw some light on the factors that influenced many twentieth century world figures: Picasso, Einstein, Martha Graham, Alfred P. Sloan, Thatcher, Gorbachev, and Gandhi. However, he only traces the event histories, less the role of education or parenting.

I am trying to test the following hypothesis: If someone meaningful enough to the child (parent, teacher, other role model) believes in his/her potential, and instills that belief in the child, is that the first step in reaching for Greatness or for world class achievement?

And then, if the hypothesis is true, how can this be worked into the educational system, products, and services to give a much larger set of youngsters enough confidence to believe that they can, indeed, have a world class destiny?

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