



# *a* MATTER of SPIRIT

A publication of the INTERCOMMUNITY PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER

NO. 124 / FALL 2019

## *Childhood*

Childhood is often romanticized; the word “childhood” can be filled with nostalgic memories of lemonade stands, make-believe, and catching fireflies. We may wish that childhood could be an innocent time of exploring the world in a safe and carefree environment. Sadly, such is not the case for many children. Today’s children endure challenges that are often different in kind and severity from those faced a generation or two ago. Growing up with the presence of the internet, cell phones, and social media can create a very different kind of childhood from what earlier generations experienced. Too many children today face violence and stresses that can be overwhelming even for adults, let alone for young and tender beings.

In this issue of *A Matter of Spirit*, we look at some of the realities experienced by children today. We examine how violence and trauma can leave a lasting imprint on children. We explore the realities faced by immigrant children, the conditions they have left and the stress and uncertainties of migrating. We delve into the effect of mass shootings and gun violence, ending young lives before they really begin and leaving survivors their own legacy of trauma. We consider the online world, and how we can keep kids safe. We look at the effects of climate change and environmental destruction on today’s youth and on the Earth they will inherit. We feature the stories of youth who in many cases are stepping in to lead where adults have failed to solve the issues that youth experience. And we offer suggestions for parents seeking to raise peaceful and just children.

We hope this issue of *A Matter of Spirit* will give us ideas and inspiration for how we can make childhood a safe and nurturing time for all children.



## *Growing Up* IN A TROUBLED WORLD

By Lydia Wylie-Kellermann

“There are guns in that movie, right?”  
“Yeah, but it’s the bam bam, funny kind of shooting.”

A friend and I were trying to do what had seemed a simple task- pick a movie for our kids to watch together.

It had been less than a year since I had to sit down with Isaac (then five) and tell him his godfather had been shot through the lungs and we didn’t know if he was going to be ok. I had sat at Ben’s hospital bedside watching fluid being drained from his lungs after a long night of emergency surgery. Miraculously, my kids spent this summer with Ben building spaceships in the backyard, flying to Mars and writing riddles about chicken butts. But still, no... gun violence can never be “bam, bam, funny.”

Isaac is in his third year of lock down drills at school. The first time I heard him say “Mommy, we had a lock down drill today,” my heart skipped a beat. “Oh yeah, what’s that like?” “We had to practice hiding in the closet and being so quiet in case a bear comes outside out window.” While I wasn’t particularly fond of projecting the fear onto woodland creatures, I realized I couldn’t imagine how to explain the truth to these four-year-olds. How on earth do you explain to a child that this country cares more about the NRA and owning guns than about the lives of children? How do you tell them that all around the country people with semi-automatic weapons are walking into schools and going

on indiscriminate shooting sprees where even preschool and kindergarteners have been targeted? How do we reckon with the reality that there is literally no defensible logic we can offer to the minds and hearts of our children?

There is no question that violence today disproportionately affects black, brown, and poor children. Isaac was only one when Eric Garner was killed by police in New York City. I held Isaac on my lap beside the fountain in downtown Detroit. Fifty black bodies lay on the ground chanting “Stop I can’t breathe.” Again rage, shame, and tears at the insanity that we would need to chant such words knowing they had been systemically silenced ‘til death.

Across the bodies sat another mother holding her young son in her lap whispering in his ear. I was struck by how different her words must be to her black child as I explained what was happening to my white child. Isaac would grow to know that police in our neighborhood were not here to keep our neighbors safe. Police presence could put them at risk of abuse, jail or death. While I tried to whisper early words about systemic racism and violence, I did not have to whisper to him that his own body would always be targeted. I didn’t have to tell him to be careful anytime he left the house praying he would come home. And that is the reason why it was so important that we bring our bodies to this place of protest.

These days I am haunted by the images of children near the border locked in cages, by the reports of sexual violence, and by the sounds of their cries begging for parents who have been lost in a system of inhumanity. I think of the children on my block who have felt the violent attacks of ICE. I’ll never forget being summoned to a neighbors’ house at 2am. We found our 8-year-old neighbor, who had been pulled from her sleep to translate to us her mother’s words. Five months earlier, her dad had been picked up by ICE after dropping his kids off at school. Since then he had been in detention. Her dad was depressed, she said, he had tried to kill himself. My heart broke and my rage grew for the world we

have created for our children. It’s been eight years, and this month ICE is at this family’s door again.

And while gun sales escalate and police and ICE stroll our streets, just three miles down the road, Marathon continues to refine its oil, polluting the air and making our neighboring zip code the most polluted in Michigan. At Isaac’s school, the drinking fountains have been turned off because the lead levels are dangerously high. And after years of fight by the people of Detroit, the incinerator located in the center of the city has just burned its last trash leaving behind empty buildings and escalated asthma and cancer

*“We are filling them with love in hopes that they will live by another way.”*

rates. The violence of climate change already lives in the lungs and blood of our kids. And as I scroll through human extinction predictions that fall in my kids’ lifetime, I can’t help being paralyzed by anxiety at the thought of the violence that is yet to come.

All this violence is more than our children can bear. And it is all so deeply connected to systems of power and money. For the truth is, in this country, it is overwhelmingly white men coming into schools shooting our children; white men ordering deportations and child separations; white men building and maintaining violent police systems set to maintain systems of inequality; white men turning the gears of resource extraction and profit driven motives for climate denial. I certainly do not say this to deny my own responsibility and accountability, but to name that we have an epidemic built on systems of patriarchy and white supremacy perpetuating violence towards people and land.

And yet, here I hold these beautiful, sacred children in my arms—two



white boys. Isaac who is an animal encyclopedia, forces us to bike instead of drive when possible, and finds his heart freest when he’s in the woods. Cedar who laughs easily, cares for his beloved baby doll, and forbids us to eat the eggs from our chickens because they are just “too beautiful.” These two boys, I love. Yet already at such tender ages they are being pulled down toy aisles filled with realistic toy guns used to pretend to kill one another. Already, they are told to not cry when they fall and to “be a man.”

We are filling them with love in hopes that they will live by another way. And so, at bedtime we fill their minds with tales of the rebels and saints who have gone before us and sing songs of liberation. We tell the old scripture stories that resist the myth of redemptive violence. We invite them along in the struggle as they crawl under pews during nonviolence trainings, hold candles at vigils, wave goodbye to grandpa in handcuffs, and write him letters in jail. We throw block parties and know our neighbors, trusting in the security of community over fences and guns. We ritualize and hold death sacred by holding bunny and fish funerals so the consequences of violence are not confused. We walk the woods and harvest tomatoes grown on abandoned lots, falling in love with the ground we stand on.

