
Youth Truth



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WHAT IS ABUSE?

Shakira Jones

In recent years, child protection services (CPS) agencies nationwide have received around three million reports of child abuse each year. After screening out the reports that don't meet their criteria, they do a preliminary investigation on about half the reports, and generally find that one third of these, or around 500,000 cases, can be "substantiated". Most of the cases found to be valid, and subsequently pursued by the overworked, undertrained staffs of CPS, fall into the category of *neglect*¹.

Child neglect, the situation most often reported to and substantiated by CPS, may involve children being deprived of food, shelter, or medical attention. But it also includes parental crimes such as "inadequate supervision", "failure to enroll a child in school", or "permitting drug or alcohol use by the child"². It is easy to imagine that these cases would be reported with frequency by school officials and concerned neighbors, and would probably be fairly simple for CPS to investigate and verify.

Meanwhile, half a million children each year are seriously injured by actual parental abuse³; 1100 were known to have died due to maltreatment in 1998⁴. Surveys of parents about their methods of discipline (which include questions about actions such as biting, kicking, or scalding their children) indicate that the number of abused children may be much higher. For instance, a 1995 Gallup poll of parents yielded the estimate that three million children were victims of parental physical abuse⁵.

According to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, about half of all reports of child abuse come from family members, family friends, or neighbors; the other half come from "professionals" such as teachers or

doctors⁷. In most assault cases, we would expect a high percentage of reports to come from the victim, but there is no mention of self-reporting in this study. Many victims of child abuse are infants or young children who are not yet able to report their own abuse; others may be too intimidated, or so isolated or closely watched that they can find no opportunity to report their situation. But those who do report would be most likely to call police, just like any assault victim. The police, if they decided to intervene in any way, would turn the case over to CPS. So these cases would then be considered to have been referred by a "professional".

Even when physical abuse is severe, it is not generally treated as a criminal matter. Instead of acting as a free agent and pressing assault charges, the child who reports being abused must be prepared to place him or herself in the custody of CPS, who will proceed on his or her behalf.

An abusive relationship is not merely defined by actual violence. Courts and psychiatrists generally agree that an abuser is one who attempts to exert *control* over another by means of "coercion, threats, intimidation, isolation", as well as physical violence and sexual abuse⁶. Lawmakers sometimes use the standard of "causing a reasonable person emotional distress" in defining abusive behavior. However, these standards do not apply when the victim is a child in the custody of an abuser. They are intended only for "domestic partners" or spouses.

If a 16-year-old female got married and felt that her spouse was abusive, she could turn to various agencies, including the police, for help or advice. The decision to leave the relationship would be hers. To help her make that decision, she might be asked such questions as:

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ASFAR VP in *Teen People*

ASFAR Vice-President Justin Mallone appears in the August issue of *Teen People*, on page 52—or, since the pages in that section are not numbered, just go to the 8th page after the “NOA” perfume insert! The article outlines the essence of ASFAR’s positions, and is very flattering and upbeat on the future prospects of youth rights. The piece has already brought in quite a few new members.

Let’s Do It Now

My name is Stephanie Green. I am 17 years old and live in Tucson, Arizona. Several months ago I started an organization here to give 16 and 17 year olds the right to vote. We are called *Generation Now*. Two of my legislators are writing a bill for us right now. I’ve been on several staple radio stations here, in the newspaper, and on one 50-minute TV program to date.

Part of our plan includes a current events class focusing on campaign information to be required of all high school students. We believe this will be a tool of socialization to encourage students to vote.

We have a web site that has not been updated in a while, but that you can check out—www.GenerationNow2000.com. (It’s not that great since we have virtually no funding.) I just found out about you through a web search and just wanted to let you know that I am working on this effort in Arizona. Let’s keep each other updated. Thanks, Stephanie.

Unnatural Relationships

As I read the first few paragraphs of “Unnatural Consequences” (*Youth Truth*, v. 1, issue 3), I found myself nodding in agreement. Ah yes, I thought, I’m familiar with that technique, and it is horrible—parents making up punishments for certain behaviors and pretending that they are “natural consequences”.

