bin is proof words can kill

Rabin’s assassination contemplates how the been punctuated by F. Kennedy, Martin
how on that Friday students crowded meaning to the news
could offer no meaning—
only suggest to my
ily of the Eisenhower
3d. Having grown up
as the Nazi period
about the human

I could tell them that
the Rabin assassination,
as it has both in
license. When a senior
that it would be dan-
es to visit his state or
police call him a
pilot in the language

bones, but words will
dil. Not directly, but to
be an atmosphere that
student who proudly
ictim of the most atro-
cious deeds, while claiming sanction for his violent
act from God.

What lesson can we draw from this assassination that might ren-
der the tragedy meaningful? While the eulogies both at the memo-
riial assembly on campus or at the funeral in Jerusalem cited the
continuation of the peace process as the proper answer to this
destructive act, I would like to suggest a more fundamental lesson,
relevant to political discourse both in Israel and here. We must
learn to be aware of the language, to avoid it our-
selves and not tolerate its use by others.

It is not a matter of freedom of speech. The classic example of
crying fire in the crowded theater is well known. You can work
vigorously for an opponent’s defeat at the polls or in conference;
you can even move to impeach him. But you don’t call for his mur-
der. Whenmorality begins at the barrel of a gun, or
for illegal acts are justified by putative instructions from a divine
source, when political debate disintegrates to demonization of
your opponent, we are not talking about democracy as it has
evolved either in America or in Israel.

Overlooked in all the eulogies is the remarkable fact that Rabin
was a general who became a politician, who, like other Israeli
generals who became politicians, adopted the democratic princi-
ples of the political arena, which are not the norms of an army
command. This rarely happens in politics, and the repetition of
this phenomenon in Israel is remarkable.

The example of his life should move us beyond mourning and
despair to a reactualization of the basic processes of democracy,
ever vigilant to defend it from its abusers.

Arnold J. Band is director of the Center for Jewish Studies.

Another View by Michael Maslin

“We couldn’t raise a million dollars for an endowed chair, but we managed to
find two hundred-and-fifty bucks for this nice upholstered chair.”

what we believe to be true about our
nation’s history. What our country stands
for — and what we want it to stand for — is
integrally linked to what we think our coun-
try has done. Our sense of worth, of meaning,
being depends upon our remembrance. But,
also, our sense of worth, our well-being also
depend upon our forgetting. Remembering
and forgetting determine the history we tell.
Because of this connection, historical schol-
arship frequently becomes embroiled in
keenly felt moral disputes.

Historians, on the other hand, are defend-
ing the standards because they embody the
telling a more complicated story about the
United States, moving beyond presidential
elections and wars to look at what went on
in the slave quarters, on the shop floor, at
Ellis Island and LAX. The success stories of
life’s winners have been tempered by the
 tales of those who suffered.
Is there any reason to think this fuller
account will unite the strings of citizen-
ship? To answer that question, we’d have to
think hard about what holds us together. In
the meantime, we can contemplate a deli-
cious irony: Critics blame a “cultural elite”
for muting ordinary voices into our history.

Parents: Don’t neglect need to develop child’s social responsibility

BY PATRICIA GREENFIELD

There is much discussion about how to be “the best parent possible,”
how to maximize a child’s potential.

But all of these discussions focus on intellectual potential. I, however,
would like to bring up something that is conspicuous by its absence: the role of
the parent in children’s social development.

What has produced the alienation and lack of social responsibility, the lack of shok-
king and caring, that we see all around us? As one who has studied child development and
socialization in other cultures where children generally grow up with a strong sense
of social responsibility, I have some ideas. I see our societal emphasis on maximizing
the child’s intellectual capabilities as standing in the way of developing socially responsible
children, adolescents and adults.

Cross-cultural studies decades ago
showed that household chores and, espe-
cially, care of younger siblings were experi-
ences that “develop a sense of social
responsibility; it is parents who assign those
tasks. In contrast, the dominant view in this
society is that play and academic activities are
children’s proper work. Yet neither pro-
vides an education in social responsibility.

In the United States, we are lucky to
have many immigrant groups that have
brought with them traditions of child-care-
ning that do promote social responsibility.
Unfortunately, we fail to recognize
that groups in which helping other family
members is an important part of a child’s life and upbringing provide a “positive
education for their children’s social de-
velopment. Instead, we tend to criticize par-
ents in those groups as being insufficiently stimulating of each child’s individual
potential.

For example, if a child of Mexican immi-
grant parents is kept home from school to
help in a family crisis, this is not consid-
ered a positive educational experience in
learning to help others; instead, it is con-
idered a negative influence on that child’s
educational development.

From the point of view of many immi-
grant groups, this emphasis on intellectual
development over social development
must look like a debate on how to raise
the smartest, most selfish children in the
world. But the epidemic of murder, crime,
homelessness and poverty in the richest
country on earth shows that smart, selfish
children are not good enough. Nor are the
highly educated parents who know how to
raise such children.

There are many groups in our multicultu-
ral society that know how to raise social-
ly responsible children. We need to learn
from them and add parental education for
social responsibility to our goal of realiz-
ing every child’s intellectual potential.

Patricia Greenfield is a professor of psychology.