We tell them again and again it’s ok to cry. We tend their hearts. And we tend to our own as parents who love this world and our children. We let the grief and rage wash over us propelling us only deeper into community, love, and resistance. May it be so.

▲ Lydia Wylie-Kellermann is the editor of Geez magazine and lives in Detroit, MI.

# The Long-Lasting Effects of ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

By Avery Haller, MPH

Each of us has an intuitive understanding that exposure to violence, abuse, and stress is not good for us. Science is starting to catch up, and add new layers, to our intuitive understanding. The past few decades of research have illuminated the extent to which trauma and toxic stress, especially in childhood, impact our mental and physical health. This scientific language allows us to move policy conversations forward with more compassion, as the question shifts from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?” We have an opportunity to identify and interrupt the patterns of individual and systemic trauma to create a healthier and just society for all.

## Trauma in Childhood is Widespread

In 1997, Kaiser Permanente published a landmark study that linked trauma in childhood with a myriad of mental and physical health conditions later in life, including depression, addiction, cancer, and diabetes. Pilot research by Kaiser uncovered the ten most common childhood traumas. These came to be known as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and were used as the basis of the 1997 survey.

The Kaiser study showed that ACEs are widespread. Two-thirds of participants had at

least one ACE. Further research confirmed these findings, and controlled for lifestyle factors—in other words, disease is not the result of maladaptive behaviors, but rather a direct result of the stress associated with trauma. This is what makes ACEs such a compelling research subject and at times a difficult place for intervention. Everyone can recognize themselves in the research, but not everyone is willing to confront and heal their past in order to create a new future.

## How Stress Affects the Body

In the body, a little stress can help cells and neural connections grow. A lot of stress causes parts of the body to shut down. When a person perceives a situation to be life-threatening, they



Illustration Nicole Eckenrode

enter fight-flight-freeze mode. In fight-flight-freeze, the stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol are released. These hormones help your body focus on quick muscle movements and keep the threat in your vision. These hormones also take a toll on your organs by putting you in survival hyper-drive. When we are in environments of repeatedly feeling threatened, we experience wear-and-tear on our bodies. This is called toxic stress. Toxic stress can come from abuse, neglect, living through civil war, oppressive political structures, racism, exposure to gun violence, among many other things. Stress is toxic when it is ongoing and there is a perceived threat to physical or emotional safety.

Trauma and toxic stress also affect the brain. Life threatening situations cause the limbic system, which includes the amygdala and brain stem, to take control. The limbic system is the oldest part of our brain, and is often referred to as the “lizard brain.” Additionally, the prefrontal cortex, which controls reasoning, and your hippocampus, which controls memory, shuts down to save energy. When people are experiencing a traumatic event, they act impulsively and enter into survival mode. Rational thought goes out the window. Often, they don’t remember what

## 10 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

### Abuse

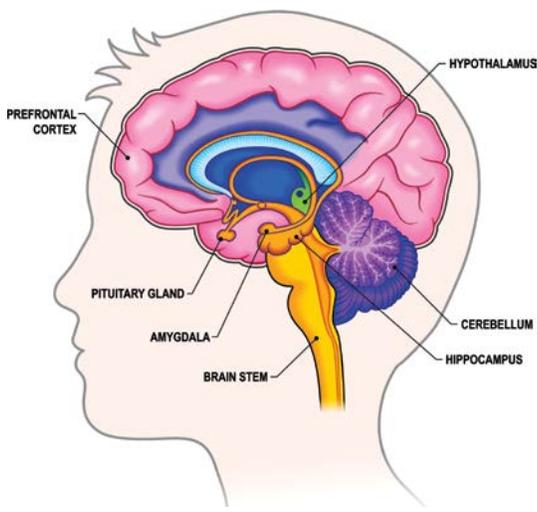
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

### Household Challenges

- Mother treated violently
- Substance abuse in the household
- Mental Illness in the Household
- Parental separation or divorce
- Incarcerated household member

### Neglect

- Emotional Neglect
- Physical Neglect



*“Resilience is less about learning a hot, new, wellness trend, and more about committing to the basics of what makes life worth living.”*

happened during the trauma.

When survival mode occurs often enough, especially in critical childhood development years, the brain adapts. The limbic system becomes more developed in a brain without trauma, and the prefrontal cortex becomes less developed. These adaptations are extremely helpful if the person continues to be in life-threatening situations. For example, children who have experienced trauma grow up to become excellent first responders. However, many environments in the modern world are not conducive to the adaptations that trauma creates. Most modern work and school environments require reasoning skills and an ability to meet emotions with rationality rather than impulsivity. The disconnect between adaptations due to trauma and general societal norms offers an intervention point for those who have suffered trauma and make space for them to heal.

### **Building Resilience**

Clearly, the most sure-fire way to prevent disease and discord due to trauma is to make sure the trauma never happens in the first place. This means that we must learn to break cycles of trauma—the cycles of violence, abuse, neglect, and war that can escalate if we do not actively seek peace in our hearts and our policies.

The antidote to trauma is resilience, or the ability to respond constructively to negative circumstances. Resilience can be fostered on both individual and community levels. Though science is helpful in showing us the most effective ways to foster resilience, it is important to note that the work of healing trauma has been going on for millennia. Resilience is less about learning a hot, new, wellness trend, and more about committing to the basics of what makes life worth living: finding joy in the present moment, getting adequate rest and recovery, having access to healing modalities, and maintaining strong social ties.

On an individual level, it is important to seek help in dealing with past traumas. Professional counselors have many techniques for effectively reducing flashback episodes and outbursts. Mindfulness and sensory awareness techniques can also be helpful for those seeking to build resilience before or after a traumatic event. Social support is critical for healing. For example, joining a faith group, increasing time with friends, or deepening relationships with supportive family members are all

positive actions to take as you seek to build resilience.

On a community level, the opportunities for building resilience are even more rich. Community members can actively check-in on each other or host community-wide events, and make sure their events are trauma-informed. Communities can advocate for policies that interrupt cycles of trauma, such as gun safety and anti-racism initiatives. Politicians can designate more money to public health interventions such as trauma-informed parenting classes to prevent abuse and neglect. Leaders in the business community can work with employees to find more flexible work schedules, allowing for medical appointments or other family care responsibilities. Leaders in the criminal justice system can seek humane solutions, including the implementation of restorative justice practices. This is far from an exhaustive list.

