

Freedom Voice

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Who's Meaner Than Mean Kids? Adults Bent on Retaliation

By Robin Templeton

From Jonesboro, Arkansas, to Springfield, Oregon, a handful of problem children are arming themselves with guns and going on shooting sprees against their fellow-students. Mean kids, they've been called in the media. But meaner still are the measures adults are pursuing in the name of combating crime — including proposed legislation to execute 11 year olds.

A series of high-profile school site killings by young boys — including the latest shooting spree in a Springfield, Or., high school cafeteria — have precipitated a more predictable horror: proposed legislation to try 10 year olds as adults and apply the death penalty to 11 year olds. It is as if a handful of problem children — “mean kids” we call them — are absolving adults of having to deal with the problems of children.

“Current juvenile laws could not have anticipated violent crimes being committed by children this young,” explains Texas state Representative Jim Pitts who is sponsoring the latest round of retaliatory legislation.

But it is Pitts' generation that warrants concern. For the past quarter century, aging Baby Boomers — not children or teenagers — have driven the upsurge in violent crime. The FBI reports arrest rates for violent crime have doubled for 30 to 49-year olds since 1975. Homicide by children under 13 occurs less frequently today than in 1965.

Texas is not a lone state. Long before Jonesboro, the governors of California and New Mexico appealed in the name of victims of juvenile crime for laws to lower their states' execution ages to 14 and 13. On state and federal fronts, efforts are proliferating to sentence children as adults, abolish the protective segregation of child from adult inmates and limit parole for juvenile offenders.

New Jersey is deploying military-designed satellite technology to track juvenile parolees cuffed with 8-pound transmitters. The head of the state's Juvenile Justice Commission boasts that the system is like “Star Wars.”

In short, the war on crime is obsessed with

young people — as targets rather than victims, predators rather than the prey. Which shouldn't surprise young people. After all, children are far more apt to be murdered by adults — including their own parents — than the other way around.

“The only time people really pay attention to kids is if we pick up a gun and blast somebody,” a 16-year-old friend observed a week after the schoolyard killings in Jonesboro, Ark. Yet most young people are more concerned about missing breakfast than dodging bullets. Some 12 million children are malnourished in America today, according to the Children's Defense Fund. The poverty rate of young people over all is fifty percent higher today than it was in 1970.

Adults' response to all this would make Charles Dickens shudder: since 1970 we have cut back spending on education by at least 25 percent and upped funding to incarcerate them by \$3.2 billion. If *(continued page 15)*

Kidnapping of California Youth Ruled Legal

CALIFORNIA, USA -- You're awakened at midnight, bundled off with two large strangers in a locked car for a 700-mile ride despite your protests, and sent on from there to a foreign country where you're held behind a high fence by people who can use physical restraints, pepper spray, mace or a stun gun against you and deny you any contact with the outside world.

Have you been illegally kidnapped and falsely imprisoned? Not if you're a minor, the venue is deemed a treatment center, and your parents agreed to it all, according to an Alameda County, California judge who ruled January 20 in the case of David Van Blarigan, a 16-year-old who didn't even have the opportunity to testify on his own behalf.

David's “problems,” according to his parents, were refusing to attend church and getting bad grades in school.. When asked why

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Renegade Nation

U.S. foreign policy at odds
with international treaties

By Jason Fults

“All youth shall have the right to adequate food, shelter, medical care and a healthy environment”

The right to survival expressed in NCRA's Youth Bill of Rights is really nothing new. In fact, it is a deeply felt sentiment which can be found in numerous international conventions and treaties. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (circa 1948) states that:

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”

The Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition, adopted by the World Food Conference in 1974, “solemnly proclaims [that] every man, woman, and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition;” as does Article 11 of the 1976 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (which was signed by President Carter in 1977 but which has yet to be ratified by the U.S.). More recently, the International Food Security Treaty states that, “food may never be used as a weapon to gain political or military advantage either within a state or as an instrument of foreign policy.”

In light of these agreements, and the universal humanitarian concerns expressed therein, one cannot help but be horrified at the human rights abuses being perpetuated by the U.S. practice of denying food and medical supplies to so-called “enemy” countries. Two examples which immediately come to mind due to recent world events are Cuba and Iraq. Though the two nations differ immensely in terms of their history, culture, and respective political situations, both govern

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Poverty Driving Boys into the Sex Trade

By Neville Johnson, IPS

KINGSTON, JAMAICA - - Damion Mendez is 15 years old. He has seven siblings and attends school in this capital city. His parents were separated when he was seven years old. His mother was left with the responsibility of caring for her eight children.

Mendez says he knows what it is to go without food and other basic necessities for days.

"I have been through hell, real hell. Nothing was going for me. I had to stop from school several days because I had no lunch money, no bus fare, no shoes. My mother just could not afford it, she was very poor, and I could not continue like that.

"My friends were able to have money and get most of what they want... I was introduced to some male friends after which I started to hang out with them and from there things started to change for the better.

"I started getting some money, clothes, school books and since then I have not had such problem getting lunch money, bus fares and other things. My male friends are now taking care of me," he says.

This signalled Mendez's introduction to the sex trade — a trade which is becoming increasingly popular among teenage boys as it is among girls.

And while Donnett Grantstam of the Women's Bureau says she does not doubt that there is an increase in the number of these young persons who are turning to prostitution these days as a result of the economic situation, there are no available figures.

Psychologists like Dr. Peter Weller also attribute this phenomenon to the deteriorating economic condition facing the country.

"There is no doubt that as the country's economic crisis deepens and family members face harder economic times, and as teenagers try to cope with the difficulties of meeting their basic needs if their parents cannot come up with the things that they want, they will do anything just to get what they want and many see prostitution as the way to satisfy some of (those needs)," says Weller.

Many of these teenagers are from single-parent homes where mothers are earning the minimum wage of just under 23 dollars per week. Some 46 percent of families here are female-headed.

Over the last two years, the Jamaican economy has been in a slump. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has dropped to -2 percent, foreign direct investment has dried up, export earnings have fallen by 10 percent while the value of imports continue to rise, leaving a

huge trade gap.

Overall unemployment now stands at 16.3 percent, but for those in the 16 to 30 age group it goes up to 65 percent.

Approximately 46,000 students graduate from the secondary school system annually. About 10,000 go into skills training programmes across the island, and another 6,000 enter college and university, leaving 30,000 seeking jobs — jobs which are, for the most part, hard to come by.

Also, one in three persons here live below the poverty line which means they earn the minimum wage of 23 dollars per week or less.

"Teenage boys in Jamaica who are involved in prostitution are forced into doing so either as a direct way of making money to take care of themselves or because of peer pressure. But there is no doubt that teenage boys are becoming more and more involved in sexual activity. This is very sad, especially when they have to rely on this route for survival," says psychologist, Aaron Dumas.

Such was the case of 17-year-old Keith Matthew. His father stopped supporting him financially when he was 15. He lives with his mother who is in no position to give him the basic necessities of life. He says he was forced into the sex industry as he sought a way to earn money so that he could stay in school.

"I got involved with other guys in my age group who were involved with older men. We were all suffering financially... Our mothers had to find everything that we wanted because our fathers did not shoulder their responsibility. You see, I usually go to school without lunch money and bus fares because my mother and most of my friends' mothers could not afford it.

"Today, things are not as bad with me and my friends, we are getting enough to take us through school," he says.

"We are forced to make this (prostitution) a part of our life for the time being. Our mothers have struggled and are struggling because of the harsh economic conditions. Some of us had to find a way out of this poverty and the easiest way for some of us is by this route," adds 18 year old Mark Johnson.

Many of these young men are involved in homosexual prostitution.

In a 1994 study on working children in Jamaica, Dr. Claudette Crawford-Brown, lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the University of the West Indies noted that prostitution is among the activities by which "working" children earn money.

A note from the Editors:

We are proud to present a new, re-energized Freedom Voice which will continue to build on the successes of the FV to date. Several new items will be featured:

Medicine For the People will feature questions by young people regarding health and medical care. Responses by several medical providers will be run.

Ask your lawyer will give answers to legal questions from readers. Attorneys (all in the U.S. to date) will respond to queries.

International events and issues will be integrated with all other issues and not seen as a separate category. Items of interest to younger children will be featured along with articles more likely to be read by older youth.

The *Freedom Voice* will continue to accept contributions (including artwork, news and editorial articles, photographs, letters to the editor, interviews, book/movie reviews, etc.) that address issues relating to children's rights and youth liberation. If you are interested in writing for the *Freedom Voice*, send for writer's guidelines - and get started today.

Freedom Voice

The Freedom Voice is a quarterly journal exploring issues of children's rights and liberation published by the National Child Right's Alliance. For more information about NCRA or to subscribe to the Freedom Voice, see page 16.

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SmUggle tHis paPer!

The *Freedom Voice* has a long history of being banned. The first episode of banning occurred in 1986 when the organizer of the Durham Exchange Club march against child abuse demanded that we "box up" our papers because he deemed the paper, "socialist" - this, because of the Youth Bill of Rights support for a national health care system. So much for free speech!

One youth home and a psych unit banned

the paper because they said that *Freedom Voice* was making children scheduled to be reunited with their [abusive] parents resistant to the reunification. Geez, getting abuse victims to resist return to abusers - baaaaaad, bad, *Freedom Voice*.

If your school, youth center, psych unit or juvenile hall refuses to allow young people to read the *Freedom Voice* - please let us know - and SMUGGLE THIS PAPER IN.

International campaign launched against the use of child soldiers

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND -- A new coalition of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) against the use of child soldiers was launched at the end of June in Geneva and New York. According to latest estimates, more than 300,000 children under 18 years of age are fighting in armed conflicts around the world and hundreds of thousands more are members of armed forces who could be sent into combat at any moment. Although most recruits are over 15 years of age, significant recruitment starts at 10 years, and the use of even younger children has been recorded.

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers has been formed in response to the failure of negotiations within the United Nations to agree a prohibition on keeping children out of armed forces. The Coalition is calling for the adoption and implementation of an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to raise the minimum age for military recruitment and use in hostilities to 18 years. The current international minimum age is only 15 years, although most countries do not accept under-18s in their armed forces.

Speaking in Geneva at the launch, the Coalition Coordinator, Stuart Maslen, declared that: The use of children as soldiers has no place in a civilized society and must be stopped. The Coalition is calling upon the

international community to ensure children are given strict legal protection against involvement in armed conflict.

The Coalition is being headed by a Steering Committee of six NGOs - Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, International Federation Terre des Hommes, International Save the Children Alliance (represented by Swedish Save the Children), Jesuit Refugee Service, Geneva, and Quaker UN Office, Geneva. It will be coordinated by a small Secretariat based in France close to Geneva.

Information on the numbers of child soldiers in the world, including the recruitment ages in governmental armed forces, is also being published on the Internet by Swedish Save the Children (<<http://www.rb.se>), which holds the world's most comprehensive database on the subject.

The objective of the Coalition is in line with the Plan of Action concerning Children in Armed Conflict adopted by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in 1995. The Plan of Action commits the Movement to promoting the principle of non-recruitment and non-participation in armed conflicts of children below the age of 18 years and to taking concrete action to protect and assist child victims of armed conflicts.

U.S. Thinks Kids Should Fight

By Thalif Deen, IPS

UNITED NATIONS, GENEVA -- The United States "singlehandedly" is blocking international efforts to de-mobilise child soldiers in national armies throughout the world, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW).

The rights organisation says the United States is the only country that has refused to accept 18 as the minimum age for participation in hostilities.

"There is a growing international consensus that the use of children as soldiers is unconscionable and must be brought to an end," says Jo Becker, of the HRW Children's Rights Project.

Since 1994, a U.N. Working Group has been trying to develop new international standards that would protect children from the horrors of war. The Group has been pushing for an optional protocol to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child which would raise the minimum age for military recruitment: from the present 15 to 18 years of age.

"Unfortunately, the U.S. singlehandedly has blocked progress on this critical effort," Becker says. She also points out that it is ironic that the United States should oppose a protocol in a convention which Washington has so far refused to ratify.