But the author’s example (in which the mother of “Little Billy” talks him through the possible risks of playing with food at a fancy restaurant and prepares to defend him if anyone objects) presents a demeaning picture of children and a distortion of the meaning of “respect” for a child.

Respect for children and their rights means no double standards. It means permitting them to engage in any activity that would be acceptable for adults, but it also means expecting the same standards of behavior (which vary from place to place) that are expected of adults. Tolerance and support of improper behavior from children simply because they are children is not “taking children seriously”.

I am not saying that children must never play—people of all ages need to play. And children should not be forced to be in formal situations where they must “behave properly”. But if a child *chooses* (as “Little Billy” did) to go to a fancy restaurant which doesn’t tolerate playfulness, they should conform to the same standards as all the other diners.

I am shocked by the author’s view of the waiter’s disapproval: “The waiter doesn’t matter because he is not in a relationship with the child”. Excuse me, I rather believe that *every* person matters and that the waiter *is* in

a relationship with the child; both the child and the mother should have respect for the waiter’s feelings and needs. The waiter may feel that part of his job is to maintain the decorum of the atmosphere, and that allowing people to play with food may threaten his livelihood. I think that’s pretty important!

What if “Little Billy” had wanted to attend a film—not a Disney extravaganza in which audience reaction was expected, but a drama on some moving or sensitive subject—and then proceeded to talk through the whole movie? This would interfere with everyone else’s appreciation of the film, including the mother’s, I would think. But the author of “Unnatural Consequences” would say, that doesn’t matter, because the only important thing is the mother’s relationship with the child.

I do agree with the author that when negative consequences occur, it is good to “make ... light of the situation” and help the child “see the funny side of it”, rather than scolding or saying “I told you so”. But I think parents should take that view even *before* the consequences occur. The mother in the story, instead of simply enjoying her dinner with her son, seems to have a duty to be constantly aware of any negative consequences that might occur, always on the lookout for ways to avoid them, always finding non-judgmental words to explain them to her son without “distressing” him. She sees her son not as a fellow human being but as some precious and fragile creature in need of her constant intervention. Her relationship with him is “you and me against the world” instead of “you and me *in* the world”. Sounds like an unnatural relationship to me.

Susan Wishnetsky

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The President's Pen

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The Irresponsibility of a Few

One of the most common objections to ASFAR's philosophy is that, while there are many responsible young people, restrictions are needed because of those who are not responsible. Such objections to ASFAR are logically flawed for several reasons.

For starters, there are people who are simply not responsible in every age group. Statistics about how many people are not being responsible do not matter when it comes to politically powerful segments of the population, such as the elderly, yet they are repeatedly used by the media and youth rights opponents as a justification. For example, older people who can barely see where they are going are still on the road—yet there are plenty of older people who can see just fine. Those people are not punished because of those who do not want to get their glasses replaced.

Young people should be judged on their individual merits, not the merits of others. There are poor drivers on the road in every age group, and the solutions, whatever they may be, should be applied on a nondiscriminatory basis. If graduated licensing systems were truly intended to decrease accidents by new drivers, they would affect all new drivers regardless of age, and would be based on the amount someone has driven rather than on their age.

While the driving issue is a glaring example for many other reasons, such as confiscatory and discriminatory auto insurance rates against young people, prohibition of car rental to those under 25, and more, there are certainly other glaring examples.

A common situation of age discrimination in many areas is where a business, often a gas station or convenience store, will post a sign restricting the number of people under 18 that can be in the store at the same time. Whether a private business should have the right to do this can certainly be debated, but I believe that as long as other groups in society are protected by anti-discrimination laws, then those laws should be made to protect young people as well. In fact, such laws already exist in many areas and are simply not being enforced. After all, it's not like elected officials have to answer to voters under the age of 18. Imagine the uproar that would be caused if a gas station prohibited more than two black people from being inside at the same time. It would probably get national attention.

Curfews and age-profiling by police also fall under the category of damning all young people for the sins of a few. Recently, a curfew in Indiana was struck down as being unconstitutional as a violation of the assembly and speech rights of young people. I would hope that this trend spreads across the country. Curfews for young people are a stepping-stone to curfews for adults, and even those who are not concerned about youth rights should be concerned about such a threat. Police should not stop anyone without prior cause, no matter what their age.

