
Youth Truth



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Involuntary Servitude

Susan Wishnetsky

In his State of the Union address in January, George W. Bush answered a letter from a ten-year-old girl who asked what she could do to help the nation: “Study hard in school, listen to your mom and dad, and when you and your friends see a man or woman in uniform, say ‘thank you’. And, Ashley, while you do your part, all of us here in this great chamber will do our best to keep you and the rest of America safe and free.”¹

The duty of a young citizen, in other words, is obedience, trust of the government, and gratitude. If the President’s plan to grant temporary worker status to illegal immigrants, proposed in that same speech, causes Ashley’s mom and dad to lose their jobs, well, that is none of her affair. If that future college degree she studies so hard for becomes worthless because grads in India will work for less—that’s for the grownups to handle. Nothing to worry *her* little head about.

The grownups have done a bang-up job on the nation’s workforce lately—that is, it’s pretty banged up. The most modest hope of economic forecasters (at least 125,000 new jobs in February) was dashed on Friday, March 5 when the U.S. Department of Labor released its latest findings: only 21,000 new jobs, all government jobs, were created that month. The report also revealed that job growth for December and January was much lower than previously believed.²

Long-term joblessness, lasting six or more months, climbed from 18.3% of all unemployment in 2002 to 22.1% in 2003. College graduates, middle-aged people, and black males are all being hit especially hard by the job squeeze.³ The only group still able to find jobs quickly and easily: illegal immigrants,⁴ the very group President Bush wants to help.

Raising standards in our schools, giving kids more and better education, we are told, will help them compete. But the problem is *not* that our workforce is too badly educated to be employable; after all, seven of the ten occupations with the greatest current and expected increases in job availability are low-skill, minimum-wage occupations such as cashiers and waiters. The problem is that Americans cost too much to hire; we want a living wage (if we unionize, then it’s health care benefits, retirement packages, overtime pay, all while working a mere 40-hour week). But once we’ve tried competing with 8 million new illegal (or newly legal) residents, maybe we’ll be willing to work for *food*.

The nation’s youth are already beyond that point. With a jobless rate for 16- to 19-year-olds of 36.8%, the worst since 1948,⁵ many young people are working for *no* money, for nothing, nothing except the hope of a letter of recommendation, an extra line on their resumes, something to improve their marketability and help them stand out in a crowd of jobseekers.

High school diplomas don’t help; they’re a dime a dozen. College degrees? even worse. Thousands of dollars later, you find you’re “overqualified” for most jobs, “lacking experience” for the rest. Trade schools or community colleges? they cost too, and they might make you look like a loser, a college wannabe who didn’t make the cut. You need something special, something to show your commitment and exceptional drive. So you volunteer.

But for many students, the opportunity to distinguish themselves with volunteer work is being eliminated, since more and more schools are making it a requirement of graduation. The state of Maryland already mandates this unpaid labor requirement for graduation in all its schools. Now the Illinois legislature is considering imposing this requirement—40 hours over 4 years of high school—statewide.⁶

In a nation of “No Child Left Behind,” it makes sense that no child be allowed a way to get ahead, either. If “volunteer work” is *compulsory*, it’s not much more help on a resume than a passing grade in gym.

They call it “community service,” a phrase now most commonly used to refer to a punishment meted out by a judge. Maybe administrators and legislators think high school students owe a debt—restitution, as it were—for their years of compulsory

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Letters

Jan. 25, 2004. I was at Lowe's this afternoon with my father, and when the cashier scanned some ceiling fan oil, a warning appeared on the screen telling the cashier the customer must be over 18. I asked her about it, and she said that she can't sell, among other things, most paints, oils, glues, or even WD-40 if the customer is under 18. - JS

Feb. 6, 2004. Watching CBS Evening News tonight, I heard the words: "It's a common gripe among seniors, that doctors practice ageism, often treating older patients like children."

I want to cry. -David Schneider-Joseph

[On "Training Wheels for Citizenship", a proposed California ballot initiative which would grant partial votes to people as young as 14, and the question: Is half a vote better than none?]

Mar. 11, 2004. Yes, 1/2 and 1/4 is better than 0. It's simple math.

Once we achieve a younger voting age, there will be no taking it away. Millions of young people will at least have half of a vote and will be a real influence on elections My opinion is that while this constitutional amendment is far from perfect, and the title is somewhat insulting, nevertheless, it's a step in the right direction. I don't think it makes sense to oppose progress just because it's not all the progress we hope for and some day will achieve. -Daniel McGuire

Mar. 16, 2004. I think compromise can be good. But, perhaps we should not (as a movement) support any type of 1/2 vote initiatives... We should push for full voting and let the chips fall where they may. If we ask for too little, that's what we will get. -jesse

Buzz

Some publicity for our organization: the March 2004 issue of *Playboy* includes a paragraph on ASFAR in a section called "Very Special Interest Groups."

Redirect

Contrary to what you may have read or heard in sensational news reports, today's American youth are a pretty good bunch. Mike Males explains the disconnect between myth and reality at <<http://home.earthlink.net/~mmales/yt-mead.htm>>.

If action video games like "Street Fighter" promote violent behavior, a commentary at <http://www.ncaa.org/cen_news/cn92videogame.htm> wonders, then why is there such good fellowship, tolerance and camaraderie at gamers' tournaments?

From fingerprints and DNA to radio-frequency IDs and global tracking devices, the commentary at <<http://www.missoulian.com/articles/2004/03/10/opinion/opinion4.txt>> worries about the ever-increasing invasion of children's privacy.

"Extended constructed response" used to be called an "essay." Students now get "formative assessments" instead of "tests." Jargon foisted on students (by teachers who don't understand it themselves) is exposed at <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A26203-2004Jan17.html>>.