Besides Somalia, the United States is the

only internationally recognised government which has failed to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and is therefore ineligible to even become a party to the optional protocol," she noted.

"The U.S. position has led to a breakdown in negotiations and currently represents an insurmountable obstacle to successfully concluding the protocol," Becker says.

The U.S. government accepts 17 year-olds as voluntary recruits into the military, and is thus opposed to establishing 18 as the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into government armed forces. But, in reality, 17 year-olds make up only a fraction of U.S. troops, namely about half of one percent, HRW says.

Last month, the U.S. expressed strong reservations on a U.N. General Assembly resolution that called for an end to the use of children in national armies.

U.S. Ambassador Seth Winnick told delegates that for more than 50 years, the United States had permitted voluntary enlistment in the armed forces at 17 years of age, with parental consent. Therefore, it did not anticipate any changes to its law or practices in that area.

Winnick pointed out that the reference to the use of children as combatants and as soldiers was contrary to the term "children" in the United Nations, where "it" referred to persons under 18 years of age, in accordance with Article 1 of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. However 15 is the minimum age for enlistment in the armed forces under texts to which virtually all

member states were parties or signatories.

Winnick said that many member states permitted military service to individuals between 15 and 18 years of age.

"Nevertheless, the U.S. was concerned by drafting practices that used unclear and imprecise language that only undermined the hard work of the United Nations."

He said that negotiations have been under way for five years on an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but agreement had not been reached. It would therefore be inappropriate for the General Assembly to prejudge the outcome of those negotiations, he added.

Human Rights Watch, however, argues that to deal with discrepancies between current U.S. practice and the goals of the protocol, Washington could follow the lead of other countries, such as Australia, the Netherlands and New Zealand, which have recently raised their minimum age for military recruitment. Another model is the UK, which plans to continue recruiting under-18s, but will place them into separate training establishments rather than combat units.

HRW also notes that 17 year-olds are placed on warships and cannot be removed if a ship would find itself in a conflict situation. However, the U.S. government's report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, submitted in 1994, said that "in practice, the Department of Defence ensures that individuals under the age of 18 are not stationed in combat situations."

Since the U.N. Working Group takes decisions only by consensus, all participating nations must be in unanimous agreement on the wording of the draft protocol. While several other countries in the Working Group have supported 17 as the minimum age requirement, the U.S. was the only country to state that it would refuse to accept a consensus of 18 years.

The Working Group is scheduled to meet again from Feb. 2-12. "If the U.S. refuses to change its objections to 18 as a minimum age for participation in hostilities, however, further progress may be impossible, as anything less than 18 years is unacceptable to other members of the Working Group," Becker says.

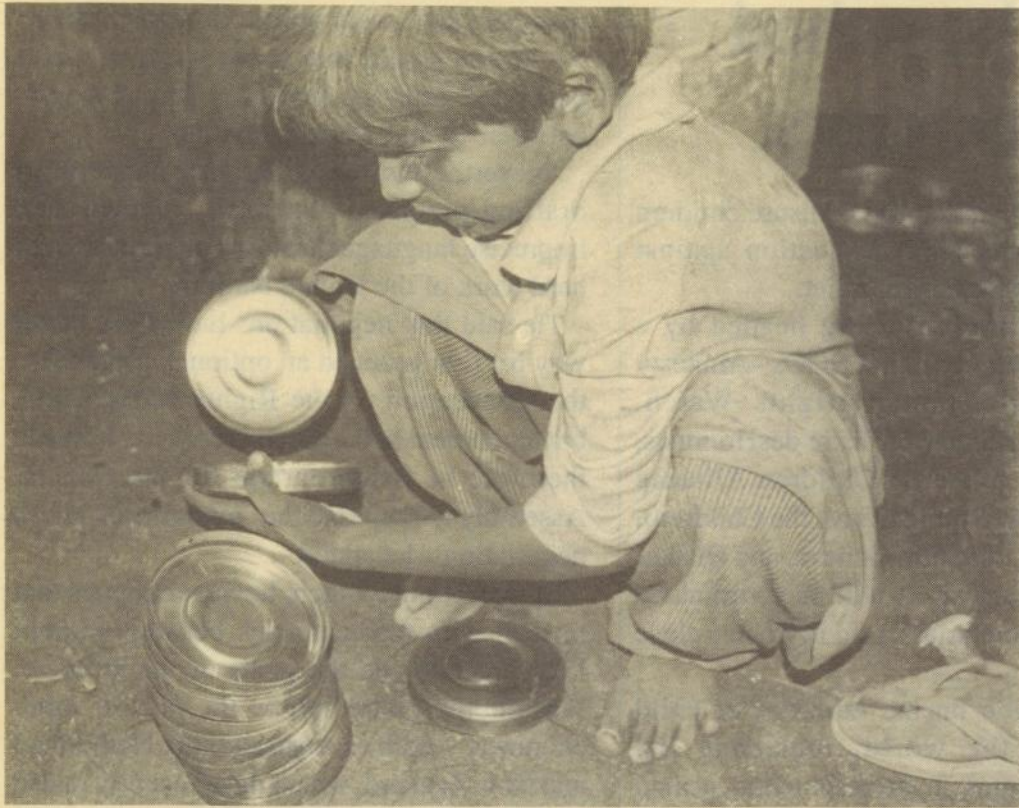
Human Rights Watch, meanwhile, says that as many as 250,000 children under the age of 18 now serve in government armies or armed rebel groups in more than 30 countries worldwide. "These young combatants, some as young as eight years of age, are both the tools and the casualties of adult hatreds," it adds.

HRW also points out that, in the last decade, more than two million children have been killed in armed conflicts, six million have been seriously injured or permanently disabled. Many more bear psychological scars from being forced to both commit and witness horrific atrocities.

A U.N. report released in 1996 also blamed the world's arms manufacturers for mass-producing inexpensive light weapons making it tragically easy for children to be recruited and trained as soldiers.

Titled the "Impact of Armed Conflict on Children," the study was prepared by Mozambique's former first lady Gracha

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(left). A 6-year-old works in a steel vessel polishing plant in Anuppanadi, Madurai. (below) A young boy who has worked since the age of four in the steel polishing plant.

Photos by Lyn Duff

Laborers March to Demand a Childhood

By James Rajakaran E.

TAMIL NADU, INDIA -- We want education, we want recreation, we need sleep and rest. Give us love and care for labour. Give us our childhood. Hundreds of child labourers were shouting these slogans and demonstrating their demand for basic rights as children as they marched through the streets of Madurai on 30th April 1998, the Anti Child Labour Day.

Thousands of Maduraites witnessed this rally with surprise and irony as the children marched through the main streets of Madurai starting from the Madurai Central Railway Station. These child labourers were from the match and crackers factories of Sivakasi, the Beedi Rolling Industry, as well as children from steel vessel polishing factories of Madurai. The Anti Child Labour Day was organised by PARD, the People's Association for Rural Development, as part of a campaign against child labour in solidarity with fifteen other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of Msdurai and the surrounding areas.

Earlier the rally was flagged by Mr. T. R. Gopalakrishnan, News Editor of the "Indian Express," one of the leading newspapers in the country.

The rally was intended to inform and sensitize the general public on the problems and needs of child labourers.

With children carrying placards and banners, the rally culminated in a public meeting at Victoria Edward Hall, near the Central Bus Stand of Madurai. This was a meeting with a difference. This meeting was presided over by a former "Child Labourer" named Stella, a 13-year-old girl from the R.R. Mandabam slum of Madurai who is now studying in VII standard.

Speaking on the occasion, she narrated her story of problems and pain. "It was PARD that showed me the way and now I am happy going to school and enjoying my childhood."

Scholars, Social Workers, Politicians and people of high public esteem also spoke on the occasion, while Ms. Stella presided over the meeting.

Dr. N. Markandan, Vice Chancellor of Gandhigram University spoke as Chief Guest. He stressed that the present pattern of elementary and primary education should be thoroughly revamped if the government was serious in eradicating Child Labour. Dr. Markandan stressed the need to arrest the incidence of children dropping out of schools and becoming child labourers.

He said though the government had built enough schools, they were no better than prisons which curbed the natural talents of the children. There was nothing interesting happening in the class room to sustain the children's interest and keep them willing to



go to school.

"It is time the schools had an approach that could aid the overall development of the child and create an interest and provide him the opportunities to sustain that interest."

Dr. Markandan drawing a parallel between poverty and child labour said that it is unfortunate that the government is still unable to alleviate poverty, as many are struggling below the poverty line. "As long as poverty remains," he said, "the exploitation of children will continue."

"It is a shame that industrialist and businessmen continued to make their profits employing children with very little concern about the society and children." Dr. Markandan said to the crowd. "It is equally worse that the salaried class has also not bothered to address to this problem."

"Religious leaders also have a major role in putting a stop to this evil." Dr. Markandan stated. "The religious heads, instead of using [their concern about this issue] as a ploy to get children converted into their religions, should work towards preaching universal brotherhood and create a moral responsibility among the business class of not employing children for work."

Dr. Markandan added that the various government regulations remained on paper and most of their welfare schemes still failed to trickle to people below the poverty line. "The local bodies need to become more alert and Government should come forward to effectively support the NGOs."

Mrs. K. Noorjehan, Postmaster General of Madurai, pointed out that the task of eradicating child labour depended mostly on the NGOs and called upon them to put their maximum in creating awareness about the various government schemes and liberate the children from the clutches of child labour.

Dr. N. Nanmaran, State Organising Secretary, CPM, pointed out the incongruity in celebrating "Children's Day" and also "an anti child labour day". He said only when the labourers problems are solved would there be scope in eradicating child labour.

Mr. J. Paul Basker, Chairman of Peace Trust, Dindigul, also spoke.

For the children the rally was an opportunity expose and express their problems to the

general public. For the general public it was another day of agitation, demonstration, and slogan shouting, or it was a day on which they had second thoughts, after being exposed again to the agony and anguish of working children and their demand for justice.

What will result? Only time can tell.

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Latin America: 15 Million Child Workers

by Gustavo Capdevila, IPS

GENEVA -- The number of children aged six to 14 years-old in Latin America almost equals the region's number of unemployed, suggesting child labour could be acting as a sort of hidden unemployment benefit for poor parents.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) discovered the situation while studying the extent of child employment in preparation for the First Iberoamerican Meeting on Child Labour in Cartagena, Colombia.

The United Nations agency aims to raise public consciousness of the situation of millions of Latin American children who "work and live in miserable conditions."

This ILO document, distributed in Geneva described the suffering of children, "who work from sunrise to sunset, baking bricks in burning ovens, breaking rocks in quarries or being pushed into prostitution in the streets of the big cities."

Available statistics indicate that between 20 and 25 percent of Latin American children aged between six and 14 are working at present. The child workforce constitutes nearly five percent of the region's economically active population. The report said this proportion is "pretty close to the open unemployment rate, which suggests the possibility child labour is, to a greater or lesser

degree, playing the role of a hidden unemployment benefit."

There are now around 15 million children working in the region, half of whom are aged between six and 14 years old.

These figures "appear modest" compared with the 250 million children working worldwide, said Michael Hansenne, ILO director general. However, "they are alarming when we realize that one in every five Latin American children is a child worker."

Other traits in the region include the growing influence of the informal sector, the reduced role of the State as employer, the stagnation of real salaries and persistent poverty in most countries.

Most of the children who work do so in manifestly dangerous conditions which threaten their security, health and emotional stability, as they are submitted to physical and moral abuse and exhausting working hours far exceeding the legal limits, said the ILO.

Some 60 percent of child labour is in the agricultural sector, which the experts class as "one of the most dangerous and difficult to control of all employment situations."

In the rural setting, the children work exposed to the elements, in unsuitable physical conditions. They are exposed to chemicals, sharp tools, animal and insect bites. As a consequence of urbanization, child labour has also

extended to towns and cities, where they work in small businesses, informal workshops, street markets or offering small services.

Hundreds of thousands of girls, around 10 percent of the child workforce, work long days as domestic servants in an atmosphere where they are frequently beaten, insulted or sexually abused.