The community-level solutions above can be controversial. Fortunately, the science on trauma allows us to move the debate from “What’s wrong with you? Why can’t you just fit in?”

to “What happened to you? How can we support your healing, so you can thrive once again in our community?” The physical and mental health problems that stem from trauma are not the fault of the victims. However, if not given the proper support, victims can inadvertently pass on their trauma to other family members or community members. Healing trauma is essential to bringing about peace

and justice in our world. Thankfully, our knowledge of how the body works gives us some concrete places for intervention.

🌀 *Learn more at <https://traumainformedministry.wordpress.com/> or <https://www.acesconnection.com/>*

🌀 *Recommended reading: “The Body Keeps Score” by Bessel Van Der Kolk*

▲ *Avery Haller earned her Masters of Public Health from Bastyr University in 2018. She is passionate about leveraging the science of trauma to create healing spaces in our world. She is a writer, presenter, and activist.*

### **Trauma-informed Spaces**

*Trauma-informed spaces and programs acknowledge that trauma may have occurred in participants’ lives, seek to create safe connection, and attempt not to re-traumatize participants. Ideas for making your next gathering trauma-informed:*

1. Leave doors open and unlocked.
2. Clearly state that bathroom breaks and snacks are welcome during the event. Provide food and drink if possible.
3. Get community input when designing your event.
4. Make time for all participants to speak.
5. Allow all participants to have meaningful decision-making power.

# Waylaid at the **BORDER**

## *The Daily Life of Children Seeking Asylum*



Henry Sullivan

Photos in this article are of families from Casa Nazareth

By Tracey Horan, SP

On a sweltering Friday afternoon in September, four women seeking asylum sat around the kitchen table to share their stories with visitors from the U.S. Children could be overheard playing on the patio outside Casa Nazareth, the Kino Border Initiative's (KBI) shelter for women and children in Nogales, Sonora. From Guatemala, Venezuela, and the state of Guerrero in southern Mexico, the women who had offered to speak with the group first fidgeted quietly, and then began to open up about what their lives had looked like over the past year: the violence and poverty they fled, the grueling travel north, and then being turned back when they approached the border to request an asylum hearing.

Though Casa Nazareth previously served as a safe place for Mexican women who had been recently deported from the U.S., its primary function for the past year has been to house women seeking asylum and their children. This shift coincided with the implementation of "metering" in the summer of 2018: Customs and Border Protection agents stationed to turn back asylum-seekers at various ports of entry across the U.S.-Mexico border.

Families turned back at border cities have then been put on lists and left to wait weeks or months until they would begin the formal process of seeking asylum in the U.S. The Robert Strauss Center's "Metering Update" reports that as of May 2019, this metering has resulted in over 18,000 asylum seekers waiting in cities in northern Mexico, including approximately 900 people in Nogales, Sonora.<sup>1</sup> In places like Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana, where "Remain in Mexico" (RIM) protocols have been implemented and asylum seekers have been returned to Mexico for their entire asylum proceedings, the number is even more staggering: at least 42,000 people have been returned to Mexico under the RIM policy.<sup>1</sup> The majority of those waiting are women and children.

### *Fleeing with Children*

Xiomara\* shared that for the past month her three-year-old son thought they were on vacation. She laughed slightly, and

the reverberating silence suggested that all understood this was no vacation. Xiomara went on to speak about life in Guerrero before she decided to travel to the U.S.-Mexico border with her young son. "The violence had shifted," she said. Before the drug cartel seemed to target individuals, usually at their homes. Now it was happening in public spaces. She described what it was like to crouch down with her son when shooting started in the street. "Sometimes," she said, "he would shake for a long time after it had stopped."

The 15 children from 8 different families at Casa Nazareth had all made the trip from their homes to a place they didn't know. For some, it would be the first time they left the small town where they were born. Mariana\*, who traveled north from Venezuela with her husband, four-month-old son and

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*"She laughed slightly, and the reverberating silence suggested that all understood this was no vacation."*

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two other children, described her concern about the impact the trip had on the baby. He had hardly slept the whole trip, she commented. It was as if his tiny body was in shock; as if he knew he wasn't at home. When they arrived at Casa Nazareth, he slept for nearly 20 hours, waking only twice to eat.

All four women agreed their children couldn't fully comprehend what was happening. Some, like Xiomara, had told their children they were going on vacation, or to visit family in the U.S. Other older children seemed to understand at some level what was happening. All seemed to share the idea that they were headed for the U.S., and that life would be better there.

"They'll finally be able to go back to school," Xiomara said with hope in her eyes. That was what her kids were most excited about. Her son wanted to be an architect, her daughter a nurse. They had already been out of school for 6 months

when they made the trip from Guerrero. According to Xiomara, the teachers stopped showing up for school when the violence escalated. It was too much of a risk, not worth the meager pay they earned.

### **Mental & Physical Health**

The other mothers agreed with this. They worried about their kids falling behind and commented on how their older children had been much further ahead in their skills at this stage, compared to the younger ones who would be waylaid at the border rather than heading back to school.

Although I often marvel at how well behaved children at the *El Comedor*, the dining room connected to Casa Nazareth, are given how much time they spend waiting hungry in the heat, the agitation children feel sometimes manifests itself in temper tantrums and fights. One week at the *El Comedor*, while one of our KBI staff members talked with a distraught Mexican mother seeking asylum, I watched her 3 young sons poke at each other at the table behind their mother. She couldn't stop crying, and was worried they wouldn't have a place to sleep for the night. She regularly had to turn around to break up their squabbles as the KBI staff member talked through options with her. I grabbed a few coloring sheets and crayons, and approached the battling brothers. With-



Families at Casa Nazareth

in 30 seconds, they were quietly coloring. "Wow," I marveled to another staff member, "they really just needed something to do." They stayed there coloring another 15 minutes without complaint, and asked for more pages to color as they left.

According to Bob Kee, a volunteer who for years has been attending to medical needs of visitors to *El Comedor*, the stresses of these transitory conditions also manifest themselves in physical health issues. He names colds, fevers, allergies, diarrhea, loss of appetite, cuts, bruises, head lice and rashes as the most common ailments. "They (migrants) are both dehydrated and exhausted, these are givens. The change of climate is a major factor for many children, who are coming from more tropical or temperate climates. I would say the first month is probably the most difficult. But some never adapt to either the extreme dry heat or cold."

Kee has also observed the way children take on mental and emotional stress: "Children are extremely intuitive and can read body language, especially that of a parent. So as they pick up on this from their parents, many children will take on this stress. And of course they are dealing with their own stresses. My fear and belief is that there are a tremendous number of children who are suffering from stress and trauma directly related to their situation, which is often

worse than the physical ailments that children get."