Parents should talk with their children, not "use librarians as intermediaries as they police their children's reading list," says one rare editorial at <http://www.juneauempire.com/stories/022904/opi_emped.shtml> opposing an Alaskan bill giving parents access to their children's library records. Another, at <http://www.dodgeglobe.com/stories/012204/opi_0122040051.shtml>, makes fun of the similar law in Wisconsin.

Note/Disclaimer

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Voting Bill Has A Chance In Maine

A bill in the Maine legislature, originally written to lower the state's voting age to 17, was amended to allow anyone who will be 18 by the time of a general election to vote in the primary preceding it. Getting the two-thirds vote needed to amend the state's constitution, which would have been required by the bill's original language, would have been a long-shot, explains an article at <http://news.mainetoday.com/apwire/D80FUANO1-33.shtml>. The amended bill, says <http://www.seacoastonline.com/news/02072004/maine/74777.htm>, passed the House on February 4 by a vote of 74-67.

Welsh Minister Supports Vote At 16

Citing apathy and cynicism among older voters, Welsh First Minister Rhodri Morgan argued passionately for lowering the voting age in Wales to 16. Some of his remarks appear at <http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk/0100news/0200wales/page.cfm?objectid=13925258&method=full&siteid=50082>.

California Bill Would Give Minors Partial Votes

On March 8, four California lawmakers introduced a bill to give California 16-year olds 1/2 of a vote in state elections; 14-year-olds would get 1/4 of a vote. Senator John Vasconcellos, one of the bill's sponsors, said he'd prefer simply to lower the voting age to 16, but thought this approach might have a better chance of success. Some interesting discussion is at <http://www.dailyca.org/article.php?id=14482>.

Adults Must Be Accompanied By Child

On February 5, the U.S. State Department announced that it will no longer give passports for minors to parents applying on their children's behalf. From now on, warns <http://www.unioncountynj.org/news/042passp.htm>, the child must be present and verify his or her identity, to prevent cases of child abduction or trafficking. Seems a sensible change.

The Danger From Within

"Children killed by drunk drivers." To most people, this phrase conjures the image of happy, healthy, promising tots, dutifully buckled in the back seat as their parents cautiously watch the road, their lives cut short in an unavoidable collision with a stranger, a reckless, intoxicated driver (probably a teenager) suddenly crossing the center lane at high speed. That's how it happens on the news. But a February report from the Centers for Disease Control, described at <http://usgovinfo.about.com/cs/healthmedical/a/kidvictims.htm>, finds that in most cases, the drivers responsible are in the car *with* the children; of children under 14 killed in alcohol-related crashes from 1997 to 2002, 68% were riding with the drunk driver. Only 32% of those killed were strapped in (the drunker the driver, the less likely it was that the kids were strapped in). The drivers' relationships to the kids was not included in the data.

Younger Old Folks Lose Case

Employees of General Dynamics Corporation, suing their company over a benefits package phased out for workers under 50 years old, were rebuffed by the Supreme Court on February 24. Although the claimants were all over 40, the class protected by the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the court said the act only covers discrimination in favor of *younger* people, not those who are older still, explains <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/news/articles/0225scotus-age25.html>.

COPA Considered By Top Court

No news at press time, but the Supreme Court will probably rule soon on the 1998 Child Online Protection Act, intended to keep minors from viewing "adult" material on the Web—and repeatedly ruled unconstitutional by courts at various levels. A brief update appears at <http://www.zanesvilletimesrecorder.com/news/stories/20040303/localnews/3014.html>.

"Child" + "Privacy" = Another Bill

The meaning of "privacy" is strained again by the Children's Listbroker Privacy Act, a bill introduced in the U.S. Senate on March 3 which would prevent the rental or sale of personal data of "anyone known to be 16 or under without the parent's consent." Senator Ron Wyden, a sponsor of the bill, is quoted at http://www.wired.com/news/business/0,1367,62522,00.html?tw=wn_tophead=1 as saying that children are "more vulnerable to manipulation in marketing pitches than adults."

"Pediatric Rule" Restored

The Food and Drug Administration can again require drug trials on children, to establish safety and effectiveness and determine correct dosages, *before* doctors can prescribe them to kids. When a federal court decided in October 2002 that the FDA had no authority to require companies to conduct such tests, legislators introduced the "Pediatric Research Equity Act" to give the FDA that authority. The bill passed the U.S. Senate last July, and got House approval in November. Some controversies over the legislation are discussed at <http://www.ama-assn.org/amednews/2003/12/08/gvvsb1208.htm>.

Cautious U.S. Response to British SSRI Ban

The December British ban on a class of antidepressants for patients under 18 has prompted the formation of a government panel to study the drugs' relationship to suicidal behavior, we learn at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A3981-2004Feb1?language=printer>. That the drugs may not even *work*, mentioned at <http://www.globeandmail.com/servlet/ArticleNews/TPStory/LAC/20040217/DRUGS17/TPHealth/>, is apparently not taken seriously by the U.S. medical community.

News Links

Blaming the Victims in the Goose Creek Incident

The South Carolina school where police restrained over 100 students at gunpoint (in a raid that uncovered *no* contraband) issued a formal response in January to the students' lawsuit, stating that the raid was "justified" and "reasonable," and that any injuries to students were partly caused by their own "carelessness" and "recklessness." One parent, <http://charleston.net/stories/012704/loc_27raid.shtml> tells us, compared the response to "a drunken driver running over someone and then blaming the pedestrian for getting in the way."

Principal Planted Pot

A South Haven, Michigan Assistant Principal, frustrated by the failure of the police's drug-sniffing dog to find any drugs in his school, told police that he knew the dog missed the marijuana in one boy's locker because he had put it there himself. According to <<http://www.heraldtribune.com/articles/2004/02/20/news/news2.txt>>, administrator Pat Conroy said he was convinced a certain student was dealing drugs, and admitted planting the drugs in his locker to get him arrested.