In a phenomenon characteristic of Latin America, street children make up between five and 20 percent of adolescents working in the cities. The study stated that crime and poverty drag thousands of street children into prostitution, pornography, drug trafficking and other illegal activities. The category of salaried child workers is far larger in Latin America than other regions of the world, where child labour costs little or nothing.

Salaried children represent between 45 and 50 percent of the 10 to 14 age group. The smaller children are generally unpaid family workers.

These children are paid low rates for doing the same work as adults, but for longer hours. In domestic service, payment is often restricted to housing and food.

But for many poor families, child labour is necessary and the loss of this income would cause great difficulties.

The ILO report said child contributions to family incomes can be particularly important for homes facing extreme poverty, especially in single parent households headed by women.

VIETNAM: Though Illegal, Child Labour Is Rampant

By Andy Soloman, IPS

HANOI, VIETNAM-- Vietnam's determined strides toward a market economy are leading to a sizable increase in the exploitation of its children, experts say.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) released a statement saying child exploitation was increasing in Vietnam and that a growing number of children were working long hours in dangerous conditions for no pay.

This is not a problem that Vietnam takes lightly. After all, the country has one of the strictest labour codes among developing nations, and child labour is absolutely illegal.

However, in a country where 80 percent of its 76 million population are poor rural farmers, accurate statistics on children who work — or those who help their families earn a living — are hard to come by.

In many parts of Asia, it is common for children to help their parents make a living. But Rima Salah of UNICEF in Hanoi says Vietnam's moves toward a new market economy are increasing the risk of child exploitation.

"There is evidence of children exploited in gold mines, children working as domestic servants at a very young age, or children working up to 14 hours a day in hazardous conditions for a meagre salary or no payment," Salah said.

Government estimates point to around 29,000 children under the age of 15 as being victims of exploitative labour. But Salah said

the actual figure was probably much higher, as most children would be working in the informal sectors outside the gaze of officialdom.

In a June report, the United States State Department said it found no evidence of state-owned enterprises or joint ventures with foreign investors using child labour. But it did say it got unconfirmed reports of children working illegally in remote mining areas.

"Child labour in Vietnam appears to occur primarily on family farms and in other agricultural activities in rural areas, and in family-owned small businesses in urban areas," the report concluded.

Vietnam's labour code, adopted in 1995, sets the minimum working age as 18, but 16 to 18-year-olds can be hired provided enterprises have permission from the ministry of labour.

Likewise, the youth are not to undertake hazardous work or do work that will harm their physical or mental development. Their working week should be no more than 42 hours and they are to get special health care.

The Vietnamese government is planning a new three-year campaign to try to increase protection of children from drug addiction, and sexual and labour abuses.

Le Van To, the labour ministry official in charge of labour policy and employment, said the plan was formulated to ensure that the 30 million children in Vietnam, which account for 34.3 percent of the population, are free from abuses that contravene international treaties and domestic laws.

There are about 18 million children in the country between the ages of six and 15.

During the year, the central government, provincial authorities and police have conducted raids to free children working in remote gold mines in Vietnam's central and northern highlands.

For instance, Na Ri, a poor mountain district in Bac Kan province some 150 kms northeast of Hanoi, has had to cope with itinerant gold hunters descending on the area for the last 18 years. They bring widespread environmental destruction and social problems including child labour, drug abuse, prostitution and crime.

In May, province and district officials, backed up by the police, found 72 children working in terrible conditions in illegal gold mines in the Luong Thuong commune.

Children, and other adult hired labourers, were often unpaid for months or not paid at all, and would work up to their waists in water digging and carrying baskets of earth and rocks for up to 14 hours a day.

All the children were sent home, and mine owners forced to sign a pledge that they would strictly abide by the labour laws.

So far only children in Luong Thuong were targeted by the government raids, but no one knows how many are still working in other areas in the jungle throughout the province.

"Contractors violate the laws on labour and children's rights. If we know we force them to return the children," Hoang Duc Hoan,

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Eulogy for a Graffiti Writer

Editor's Note: *In cities all across the United States and many suburbs as well, young people announce themselves, proclaim their views to an uncaring adult world, through graffiti, the most ubiquitous medium of youth communication. And all over the United States adults respond with angry denunciations, rarely knowing how to interpret the messages. Last spring, an 18-year-old graffiti writer in San Francisco named Jonathan See Lim, AKA TIE ONE, was shot and killed outside a building by a resident who told police he thought the young man was trying to break in. Other "writers" who knew and admired his work insisted he was no intruder — he was climbing the fire escape in search of a canvas for his aerosol art. The following eulogy offers a unique perspective on the passions that motivate and sustain graffiti writing. Spie, the author, lives and "writes" in San Francisco.*

By Spie

CALIFORNIA, USA -- Tie loved graffiti. He lived graffiti. Writers will say they live graffiti or graffiti is their life, but they are lying to themselves. Graffiti for them is a part of their life but it is not their life. Tie found what he lived for and he was killed for doing it.

Graffiti permeated this 18-year-old body like soy sauce soaks into rice. Tie's veins flowed with permanent ink; with Rustoleum paint; with pure, unrestricted self-expression. Graffiti's loud and angry reaction to the backward system in which we live sprang from every step he took.

Tie's response is seen — on the bus, on the walls, in doorways, over stop signs, on billboards, on overpasses, even on police paddy wagons. He cared not to be confined by authority, by categories and limitations, by the risk of another beating him in defense of his pride, by the walls of separation that the ruling class constructs in grids that attack our psyches.

Tie bounced off these walls. Hit-ups looking like horizons just altered and diagonal planes invaded our spectrum of sight — big with a fat cap and whipped out in seconds, like rampaging elephants, round and bold, over windows, over entrance ways, poles — what have you — he bombed. Making a mockery of this bureaucratic world of ridicu-

lous and humiliating laws, of this power structure and its home. Tie was that big rash the beast despised the most.

This beast battled Tie hard with paint buff squads and good Samaritan "keepers of the state" who took it on their own initiative to shut up this one youth from ever speaking his mind. But he won. Even after the system took him out, he is up everywhere, on the streets and in our hearts.

Tie's last piece had a message on it. It said "The joy of life." People have been taught how to kill, but Tie told the world to live. What was he doing that was so wrong? Perhaps feeling his own heart, responding to his gut-felt soul voice. Is this what was so dangerous?

When I think of Tie, I think of his pain. I think of his family. But I also see a smile that told a story of life's acceptance — a smile that stretched longer than the Great Wall of China. I see a spiritual man-child who walked in prayer everywhere, with Buddhist prayer beads around his neck, a strong and complete pride in his Chinese ancestry and a mind that thought justice before peace.

Tie always gave thanks. But he was steamed, too, "like a steamed (BBQ pork) bun," he would say, and he started getting that up, spelled "SEO," a transliteration of the Chinese character — meaning he was angry, pressure-cooked with thoughts and frustrations.

Tie chose to be a rebel. He even looked like Luke Skywalker, the Jedi knight on a speeder bike with his knit cap beanie and brim. His rebelliousness made him an enemy of the state, which labeled him a vandal, a criminal, a gangster, one of those good-for-nothing youth that cause trouble, the kind they'd rather jail or kill.

Tie was not an intruder. He carried no threat, and he did not deserve a .38 slug in the back of the head. He was climbing the ladder to "fame" — a principle highly regarded as the "American thing to do." He was climbing to scream his presence — "I am here!" — and stake a claim as a free person in this jail called America.

What other writer do you know who took the bus across America to the graffiti Mecca of New York, picking the route with the most stops just so he could bomb along the whole way? Who do you know who ever survived

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When Kids Pay for Poverty

By Samuel Sarpong

ACCRA, GHANA -- It happened on a Friday night. Afi Dogbe, then 10, was asleep when she was awakened by her mother to accompany an elderly woman to the city. She had no knowledge of what she was to do in the city.

When she probed, the mother shouted at her, "Just pack your things, I say." She picked up her few belongings — two dresses and a pant — and was swallowed by the dark.

When it dawned on her that the two-hour journey from her village to Lome, the capital of Togo, had run into four hours, her suspicions were aroused, but she could not

understand what was amiss.

Unknown to her, her mother had arranged for her to be taken to Ghana, so the rest of her family could do with the little food in the house.

It is three years now since Afi left her native Togo. All these years have been a nightmarish experience, years of maltreatment from her "new mother" here in Ghana.

Afi's story represents a new phenomenon, one that was overlooked in the jostling for headline space until police here broke up a ring trafficking in Togolese kids. By

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Vietnam -- Though Illegal, Child Labor is Rampant

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chairman of Na Ri district peoples committee said.

The chairman of Luong Thuong commune peoples committee, 34-year-old Be Van The, who himself spent three years searching for gold, said clamping down on child labour was not easy and that the youngest child sent home was just 10 years old.

"We started to prepare the child labour campaign many years ago but it was very difficult for us because some kids were the children or relatives of the buong (mine owners)," Be said.

He added that some children, often with no identity documents, lied about their ages so they could stay working.

Many of the children come from poverty-stricken areas on Vietnam's north-central coast. In some cases they were sold to mine owners, or the parents sent them away to fend for themselves to relieve the pressure on the family purse. Others ran away, lured by tales of riches and regular wages.

The promise of making good money drives many to try their luck. Per capital annual incomes in Vietnam average less than 300 U.S. dollars, but for many it is a lot less. After all, Vietnam remains one of the poorest countries in the world.

Experts say that until Vietnam drags itself out of the poverty trap and is able to curb rapidly widening income disparities, the problem of child labour is sure to get worse before it gets better.

The communist-led government, however, says it will not allow the situation to deteriorate to the level of systemic abuses in child labour found in other Asian developing countries.

Students March Against Police Brutality

HARARE, ZIMBABWE -- In late April, thousands of students from the University of Zimbabwe took to the streets to protest against the shooting of a fellow student during a demonstration the week before.

"The police have become a law unto themselves. They have become murderers... It has become a culture among the police to employ heavy handed means when dealing with demonstrations which are not violent," the students said in a written statement.

Waving placards, two of which read, 'Lord Save Us From Police Brutality' and 'Mugabe You Are Irrelevant', about 7000 students marched from the University of Zimbabwe to the city center.

The student who was shot, Morememories Chawira, was in intensive care with a bullet lodged in his neck.

The students marched also to protest against the proposed privatization of non-academic services at the campus. The lecturers and support staff argue that if food services are

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Kidnap Ruled Legal

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they sent him away, David's mother said that he "wasn't happy at home."

Apparently David wasn't too happy being sent to a locked facility either. After a short stint in Brightway Adolescent Hospital in Utah, he was sent to Tranquillity Bay, a lock down teen treatment center in Jamaica.

When David arrived in Jamaica, he found that no one was there to meet him. He quickly called his neighbor Neil Aschemeyer, an administrative law judge, who in turn contacted Deputy District Attorney Robert Hutchins. A few minutes later, officials from Tranquillity Bay, "a behavior modification school," hustled him away and he has not been able to have any contact with his attorney, the district attorney, or anyone other than his parents, since.

Hutchins filed a civil petition to require David's return to Oakland, describing David's parents as "aiders and abettors" in the kidnapping and false imprisonment of their son, and charging that they exceeded the law in November by signing over all their parental authority to Tranquillity Bay and to Brightway Adolescent Hospital in St. George, Utah (where David was evaluated before being shipped to Jamaica), including authorizing the restraints, pepper spray, mace, and stun guns.

"Since you have sent me here, I will take care of my issues so that I can come home soon and be a better, happier and nicer and smarter person than when I came here.

The water is so blue, the beach looks so sandy, the hills are so green, the weather is so nice — and the chain link so high."

- Letter from David van Blarigan to his parents, December 15, 1997

The psychiatrist who evaluated David was Dr. Dilbert T. Goates. Dr. Goates was formerly in the employ of Rivendell Psychiatric Center in West Jordan, Utah, which nearly went out of business after a number of well publicized human rights abuses came to light, including the forced treatment of gay and lesbian teens with aversion therapy and shock treatment.