The hope for the women at Casa Nazareth, as well as the thousands of people awaiting asylum hearings at the U.S.-Mexico border, is that one day they might look back and know that the emotional and physical trials their families have endured those weeks, months or sometimes years *valió la pena* - that it was worth the risk. With only about 1 in 10 asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border being granted relief, and recent implementation of an asylum ban for countries non-contiguous to the U.S., this hope is becoming increasingly a far-reaching dream rather than tangible reality.

*\*Name changed to protect the identity of the women at Casa Nazareth*

▲ **Tracey Horan, SP**, is the education coordinator for the Kino Border Initiative in Nogales, AZ/Nogales, SON, MX, and has ministered with Latinx migrant communities for nearly a decade. She previously worked as a teacher and then community organizer, and has written on issues of faith and justice for *Global Sisters Report*.

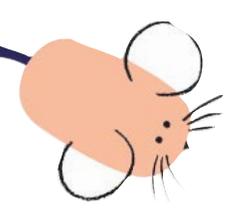
<sup>1</sup> Robert Strauss Center, and Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, "Metering Update 2019," Observatorio de Legislación y Política Migratoria, May 20, 2019, [https://observatoriocolef.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Metering-Report-May-2019-MSI\\_5.20.pdf](https://observatoriocolef.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Metering-Report-May-2019-MSI_5.20.pdf)



Henry Sullivan

# ⇒ GROWING UP ⇒ ONLINE

## *Keeping Kids Safe*



By Julie Inman Grant

When I was a child my parents spent quality time worrying about a number of things: balancing sport, theater and school, ensuring my manners were up to scratch, preparing for where I might go to college, worrying about how many Doritos I was ingesting while watching endless hours of MTV. Parents these days have all the same worries but with additional complexities including managing the issues that arise from the digital world our children now inhabit—and how to best support them as they navigate through that world.

I currently serve as the Australian eSafety Commissioner whose role is to promote online safety for all Australians. The Office coordinates and leads the online safety efforts of the government, industry and the non-for-profit community.

Research conducted by the eSafety Commissioner reveals that 81% of children in Australia have access to devices from the age of 2 years and almost 100% of teens aged 15–17 have access the internet.<sup>1</sup> Australia is not alone in this; these statistics are universally consistent.

Our research shows that parents understand the benefits of the internet but worry about risks—particularly access to inappropriate material, cyberbullying and contact with strangers. Ninety-four percent of parents consider online

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*“They are effectively wired differently because they are growing up wired.”*

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safety a pre-eminent parenting challenge, yet less than 50% felt confident dealing with these issues. This is a concern, given 1 in 4 Australian young people have been contacted by a stranger online<sup>2</sup> and 1 in 5 have been cyberbullied.<sup>3</sup>

The research supports what we know from within Australia and across the globe: parents want to understand how to do better and safeguard our children in this brave new world where kids’ online and offline worlds converge.



### *Growing Up Wired*

We cannot underestimate the importance of how this changed environment impacts our young people. They are effectively wired differently because they are growing up wired. They live in a world where there is no difference between online and off—it is pervasive, invasive and intense.

Peer pressure has also intensified as young people believe they need to live up to some improbably confected standards. They have a different way of thinking about privacy and sharing, and in many cases do not yet have the cognitive ability to understand the long-term implications of what they do online, and the digital footprint they might leave behind. They have ready access to vast amounts of online content, some of it disturbing, and, while they may demonstrate technological skills, they will have not yet developed the maturity, experience, and resilience to cope with negative online experiences like cyberbullying, online grooming or inappropriate material.

It is not all bad news. Our children are enjoying unprecedented levels of interconnection, community, education, affinity groups and support services that were not available in our youth. And these provide tremendous benefits. However, what we need to understand in order to best help our young people are the potential harms and the ways to mitigate these risks.

## *Inappropriate Material*

One of the very real concerns for parents is the impact of children seeing inappropriate material online. Material that is considered inappropriate can vary depending on a family's culture, values and the child's age. This content can manifest itself in many ways online: in social media, in gaming content or through interaction with others. It can range from racist and hate material to sites which promote eating disorders and self-harm.

It's important to be aware that as children grow older, technology is also increasingly likely to be used to explore sexuality. This may lead to peer pressure to send nude images online as an increasingly common form of modern-day courtship—commonly referred to as “sexting.” When an intimate image or video is shared without consent, it then becomes image-based abuse, which can have devastating impacts on the young person and their school community.

## *Cyberbullying*

Cyberbullying is, unfortunately, another significant and common issue online. Australia has a legislated regulatory scheme which allows eSafety to serve as a safety net when “serious cyberbullying material” directed at a child is not removed from the social media site or app. We have powers to compel sites to take down this content and can provide evidence and context to them when reports have fallen through the cracks. We have a 100% compliance rate.

At eSafety we have received more than 1,400 cyberbullying complaints to date involving young Australians under the age of 18. Girls are represented more than boys, and the average age is 14 years, though we have received complaints for children as young as 6. Cyberbullying can range from fake profiles set up to taunt and damage the reputation of a young person, to serious name calling and threats to personal safety. It is commonly the extension of a social conflict already happening in school grounds. But what makes cyberbullying particularly insidious for young people is that it is highly visible to their peers—amplifying their humiliation online—but remains largely covert to parents and educators.

## *Contact with Strangers and Grooming*

Contact with new people online is not always negative. Socialising online can be a great way to build friendships and develop communication skills. Unfortunately, it can also put children at risk of unwanted contact. At eSafety, we define this as any type of online communication that a child finds unpleasant or confronting, or that leads them into a situation where they might do something they regret. This can happen even if they initially welcomed the contact. It can come from

strangers, online ‘friends’ the child has not met face-to-face, or from someone they actually know.

At worst, unwanted contact can involve “grooming.” This is when a predator builds a relationship with a young person online over time. Predators may lurk on apps and games that young people use and pretend to be of similar age, with similar interests. They take time to build trust with their victims and eventually may try to meet in person or may show them sexual imagery to desensitise the child and convince them to do similar things.

Sadly, these incidents can occur on cell phones behind closed bedroom doors, right under parents’ noses. Parents need to be aware that this can happen, as well as how to protect against it. At eSafety we recommend setting up parental controls on devices, talking to children about these issues in an age-appropriate way, disabling cameras within apps and using technology in ‘public’ areas of the home during designated waking hours.

## *The ‘4 Rs’ of the Digital Age*

We need to note that these online issues are not caused by technology, rather they are behavioural and social issues playing out on technology. To best support our children and young people we need to be looking to change these behaviours and to reinforce core positive values, both at home and school.

Historically, we referred to essential learning skills as the 3 Rs: Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. While these are still important, we believe in a new set of Rs—the ‘4 Rs’ of the digital age. Respect, Responsibility, Resilience and Critical Reasoning are the values, behaviours and attitudes we want our young people to embody online.