Bibles For Everyone, On the House!

California lawyer Matt McLaughlin is collecting signatures for a ballot proposal requiring the state to purchase a Bible for every public school student and allow its use as a textbook in literature classes. The article at <<http://www.mercurynews.com/ml/mercurynews/news/local/7649334.htm>> says the plan would cost California about \$200 million.

California School Makes Late Students Pay

Whittier California kids late to school three times are fined \$165, says <<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,105034,00.html>>.

Pledge News

On March 9, a panel of judges deliberated on Pennsylvania's Pledge of Allegiance law, found unconstitutional last July, and their session, described at <<http://www.philly.com/ml/inquirer/living/education/8146611.htm>>, contains a notable quote. Considering whether notifying parents of children who refuse to pledge is a "coercive" measure, Judge Richard L. Nygaard, one of the panel members, remarked, "If it had happened to me when I was a kid, I wouldn't have just saluted the flag, I would've climbed the pole."

Which Allegiance Comes First?

We missed this news story last fall: since September, in accordance with a new state law, Texas schoolkids have also been reciting a pledge to the flag of Texas, says <<http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/story.htm/topstory2/2053955>>.

Drug Testing to Invade U.K. Schools

On February 21, British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that the nation's schools are now permitted to perform random testing for illegal drugs on students, and encouraged them to begin doing so, according to <<http://politics.guardian.co.uk/homeaffairs/story/0,11026,1153660,00.html>>.

D.C. School Goes "Maximum Security"

After a fatal shooting in Washington's Ballou High School cafeteria on February 2, the school is beefing up security with police officers and other armed guards, metal detectors, X-ray machines, and locked doors, reports <<http://www.washingtontimes.com/metro/20040218-100449-9348r.htm>>.

Girls Thrown Out for Doing Ibuprofen

Alabama sophomore Ysatis Jones, kicked out of her school for taking a Motrin in class on December 3, finally returned on January 22. Pending her appeal of her punishment, a judge ordered the school to let her attend, says <<http://www.al.com/news/birminghamnews/index.ssf?base/news/107476667896820.xml>>. And <<http://www.shreveporttimes.com/html/AE0F03BF-76FC-4300-8564-695F1898F37C.shtml>> tells of the recent expulsion of Louisiana sophomore Amanda Stiles when a teacher searched her purse for cigarettes and found Advil.

Florida Buses to Track Kids

An article at <http://www.sptimes.com/2004/02/28/Tampabay/Have_your_thumb_ready.shtml> describes the fingerprint, communications, and global positioning systems soon to be installed in the school bus fleet of one Florida school district.

Middle-Schoolers Get Some Relief

A middle school in Lawrence, New Jersey changed its policy on hall passes and locked restrooms as of February 23, so that kids would no longer have to "hold it in" during classes. The old and new policies are explained (not entirely clearly) at <<http://www.nj.com/news/times/index.ssf?base/news-1/1077354369285521.xml>>. Some parents and students are still not satisfied with the policy.

Mother's Concern Gets Son In Trouble

Lori Bolling, whose 17-year-old son Robert drives 20 miles to his after-school job, bought him a roadside emergency kit to keep in his truck. One day in October, <<http://www.nbc4.tv/education/2535992/detail.html>> relates, drug-sniffing dogs in the high school parking lot picked up the scent of Robert's asthma inhaler. Searching the truck, a security guard looked inside the brand new, never-opened emergency kit and found—a utility knife. Rules are rules. A weapons violation means automatic suspension. But you have to wonder: for what precise action or behavior is Robert being punished? What does the school think he should have done differently?

News Links

Advocates Discuss Reform in Mississippi

After the U.S. Department of Justice's intervention last fall to stop the gruesomely inhumane conditions in Mississippi's juvenile detention centers, it sounded like a few administrators might get shifted into new jobs, and kids would continue to be tortured. But a recent article at <http://www.clarionledger.com/news/0403/07/merc.html> presents a more optimistic view. The Juvenile Justice committee of the State's House of Representatives seems to be heeding the calls of advocates for greater leniency, family therapy, and alternatives to incarceration.

Louisiana to Keep Locking 'Em Up

Youth advocates who hoped that the recent state takeover and planned closure of a horrible Louisiana youth detention facility would prompt a re-examination of the state's juvenile justice policy were shocked when Governor Kathleen Blanco reappointed longtime Corrections Secretary Richard Stalder on February 26. At <http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/index.ssf?base/news-1/1077868737113570.xml>, Governor Blanco is reported to have announced that Stalder would no longer control the juvenile division.

California Juvenile Courts in a Bind

Despite having no good alternative placements for youthful offenders, two California counties decided in February not to place any more kids in the custody of the California Youth Authority unless their facilities and their treatment of inmates improves, reports <http://www.mercurynews.com/ml/mercurynews/news/local/7979426.htm>.

Michigan Agency Sued By Christian Camp

Michigan's Family Independence Agency, responsible for placing some "troubled" kids in various rehabilitation centers, stopped sending kids to a facility called Teen Ranch while investigating complaints that residents were forced to attend church and engage in religious activities. After Teen Ranch officials agreed to moderate and clarify their admittedly religious focus, the agency called off the ban, but is being sued anyway. Two articles giving rather different accounts are at <http://www.thetimesherald.com/news/stories/20040209/localnews/382025.html> and http://www.freep.com/news/childrenfirst/teen26_20040226.htm.

Lionel Tate Freed

Now 17, the boy sentenced to life for killing a 6-year-old girl at the age of 12 was released from his Florida juvenile jail on January 26, his sentence overturned on appeal, says http://www.sacobserver.com/news/021004/lionel_tate.shtml. Lionel had maintained that the fatal assault was accidental.