Dr. Goates wrote a letter to the United States Passport Agency stating that David was so mentally ill he was unable to sign for his own passport (in the US, everyone over the age of 13 must appear in person to apply for a passport). David's parent's used that letter to get him a passport, and made arrangements to have him incarcerated in Tranquillity Bay for an indefinite length of time.

Hutchins believes that at the very least the process by which David was packed off to Jamaica constitutes psychological abuse, and that David may be in physical danger.

Former Abductees Want Constitutional Rights

By Lyn Duff

CALIFORNIA, USA -- Parents who've institutionalized their teenage children packed an Alameda County courtroom recently to praise an out-of-state mental health facility for saving their families. Missing at the hearing were the voices of teenage abductees who felt profoundly betrayed by what their parents had done.

The court hearing centered on the case of David Van Blarigan, a 16 year old Oakland, California resident whose parents had hired

The parents' attorney Daniel Koller insisted that the order Hutchins requested would constitute a "forbidden government intrusion into the sacred domain of parental rights" and that the situation was no business of the neighbor's, the prosecutor's or the state's. As for the restraints, pepper spray, mace, and stun guns, Koller took the position that, "Just because it's in a contract doesn't mean it's being used." In fact, he asserted that none of those methods were being used against David.

Judge Ken Kawaichi emphasized that his rejection of Hutchins' request for David's return represented neither "a stunning victory or severe defeat" for either side. He believed that Hutchins had failed to present evidence that David is in imminent danger, and since the ruling was made "without prejudice," the case could be reopened if such evidence is found. (Hutchins believes there's no way to know whether David is harmed or endangered without his presence in Oakland to speak for himself, and he also said after the ruling that "this case dies at this point.") Kawaichi does see a gray area in the law with many questions unanswered, and is not happy with the notion of an American citizen being potentially subject to the physical "controls" without American supervision. Some other California courts have recognized some limited rights of teenagers to consent to or refuse such treatment.

However, despite Kawaichi's perception, a crowd of about 100 parents who were in the courtroom in support of the Van Blarigans definitely took the ruling as "a stunning victory," cheering and giving each other high-fives in celebration. Many of their children are in facilities similar to Tranquillity Bay, while of course other minors were required to be in school at the time of the hearing.

There were a few child advocates present, though. Loren Warboys of San Francisco's Youth Law Center told the *Oakland Tribune*, "It's a sad day for children in America. A parent can send a kid off to any place for any reason. There is no rule protecting the teenager and that can't be right. There has to be some restriction." Shannon Minter of the San Francisco-based National Center for Lesbian Rights told the Associated Press that, "You should not be able as a parent to have your child forcibly abducted and sent to another country against his will."

PlanetOUT on-line magazine contributed to this report.

an escort service last November to deliver him to Brightway Adolescent Hospital in Utah. (Unlike California, Utah does not protect young people from being needlessly incarcerated in psychiatric treatment facilities.) David's offense was that he apparently argued with his parents over issues like church attendance and poor grades. But when the hospital then transferred David to another facility in Jamaica, he was able to call a neighbor in Oakland who, in turn, contacted the DA who petitioned the court for David's release.

As a California teenage whose mother had me institutionalized in a Utah psychiatric hospital at the age of 15, I found myself relieved that at last this issue was being aired publicly. I managed to escape from the hospital and eventually challenged my mother in court and was placed in foster care. But I have never been able to talk with my mother or reconcile myself to what she did.

Conversations with other friends who've shared this experience revealed that many former abductees felt deeply resentful of being singled out for their family's problems and incarcerated without being guilty of crimes. Many hoped, as I did, that the judge's ruling in the Van Blarigan case will set a precedent to ensure that our constitutional rights are protected.

Jean, now 18, was kidnapped from Van Nuys in 1996 by Guiding Hands, a company that specializes in abducting teens, and placed in a behavior modification program in Southern Utah.

"Mostly I feel sorry for the parents," she says. "They are the misguided ones. They think we're being helped. My parents wasted over \$100,000 on these programs and we still argued—fighting about curfew and the dishes doesn't get solved by sending your kid 500 miles away."

We may come back and behave better, but only for a short time and only because we're scared of being sent back to lockup. It made me respect my parents a lot less, because locking me up was a way of blaming all our family problems on me...and regaining a sense that they were in control."

Jean is now homeless and living in San Francisco. She says her family doesn't want her living with them and still view her as the root of their problems. Her advice to mothers and fathers who would consider taking such drastic actions towards their own kids: "You don't make a good relationship with your child by forcing them. That doesn't make anyone trust or love their parents, no matter what they write when they're locked up."

Eliza, 16, thinks "it's great that this kid (David Van Blarigan) is fighting back, and was able to find an adult who really could do something to help him."

When her parents sent her into such a program, she recalled, "I tried to get out. My best friend's mom got me an attorney, but he

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Letterbox

For the past two years the State of Utah has been making a concerted effort to take away the four children of David and Teresa Rodriguez. Their four children are Erick, age 15, Jetaime, age 13, Jessica, age 10, and Christopher, age 8. Their story can be found in more detail on the internet at <www.coastlink.com/users/sbryce/rodriguez>.

In April, 1997, the Rodriguezes were coerced by a court-appointed attorney into accepting a conviction of "medical neglect" for refusing to put their children on Ritalin and "educational neglect" because they were homeschooling their children. They were "allowed" to leave the state to find a new home, and moved to Arizona in September, 1997.

At 2:00 a.m. on Saturday, March 7, 1998, police in Bullhead City surrounded the Rodriguez home, took the children into custody, and sent them to foster care in Utah.

The parents are now allowed to see their children two hours per week under strict supervision. At no time has the State made any allegation of abuse of any kind, nor of neglect beyond "education" (home schooling) and "medical" (refusal to medicate).

On Tuesday, June 16, 1998, the State of Utah held an expedited hearing for the purpose of putting the two oldest children on psychiatric medication, claiming that Jetaime had attempted suicide. Although the State attempted to hold the hearing while both of the new defense attorneys were out of town, both were able to be present.

Nevertheless, the court ordered medication of the children without taking any evidence, and refused to hear the Rodriguezes witness, Dr. Peter Breggin, M.D., who was available to testify. In fact, in five hearings in the past three months, the court has never allowed the Rodriguezes to present any evidence of any kind.

The State is attempting to isolate and silence Jetaime Rodriguez as a potential witness against corruption within the system. The Juvenile Court system in Utah is closed to the public, and the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) uses this to their full advantage.

Please let Ken Patterson, the director of DCFS, know that this is a public matter and that forcing drugs on the Rodriguez children is unconscionable.

Patterson's mailing address is:

Ken Patterson, Director
Utah Division of Child and Family Services
120 North 200 West, Suite 225
Salt Lake City, Utah 84103 USA.
Phone number 801-538-4083.
Fax 801-538-3993.

Please help Jetaime Rodriguez and her brothers and sister before it's too late.

-- Support Coalition International
<www.efn.org/~dendron>
<dendron@efn.org>.

I found your site excellent. My name is Keith Mandell, and I am a member of YouthSpeak, a national teen rights organization, founded in 1997 by 15-year-old high school sophomore Avi Hein. It now has over 200 members dedicated to working for teen rights. Most of our members are in high school or college, but we have members as young as 12 and as old as 63.

I want to announce that on May 22, 1998, we had our Operation Register protest day. These symbolic protests were organized to promote the cause of youth rights, especially efforts to lower the voting age so that teens will have a meaningful voice in society. I thought that the NCRA would be especially interested in our efforts. The protests were completely peaceful and legal, and attempted to focus media attention on the issue of youth rights and youth voting rights.

YouthSpeak is nonpartisan, and endorses no political party. We are working for the cause of youth throughout America.

Our web page is located at: <<http://www.oblivion.net/youthspeak/>>.

-- Keith Mandell

National Coordinator, Operation Register
kmandell@gwis2.circ.gwu.edu



'Nuff said.



I would like to get some information sent to me about the NCRA. I would also like some recommendations that I can offer to some high school students in North Philadelphia. I spoke with a group of students yesterday and they began talking about how their school pays loads of money for a security system, but can't afford books or heat. How can they most effectively direct their complaints?

-- Carol Ann Gross, Norristown, PA

Ed. Note: Good question! How can we most effectively speak out about problems in our schools and communities? The Freedom Voice would like to invite all readers to contribute their thoughts and ideas on this issue for publication in the next FV.



Keep up the good work! I am a transsexual woman who has experienced during my childhood a certain amount of abuse due to who and what I was. I have been outraged recently

to hear that in New Mexico children showing signs of "gender identity disorder" have been institutionalized "for their own good". This is tantamount to torture for children who are transgendered. I lived in fear of being locked up for being different when I was a child and it is still a concern should something put me into the hands of the police or a hospital. Please do something about this! This must END!

-- Marina Brown, via email



On Monday, June 22, 1998, at 2:30 p.m., the Office of Judicial Affairs will begin hearing the case of Kim Larson, Ted Bowen, Nathan Solinsky, and myself. Kent State University and the Kent State Police Department are continuing their attempt to place disciplinary sanctions on us, as student activists, for seeking information and wishing to speak with KSU President Carol Cartwright on an issue of urgent importance on May 14.

For five months, beginning at the first public knowledge of the intention of the administration to move Vice President Nancy Scott's offices into the Student Center, students from varying organizations began a vigorous campaign to seek out information and try to stop the move. We took part in administration-created committees, met with administrators, voiced concern in local media, held public forums, aired disapproval at public meetings, and more. Even after all the work put into the issue, during finals week, all student organizations were given two days' notice to pack up their offices and move out to make way for the new administrative offices.

On May 14, students were to be out of their offices. For the days before, many students were spending hours trying to seek out information regarding whether or not the organizations would have space over the summer and the coming year, and other important issues facing them. No administrators or Student Center staff were able to answer their questions. Just weeks before, President Cartwright announced her responsibility for her intention to move the offices of the Vice President into the Student Center.

After exhausting all avenues, six students, including myself, entered the office of the President to speak with her regarding the eviction of all student organizations from their offices housed in the Student Center. One student left soon after entering to continue seeking out information from the Student Center personnel. Several administrators and staff entered the office and spoke with the remaining five of us, never telling us to leave, but instead asking us what we wanted from the President.

We conveyed our concerns calmly, and insured all that we would wait quietly until it was convenient for the President to meet with us, but insisting that we would remain in her office until that time. Within minutes, the office was flooded with Kent State Police officers. We were told that if we didn't leave, we would be arrested in three minutes. At that point, one student left, and the four of us remaining were arrested and charged with Criminal Trespassing.

The criminal case resulting from the arrest

is still pending in the Kent Municipal Court, despite the overwhelming international outrage over the arrests. President Cartwright has received letters demanding she drop the charges from as far away as Scotland, Puerto Rico, and Australia, and from student organizations from Kent State to Iowa State. She has told us that she is considering dropping the charges, but has yet to make a decision.

The University is determined to pursue internal charges through the Office of Judicial Affairs. We are accused of "Behavior in violation of University policies or procedures," and "Behavior deemed detrimental or disruptive to the University community, and/or prohibited by local, state, or federal law." These charges carry the potential of dismissal from the University. Dismissal from the University is a context is rare, for instance in the case of trafficking in drugs on University property. Even drug use on University property only carries the potential of probation.

We are asking that our supporters write letters of support that we can turn over to the Hearing Officer. Those who wish to testify on our behalf should contact us as soon as possible. If you have further questions, you can contact me at <brucato@bright.net> (or Nathan at <javanate@megsinet.net>, Kim at <klarson@kent.edu>, or Ted at <ebowen@kent.edu>). For further background on the Student Center issue, please check out the Student Coalition web page at <http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Campus/1595/>. REMEMBER MAY 4, 1886 & 1970!

--Ben Brucato

Student Anti-Racist Action, Kent State

Beyond Identity Politics

By Jeanne Lenzer

The following editorial is written in support of changing the requirement for voting membership in NCRA from being a "survivor of child abuse either by parents, caretakers or the state" to being a supporter of the Youth Bill of Rights (see page 16).