It is time for the youth of America to stand up and assert their God-given rights. You can do your part by joining ASFAR in the fight against age discrimination. Age discrimination will continue until young people stand up and fight for the political representation and power that they deserve as Americans.

**— YOUNG PEOPLE
SHOULD BE JUDGED ON
THEIR INDIVIDUAL MERITS,
NOT THE MERITS OF OTHERS —**

News Links

Washington State Student Challenges School's Punishment for Web Page Parody
<<http://www.aclu.org/news/2000/n050200d.html>>

Home Schoolers Win First, Second and Third at National Spelling Bee
<<http://www.hslda.org/media/releases/docs/06-02-00.html>>

Teen Kills Self After Months in Behavior Modification Program
<<http://www.denver-rmn.com/news/0702core5.shtml>>

Students and Parents Challenge Drug Testing at Maryland High School
<<http://www.aclu.org/news/2000/n051200b.html>>

Maryland Alderman wants Federal Law Banning Toy Guns
<<http://www.freeyellow.com/members8/apll/2ndAmendment4.html>>

Couple Accuses Cruise Line of Age Discrimination
<<http://www.herald.com/content/sat/news/dad/digdocs/090078.htm>>

Teenager Sues School Over Confederate Flag
<<http://www.freedomforum.org/news/2000/06/2000-06/2000-06-12-01.asp>>

Perspective

Justin Mallone

Vice-President, ASFAR

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Zero Tolerance for Individuality in Schools

A 12-year old boy, a straight-A student, is flagged as “potentially dangerous” because he defended the 2nd amendment and the right of the people to keep and bear arms <http://www.worldnetdaily.com/bluesky_dougherty/20000330_xnjdo_sixth_grad.shtml>.

A computer program called Mosaic 2000 is developed to identify “violence-prone” youth, its questions betraying a particular political bias against gun ownership <http://www.worldnetdaily.com/bluesky_dougherty/19991215_xnjdo_computer_t.shtml>.

Kindergartners are suspended for playing cops and robbers, because the use of fingers as “guns” and the accompanying sound effects (“bang! bang”) of those “guns” violated a school policy against “threats” <http://www.worldnetdaily.com/bluesky_fosterj_news/20000607_xnfoj_zero_tolera.shtml>.

Five million school age kids are now on mind-altering drugs <http://www.worldnetdaily.com/bluesky_excomm/19990707_xex_drugging_kid.shtml>; those drugs continue to be administered at younger and younger ages <<http://www.asfar.org/zine/2nd/drugs.html>>.

What do these facts have in common? They all represent a systematized effort to threaten, scare, and drug any trace of individuality and political-incorrecness out of young people. But why would the educational establishment, whose aim is supposedly to help provide a quality education for youth, be doing such a thing?

To understand this we must take a look at the nature of the system.

Compulsory education forces young people to be in some sort of state-approved schooling environment. Onerous taxes reduce educational choice by stealing away precious money from working families, virtually forcing them to send their kids to a public school. In the public school system, these young people, initially so curious about the world around them, have it drilled into their heads that there is only one approach accepted in public education: the obey-the-teacher, top-down, from the textbook, authoritarian model. So the teacher reads from his or her textbook, and the students obediently complete the work they’re told to, the substance of which they will forget after the next test (if not sooner). The system “educates” (hack, cough), producing indoctrinated automatons incapable of independent thought, and the teachers get paid. Any “hyperactive” (read: independent-minded) kids are immediately put on Ritalin or Luvox or Prozac or some other fun mind-altering drug; stuck in this “educational environment”, they try to hang on until they are 18 and thus considered finally “old enough” to make their own decisions (as if they could possibly do any worse than what’s been done to them already!)

And when the occasional kid does snap, and decides to bring a semi-automatic to school to pay back that guy who gave him a dirty look the other day, the media and its “experts” cry “Why?” and scratch their heads, bewildered. Ignoring the authoritarian educational system, with its crusade against independent thought; ignoring the mind-altering drugs; the media finds its answer: “Eureka!”, they yell, “It’s the Guns!”

Of course, why didn’t I think of that?