Obituary

Joan McCord, Criminologist
August 4, 1930-February 24, 2004



Unfounded assumptions—baseless beliefs widely accepted as truth—are like weeds in the garden of our society. Some may look pretty, but, left to grow unchecked, they can destroy all that surrounds them and their roots threaten the foundations on which we build.

Joan Fish McCord, a champion of skepticism in the face of unwavering dogma, devoted her life to digging up and exposing the deeply-rooted conceptions of the formers of social policy, angering liberals and conservatives alike by challenging their beliefs about crime, families, prevention and rehabilitation.

After earning her doctoral degree in sociology from Stanford University, McCord began to focus on programs intended to help youth. Her 1953 article "Two Approaches to the Cure of Delinquents" concluded that a "therapeutic" approach to treatment was preferable to a "punitive" one (and in the text of the article, she placed the word "cure" in quotation marks). But in pursuing a longitudinal approach, a study taking place over years of follow-up contacts, she began to question the value of "therapeutic" approaches as well, finding that "at risk" children sent to summer camps, group therapy sessions, or other "feel-good" programs displayed *more* future criminal behavior than similar groups who received no treatment—even though most subjects believed they'd benefitted from the programs.

McCord used long-term studies to amass evidence disputing the effectiveness of corporal punishment, "Scared Straight" projects, and the DARE (Drug Awareness Resistance Education) program. Her 1999 article "When Interventions Harm" mentions the "file drawer problem"—researchers publishing only results they hoped for, and filing away the rest, unseen.

Her research was sometimes met with hostility when officials found their pet programs threatened by her evaluations, feeling that their good intentions and their own faith in their programs should be enough to ensure their continuation, regardless of the scientific evidence. Her last article, "Cures That Harm: Unanticipated Outcomes of Crime Prevention Programs," published in May 2003, compared people with this attitude to medical researchers who feel justified in covering up harmful effects of a drug just because they believe in its benefits.

Dr. McCord's legacy is her influence on other researchers.

Lisa Freeman

News Links

Evolution Plan Pleases No One

In January, Georgia's State School Superintendent Kathy Cox, trying to formulate a policy on teaching evolution that would appease all sides, proposed replacing the word "evolution" with the phrase "changes over time." The plan was criticized by former President and Georgia native Jimmy Carter, who said he was "embarrassed" by the "attempt to censor." The name change didn't satisfy creationists either; they realized that the same concepts would be taught as before. From the article at <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,109939,00.html>, it seems that Cox misjudged the controversy, thinking that if she made the "buzzword" disappear, the issue would go away too.

Teacher Guides Flunk

On November 4, New York City teachers didn't know whether to laugh or cry when they opened their newly-distributed curriculum guides and found page after page of terrible spelling and grammar, incoherent sentences, and some serious factual errors, too. The article at <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/story/134177p-119592c.html> is worth looking at—the mistakes are pretty funny.

Colorado Voucher Plan Blocked

Denver District Court Judge Joseph E. Meyer III ruled on December 3 that Colorado's "Opportunity Contract" program of private school vouchers did not conform to a section of the state's constitution which requires local control of schools, reports <http://www.heartland.org/Article.cfm?artId=14052>.

Cleveland Voucher Study Ends

Part of the funding for the 1995 "Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program" was earmarked for ongoing evaluation by a team of researchers from Indiana University. The voucher program continues, but the state of Ohio has stopped funding the evaluation team, which dutifully released its final report in December. Unbiased summaries of the report are hard to find, with pro- and anti-voucher sources both focusing on sections most favorable to their positions, but it seems safe to say that Cleveland's plan has not fulfilled the wildest hopes of its supporters. One summary is at <http://www.nsba.org/site/doc.asp?TRACKID=&DID=32622&CID=1315>; the report is in PDF form at http://www.indiana.edu/~iujce/rprt_rqs.html.

D.C. Voucher Program to Begin

The first federally-funded voucher plan will be instituted in Washington, D.C. The plan, part of a 2004 budget bill passed by the U.S. House in December, was approved by the Senate on January 22, says <http://www.cnn.com/2004/EDUCATION/01/22/congress.vouchers.reut/>.

New Rules Promote Segregation

Title IX of the 1972 Education Act requiring equal education for students of both genders has for years been interpreted to mean that boys and girls should attend classes together, since "separate" was believed to be "inherently unequal." But according to <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A28593-2004Mar3.html>, the U.S. Department of Education has rewritten the rules on what "equal" can mean. On March 3 an announcement came from the Bush administration that single-sex classes and schools are now okay. Less than a week later, one Indiana middle school announced its intention to try splitting up the sexes this coming fall, reported at http://www.myinky.com/ecp/gleaner_news/article/0,1626,ECP_4476_2720372,00.html.

Schools Revolt Against Federal Mandates

Schools are places where everyone must abide by the rules. But a *Christian Science Monitor* article at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0211/p01s02-ussc.html> says that many schools, fed up with the demands of the No Child Left Behind Act, are rebelling—by turning down federal funds, suing the government, or simply defying the Act's requirements. The Bush administration is looking for ways to quell the protests.

Dress Code At Odds With Religion

Nashala Hearn, an Oklahoma sixth-grade student suspended twice for dress code violations, sued her school on October 28 for the right to wear a hijab, a Muslim headscarf, in accordance with her faith. The article at <http://pewforum.org/news/display.php?NewsID=2827> says that the school is reconsidering the policy on headwear that seemed to rule out the hijab, and has allowed Nashala to return if she covers only her hair, but not her face.

French Law Discourages Religious Identity

On February 10, French legislators overwhelmingly voted to prohibit "ostentatious" religious garb, such as Muslim and Jewish head coverings, from the nation's schools. Unlike U.S. dress codes, presumably *not* meant to prevent students from observing religious requirements, the French law is explicitly intended to promote assimilation with a "secular" school environment. The controversial ban, to begin in September, is discussed at <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/world/20040304-0639-religion-france-headscarf.html>.