When we first burst onto the national scene in 1986, NCRA made a claim no other organization could make; we were the only child rights organization directed solely by "child abuse victims and survivors." The distinction of victims and survivors was meant to indicate both children currently being abused and adults who had been abused. NCRA, then People Allied for Child Advocacy, was an action group. We took on big questions and we proved ourselves scrappy fighters. We precipitated a national movement with our support for sanctuary rights. When one of our members was found harboring a child on the run, the Freedom Voice with its front page article, "Sanctuary Rights for Children," was a lead shot on Nightline. Suddenly we became the news not only nationally, but internationally. Beyond our work for sanctuary rights, we held demonstrations in front of social services when an abused child was returned to a known abuser — only to be killed. We took on the legal defense of George M., a child who sought to "divorce" his abusive father long before the much more famous case for which we also supplied legal counsel - Gregory K.

Identity politics was important to our work because our voices had been silenced and distorted. "Children want to stay with their abusers" was the lie social services used to justify returning battered youth to the parents. By coming together we were able to challenge such myths. Since 1986 virtually thousands of child abuse "survivor" groups have been organized. Most are self-help oriented. Some have challenged legislation and social practices. Unfortunately, few have integrated social issues such as racism, class, religion and free speech the way NCRA always has. This disparity between NCRA and other groups was to play itself out in serious ways. The child abuse "survivor movement" has become a force not only for good - but has become a reactionary force as well.

Much of the legislation, judicial decisions and literature of the movement has focused on bigger and badder punishments for perpetrators. Whether it's, "put 'em in prison and throw away the key," Megan's law, mandatory castration or support for lowering the rules of evidence in order to accommodate "recovered memories," we have to face the fact that the survivor movement is running amok. They have run far afield from the vision and focus of NCRA - which was always on how to break the cycle, how to find safe haven and nurture for children in distress, how to improve the lot of children and the rights of youth who suffer from poverty as well as physical abuse; from unfair institutionalization as well as emotional abuse;

and from unfair removal from parents as surely as from sexual abuse.

This isn't to detract from the good that has been done. The survivor movement in all has managed to make several important points; 1) returning children to their abusers in like forcing battered women to return to their men; 2) child abuse has profound effects that shouldn't be minimized; and 3) child abuse often results in many of the social ills which concern society today - from drug use to prostitution to violence and mental illness.

It was no small feat to get these important points out. However, what is desperately needed now are solutions - solutions which cannot be found in the general reactionary trend of promoting prisons, boot camps and punishment - none of which have solved any social problems. One of our founders, Maxine Alexander, made a point that has always stayed with me, she said, "We need to come up with solutions that people won't have to fight 20-30 years from now. Because we're fighting solutions right now that we created 20 years ago." Alexander, as a Black woman, was referring to the "keep the family together" mandate that was largely put in place by African Americans fighting unfair biases in social service practices.

I believe it's time to move beyond identity politics and to change our voting membership. "Survivor" groups have helped create spaces for many of us to speak out. But sometimes the voices are as disturbing as they can be visionary. It's time to think critically, to move with greater care and reason as we search for solutions to massive social problems which can never be solved with the simplistic right-wing formula of building more prisons. I think we need to promote sanctuary rights and other changes which could have some genuine effect in reducing abuse and violence against children. And I think that people who support the Youth Bill of Rights are the best people to do that.

Rock Plymouth in '98!

Last November, NCRA members and supporters were surprised to see NCRA board member, Cley, getting arrested on CNN. On November 27th, police viciously attacked a peaceful demonstration of some 300 Native Americans and their supporters while they were participating in the 28th annual National Day of Mourning in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Sponsored by the United American Indians of New England (UAIINE). The National Day of Mourning is an attempt to expose the lying colonial mythology behind White America's most cherished national holiday, Thanksgiving Day.

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Abductees Want Rights

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couldn't do anything — he said no one could help me because I'd been taken out of California.

"These programs don't really care about helping kids work out their problems, they just warehouse you and take your parents' cash. I finally got out on a home pass and ran. I'm living underground until my 18th birthday. It's not too bad. I got friends helping. Any place is better than lockup."

Orah, 17, expresses surprise that California's law enforcement officials would have been willing to act on a minor's behalf. Now attending junior college in Oakland, she was 13 when her Berkeley parents hired an escort service to take her to a behavior modification treatment center in northern California.

"I only wish they (the state) had come to my aid. I didn't know I had any rights to fight back. When they (the escort service) came for me, I was in the bathroom taking a bath. They demanded that I come with them, then they dragged me from the bathtub and forced me into clothes. One twisted my arm behind me and they handcuffed me when I wouldn't cooperate. The whole time they were laughing at me, saying I was flat-chested."

"Eventually, I agreed to go with them. I was so ashamed by the experience, I felt like I'd been raped. It's been several years, and I still have nightmares and feel nervous all the time. Sometimes I have nightmares about them (my parents) kidnapping my little brother."

Children's Advocates Clash with China on Int'l Criminal Court

By Farhan Haq, IPS

ROME, ITALY -- The two faces of modern China were on view here Tuesday as Chinese delegates offered fulsome - if qualified - support for an International Criminal Court (ICC), at the same time as Beijing blocked the holding of a U.N. news conference by children's advocates.

On the one hand, Chinese envoy Wang Guangya said Beijing "stands for the establishment of the ICC" even as he insisted that the Court should await the consent of states being investigated before conducting its work. On the other, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and some U.N. officials confirmed that the Chinese delegation ordered speakers to be locked out of a briefing sponsored by 'Terre des hommes' concerning child victims of conflicts, forcing them to make their case on the plight of Chinese orphans from a U.N. hallway.

"The Court should not become a tool of political struggles or a means of interfering in other countries' internal affairs," Wang said. "Meanwhile, the ICC should not compromise the principal role of the UN, its Security Council in particular, in safeguarding world peace and security."

In order to prevent biased prosecutions, Wang argued, the Court should reflect a "cautious attitude" in which national sovereignty

and security, as well as national legal principles, are respected. In common cause with the United States, China is envisioning a Court which would require either permission from involved states or from the 15-nation Security Council - or possibly both - before it could try any cases. Those views could sink the ICC statute if applied, rights activists believed.

Wang argued that, rather than force a vote over such matters as Security Council control, the ICC drafters should try to act on "a basis of democracy and equality" in which all countries' views were included. "The statute should be passed by consensus rather than by vote," he said. In order to ensure its passage, the Court should allow "maximal flexibility" in defining its jurisdiction.

Ironically, while Wang spoke of the need for democracy in the ICC meetings, China was ensuring that the Terre des hommes speakers were unable to plead their own case on behalf of including the protection of children's rights in the ICC's brief.

Marina Rini, spokeswoman for Terre des hommes, said that Beijing requested that the briefing not be held after learning Monday that Dr Zhang Shu-Yun, who heads the Chinese Orphans Welfare Concern Association in London, would be speaking about the treatment of Chinese orphans.

Zhang told Terra Viva that she has become used to being prevented from speaking. "It's

always like that," she said. "But they are losing face this way. This is not China - (here) we must have the freedom to speak."

Zhang previously attracted Beijing's ire by drawing attention to what she claimed has been the abandonment of children in Chinese orphanages who failed to win the attention of adoptive parents.

"These children are healthy in the beginning," said Zhang, who worked as a doctor in a Shanghai orphanage for five years, said. "But they choose some children for adoption and then abandon the rest ... It was like a business for China, since a lot of old people who didn't have children would go to Shanghai."

The going rate for healthy children could be as high as 5,000 U.S. dollars, she said. For children who were not wanted - including disabled, mentally disturbed or rowdy ones - the orphanages made no effort to provide food or medical care, Zhang contended. She said she has been instructed to deny food or medicine to such children.

"The hospital administration deliberately allowed the orphans die," she said. "My memory of the child who died in my arms, my nightmare of all those skeletal baby corpses, will always stay with me."

Zhang's appeal may have been too specific to be heard during what is a conference to work out a treaty, said Susan Markham, a U.N. spokeswoman. "This is a negotiating conference - not a conference to discuss issues."

More than one country had objected to the briefing, she added. Markham said the Terre des hommes briefing was cancelled because it lacked appropriate sponsorship, either from the NGO Coalition for an International Criminal Court or from any individual nation. The lack of sponsorship, she said, was only found out after the news conference had been tentatively scheduled. "We don't hold individual press conferences for individual NGOs," she said.

According to Rini, the Coalition was discouraged away from its previous support of the briefing because of worries that its rights at the ongoing ICC conference would be removed if it sponsored the Terre des hommes speakers. Several nations, including Italy and Senegal, also expressed concerns about providing sponsorship, she added.

The speakers, however, continued to talk to reporters even after they were locked out of the U.N. press briefing room at the FAO secretariat. U.N. security staff allowed the speakers - who also included the parents of kidnapped and abused children in Belgium, and family members of children killed by terrorism in Algeria and "disappeared" in Argentina - to conduct their briefing informally in an FAO hallway.

Michel Hoffman, programme director of Terre des hommes, argued that, regardless of the lock-out, the parents "deserve an opportunity to be heard." He said that the crimes against children which they had discussed should make the case for the inclusion of crimes against children as 'crimes against humanity' in the ICC draft statute.

Zhang urged governments here to support the 'Lausanne Appeal', a call for the inclusion of crimes against children in the statute. "Let us form an obstacle against evil," she said.

'Civil Rights Are Not For Sale'

Berkeley Police Review Commission Demands an End to "Operation Ave-Watch," a Police Crackdown on Street Youth Instigated by Merchants

by Terry Messman

CALIFORNIA, USA -- Operation Ave-Watch, a name seemingly ripped from the pages of George Orwell's 1984, was unleashed against homeless youth on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley on June 15. Outraged street youth and homeless advocates charge that the massive police crackdown, which will cost \$80,000 in police overtime pay from mid-June to mid-July, is an illegal maneuver by city officials to enforce the ban against sitting on the sidewalk that was repealed by the Berkeley City Council.

On June 24, homeless youth turned out in force and testified to the Police Review Commission (PRC) that they were being driven off the streets by systematic police sweeps, and charged that street teenagers were being sprayed with hoses by merchants and the public works department in a program of "cultural cleansing." The impassioned testimony convinced the PRC to take the unusually strong step of condemning the police crackdown as unjustified. In a motion made by PRC Commissioner Claire Zellman, the PRC recommended to the Berkeley City Council

that it immediately end Operation Ave-Watch, and that any such police actions in the future be brought before the PRC and the council for prior approval.

Many homeless youth told the PRC that the Berkeley police were creating a hostile, frightening environment on Telegraph Avenue by citing and arresting them for trespassing and sitting on public sidewalks, and harassing them for "looking different" or owning unlicensed dogs.

Attorney Osha Neumann testified to the PRC that, since the Berkeley City Council acted to repeal Measure O's ban on sitting on sidewalks, all trespassing citations for sitting on the sidewalk are patently illegal. Even though the Berkeley city attorney and police officers confirmed to him that it is no longer a crime to sit on the sidewalk, Neumann said that homeless youth were cited for trespassing on June 19 simply for sitting on a sidewalk in front of Cody's Books.

"There is an illegal element on Telegraph Avenue," Neumann testified. "Unfortunately,

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Rock Plymouth in '98!

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For twenty-seven years UAINÉ conducted its rally across from Plymouth Rock and march through the streets of Plymouth without any arrests being made. However, the merchants and 'town fathers' of Plymouth boiled at the reoccurring demonstration undermining the lying, racist mythology that is the basis of the profitable tourist industry which Plymouth exploits. In 1997, they conspired with the Massachusetts State Police to have the National Day of Mourning demonstration brutally attacked.

As the marchers left the rally and started a silent procession down the oldest street in "America's Home Town," they were confronted by hundreds of state, county and local policemen, including some whom were mounted on horseback. Without provocation, the police squirted pepper spray in the faces of the protesters and arrested twenty-five people, slamming their faces into the street as they handcuffed and maced them.