Back in the real world, where inanimate objects don’t whisper “kill that guy” in the ears of their owners, we see a system designed to produce dumbed-down, malleable kids easy for the teachers to control and even easier for politicians to manipulate come election time. And given these ends, everything seems to be going pretty well for the system, except...

There are those who don’t back down, who won’t be drugged, threatened, intimidated, or brow-beaten into compliance with the system. And when these brave individuals who are some of the best among us, those young people who are truly our comrades-in-spirit, confront their oppressors by pointing out their lies and questioning their authority, the teachers and establishment boot-licking “experts” are *shocked, shocked* that a mere youth would dare question them. And hell hath no fury like an authoritarian pissed at a subject under his jurisdiction (see Stalin, Hitler, Pol Pot, etc. for historical examples).

So it is for those individuals with courage enough to stand up to tyranny and oppression in our schools that the system’s worst fury is reserved. Ironic, in that these individuals, by virtue of their already proven courage and tenacity, are likely the visionaries and innovators of the future that the school system is supposed to prepare, not harass.

By now you must be asking: but Justin, what can I do about it? The answer, fortunately, is a great deal!

Besides starting an ASFAR chapter and organizing locally to campaign against institutionalized oppression in schools, you check out these sites to inform yourself about ways to change the current educational system, as well as how to liberate yourself right now from the shackles of traditional education:

Separation of School & State Alliance <<http://www.sepschool.org/>>
Learn in Freedom! <<http://learninfreedom.org/>>

Student Rights Page (with many links regarding laws affecting youth in schools) <<http://www.tentler.com/StudentsRights.htm>>

Together, we can fight for a more free educational system!

Editor's note: Content of reviewed books is not necessarily the opinion of ASFAR.

Sue's Review

Llewellyn, Grace. *The Teenage Liberation Handbook : How to Quit School & Get a Real Life & Education*. Rev. ed. Boston (et al.) : Element Books, 1997.

Susan Wishnetsky
Secretary, ASFAR

Adults maintain that kids need rules, structure and guidance in their lives if they are ever to "make anything" of themselves. They say that, left to their own devices, young people will invariably make wrong choices, fritter away their time with games, never learn anything, and end up wasting their lives.

In my home town of Chicago there now stands a towering monument to the opposite opinion: Sue the Dinosaur, the most complete and well-preserved Tyrannosaurus Rex ever discovered. The massive skeleton on display at the Field Museum of Natural History, attracting thousands of visitors, was named after the woman who unearthed it, Sue Hendrickson, a high school drop-out who left formal education behind to pursue the career she loved.

Lest people think that this case is a rare exception, *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* devotes itself to convincing them otherwise. Intended for teenagers and written in a casual and conversational style, the book does offer many good persuasive arguments for allowing kids the freedom to learn on their own by "unschooling". Starting with the assumption that most people believe non-attendance at school is illegal, impractical, or harmful for children, the author, Grace Llewellyn, systematically addresses the concerns people may raise.

After reading the first chapter, my reaction was that the title of the book was misleading; why call it "teenage liberation" when it deals with only one of the sources of oppression—school? But later in the book my question was addressed. Based on her experience and communication with unschooling students, the author has found that the relationship between parents and children often improves once school is out of the picture. Instead of worrying, nagging, and threatening about grades, parents often become truly excited about helping their kids educate themselves. And with supportive parents, many of the other barriers that keep kids away from life's experiences can be overcome.

The book is divided into three parts. In Part 1, Llewellyn presents the evidence that school—at least the compulsory variety—is bad for students: it wastes their time, batters their confidence, destroys self-motivation and self-

discipline, stifles their curiosity and creativity, and deprives them of freedom. Drawing on her own experiences as a former student and a former schoolteacher, Llewellyn argues that little of value is taught or learned in school, and what *is* learned there (and usually quickly forgotten) can generally be mastered more rapidly and permanently by studying on one's own.

Part 2 addresses some practical problems with leaving school: the need for parental approval, legal requirements in various countries, social isolation, meeting college entrance requirements. It also discusses setting educational goals and creating one's own sense of structure.