Anthology Attacked

On November 17, students in an advanced placement English class in Pennsylvania were suddenly ordered to surrender their textbooks. According to <http://www.centredaily.com/mld/centredaily/news/local/7376187.htm>, four selections in the literary anthology, including a passage from Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, had upset some parents.

Joke or Threat? Judges Split

In a 5-4 vote February 12, the Washington State Supreme Court overturned the 2001 felony harassment conviction of Martin Kilburn for telling a classmate that he would “bring a gun to school and shoot everyone and start with you.” The majority, according to <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/news.aspx?id=12677>, felt that Kilburn’s demeanor, his relationship with the classmate, and his habit of kidding around should have made clear to a reasonable person that the statement was a joke; the other judges felt that in these times, with a school policy against such statements, no such statement can be taken lightly. Kilburn had only been fined \$100 for his crime.

Town Slogan Too Racy for School

Although students have been wearing the local pride t-shirts to school without objection since their town’s centennial in 1996, Climax, Minnesota school officials have decided that in 2004 the official slogan “Climax—More Than A Feeling” is inappropriately suggestive, according to <http://www.cnn.com/2004/US/Midwest/02/13/offbeat.climax.controversy/>.

Teacher Ousted For Free Press

Jenny Acree, a high-school journalism teacher in Kansas, resigned under pressure following the February 13 release of the school paper’s special issue on sex. According to a brief series of articles in the *Salina Journal*, the team of student writers did edit out some of the most controversial passages, but the content was still offensive to many local residents. The next week, another teacher was appointed to accompany the paper’s student staff to a regional student press competition, so that Acree could spend a whole day in parent-teacher conferences; in solidarity with their teacher, the students all decided to skip the competition. The final article in the series, at http://www.saljournal.com/content/2-0-/module/displaystory/story_id/1385/format/html/displaystory.html, reports that Acree resigned from her job.

The Taming of the Play

Oregon high school principal Karen McKenzie insists that plays on her school’s state be “cleaner” than G-rated movies, says <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/news.aspx?id=12692>, demanding that the words “hell” and “damn” be left out of a February performance of Arthur Miller’s drama *All My Sons*. A happier story, from Washington, appears at <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/news.aspx?id=12360>. When Kennewick principal Jack Anderson cancelled the performance of *The Breakfast Club* in late November after three months of rehearsals, word of the tragedy spread all the way to Seattle, 220 miles away. Journalists and theater folks all pitched in, booking an auditorium in Seattle, arranging the cast’s transportation, lodging, chaperones, as well as a stage crew and publicity. On December 19-21, the show went on.

Protection from Religious Classmates

Ohio school superintendent Robert Mengerink defends his decision to stop kindergarten student Madison Wuebben from handing out bags of jellybeans with religious messages in class, saying kindergarteners aren’t able to distinguish “a friend’s opinion” from a school’s endorsement. The school okayed the candy distribution anywhere *outside* the classroom, but on February 6, Madison’s parents sued the school anyway, says <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/news.aspx?id=12633>.

The “G-Word”

On December 17, Illinois senior James Lord ended his news program, broadcast in his high school via closed circuit TV, with the words “God bless.” Principal Jonathan Heerboth said the comment was inappropriate and suspended Lord’s broadcasting privileges. The information at http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=36692 doesn’t make clear whether the news show would be considered “school-sponsored” or “student-initiated.”

The Other “G-Word”

Seven-year-old Marcus McLaurin was sent home early from his Louisiana school on November 11 after he was overheard telling a classmate that his mom was gay. He brought with him a discipline form which gave his use of the word “gay” as the offense. Now, says <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/12/04/national/main586923.shtml>, school officials claim that Marcus was sent home for some *other* kind of misbehavior, although they haven’t specified what that misbehavior was.

Gay Couples Okay

Two straight Wyoming high school girls decided to attend their homecoming dance on September 12 as a couple, to test their school’s policy, and were forcibly ejected by two police officers. The ACLU intervened on their behalf, and announces at <http://www.aclu.org/LesbianGayRights/LesbianGayRights.cfm?ID=14548&c=106> that the school has now changed its policy and will allow same-sex couples at dances.

We Don’t ’Low That, ’Round These Parts

On March 3, Texas Judge Sam Cummings ruled that student members of the Lubbock Gay-Straight Alliance had no right to hold meetings in their high school, even though federal courts have previously ruled in favor of similar groups in other states. From the article at <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/nation/20040304-0510-gayrightslawsuit.html>, it sounds as if Judge Cummings thinks Texas, because of its “community’s standard of what ... is considered obscene and inappropriate,” is different from those *other* places.

News Links

Should Kids' Reading Be Private?

"It's hard enough to get kids in the library," says an Alaskan librarian at <http://www.news-miner.com/Stories/0,1413,113~26794~1974882,00.html>. "We don't want to undermine their trust." But SB 269, approved on February 23 by a Senate Committee, would allow parents to see what their children are reading, and not all librarians are upset by the idea.

Michigan Law Threatens Bookstores, Youth

Remember the Canadian donut shops that chose to ban kids rather than adopt a no-smoking policy? Michigan bookstores will have to make a similar decision if their lawsuit against an anti-obscenity law is unsuccessful. The law, reports http://www.lsj.com/news/local/040207_porn_1a-4a.html, took effect on January 1, but state prosecutors have agreed to delay enforcement until the bookstores get their day in court. The bookstore owners say the law, to keep sexually-explicit material away from minors, is so vague as to include most of what is on their shelves, and they don't trust assurances that the law will be imposed in only the most "blatant" cases.