## *How We Can Help*

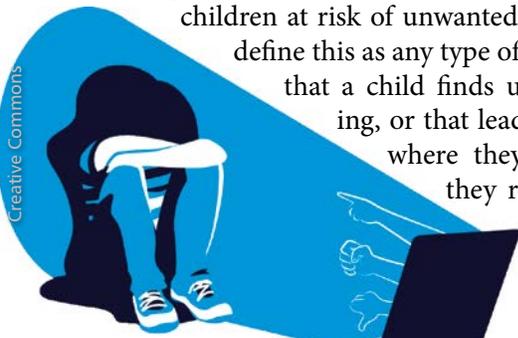
As parents, friends and loved ones of children and young people we have a significant role to play in helping to guide the next generation along their digital journey. And the best way to do so is to be actively engaged in their online lives: encouraging them to demonstrate sound values online, having age-appropriate conversations about acceptable and harmful online behaviours and providing practical advice and support when they need. Together we can help them grow up safely, online.

▲ *Julie Inman Grant is the eSafety Commissioner of Australia. She commenced her five year appointment in January 2017.*

<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies (2018). Digital technology use in the child, youth and family sector CFCA Resource Sheet. Retrieved from <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/digital-technology-use-child-youth-and-family-sector>

<sup>2</sup> Office of the eSafety Commissioner (2018). State of play – youth, kids and digital dangers. Retrieved from <https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-the-office/research-library>

<sup>3</sup> Office of the eSafety Commissioner (2016). Research insights: Teens, kids and digital dangers Retrieved from <https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-the-office/research-library>





Protect Kids Artwork by Micah Bazant for Amplifier.org

# CHILDHOOD

## *In the Age of Gun Violence*

By Samantha Yanity and Tali Raviv, Ph.D.

“We have had to duck and even shield the children from stray bullets a time or two.”

These were perhaps the most startling words uttered to me during a job interview. While in graduate school at Loyola University Chicago, I was interviewing for a part-time position at a Catholic school that sits at turf intersections of rival gangs from the Back-of-the-Yards and Englewood neighborhoods in the heart of Chicago’s South Side. The needs of the school far surpassed what I could ever offer to them having never experienced gun violence myself, but I will probably carry those words in my heart with me forever.

These two neighborhoods where the school sits, particularly Englewood, pop up regularly in the media alongside the phrases “bloodshed” and “violence.” As spectators, held captive by the theatrics of shock and awe politics and sensationalized news stories, we often get caught up in stimuli, but do we pause to stop and think about the lasting effects on the communities themselves? Mass shoot-

ings often grab the headlines, but the reality is that violence happens everywhere and for many people, as I learned in Chicago, it occurs more frequently than what is reported.

Children in Chicago face violence at alarming rates and that violence has a lasting emotional, physical, and psychological impact. A report from the Erickson Institute released in 2019 details that there are 176, 319 children in Chicago under the ages of 5 and 60% of them have experienced more than three homicides.<sup>1</sup> To frame this another way, by kindergarten more than half of Chicago’s children will have witnessed or experienced a minimum of three homicides in their short life. Not high school or college- *kindergarten*.

Having worked with children in direct support, I witnessed the impact of trauma in the behavior of children in the forms of tantrums or outbursts, but I never got to go beneath the surface of that trauma with the children. To answer some of my gnawing questions, I contacted Tali Raviv, Ph.D., the Associate Director of the Center for Childhood Resilience, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago, to shed some light on the lasting

impact of pervasive violence.

Dr. Raviv shared that trauma saturates more of our beings than we might realize. All of us experience stress daily, and as a species, we have learned to adapt to stress as a means to survive. The experience of stress is our body’s biological response to natural threats. Naturally, as adaptive beings, we have the capacity to adjust to an array of experiences and conditions due to our innate stress response, fight-or-flight, that has kept us alive for millennia. When we respond to stress, our survival instinct kicks in.

Dr. Raviv explained, “If I step off a curb, and I see a car blowing the stop sign, without thinking, my flight-or-flight response kicks in and it allows me to jump back and onto the curb, without really stopping to think about it, just acting on instinct.” For most of us, as Dr. Raviv pointed out, after responding to the shock of the car, our brains can adjust and communicate to our body that “the threat is gone” and our bodies and brains return to baseline. Dr. Raviv pointed out that for children living in persistently violent environments fight-or-flight response triggers occur more easily and more often,

# Raising Our VOICES

By Eliana Vélez

I am a young adult who grew up in the era of school shootings. The shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary, at Virginia Tech, at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School—all these and way too many more—have been part of the fabric of my life. Active shooter drills have been as much a requirement of school as have homework and tests.

On the 19th Anniversary of the Columbine shooting, my senior year of high school, around 50 students from my school, Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts, walked behind me as we chanted up and down our school's neighborhood streets demanding an end to gun violence. With a Puerto Rican father and a Jewish mother, I am no stranger to adversity and therefore understand how deeply important fighting for equality is to the prosperity of our nation, especially in this current political climate.

## Childhood in the Age of Gun Violence continued here

and they take longer to return to baseline after the perceived threat has passed.

Dr. Raviv gave the example that if a child exposed to trauma goes to school and someone drops a book, the sound might remind the child's brain of a gunshot, sending a signal that communicates to the body and brain of the child "I am in danger." Even when the child realizes, "that was just a book, not a gunshot," it may take longer for the stress response to abate and for the child's body and brain to return to baseline. For children living with persistent and ongoing threats of violence, Dr. Raviv pointed out that many small or seemingly insignificant incidents (a raised voice, a loud and crowded auditorium, being inadvertently bumped in the hallway) can trigger the fight-or-flight response. Frequent exposure to violence can force the brain into survival mode, causing the brain to respond to all stressors as if they are larger and more dangerous threats like gunshots.

We also carry chronic stress and trauma in our physical bodies. Dr. Raviv explained that when our body enters into constant fight-or-flight response, our immune and digestive systems can shut down and inflammatory processes are triggered. This is part of an adaptive process, directing all resources to survival and allowing

our bodies to be maximally prepared for danger. "Now, there are scientific studies linking the stress response and chronic inflammation to cancers, heart disease, and all kinds of autoimmune disorders." The long-term result, as we are learning, par-

*"If we want to change the culture, we have to begin with how we engage with children."*

ticularly in marginalized communities is intergenerational trauma. Dr. Raviv noted that stress can even occur prenatally and the stress of the mother can be transmitted from the mother to the child in utero, resulting in low birth weights, developmental delays, and other concerns.