This state-sponsored use of violence to suppress the truth about "Thanksgiving Day" has created a lot of controversy in New England where the prosecution of the Plymouth Twenty-Five continues to make headlines. UAINÉ has called for a mass demonstration in the streets of Plymouth on November 28th this year to show that these police state tactics will not silence the movement.

The issues raised by the National Day of Mourning as well as the issues of political suppression of free speech and police violence are issues which should be of concern to all youth liberation activists. In every school in America the Thanksgiving Day mythology is shoved down the throats of kids from kindergarten on up. In a country founded upon the near total genocide and dispossession of its indigenous inhabitants, the racist promotion of the "godly" Pilgrims (a term coined in the 19th century) as positive symbols of our mythical national origin is not only insulting to the descendants of the original inhabitants but serves to desensitize all Americans to the true legacy of colonial invasion, conquest and oppression.

Youth activists of every ethnic background should seize the time at Thanksgiving to expose the lies and distortions promoted in the schools and to promote the idea of mourning, not celebrating, the legacy of colonialism. Those who can should travel to Plymouth on "Thanksgiving Day" and join in the National Day of Mourning activities. For more information contact: United American Indians of New England, PO Box 7501, Quincy, MA 02269. Tel: (617) 773-0406, Fax: (617) 773-0406, E-mail: uaine19@idt.net.

Notice To All Readers

Freedom Voice subscriptions are extended in order to make up for missed issues. So, if you paid for a "one-year" subscription - it will be extended beyond one year in order to assure that you receive four issues as long as the paper is published quarterly. Plans to become a bi-monthly publication are already under consideration.

University of California Students Announce Plans for System-wide Strike

CALIFORNIA, USA -- In balloting that ended in June, members of academic student employee unions throughout the University of California voted by an 87% landslide to authorize a system-wide strike next fall if the administration does not recognize the unions and agree to begin collective bargaining with teaching assistants, readers and tutors.

More than twice as many academic student employees (ASEs) took part in the balloting as in any previous strike authorization. Some 4,221 members of academic student employee unions affiliated with the United Auto Workers (UAW) took part in the vote. There are a total of about 7,500 academic student employees on the seven UC campuses where balloting took place.

Votes were held at the Berkeley, Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, Riverside, Irvine and San Diego campuses of the UC. AGSE/UAW members at UC Davis expect to hold a strike authorization vote in the coming months.

Union activists emphasized the strength demonstrated by the large strike vote. "This strike will be much larger and significantly more disruptive than any action we have taken before," said Ted Levine, of the Coalition of Academic Student Employees (CASE/UAW - Riverside). "But our demand is the same: recognition of our collective bargaining rights."

The vote authorizes the leadership of each campus union to call a strike next fall, if the university administration does not recognize the unions, but it does not make a strike inevitable.

"We have exercised great restraint," said Ricardo Ochoa, President of the Association of Graduate Student Employees (AGSE/UAW - Berkeley). "We have tried to meet with campus chancellors; over 5000 of our members sent letters to state and federal legislatures; we have employed short rolling strikes in order to avoid a serious disruption of undergraduate education. But the university has so far refused to budge."

The California Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) has verified that a majority of the 9,000 ASEs on all UC campuses have selected UAW-affiliated unions to represent them in collective bargaining. And PERB has said that the University administration may grant recognition to the unions at any time. The UC's denial of collective bargaining rights led to 25 days of strikes on 5 UC campuses during the 1996-97 school year. The University administration has engaged in 14 years of litigation at PERB, costing millions of taxpayer dollars.

The ASE unions have been winning on the legal front, despite the UC's extravagant use of lawyers and public money. The PERB board, the final level of appeal, on April 24 upheld an earlier ruling that teaching associates, readers and tutors at UC San Diego are employees and are entitled to collective bargaining rights under the Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act (HEERA).

Employees (ASE/UAW - San Diego) will be certified as the workers' collective bargaining agent.

"The PERB decision was great news," said Anthony Navarette, spokesperson for ASE/UAW - San Diego. "But we have never relied entirely on the legal system to guarantee our rights. We have always concentrated on winning recognition by building on the power of our membership with protests, letter-writing campaigns, and strikes."

The university administration vindicated the unions' strategy of not relying on judicial avenues alone when it announced in a legal filing last month that it would refuse to abide by the legally-mandated election if ASE/UAW is certified. The UC San Diego administration said that even if academic student employees voted in favor of representation by ASE/UAW, it would refuse to bargain collectively, as it would be required to do under HEERA.

"The University administration has announced that they will break the law in order to keep academic student employees from exercising our rights," said David Kamper, an activist with the Student Association of Graduate Employees (SAGE/UAW - Los Angeles). "But, the University of California works because we do. If the administration continues to refuse to recognize us, we'll have to show them what that means."

Student Sues School After Being Arrested for Publishing Underground Paper

NEW YORK, USA -- Josh Herzog, national board member of NCRA, is going back to court on his multimillion dollar civil right law suit against the Monticello, NY school district.

Herzog is the only U.S. student known to have been arrested for publishing an underground newspaper. His paper, the Sub Station was put out in response to a new and authoritarian administration at the school. Although most media report that Herzog called on students to "urinate in the hallways" and "throw garbage in the courtyard" what they virtually never report, according to Herzog, is that the new principal had instituted a series of reactionary regulations including locking bathroom doors forcing students to request a key in order to use the bathrooms.

Herzog, 17 at the time of his arrest was charged with "criminal mischief and intent to incite a riot". Although the school later dropped the charges, Herzog was suspended from school and his suspension was upheld by New York state's highest court.

Medicine for the People

By Jeanne Lenzer

My mother has just been diagnosed with manic-depression. We always knew something was wrong with her but we didn't know what. Now I'm worried that I'll turn out like her. Is manic-depression inherited?

Many studies about the biologic basis of mental illness are flawed. An important point for you to know however, is that your chances of NOT becoming manic-depressive are greater than the chance you will. Many people with various emotional problems or mental illness, along with many psychiatrists and physicians, prefer to think of these problems as biologically based. This happens for a whole variety of reasons - including political and social reasons. However, you shouldn't let this scare you into thinking that it is a.) your fate to become manic-depressive; b.) something over which you have no control; c.) entirely true.

Let's review each of these points. It is worth repeating that you are more likely *not* to develop manic-depression than it is for you to develop it. Even inherited diseases are not transmitted on a one to one basis in most

instances. In addition, your lifestyle may further reduce the likelihood of developing a problem even if you do inherit a predisposition to a disease. For example, adult-onset diabetes has a strong genetic component, but even among those adults who do inherit the gene, they are much less likely to express the illness if they don't gain weight, exercise and eat a healthy diet. The same is likely true for manic-depression. If you pay attention to your own needs for rest, friendship and balance in your life you will probably be more resistant to any underlying biologic tendencies.

Finally, while it seems that the brain and our emotions are just as subject to biologic problems as our joints, our hearts and our endocrine system, the truth about diseases of the mind is often obscured by a tendency for researchers to ignore environmental effects for very real political reasons. For anyone with interest in this area, and I think for anyone worried about their chances of inheriting a parent's problem, the book, *Not in Our Genes*, should be required reading. This is a well-documented and scientific review by three researchers but is also highly readable.

When Kids Pay: Child Trafficking in Africa

Continued from page 6

conservative estimates, hundreds of children have been brought into Ghana under bizarre arrangements — some to serve as househelps. Others have been sold into perpetual slavery.

A tip-off led police to rescue Afi at the house of a Nigerian, Hajia Sidi Musah, described by police as the brain behind the business. Police say she confessed to recruiting young girls age 10 to 14 from Togo to serve as househelps and led police to four Togolese accomplices.

Afi, who says she has been kept at Hajia Sidi's house for three years, led police to three other girls who Hajia Sidi had contracted out. All were brought into Ghana under bogus arrangements, including Ana Gbekah, 14, who was sold three years ago for a paltry 60,000 cedis (about \$25). She complains, "I always thought of running away but I didn't know where to go. Besides, I didn't have the means to move."

For now, these two girls are under police protection. "We need to uncover the activities of the various syndicates. We are going all out to track down the people involved in this illicit trade," says Angu Awuni, director of police public relations.

Many Ghanaians have been shaken by this discovery. "I'm lost for words. How can this be happening here?" asks Kofi Amofa, a sociologist.

But Akua Afriyie, a trader, is not surprised. "I got to know about this about five years ago when a woman who sells next to my stall went

in for a Togolese child."

Togo lies on the eastern fringes of Ghana. About 80 percent of its 4 million people are engaged in subsistence farming.

"Despite a constitutional declaration of equality under the law, women continue to experience discrimination especially in education, pension benefits, inheritance and as a consequence of traditional law," says Mawuli Acolatse, a Togolese.

He attributes the child trafficking to severe deprivation. "Child trafficking is not any strange thing in Togo." In rural Togo, parents sometimes force young children into domestic work in other households in exchange for cash.

The government has done nothing to stop this practice. Harsh conditions in the rural areas leave women with little time for activities other than work in the fields.

Togolese laws protect children's rights, but there is little enforcement. The law does not specifically address the question of forced or bonded labor, including that performed by children. International trafficking often results in the children being taken to other West African countries, the Middle East or Asia, according to informed sources in Togo.

Child trafficking services have also developed sophisticated marketing strategies, keeping their eyes on the bottom line.

Samuel Sarpon is based in Ghana and writes for the Pacific News Service.

Girls, But Not Women, Still Forced To Marry Rapists

PERU -- Poverty, parental pressure, and sometimes sheer violence have forced girls and women to agree to marry the men who raped them. In a perversion of values seen world-wide, victims of rape are seen as "shameful." In the words of Gaby Ore-Aguilar, staff attorney for the international program of the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy in Peru, "a woman loses her honor when she is raped, so a way to establish the honor of the victim is to marry the aggressor."

Women's groups in Peru, like the Movimiento Manuela Ramos, fought to change the law which frees a rapist if he proposes marriage to his victim and she accepts. A number of other countries have similar laws. But when the Peruvian government agreed to abolish the law, they left in a provision which still frees the rapist if his victim is a minor between 14 and 18 years old.

For a girl who is threatened by the family of the rapist, who may be barely eating enough to survive, who may be pressured by her own parents who, like one father, believes that only "bad" girls are raped, adolescent girls may find not marrying their rapist to be a very rocky road. Most in Peru acknowledge that prosecuting rapists is extraordinarily difficult. Of the 25,000 annual rapes in Peru - the majority of victims are children and young people. Only one in three rapes is even reported and only 11% even make it to court. Of those, many attackers are freed, especially if the victim was considered "promiscuous" or was wearing "provocative" clothing.

From Latina, May 1998

Students Protest Police Violence

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privatized, the price of food will increase by more than 500 percent and workers will lose their jobs.

"We are highly concerned that the government of Zimbabwe, as has been evidenced by atrocities of its police force, still carries the legacy of Ian Smith(ism), which is intolerance, ignorance, arrogance, and downright repression," read a petition written by the protesters. Smith is the former Prime Minister of white-ruled Rhodesia.

"The concept of democratic dissent and democratic expression of one's ideas on the streets is now unknown in this land," the petition added.

The students demanded that a commission be set up to look into the brutalisation of citizens by the police force and called for the suspension of current Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri.

Fortune Mguni, vice-president of the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) said that the students will not rest until "the blood of the [injured student] has been fully compensated for."

Stupid Adult Tricks

Quit Bugging Me!

The latest craze in overprotective parenting is bugging children, literally. According to Lucy Howard and Arlyn Tobias of the Associated Press, many Japanese parents are now monitoring their kids with tiny electronic listening devices in the form of credit card sized UHF transmitters that can be concealed in a child's bookbag.

The monitoring units have a range of 300 meters radius or more and cost a few hundred dollars per set, but rental units are also available. For the truly paranoid parents, a number of Japanese private detective firms are now offering "children research" as one of their services.

In the United States and internationally, a growing array of micro video cameras and other stealthy devices are currently being privately employed to watch and listen in on children and their baby-sitters as well as teenagers, husbands and wives, employees, customers, and the public at large, so "Smile (and watch what you say), you could be on Candid Camera!"

Is a kid worth a dollar?

\$ One child dies every 38 seconds from neonatal tetanus.