Bared Breast Not Pornography

Circuit Judge Michael C. Overstreet, considering evidence in the "Girls Gone Wild" video series filmed in Florida, ruled on March 9 that images of females exposing their breasts are not pornographic, even if the females are under 18. The judge's decision, says <http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/state/8145418.htm>, focused on the specific definition of pornography under Florida law.

Private Fantasies Protected

A judge dismissed child pornography charges against Brian Dalton of Ohio on March 5, says <http://www.onnnews.com/story.php?record=29240>, finding that his private journal containing fictional writings about caged and tortured children didn't violate any Ohio laws.

End of Chapter in 1980s Witch Hunt

Gerald Amirault, a man who became a symbol of parents' fears, real or imagined, will be freed this April after 17 years in prison. Overlooking Amirault's refusal to admit to and apologize for bizarre sexual practices involving children, animals and robots at his family's Massachusetts school in the 1980s, the parole board voted unanimously last October for his release. But despite the evidence that the accusations against him were coerced and untrue, says http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2003/10/18/board_grants_parole_to_amirault/, Amirault will be subject to all of the restrictions imposed on any released sex offender.

Indiana Curfew Ruling Affects Illinois

In light of a federal court's January 22 decision against an Indiana curfew law, some Illinois towns have halted enforcement of their curfews while they have them looked over by lawyers, says <http://archives.pioneerlocal.com/cgi-bin/ppostory/archives/localnews/2004/nl/02-18-04-225846.html>.

Florida Abortion Law Requires Amendment

A 1999 Florida law requiring parental notification before a girl under 18 can get an abortion was in conflict with a section of the state's constitution dealing with privacy rights of minors, explains <http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/state/8144148.htm>, so legislators are beginning the process of amending Florida's constitution so the law can be reintroduced. One Senate committee gave its approval on March 9.

Iowa Sex Offender Restrictions Unreasonable

District Court Judge Robert Pratt ruled on February 9 that Iowa's 2000-foot "buffer zone" around schools and day care centers, in which people convicted of sex offenses may not live, unconstitutionally limited the residence options of the ex-convicts, essentially banishing them to rural areas, keeping them from living with family members, and causing long commutes to jobs, counselors, or parole officers, noted <http://www.dmregister.com/news/stories/c4788993/23493858.html>. The judge added that the 2000-foot rule might also punish spouses who are forced to move as well.

True Love Waits—For A While

A national longitudinal study of young people who pledge to remain chaste until marriage, released March 9 and described at <http://www.ajc.com/news/content/news/0304/10virginity.html>, finds that six years later, 88% had broken their vow. Those who took the chastity vow did hold out about 18 months longer than those who did not, and had fewer sexual partners overall, but once their vows were broken, they tended to "catch up" by having sex with more partners in a shorter time. Fewer of the pledgers reported using condoms. Both groups had about the same rate of sexually-transmitted diseases, but pledgers were less likely to know about their infections or the risks of transmitting them before being tested as a part of the study.

AIDS Prevention Not So Easy

Some international AIDS prevention workers tell young people to use the "ABC approach": abstain, be faithful, use condoms. But in an address on the occasion of International Women's Day on March 8, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan said that a girl's commitment to abstinence is no protection against AIDS in places "where sexual violence is widespread." Early marriage provides no guarantee either, when husbands are commonly unfaithful. More on Annan's remarks can be seen at <http://www.allafrica.com/stories/200403081029.html>.

News Links

Homeschoolers vs Child Protectors in England

The Association for Education Welfare Management, a child protection group in England, is urging British Children's Minister Margaret Hodge to mandate greater oversight and supervision of homeschoolers in a bill to be introduced in March, to reduce the potential for abuse in homeschooling situations. Education Otherwise, an organization of home educators, doesn't take kindly to the idea of government interference and intimidation. More details are at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/3493342.stm.

Christian Homeschoolers Taking Power In U.S.

Patrick Henry College, a conservative Christian college in Purcellville, Virginia was founded in 2000 primarily to provide higher education for homeschoolers. Some reporters are now noticing that its students are already well-represented in the Bush administration. For example, <http://www.twincities.com/mld/pioneerpress/living/education/8131523.htm> notes that of 100 White House interns, seven are from Patrick Henry. The February 28 issue of *The Economist* includes two articles on the school and on Christian homeschoolers, one of which is called "George Bush's Secret Army." And at <http://www.cornelldailysun.com/articles/11302/>, a Cornell student reflects on the differences between Cornell and Patrick Henry (this article may not be suitable for conservative Christians).

Pastors Won't Snitch on Flock

An Ohio bill extending state child abuse reporting requirements to clergymen, which seemed well on its way to a speedy passage last year, has now come under attack by some fundamentalist churches. Mainstream churches have supported the bill, but an article at http://www.enquirer.com/editions/2004/02/20/loc_abuse20.html says that some independent Baptist and evangelical ministers, reluctant to involve government agencies in church and family matters, are concerned about the privacy of their church members and may believe that the law will force them to define all corporal punishment as abuse.

Security Camera Captures Neighbor's Abuse

On the night of February 15, images of a woman's apparently abusive punishment of two toddlers mysteriously appeared on a Milwaukee man's home security system monitor. Realizing that he must have intercepted the signal of another nearby security camera, he turned over the videotape to police, who arrested his neighbor, a foster parent, according to <http://www.jsonline.com/news/metro/feb04/208097.asp>.

Malnutrition to the Max

Seamus M. Leonard, age 15, weighed 21 lbs. when found dead in his mother's Illinois home, says http://www.cjonline.com/stories/031304/pag_woman.shtml. Pneumonia was cited as the cause of death, with malnutrition a contributing factor.

Quality Time Together

A Florida mother was arrested in December for inducing her 11-year-old daughter to steal clothing with her, says an article at http://www.wtev.com/news/state/story.aspx?content_id=9082CD6B-A046-4800-979E-C9ACFF47B361.