As adults, we have the capacity and the responsibility to foster resiliency in children. If we want to change the culture, we have to begin with how we engage with children. The pathway to building resilient children begins with providing a safe space and healthy relationships with support-



Author leads rally for the anti-gun violence march

ive and stable adults. In addition, we must nurture and cultivate a child's strengths and gifts or assets, as Dr. Raviv defined them. Identifying a child's assets, such as athletic or academic talents, and then allowing them to develop allows the child to flourish. When children are able to develop their assets within a healthy and nurturing environment, they can develop the social-emotional skills that will allow them to grow into emotionally healthy and loving adults. We must also invest in community resources, such as safe parks, afterschool activities, faith communities, and libraries. If we want to create a better world for children, we need to model healthy behavior, give them the safe spaces they deserve, and allow them to live in a world that does not require them to duck from stray bullets.

▲ *Samantha Yanity is the Editor for A Matter of Spirit and Justice Educator at IPJC. She recently earned a M.Div. and MA in social justice at Loyola University Chicago.*

▲ *Tali Raviv, Ph.D. is the Associate Director of the Center for Childhood Resilience in the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago and also Assistant Professor at Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University.*

As a student I often orchestrated classroom discussions, arguing that I did not believe in the ownership of guns period, let alone assault weapons used by the military. This gave me a reputation as a headstrong and at times abrasive activist. It seems as though since the 2016 election many have lost both hope and stamina for change, but I have resisted the temptation to be discouraged.

As the walkout day grew closer, students spread rumors about administration calling authorities, or possible expulsion. Our principal gave an announcement in the morning, threatening that the school had “alerted the local police” in an attempt to sway us from leaving the school. A few students organized a letter-writing campaign to take place in the lunchroom, as a substitution for the protest. I refused to allow students to become misguided. I printed out 100 copies of the ACLU’s guide to protest rights and regulations for the state of Pennsylvania, and proceeded to walk to every classroom, handing out papers, and explaining to students that they could not be arrested for march-

ing as long as we were obeying traffic laws, remained on public property, and did not block any exits. As students gathered in front of the door, I handed out flyers to each individual.

As we walked outside, we were greeted by a police officer who applauded us for exercising our first amendment rights, more than our school was ever going to. As I stood in front of my fellow students at city hall, speaking to them about gun control, I had a realization. If 50 students could march for the entire school day chanting until they lost their voices, until they didn’t have any water left, not knowing if they would face any consequences that would affect their education, there is no excuse not to take action as though the whole world is watching, as though this is the very action that will affect change.

▲ *Eliana Vélez is a Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts alum, and she is currently pursuing a degree in Human Services at Lehigh Carbon Community College in Allentown, PA.*

## Youth Rise Up for **CLIMATE JUSTICE**

By Patty Bowman

On September 10, 2015, twenty-one youth filed an environmental lawsuit in federal court, *Juliana v. United States*.<sup>1</sup> Four years later, on September 20, 2019, hundreds of thousands of young people took to the streets in cities across the world to demand action on climate change.<sup>2</sup> The predicted outcomes of a warming planet, such as sea level rise, increased flooding and droughts, more severe storms, the displacement of peoples from environmentally devastated areas, will affect today’s children and their children’s children long after the present generation has passed away. Because the stakes for their future are so high, youth around the world have become impatient waiting for adults to take action, and have begun to speak out for themselves in an effort to safeguard their environmental future.

The *Juliana* lawsuit asserts that, although the U.S. government has known for decades that carbon dioxide pollution was causing climate change, it has created and enhanced the dangers of climate change through policies that have encouraged continued extraction and use of fossil fuels. The plaintiffs argue that by failing to protect the environment, the government has violated their constitutional rights by depriving them of life, liberty and property without due process of law, as well as by failing to



*Luke Henkel and Carina Baumgartner from Laudato Si’ Generation meet with Pope Francis*

protect essential public trust resources. Framing the long-lasting effects of climate change in terms of constitutional rights changes the discourse around the issue. It forces us to look beyond the present and into the future. “I’m part of an amazing group of plaintiffs who won’t put up with adults jeopardizing our futures any longer,” says 17-year-old Milo Vergun, a plaintiff in the *Juliana* lawsuit.<sup>3</sup> Despite the government’s repeated attempts to have the case dismissed before trial, the youth are not deterred—nor are they alone. The twenty-one initial plaintiffs in the suit have recently been joined by over 30,000 youth who have signed on to a “friend of the court” brief in the case.

The September 20, 2019 Youth Climate Strike was part of a rapidly growing movement of young people, inspired in part by the actions of Swedish 16-year-old activist Greta Thunberg. She began sitting in front of the Swedish parliament in 2018, holding a sign that read simply: “school strike for climate.” Her action

has ignited a rapidly growing movement, resulting in climate school strikes in hundreds of cities around the world just one year later. Thunberg recently was invited to address the United Nations General Assembly and has been honored with the Ambassador of Conscience Award from Amnesty International.<sup>4</sup>

For many Catholic youth, advocacy on behalf of the environment is linked to their faith. For example, approximately 2,000 young Catholics worldwide have joined the *Laudato Si' Generation*, the youth branch of the Global Catholic Climate Movement. In his encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis stresses the importance of caring for the Earth for future generations: "Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of

justice. The environment is on loan to each generation, which must then hand it on to the next." (Par 159) In a statement supporting the Youth Climate Strike, these young Catholics have issued a powerful plea: "We're the young Catholics of the *Laudato Si' Generation*, and we'll inherit the Earth older generations leave us. This Earth could offer a rich heritage, bright with promise, but it has not been protected. We're scared, and we are motivated by a sense of urgency, and we need your help. We call on all those in the Church to stand with us."<sup>5</sup>

We who consider ourselves adults must listen to young people and allow them to lead us. May we all work to leave our children, and their children's children, a safe, beautiful and sustainable world in which to live and thrive.

▲ *Patty Bowman is Executive Director of IPJC.*

<sup>1</sup> Documents in the case can be found at [www.ourchildrenstrust.org](http://www.ourchildrenstrust.org).

<sup>2</sup> Sengupta, Somini. "Protesting Climate Change, Young People Take to the Streets in a Global Strike." *New York Times*, September 20, 2019, accessed October 9, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/20/climate/global-climate-strike.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Parker, Laura. "Support is surging for Teens' Climate Change Lawsuit." *National Geographic*, March 5, 2019, accessed October 9, 2019, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/03/youth-climate-change-lawsuit-grows-support/>.

<sup>4</sup> Climate Activists Greta Thunberg and the Fridays for Future Movement Honored with Top Amnesty International Award." *Amnesty International USA*. Accessed October 10, 2019. <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/climate-activists-greta-thunberg-and-the-fridays-for-future-movement-honored-with-top-amnesty-international-award/>.

