

LET CHILDREN BE CHILDREN



Outside my open window I can hear the sounds of children playing, gleeful notes of joy and discovery resulting in a concerto of jubilee and innocence that pleases this ear. Summer draws to a close, marked by the start of a new year of school, a scholastic structure that necessarily organizes a child's life in preparation for the eventuality of the real world. After a week of buses and bells the student, especially the child-student, needs time to unwind and create his or her own play. Simply be.

Society asks our children to grow up too fast. When faced with a world increasingly desensitized by practice, play dates, pee wee sports, age-inappropriate responsibilities and the omnipresent cultural references of sexuality,

individualism and materialism disguised as “hip,” our children grow up much too quickly. The exact moment a child becomes mature, an “adult,” the avenues of return to an uncomplicated life have closed. Our children are now too aware of our adult world, and will be for the rest of their lives, though the legal age of 18 is far off. Decades of obligations and you-should-know-betters. We need to let children be children.

The reader may assume that I am referring to the average upper and middle class of America. No, this is an affliction that knows neither class nor boundaries and can be far worse than overscheduling. Children who share the wonder of where or when their next meal will come from lose their naiveté. Children who suffer from drought and dehydration, famine and starvation inhabit a reality that none should have to imagine or experience, certainly not a child. Children who are sexually trafficked have lost their innocence. Children who lose brothers and sisters and cousins and parents in wars, violence and conflicts in our neighborhoods and in countries abroad lose their dewy-eyed view of the world. Children who are not given the chance to be born—they were aborted—have, well, lost their lives.

Children are whole when they can trust that others will protect them; when they can still be dependent upon a parent, a guardian, a society that looks after their well-being and has their best interests at heart.

When society fails to ensure that its children have nourishing food—29.2% of children in Oregon are not sure where their next meal will come from (“food insecurity”)—the children are not given a chance.

When the U.S. Government is not funded to combat the global scourge of labor and sexual trafficking, the children are not given a chance.

When U.S. Government is not funded to provide help for our global brothers and sisters suffering from severe poverty, disease and violence—a small amount of aid will feed 5 million schoolchildren and continue to provide safe, reliable drinking water to more than 1.3 billion people, which prevents disease— the children are not given a chance.

When individuals and society do little to address the reasons that men and women chose abortion and “to support women and families whose circumstances may lead them to seek an abortion,” the children are not given a chance.

Society creates a legacy marked by morality and compassion when its government and its individuals give children a chance to live, to thrive, and to play; when we let children be children.



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