\$ One child dies every 15 seconds from measles.

\$ One child dies every 53 seconds from pertussis.

\$ One child is paralyzed every 160 seconds from polio.

\$ Over 800 children die every four hours from vaccine-preventable diseases.

\$ The cost of immunizing every child in the world is about 8 minutes worth of the United States defense budget.

From UNICEF data

How to Beat Your Child and Win Every Time...

According to the Jeanette Norris, MD of Nemour's Children's Clinic, a 2-year-old child was beaten by his father so violently that his skull was fractured causing permanent brain damage and leaving the child a "vegetable." Rather than remove the child and have the state pay the child's medical expenses, the Judge ordered the child returned to his father's custody so his medical care would be covered by private insurance.

Next On Sally: Teens Who Wish Their Parents Never Bought A Television

Looking for sympathy or attention, many parents have turned to talk shows: exposing their family or child's personal problems on television. (Often to their child's horror and without his or her consent). In a segment titled, "My teen is headed for jail" the guests and audience of the Sally Jesse Raphael show indulged in an orgy of teen-bashing and confrontational tactics that would make Attila the Hun look agreeable.

A boot camp "counselor" gave a demonstration of how she can "help" the teens. Charging angrily up and down the floor in front of the defiant teens, the counselor screamed at the youth:

"I cannot believe the disrespect these females show for their mothers. When you come to boot camp - you don't turn your eyes to the left. You don't turn your eyes to the right. You - don't - look - at - me. The first thing I do is cut your hair because you aren't going to have any life in the boot camp. You speak when your spoken to and only when you're spoken to. The first word out of your mouth is "Ma'am." The chairs you're sitting on are a privilege. You sit on the floor."

"I tell you when to eat, I tell you when and if you can use the head. I decide if you need to use the head - not you. You make no decisions whatsoever. You understand that? You don't say *&#% to me."

"Step into the boot camp and feel the reality. You don't know what it's like until you get there. You have no say-so in what is done. To the parents - you don't get to see your child. You don't get to visit them."

A number of parents in the audience stood and cheered.

Dr Patricia Farrell, a licensed psychologist who was a guest on the program said "I see girls trying to act like women. Expecting the respect of adults but not willing to act like adults.... Not only are you cowards by the things you say, look at what you chose." Later in the show, Farrell, angry at a 14-year-old girl who told the therapist she didn't know anything about her life, told her she needed to be put in boot camp.

Child's Play:

A Waste Of Time?

Some are arguing that play time is a waste of time. Some school districts have gone so far as to build new schools without any playgrounds at all, arguing that playgrounds are a waste of money and a risk because of strangers lurking about the playground areas and lawsuits as a result of injuries incurred on the play area.

Politician Prevents

Prosecution: Parents Prevail

FLORIDA, USA -- When Charles Reeder of Leesburg was charged with brutally beating a 12-year-old boy with a board so hard that "95 percent of his buttocks" were bruised, he had a friend waiting in the wings to get him off the hook: none other than State Rep. Stan Bainter.

Bainter wrote a letter to the judge asserting that Reeder never abused the boy. Reeder, the son of Ralph Reeder, an ex-member of the Lake County Republican Committee and a prominent businessman was freed after Banter's intervention.

Reeder wasted no time putting his freedom to use. Just one year after the initial charges, Reeder was arrested on a new complaint - "sexual battery on a child under 12."

Reeder pled no contest and was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

But freeing one abuser isn't enough for Bainter who takes the idea of parents' rights to new heights. Now, Bainter is intervening in the case of a 3-year-old Lake County boy, Robbie Torrence, who was so badly battered that his bottom and upper legs are a mass of bruises in police photos.

Bainter wrote a letter in defense of Daniel Nichols, the mother's boyfriend and the accused assailant. Nichols, who lived with Robbie's mother for three months states that he stopped hitting Robbie with his hand because it "stung my hand when I hit him" — so he switched to a belt. He defends his actions as reasonable discipline stating, "Everybody I know has spanked their children with a belt."

Bainter, showing no fear of siding once again with an alleged child abuser, wrote an angry letter to the Department of Children and Family Services threatening them with loss of funding if they persisted in their charges against Nichols. Banter's letter "made everyone back off a couple steps," according to Wofford Torrence, the boy's grandmother.

Torrence charges that Bainter had no business interfering with social services and believes that it was his threats which resulted in Nichols being given a slap on the wrist consisting of two years probation and no conviction on his record.

Good Golly, Miss Molly!

Wus'up wid the Boy Scouts?

Let a gay Boy Scout fraternize with real Boy Scouts? Un-bulleevable. But that's exactly what a New Jersey appellate court did when it ruled that the Boy Scouts of America could not kick out James Dale because he is gay. Dale, an Eagle Scout with 11 years of commendations is also co-chair of the Lesbian/Gay Alliance of Rutgers University.

Private Youth Jail Closed

Investigators in Colorado have shut down a privately run, 184-bed prison 95 miles north of Denver in May citing chronic understaffing. States paid at least \$52,000 a year for each youth incarcerated there. The High Plains youth prison housed juvenile offenders from more than a dozen states, but its principle client was the state of Colorado. The prison, consisting of two buildings, a ball field and a tall wire fence, and not much else, collected more than \$20 million in rent since 1988. This has allowed the owners to pull in \$5.4 million in profit.

As more and more youth are being locked up across America, the trend towards privatization of prisons is bound to increase, meaning big profits for investors, higher taxes for the public, and for the young inmates, less rehabilitative services and increasingly dangerous conditions. Clearly locking up young people is not the answer to worsening social conditions, which are the cause of crime. However, with this being the orientation of the federal and state governments, we can be assured that profiteering, and not the people's needs, will tend to dominate.

Street Youth Testify About Police Crackdown

Continued from page 10

it's now the police. And it is absolutely clear both from the testimony of the city attorney of Berkeley and our own police officers that what they are doing is illegal. It is simply unconstitutional. So now really it's up to us to make sure the police obey the law."

Orwellian overtones

The officially designated name of the crackdown - Operation Ave-Watch - carries ominous, Orwellian overtones, conjuring up images of a police-state operation aimed at keeping an intimidated populace under constant surveillance. As police cruisers swept up and down Telegraph Avenue monitoring street youth, with the "Orca" black-and-white police substation deployed nearby, activists questioned whether civil rights were being suspended for certain age groups and income levels.

"Civil rights are not for sale," said activist Carol Denney. "I object to the disproportionate public resources being spent to placate a whining merchant group which can't seem to understand that the area around the campus will always attract youth rather than 4th Street-style money."

Denney and Keith McHenry set up a colorful protest - "Cody's Unexpected Shower and Water Sports Program" - to mock the frequent, unscheduled spraying of street persons outside the bookstore owned by Andy Ross, as well as the several daily hose-downs by the public works department's "Big Green Clean Machine."

"It's all about intimidation if you ask me," said Denney about Operation Ave-Watch. "They are targeting street youth culture. I really resent the implication of this cleaning program that human beings are filth."

For youth, no direction home

Lyn Duff, 22, a youth advocate who was homeless throughout her adolescence, said in an interview, "The thing about the police sweeps is that these adults who have the opportunity to make contact with homeless youth: Are they really dealing with their problems, or are they just pacifying business owners? When you're 16 years old and homeless, and your only real contact with adults is when they arrest you, that's really going to make you hate them and not want to be part of society. When you're 16 and homeless, you're alienated enough from society as it is."

Duff, who now works at Pacific News Service, said that during her years of being homeless as a teenager in the East Bay, she and her homeless friends found that most people "aren't there to help you."

"With the young people on the street, they really have no choice - it's not like there's anywhere to go," Duff said. "To be a kid and to be hanging out there and panhandling and spending your time with your friends - and your only contact with adults is when they come to arrest you - what kind of image does that give kids of the adults in their world? That just reinforces the kids' past experience that adults are there to punish them and have an adversarial relationship, and that adults aren't

there to care for the kid, to help them or parent them or love them."

Describing the nearly complete lack of shelter for homeless youth in the East Bay, Duff told of her attempt two weeks ago to find a shelter for a 17-year-old friend who is homeless. "We spent weeks trying to get her into a shelter or anything in the East Bay, and we couldn't find anything," Duff said. "She's from the East Bay, but we finally could only find her a shelter in Marin."

Crackdown incited by merchants

Almost invariably, police sweeps in the Bay Area are instigated by merchants who use their economic clout to pressure the city manager and the cop on the beat to drive homeless people out of what are indisputably public spaces open, by law, to all citizens. In the case of Operation Ave-Watch, advocates point the finger at such Telegraph Ave. businesses as Cody's and Moe's bookstores and Amoeba Records.

Advocates are asking pointed questions of Berkeley city officials: If only a small fraction of the people on Telegraph cause any turmoil, why is there such a massive act of discrimination being practiced against an entire group of people? Why do merchants get special treatment by city leaders and police, who sweep people off public sidewalks as if business owners had won some monopoly on public space? And how can any democracy support a socioeconomic cleansing based on economic class and age?

Andrea Prichett, a founding member of Copwatch, said, "The intention of this crackdown is to make life so miserable for homeless people that they leave the area. And I think that's wrong. I think discrimination against any kind of people - no matter what, no matter who - is wrong."

"I was outraged that our politicians would be so cynical and would use these kids as pawns in their political campaign," Prichett told this reporter. "This is almost an annual issue - a pre-election wedge issue."

Noting that the police sweeps are accompanied by animal-control officers, mental-health workers, and public works employees spraying the sidewalks with a high-pressure mixture of water and chemicals, Prichett said that Operation Ave-Watch itself is highly disruptive of normal life on Telegraph. "I've heard city officials complain about what they call 'service-resistant homeless people,' and it's no wonder that people grow hostile to these so-called services when they're used as part of a police arsenal."

End run around civilian review

In years past, Prichett pointed out, when Berkeley police were planning some sort of sweep or unusual measure, they would discuss it with the PRC first, which could take it to the Berkeley City Council, thus maintaining civilian control.

"Now they're running these paramilitary style exercises," she said. "It's like an occupying force on Telegraph Avenue. The PRC really had no information about it. I'm really concerned that our current chief of police is attempting to do an end run around the civilian review process."

That concern was echoed by James Chanin of the American Civil Liberties Union, who

testified that, in years past, the police department would come to the Police Review Commission for consultation before launching a sweep.

"But you're not running this police department anymore, and neither is the city council," said Chanin. "This program was dreamed up in the city manager's office with absolutely no public input whatsoever from the commission or the council. It was then presented as a fait accompli, and the police chief is not even here tonight and that's outrageous."

"Please stop it now. In your hearts you all know this will not work. You all know this is a waste of money. So stop it now before more money is wasted, and more people who are poor are criminalized."

Denney reproached Berkeley City Councilmember Kriss Worthington for initially supporting the "cleansing" of Telegraph Avenue, and called on him to show moral leadership by holding a press conference in front of Cody's Books to call for an end to Operation Ave-Watch. "Kriss Worthington doesn't need five votes to take a stand against human rights violations. He alone can stop this. It's his district. It's his constituency."

Frances Townes, founder of the Chaplaincy to the Homeless, told the PRC meeting, "I just don't think that we can treat people as non-people, especially our young people." But she pointed out that Operation Ave-Watch did not simply emanate from the police, but from higher-up city officials. "I don't only blame the police," Townes said. "I blame the administration of this city that made this happen. And it's a political season. Don't forget - it's a political season!"

Prichett described, in emotional tones, why she believes the persecution of homeless youth in Berkeley has echoes going back to the civil rights era.

"At 3:30 in the afternoon," she said, "a woman was sitting with a baby on the sidewalk, perfectly within her rights. And I have to tell you, it reminded me somewhat of Rosa Parks. Because she's surrounded by police officers, and the public works guy is blasting away at an already clean sidewalk. And the police came up and say, 'Well, are you going to move?'"

"And she looked at that officer and she said, 'Officer, I'm tired of moving five times a day.'"

Terry Messman writes and edits for Street Spirit in Berkeley, California. He can be reached by email at: <t_messman@hotmail.com>.