<sup>5</sup> New Statement from Young Catholics." *Laudato Si' Generation*, September 10, 2019. <https://laudatosigeneration.org/2019/09/10/new-statement-from-young-catholics/>.

# Parenting for PEACE JUSTICE

By Lynn Herink

As I write this, my kids (ages 14 and 11) are in the kitchen arguing about the injustice of having to do the dishes and I wonder: what credibility do I have to be writing an article on parenting for peace and justice? There isn't much peace at the kitchen sink tonight and, according to my kids, probably very little justice. Shouldn't my kids be beyond petty arguments about the fairness of chores? And yet here I am, writing to share a small bit of my parenting journey thus far, hoping it resonates with other parents or at the very least helps them feel less alone.

Fourteen years ago, Linda Haydock, SNJM and Judy Byron, OP of IPJC came to our home to meet our new baby. While chatting, they asked me what I thought about a Parenting for Peace & Justice group. I was already part of a mom's club that met to discuss infant development, how to feed our babies, sleep troubles, and more. But something was missing for me. The idea of gathering new parents who wanted to explore topics of peace and justice, as they relate to parenting, struck a chord with me. I said YES. I set about forming a group that



*First Parenting for Peace and Justice group*

would test each meeting agenda before I finalized it into a program guide. Gatherings included a meal, prayer, a children's story related to the theme, and discussion. We settled on five themes: Peace & Non-Violent Communication, Simple Living, Care for the Environment, Nurturing Respect for Diversity, and Living in a Global World. Underneath it all, I think, was a desire to raise children who would care for others and the world around them. We also wanted an experience of community and spirituality.

I recently met up with friends from that first Parenting for Peace and Justice (PPJ) group. They helped me to reflect on the parenting practices that seemed most helpful in fostering our children's spiritual growth and raising the social conscience of our children. Here are a few of the things we learned (and continue to learn) about parenting for peace and justice, by developmental phase.

### ***Babies and Toddlers: Exposure***

This phase of life is a time to expose children to different environments and activities. One practice that helped us become more aware of our children's exposure was doing a personal diversity audit. This is a checklist tool in which you take stock of the diversity present in your home and daily activities. We considered the gender and race of those who provided our family with services and identified how often we see women and people of color in professional roles. We looked at whether the faith community, sports, lessons, and daycares we chose reflected a diverse community. We analyzed the art, magazines, books, and media in our home to see if we were exposing our children to multiple races and histories. We asked ourselves whose stories are represented, over-represented, and under-represented, then sought out stories to teach our children a truer and wider history of the people in our community and world.

### ***Preschool and Early Elementary: Fairness***

At this age, children begin to notice and care about what is fair and what is NOT fair among their social groups. They notice all kinds of differences and are eager to talk about what they observe. This includes noticing race and forming ideas about others based on race. As a white person, I have had to learn to talk openly about race because not doing so can convey to my children that race is a taboo topic. Not everyone in our PPJ group is white, and hearing the perspective of friends of color helped me better understand my whiteness and how it influences my parenting.

Parents can also talk openly about gender, poverty, and the environment, and connect it to their beliefs about what is fair and unfair. This is when your collection of books representing diverse perspectives will be well-utilized. Children love stories! As you read together, stop to talk about the pictures, the characters, and the conflict. Ask for your child's opinion. Share your ideas too. A bedtime story can easily tie into a nightly routine of talking with your child about the events of the day, reflecting on how God was present in each moment, and praying together.

### ***Upper Elementary School: Action***

Children at this age love to do things together. This is a time to take action as a family, like volunteering at a food bank or with your faith community, making kits for people experiencing homelessness, or joining marches or fun runs to promote issues that matter to your family. Help children realize how their actions impact those around them. Ask questions that spur them to think about and talk through problems in the community. If your children are provided an allowance, help them connect their money to the outside world by teaching them "save, spend, share." One thing we do is help our children to select a charity organization to donate to on the GIVE BIG day every spring. Each year, the organization changes based on what our children know and care about at that time.

### ***Middle School: Voice***

Middle schoolers have a heightened awareness about the world and the ability to respond. Our middle schoolers were hungry to talk about the social problems in their schools, such as an unequitable dress code. We listened to them, talked through their issues, and encouraged them to speak up at school. Kids know that the world isn't fair, and it can really bother them. We wanted to mitigate some of their stress and anxiety, so in our meetings we highlighted hope by sharing how other kids make a difference. We also gave our middle schoolers a voice, which they loved! When one of the kids in our PPJ group turned 13, her mom asked each of us to give her a piece of advice as a gift. An older child in our group, Maddy, decided to share a blog post titled 13 tips for healthy relationships. Every member of our group benefitted from Maddy's idea to discuss each of the tips one-by-one.

### ***High School: Independence***

High school students choose what they are interested in and initiate their own activities. They make new friends who have beliefs that differ from theirs or their family's. Parents have less control of the environment of their high school student, and this is a time of release. High school students can do many things like an adult, but they still need support with decision making. As parents, it is critical that we continue to ask questions that spur our teenagers to think about how their actions affect others. The conversations become more complex and you may find yourself disagreeing on values. We have found it best to continue asking questions and allowing our kids to experiment and explore. This stance seems most likely to result in open and ongoing communication. It is critical to have other trusted adults in your life who share your values. Sometimes a message is better received if delivered from a trusted auntie, family friend, or grandparents.

As a parent, the stakes feel high. What we say and do influences how our children conceive of themselves, their family, God, and the world around them. PPJ helped me to raise and begin to answer questions of justice as they relate to parenting. I don't really know the extent to which PPJ has contributed to raising socially conscious children – my kids struggle with more than dishes – but my parenting journey has been enriched by my PPJ community. This community brought wisdom, joy, compassion, and love to the hard work of parenting. For any parents out there hoping to form a similar group, I encourage you to reach out to IPJC for the PPJ Program Guide. May you never feel alone in the work of parenting!

For more information about Parenting for Peace and Justice: <https://www.ipjc.org/parenting-for-peace-justice/>

▲ *Lynn Herink, a volunteer with IPJC since 1996, developed the IPJC Parenting for Peace & Justice (PPJ) Program 14 years ago when her first child was a baby. She is married to Jon Gordon and is the mother of two children, Kevin, 14 and Simone, 11. The great joy of her life has been to teach immigrant and refugee students in middle school and high school, mostly in Highline Public Schools. Lynn currently works as an Assistant Principal at a public high school in Federal Way.*



# INTERCOMMUNITY

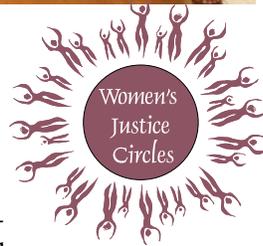
## ▶ Women's Justice Circles



### WAISN Statewide Gathering

On September 27-29 over 200 people from 84 organizations, 52 cities and 22 counties across Washington gathered in Ellensburg for the first Statewide Gathering of the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAISN), the largest immigrant-led coalition in the State. Giselle Cárcamo, Justice for Women Coordinator, was on the organizing team and co-chaired the Outreach Committee.

