

Obama on fatherhood and 'the hole left in my life'

Thomas C. Fox | Jun. 19, 2009 NCR Today

President Obama was at his best this afternoon at a White House gathering that was really an extended reflection of fatherhood. This as the nation approaches Father's Day Sunday.

He spoke about "the hole" left in his life by the absence of his own father, calling upon American men to do their duty by their kids.

The president launched what the White House termed a "national conversation" on fatherhood, admitted that he had been at times a "far from perfect" father himself.

"Children who grow up without fathers are more likely to drop out of school and wind up in prison," Obama said at a town-hall style meeting that including several top sports stars.

"They're more likely to have substance abuse problems, run away from home and become teenage parents themselves.

"And I say this as someone who grew up without a father in my own life."

He credited his mother -- who died of cancer in 2008 -- and his late grandmother and grandfather with key roles in his meteoric rise to the pinnacle of political life.

"Despite all their extraordinary love and attention, that doesn't mean that I didn't feel my father's absence," Obama said.

"That's something that leaves a hole in a child's heart that a government can't fill."

"If we want our children to succeed in life, we need fathers to step up," Obama said.

"We need fathers to understand that their work doesn't end with conception; what truly makes a man a father is the ability to raise the child and invest in that child."

I suspect I was not the only father moved by the openness and eloquence of the president. Can't imagine his detractors will find much wrong with what he had to say. Or maybe that's my hope.

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