U.S. Thinks Kids Should Fight Wars

Continued from page 3

Machel after visits to several battle zones, including Angola, Cambodia, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and the former Yugoslavia.

Machel said the participation of children is "one of the most alarming trends in armed conflicts."

"Children serve armies in supporting roles, as cooks, porters, messengers and spies. Increasingly, however, adults are deliberately conscripting children as soldiers," she pointed out.

USA: Renegade Nation

continued from page one

ments have violated the will of U.S. imperialism, and as always happens when governments disagree, the people have suffered. Not all the people mind you, Saddam Hussein and Fidel Castro still remain firmly in power despite the earnest attempts of the CIA; but the citizenry of those two countries: the aged, the infirmed, and especially the youth who have no control over their nation of origin and have had no opportunities whatsoever to exercise their political will ñ they have borne the brunt of this new warfare known as the economic embargo.

And make no mistake, this is warfare. Though we have yet to see Americans coming home in body bags, and United States national expenditures are still in the billions, there have been casualties, and there have been costs.

A March 1997 report issued by the American Association for World Health documents that harm to the health and nutrition of large numbers of ordinary Cuban citizens [is] directly linked" to the further tightening of the decades-old U.S. embargo by the 1992 misnamed Cuban Democracy Act. The medical experts comprising the AAWH's research team has noted considerable deficiencies such as malnutrition, poor water quality, and a shortage of medicines, equipment and medical information, deficiencies that were not prevalent in Cuba's high quality health care system prior to the tightening of the embargo.

From 1993-96, the Cuban economy has expended \$8.7 million on shipping medical imports from Asia, Europe, and South American rather than the U.S. In certain instances, patients have died simply for lack of otherwise available medicines. There has also been a noticeable decrease in caloric intake resulting in an increase in low birthweight babies.

The situation in Iraq is even more disheartening, if such a word can adequately describe the death of an estimated 1.2 million civilians (half of them children). Compounding the extensive damage to Iraq's infrastructure during the Gulf War (no, those were not all military targets we were bombing) is the comprehensive U.S.-led U.N. "sanctions."

The resulting damage to this import-dependent economy was visible immediately. UNICEF reported "47,000 excess deaths among children under five years of age during the first eight months of 1991." The deaths resulted and continue to result from preventable infectious diseases, decreased quality and availability of food and water, and a health care system nearing meltdown due to a lack of medicines and supplies; additionally, a startling rise in the rates of leukemia has been linked to the uranium-laden "weapons of mass destruction" employed against Iraq in 1991.

Our leaders have shown themselves to be clearly disinterested in the true realms of human concern, and our mass media complicit in the perpetual attempts to expand the U.S. hegemony to every corner of the globe.

It is the duty of youth everywhere to

oppose not only outright military aggression, but also the continued attempts to starve foreign populations into submission. And oppose these policies we will. Not only out of compassion for defenseless citizens caught in the crossfire of a senseless war, not only out of our respect for the sovereignty of other nations and the rights of their populace to determine their own future, but also because we as Americans cannot continue tying yellow ribbons while our young people are shipped away to kill or die in a foreign land, filling their minds and hearts with a sorrow they can never forget, all while our government squanders our nation's wealth to secure the overseas investments of the owning class.

We will oppose these actions in the hopes of a world that one day realizes the commitments put forth in documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or for that matter the Youth Bill of Rights. Truly a world worth struggling for.

Medical Supplies to Cuba

Several anonymous donors joined together to send antibiotics and aspirin to Cuba. The donation was made on behalf of NCRA and was sent to the people of Cuba via a caravan organized by the Bruderhof in New York. The medical supplies and medications were valued at \$1,000.

Adults Are Meaner than Kids

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the present rate of incarceration continues, one out of every twenty children born in 1997 will spend time behind bars. For males the figure will be one out of eleven, and for African American males it will be one in four.

The irony is that the generation of baby boomers backing these policies grew up, by and large, distrusting adults. Today it is adults who distrust the young. A RAND survey in 1996 found that American adults believe juveniles cause 50 percent of violent crime. The FBI, by contrast, reported that year that juveniles caused 10 to 15 percent of violent crime. Last March — the same week that media headlined the Jonesboro shootings — the FBI reported a 30 percent drop in the juvenile homicide rate over the past three years.

"I know what World War III will be — a war against teenagers," predicted Emilio, 17, after watching *Twelve Monkeys*, a Bruce Willis flick about post-apocalyptic dystopia. According to the National Criminal Justice Commission, spending on crime fighting is actually increasing three times faster than defense spending. The specter of 10 and 11 year olds dressed in camouflage, toting rifles as they stalk their peers, serves as the new "Red menace" for a prison-industrial complex that is coming to rival the military-industrial com-

Eulogy for a Graffiti Writer

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getting shocked by the third rail? What writer ran from cops after getting up — jumping off a building breaking both of his legs, then covering himself in the snow to escape getting busted? What writer got the utmost respect from Queens and Kings coast to coast and paid his dues to writing graff? What writer did you ever know who said, "I got nothing to lose!" and would scream at you to go out and do the same?

"BOMB, SPIE, BOMB!" he said to me with a passion of expectation as he left to carry on his journey. I thank you Jon, TIE ONE. You taught me a lesson in living up to my full potential and I love you for that. You are forever young, and in your memory we will not ever give up the fight.

"What all of this indicates is that despite the Constitution, despite the First Amendment and its guarantees of free speech, American citizens must fear to speak their minds, knowing that their speech, their writings, their attendance of meetings, their signing of petitions, and their support of even the most nonviolent of organizations may result in their being listed in the files of the FBI, with consequences no one can surely know. It was Mark Twain who said, 'In our country, we have those three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practice either.'"

• -- Howard Zinn

plex. This time the enemy is among us — our own children.

Wars, of course, can be useful. World War II drafted 10 million American men after the Great Depression rendered more than 15 million Americans jobless. In de-industrializing economies, prisons convert otherwise expendable and potentially subversive residents into raw material and profit margins.

The war on crime is assimilating young people on the margins by criminalizing them largely for non-violent, economically-motivated offenses like drug possession. Three-strikes-you're-out laws make it clear that there is no such thing as redemption once you have activated the trip wire.

Facing up to Springfield — or Pearl, Ms., or Memphis or Jonesboro — will require acknowledging that children devalue life to the extent that the adult world devalues their lives. In towns long considered America's heartland, mean children are arming themselves in imitation of adults increasingly determined to prove they can be meaner.

Pacific News Service associate editor, Robin Templeton, a youth advocate and prison reform activist, is writing a book about how young people are responding to the punitive legislation of the 1990s.

National Child Rights Alliance:

Working for Child Rights and Youth Liberation Worldwide

The National Child Rights Alliance was founded in March 1986 by seven youth and adults who had been abused and neglected as children. NCRA recognizes a "dual form" of abuse: that by a parent or caretaker and that by society at large. Whether a child is deprived of safety, food, dignity, medical care, shelter or emotional support by the actions of an individual parent, or by the actions of a negligent society does not make the suffering of a child any less.

NCRA believes that its mission goes beyond the immediate need to stop child abuse now. It extends to a larger social justice view of oppressed groups taking power; a civil rights movement comparable to other great civil rights movements.

A key distinction between NCRA and other "child advocacy" organizations is NCRA's focus on children and youth creating and leading a movement for their rights, rather than on the common practice of protecting and speaking for children. This very different focus arises out of the unique ability of individuals who have been abused to point to the many different ways that they themselves could have been part of the solution, had they not been silenced and ignored by the agencies and professionals to whom they were entrusted.

Youth Summit

NCRA has sponsored an annual Youth Summit since 1995. The Youth Summit has been exclusively organized by and for youth and has been planned by youth members of NCRA in conjunction with a number of other youth-led organizations. The Summit has

hosted speakers from Haiti, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Canada and the United States and unites children, youth and students working on many issues including child abuse in the home; the institutionalization of youth as a form of social control; racism and imperialism; child prostitution; AIDS, oppression in the school system and other issues. NCRA has also sent representatives to connect with youth organizations in Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, India, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, People's Republic of China, South Africa, Tanzania, Venezuela, and Vietnam.

Legal Cases

NCRA has been on the cutting edge of changing the legal concept of children from property to personhood. With its groundbreaking work on behalf of Gregory K. NCRA became the organizing force behind the right to legal standing for youth. Gregory won the first rounds in court but was ultimately denied standing by an appellate court. However, NCRA also retained counsel for Maggie G. in Illinois. She became the first child to successfully file a "citizen's petition of child abuse" on herself and win her right not to be forced back with the stepfather who had just months previously been convicted of sexually assaulting her.

Youth Bill of Rights

The founding members wrote a Youth Bill of Rights which was re-drafted in 1995 at the first Youth Summit. It is the document that unifies all members despite divergent backgrounds and beliefs. We believe that civil and human rights apply to all people — including children and youth. We will work to

establish and defend these rights for children.

Who Supports NCRA?

NCRA welcomes members and supporters of all ages, from every spot on the globe and from all walks of life.

NCRA is an independent organization which has members of many differing political, religious or non-religious and cultural backgrounds. NCRA is not affiliated with any one political, religious or cultural group. NCRA works with various progressive organizations and movements in support of the struggles of all people for human rights and dignity. If you are interested in joining or supporting NCRA or in subscribing to the Freedom Voice, please fill out the following form.

Would you like to endorse the
Youth Bill of Rights?

Interested in
joining NCRA?

Fill out and return to: **NCRA, PO Box 422, Ellenville, NY 12428**

Yes, I would like to join NCRA. I am 25 years or younger. (\$20 if employed, as much as you can if not). My year of birth is: _____.

Yes, I would like to join NCRA. I am over age 25 (\$20).

Yes, I agree with the Youth Bill of Rights - in general if not in all particulars - and would like to endorse it.

I would like to subscribe to the Freedom Voice, a voice of the child and youth liberation movement (\$15 non-members; free to members; \$45 institutions).

I would like to make a donation to support the work of NCRA and the Freedom Voice. I understand that NCRA is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization and that my contribution is tax-deductible.

Please provide us with some contact information.

Name:

Address:

City:

State: Postal/Zip code:

Country:

Daytime Phone:

Evening Phone:

Email (please specify zero vs. letter 0 and number 1 vs. letter l):

Are you also interested in writing for the Freedom Voice?

The Freedom Voice accepts contributions (including artwork, news and editorial articles, photographs, letters to the editor, interviews, book/movie reviews, etc.). Get involved!

Yes, please send me a copy of the Writer's Guidelines.

Youth Bill of Rights

The Right to Liberty

No youth or child shall be forced to live in any household against his or her will — this includes biological as well as foster and adoptive families. No person shall be forced into marriage. No child or youth shall be institutionalized against her or his will without due process rights. The right to freedom from forced institutionalization includes the right to freedom from military conscription.

The Right to Safety

All young people shall have the right to safe haven on request, without fear of criminal charges. We support sanctuary for youth.

The Right to Survival

All youth shall have the right to adequate food, shelter, medical care, and a healthy environment.

We support a free national health care system for children which is not dependent on parental income or parental permission.

We support full employment and living wage rights for workers, and a guaranteed income for those unable to work, so that families are not torn apart by poverty. Pay differentials based on age shall be abolished.

All young persons shall have the right to emergency services including welfare services regardless of the status of their guardians.

The Right to Education

All youth shall have the right to a free education — including college and technical schools — at public expense. Programs must be free of cultural, racial or gender bias in all respects.

The Right to Free Speech

All young people shall have the right to free speech. This includes both in personal expression and in school-based and public media.

The Right to Non-Discrimination

We support all efforts to end curtailment of the potential or self-esteem of any youth. No child shall be discriminated against on the basis of age, race, gender, language, country of origin, economic or marital status of parents, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, or physical or mental limitations or differences.

The Right to Free Choice

No youth or child shall be either forced or forbidden to choose a religious or political affiliation, philosophy or creed.

The Right to an Attorney

All young persons shall have the right to legal representation whereby attorneys act as an attorney for — rather than guardian of — their clients.