The goals of the gathering included: building statewide relationships and partnerships and learning from directly impacted communities. The gathering concluded with participants walking from Central Washington University to the Kittitas County Jail to urge Sheriff Dana to end the contract with the federal government for detention services and to support the families of immigrants detained with ICE holds in Kittitas County.



## ▶ Young Adult Justice Cafés



Our 2019-2020 year is off to a great start! In September young adults met to discuss the root causes of migration. If you are a young adult who would like to build community, deepen your spirituality and act for justice, join or start a Justice Café. Email [syanity@ipjc.org](mailto:syanity@ipjc.org) or call Samantha, 206.223.1138.

### 2019-2020 Justice Café Topics

- OCT **Feminization of Poverty**
- NOV **Ethical Consumerism**
- JAN **Modern Day Slavery: Children**
- FEB **Plastics**
- MAR **Just Transportation**
- APRIL **Changing Face of Democracy**



**Samantha Yanity**, new IPJC Justice Educator, with students from St. Joseph School, Seattle at the Climate Strike 2019

**María Peña**, a leader from our Connell Justice Circle and a member of the Justice for Women Board, spoke at the rally in support of immigrant rights. Justice Circle participants from Connell, Mattawa, Sunnyside, Wenatchee, Yakima and Burien attended the WAISN State Gathering.

# PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER

NEWS • ANNOUNCEMENTS • UPCOMING EVENTS

## ► NWCRI Update

### *Amid Escalating Gun Violence, Shareholders Press for Responsibility*

Over 36% of **American Outdoor Brands** (AOBC) shareholders supported our resolution requesting the Board to adopt a human rights policy and a due diligence process to assess, prevent and mitigate human rights impacts of the Company's operations and products. Representing nine religious proponents of the resolution, Judy Byron, OP addressed the CEO and board: "Since I addressed you in 2018 there have been 455 mass shootings in our country—31 of which occurred in K-12 schools. That averages out to a school shooting every 12 days. I ask you, in light of these continuing horrors, whether you still believe maintaining a business as usual approach is the wisest course of action for our company?" Until shareholders see affirmative action on gun violence, we will continue to raise concerns with AOBC and other companies in the firearms sector.



**Patty Bowman**, IPJC Executive Director with the Seattle delegation to *Laudato Si'* and the U.S. Catholic Church conference. The conference was co-sponsored by the Catholic Climate Covenant and Creighton University.

## ► Donations

**In memory of:** Selma Beckwith, Mary Ann Caviacchi, Margaret Lichter, Joan Trunk

**In honor of:** Helen Brennan, SP, Makiko Fujiwara, SNJM, Adrian Dominican Jubilarians, Sisters of Providence Jubilarians, Sisters of The Holy Names of Jesus and Mary US-Ontario Province Jubilarians, Josephine Showalter, SP

## *Prayer to the God of All Children: PLEASE Stop Child Terror* By Marian Wright Edelman

*O God of the children of Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala*

*Of Syria, Nigeria, Liberia, Sudan and South Africa*

*Of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Myanmar, Israel, Iran and Iraq*

*Of Libya, Yemen and Ukraine, Nepal and Kashmir,*

*Of the Congo, Charleston and Cleveland, of Darfur and Detroit*

*Of all refugee children without a country to welcome them,*

*at sea in flimsy boats, struggling across steaming deserts*

*to find safety, or caged in holding pens as they seek asylum,*

**Help us to love and respect and protect and welcome them all.**

*O God of Black and Brown and White children and those all mixed together*

*Of children who are rich and poor and in between*

*Of children who speak Spanish and English and Russian*

*and Swahili and Mandarin and Arabic and languages and*

*dialects our ears cannot discern,*

**Help us to love and respect and protect and welcome them all.**

*O God of the child prodigy and child prostitute, of the child of rapture and the child of rape,*

*Of runaway and thrown away and sexually trafficked children*

*who struggle every day without a parent or place or friend*

*or future,*

*Of LGBT children struggling to be who they are and children roaming across nations in search of a place called home,*

**Help us to love and respect and protect and welcome them all.**

*O God of children who can walk and talk and hear and see and sing and dance and jump and play and of children who wish they could but can't*

*Of children who are loved and unloved, wanted and unwanted,*

**Help us to love and respect and protect and welcome them all.**

*O God of incarcerated, beggar, beaten, abused, neglected, and homeless children*

*Of AIDS, drug, violence, and hunger ravaged children,*

*Of children who are emotionally and physically and mentally*

*fragile, and of children who rebel and ridicule, torment and taunt,*

**Help us to love and respect and protect and welcome them all.**

*O God of children of destiny and of despair without hope for the future, ravaged by wars of adults*

*Of disfigured, diseased, and dying children,*

*Of children without hope and of children with hope to spare and to share,*

**Help us to love and respect and protect and welcome them all as we affirm the sacredness of every child in our own country and all across our shared world.**

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## Reflection

Gather as a group to read and reflect on this issue of *A Matter of Spirit*.

**Leader:** In this issue of *A Matter of Spirit*, we have been given the charge to contemplate the complexities of childhood in our time. Let us take this opportunity to pray that God, who came to us as a vulnerable child, might open our hearts to care for the children of the world with gentleness, wisdom, and love.

- ☞ This issue of *A Matter of Spirit* provided us with both hopeful and painful portraits of childhood. Which narrative resonated with you the most? Which did you find most challenging?
- ☞ Some of the articles explore the effects of trauma on children. Reflecting on your own experience of childhood, did any of those issues resonate with you? Does anyone you know carry the long-lasting effects of trauma? How can we help one another heal?
- ☞ Violence is more than physical. In what areas of our lives do we see or experience violence? How might we root out violent thinking or behavior from ourselves and our communities?
- ☞ The children of today face not only challenges but also unprecedented possibilities. Where do you see positive opportunities for today's youth? What is your dream for children today?
- ☞ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, once said: "The future is in the hands of those who can give tomorrow's generation valid reason to live and hope." How am I giving young people in my life reasons to hope?

**Leader:** Let us close with the prayer on page 15 from Marian Wright Edelman.