Bumper Game Ends Badly

A six-year-old Florida boy was apparently playing a "bucking bronco" game with his father and a car on December 1, trying to stay on the car's bumper as his dad rapidly shifted gears to throw him off, according to http://stpetersburgtimes.com/2003/12/02/Hillsborough/Man_charged_after_son.shtml.

Adult Supervision Puts Girl In Coma

A 12-year old Baltimore girl is in a coma after a February 28 party where a woman allegedly urged an older girl to beat her, says <http://www.wtopnews.com/index.php?sid=177827&nid=25>. Other partygoers joined in, "egged on" by the adult woman who was present; the beating lasted over half an hour. All involved initially lied about how the injuries had occurred.

Mother Condemned for Sedating Kids

After Michelle Helgeson of Naperville, Illinois was arrested on March 9 for putting crushed Xanax in her children's fruit juice, local news sources responded with melodramatic outrage, even comparing her to another Naperville mother, Marilyn Lemak, who killed her children five years ago. The arresting officer, quoted at <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,113717,00.html>, put the incident in perspective: "The kids would have been fine if she had never called." Helgeson apparently panicked and called 911 when one child seemed too out-of-it.

Spy Parents

A recent article at <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/04046/273366.stm> gives an overview and discussion of technology parents use to snoop on their kids; another, at http://abclocal.go.com/wabc/news/wabc_022304_gpsphones.html, focuses on cell phones with global positioning systems, that know where you are and tell your parents.

Helping and Caring? Or Bizarre and Interfering?

The increasing involvement by parents in the lives of their college-age kids has been noted for several years, but now, an article at <http://www.cnn.com/2003/EDUCATION/12/03/college.parents.ap/index.html> reveals, some are organizing into lobbies "in the style of the AARP," pushing for increased services and safety measures on behalf of their kids. Other parents sign up for "distance" versions of their kids' classes, so they can study along with them from afar.

Sue's Review

Susan Wishnetsky
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Karson, Michael. *Patterns of child abuse : how dysfunctional transactions are replicated in individuals, families, and the child welfare system.* New York : Haworth Press, 2001.

The local news here in my town recently reported on some third-grade girls who had been “inappropriately touched” by some male classmates in their public school. The boys were expelled. One of the mothers appeared on the news to say that her daughter had been “violated.”

Seems to me this kind of thing used to happen once in a while when I was a kid. I think boys were occasionally expelled for it. But nobody ever publicly labelled the girls “violated.” The stories never made it onto the news, because they were private matters and weren't newsworthy.

Psychologist and author Michael Karson has a comment related to this:

Sexual abuse can be an identity-defining event. One insightful therapeutic technique in working with a victim is to add up the number of minutes in her entire life that she was being sexually abused The idea is to communicate that the victim does not have to be defined by the experience.

When this book came my way (by accident), I put it aside, thinking it was just for social workers and psychologists on handling abusers and their children—probably not of much interest to youth activists. Lately I looked at it again and found it enjoyable. And quotable.

Much of the book resembles “transactional analysis” self-help books, case histories explained through life scripts that govern and predict behavior. The author believes that we all follow such patterns, responding to situations with a cast of characters created and internalized in our early experiences. Our degree

of powerlessness to change the script, or to decide which character should “take the stage”, determines whether our dealings with others will be enjoyable or devastating, effective or dysfunctional. Unlike testable theories of behavior, such theories of underlying psychological constructs are likely to seem fanciful, but they do make for interesting reading, and many people find them meaningful and believable in interpreting their own lives.

The author uses the theories to show how relationships, including those between parent and child, go wrong when communication is not a two-way street. “When parents judge their behavior independently of its effect on the children, harm to the children is almost inevitable.” The mother who declared her daughter “violated” on TV may have fulfilled her internalized role of a good mother—one who is protective and outraged—satisfying her own need for validation, but not necessarily recognizing her daughter's need to be whole and “normal”.

Some parents need a child to act like a parent; others need a disobedient child to punish. But, says Karson, “parenting has a lot more to do with finding out which kind of child you got than with molding her into the one you want.”

Social workers and therapists perpetuate harm when they are more concerned with acting like or being seen as good professionals than listening and responding to the person or family in front of them. Some too quickly agree with parents that an “uncontrollable” child *caused* their own beating, placing responsibility for the parents' behavior on the child. In the case of a boy who associated long-term

relationships with terrifying violence and loss, Karson proposed allowing him to change foster families every few months—respecting his need to avoid intimacy without forcing him to misbehave and alienate others, and allowing him to experience a series of successful placements rather than a string of failures and rejections. But social workers opted to institutionalize the boy—preferring to give up rather than put aside their preconceived notions of what a child needs.

Karson advocates the same respect toward children taken for granted by adults: trying to understand the other person's needs, explaining your own, compromising, apologizing if you hurt someone.

For every time the parent has a legitimate gripe about the child's tone of voice, there will be ten times when the parent should be trying to figure out what he did wrong to make the child irritated with him. When apologizing is taught in the parent-child context, apology becomes ... a sign of submission to the other person's power, rather than an exploration of what went wrong.

“I have heard parents apologize for ... the fact that it did not snow on Christmas,” Karson notes. “I have never heard a parent apologize for bringing a molester into the family.” Later, he continues, “Some addicts will apologize to their friends ... to their parents ... and to their employers for screwing up, but not to their children.”

Putting aside the pop-culture psychology and memorable case histories, Karson's message of respect and fair play in interacting with children is a welcome one.

Sue's Review

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Straus, Murray A. *Beating the devil out of them : corporal punishment in American families and its effects on children.* New Brunswick, N. J. : Transaction Publishers, 2001.

This review of research on corporal punishment was originally published in 1994, but was "lost" in a series of corporate takeovers of its publisher. For six years the book was not listed in its publisher's catalogs or distributed to bookstores. Finally author Murray Straus persuaded the publisher to give him back the right to publish the book elsewhere.

This long and frustrating experience led Straus to speculate, in his introduction to the new edition, that the slipshod handling of *Beating the Devil Out of Them* was not, as the publisher claimed, accidental, but was a response to the book's unpopular recommendation: that parents and caretakers should never hit children.

Suppression of unpopular ideas certainly can and does occur, as in the case of *Harmful to Minors* (previously reviewed in this column), whose publisher was threatened and investigated by its state legislature even before the book was published! It may have been a factor in the case of this book as well.

But then Straus goes on to question the hidden intentions behind a bad review, and the award of second place, rather than first, by the American Sociological Association in their annual recognition of works of research. Straus wonders whether his publishers, reviewers, and colleagues were all so committed to corporal punishment as a mainstay of parental discipline that they were too eager to overlook or criticize the extensive, solid research findings he presented.

Well, Murray, I for one agree with your position wholeheartedly, but I'm still not that impressed with the book!

Don't get me wrong. There's worthwhile information in it, and good arguments to keep in mind. But I was hoping for more.

The book starts with general statistics on how many U.S. parents use corporal punishment (over 90%), which parent, how often, at what ages (20% hit before the child is a year old and 20% hit 17-year-olds, with much higher percentages in between). These numbers are useful.

The second part deals with the evidence of negative consequences of corporal punishment: depression, depression and suicidal thoughts, reduced achievement and future income, masochistic sexual tendencies. The section focuses on research studies, with plenty of charts showing the results. That's too bad, because the data alone is not powerful evidence, at least, not of cause and effect. Straus does mention this several times later in the book, but by that time, the reader is already disappointed.

For example, studies of abusive parents about their use of corporal punishment hardly seem worth mentioning. *Of course* they hit their kids—that's what abusers do. *Of course* the punishment escalates to the point of abuse—or they wouldn't be abusers. It's practically self-evident.

More persuasive than the studies are a couple of parents' descriptions of how their attempt to discipline "accidentally" turned into abuse:

... suddenly I realized I had knocked Camille into the bathtub. And apparently I had struck her in the face, which by no means was intentional. But she had a swollen eye ...

Straus claims that the evidence linking corporal punishment to abuse is as strong as the evidence linking other factors, such as poverty or teen motherhood, to abuse, but no one demands stronger evidence of those "causes." So Straus is demanding the same low standard of evidence for his theory as he believes has been granted to other theories?

Straus is at his best when he turns away from the studies and just argues:

Children hit other children when, in their minds, the child is doing something seriously wrong and won't listen to reason contrary to what most parents think, it is not different when parents hit children. When they spank and, ironically, when as good parents they explain why, they are teaching the child that when someone does something outrageous and won't listen to reason, it is morally correct to physically attack the offender.

Straus asks us to consider our reaction if we learned that 90% of bosses hit their secretaries, but usually during "the first year or two on the job and ... only when the secretary would not listen to reason." Regarding people who were spanked and "turn out okay", he points out that only a third of smokers end up with lung cancer; that doesn't prove that smoking is safe. He appeals to our common sense when he explains that spanking "works" only if the threat of spanking is present.

There are fine and memorable arguments in this book. Too bad so much of it is occupied by unconvincing, unimpressive studies and statistics.

Involuntary Servitude

continued from page 1

education, which many students look upon as involuntary servitude anyway. But as a statewide program, mandated community service will *cost* taxpayers money; the Illinois program will install “coordinators” in each high school, which will require \$6 million in new funding.

Maybe they think that teenagers can’t be trusted to decide how to spend even a moment of what may be left of their spare time. Forty hours, after all, is only ten hours a year, 11.5 minutes a week. But parents and teachers already see many students who are overburdened with homework, extracurricular activities, and (if they’re lucky) part-time jobs. “You will make time for things you’re interested in,” said one principal, but “forced serving is not serving.”⁷

Some think it’s good for students to do unpaid labor. Proponents point to schools and districts where community service requirements already exist (such as in Chicago public schools), noting the higher grades and attendance of students who complete their required hours of “volunteering” when compared with those who don’t. Well, *duh*. Students

with the best grades are more likely to complete *any* requirement that the school hands out to them; that doesn’t mean the requirement makes them better students.

The schools will guide students into projects they consider “appropriate”. To what types of projects will they award credit, and what will they decline? Anti-drug, anti-smoking, and sexual abstinence related “volunteer” work will certainly be acceptable; work with harm-reduction programs will probably not. Religious-based programs might count; political action, probably not. Schools will be able to impose their own definitions of “serving the community” upon students, who will have to choose from projects their school deems acceptable.

Once community service programs have swept the nation’s schools, the time will be ripe to impose it upon young adults as well. No politician wants to be the one to propose bringing back a military draft, but some have raised the idea of requiring a year or so of “national service” for 18-year-olds.⁸ What better way to keep them off the job market? Then, if they’re stuck with doing some kind of service

anyway, and military enlistment offers more and better benefits than the other kinds of involuntary servitude from which they must choose, maybe more of them will join up “voluntarily.”

Of course, there’ll have to be a loophole to exempt the sons and daughters of the wealthy and well-connected. Here’s an idea: those enrolled in college don’t have to serve, but financial aid will only be available to students upon completion of their national service. How’s that?

The future looks bright for the WalMarts of the United States. After their term of unpaid service, young American citizens will be happy just to get a paycheck. If they’re not, you can always bring in some guest workers from other countries. And if you really must provide a benefit, such as child care, just make it a “community service” and persuade the local school to send over some students to do the work for free (or if you don’t want high-schoolers, call it a “national service”).

Once our government starts forcing us, at whatever age, to perform unpaid labor, who knows where it may lead?

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