Part 3 discusses the possibilities of educational experiences outside of school: reading on one's own, utilizing community resources such as museums and nature preserves, obtaining laboratory equipment, creating a workshop, becoming an apprentice or a volunteer, taking a trip, or starting one's own business.

While the author acknowledges that the obstacles to leaving school may be insurmountable for some, her tone throughout the book is unceasingly optimistic. Regarding legal problems, she comments, "If you live in one of the countries where unschooling is difficult, lucky you. Yours is the chance to make history." She quotes a 14-year-old from Switzerland on age-based restrictions to educational resources: "I get around this problem by posing as an 18-year-old at the local library, as my mother at the WHO [World Health Organization] library, and as a secretary at the embassy"—a solution for some teenagers, but of no value to those who look younger than their age and cannot "pass" for adults. The author also tells her readers that the suggestions in this book will "most likely...enable you to convince your parents." Regarding parental supervision, she states, "I know of many unschoolers, by the way, whose parents both work away from home....there are occasional letters from parents with *younger* children who stay at home without adults during the days—and like it, and don't die."

Ms Llewellyn's view of parents may be largely based on the small sample who *have* been convinced to try unschooling. The typical parent may be far more fearful and less open-

minded than she believes. And parents may be justified in their fears of unschooling. There have been reports, even recently, in the U.S., of children registered as homeschoolers being taken from their homes by Protective Services agency workers because of alleged "neglect". Many people agree that kids are often quite capable of caring for themselves at home, but for government agencies, lack of supervision can surely be seen as a reason to intervene.

For those teenagers whose parents would *never* agree to let them try unschooling (and I really believe that's the majority), reading this book could be a pretty depressing experience. For them, the author offers only the following: "Survive spiritually by focusing more on your life outside school and not worrying too much about grades." For some teenagers, in some situations, I think that could be very bad advice.

My only other problem with the book is the author's extreme condemnation of school and what I see as intolerance toward people who like school and feel that they benefit from it. While she repeatedly asserts the importance of individual interests and learning styles, she cannot accept that the "school way" could possibly be right for *anyone*. She explains that schools are designed to turn out factory workers—well, even if so, what's wrong with factory work? For many, it can be a satisfying and lucrative career. The author's prejudice is revealed, in fact, in the book's introduction:

If you truly enjoy school and all its paraphernalia more than anything else you can possibly imagine doing, I suppose I'm not writing for you, because I don't understand you. I'm not sure you exist....maybe I have something to learn about docility. Or maybe I have a healthy aversion to something dead in people that should be alive.

However, these small portions of the book that might offend or discourage its readers are few, and are more than compensated for by the strength and persuasiveness of the writing in general. The virtue of *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* is its presentation to young people of an alternate view of education, an argument against what they have been told all their lives. In this, the book admirably succeeds.

Editorial

Dylan Schwartz
ASFAR Member
Gladstone, Oregon

Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death

The Constitution is very important to me and my country. One thing I am committed to is a refusal to serve the U.S. government in its present condition, in any capacity other than one that would allow me to change current policy.

One policy I admittedly dislike is voting restrictions. I personally believe that any person who is so inclined should be able to vote as they choose, and this paper is meant to cover why I hold this belief and why the changes I am suggesting can only benefit the country.

In the 1960s, when the voting age was set at 21, eleven states chose to lower voting age restrictions separate of a constitutional mandate to do so. I expect it will first be local government, as it was originally, who will first take action in this direction, not the federal government —unless of course the Supreme Court steps in somewhere along the line.

“The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant.”

John Stuart Mill, “On Liberty”, 1859

I believe that the absence of all age qualifications, not just political ones, would begin an era in which young people would develop knowledge and potential far greater than they do today, and at a much earlier age. If our efforts were taken seriously, the benefits would appear quite miraculous. The political equality caused by an unrestricted right to vote would challenge adults to take young people more seriously and abandon the patronizing attitudes they demonstrate today. Underestimating young adults would become a thing of the past.

Increasing interest and participation in politics is a major goal in the US, and programs such as mock elections for those of us under the golden age of 18 have been proven to increase interest in politics in both young people and their parents. However, this does not address the problems affecting children today. Representation for youth in politics is weak, and organizations trying to unite youth and adults have had a rather poor success rate. Problems such as crime, poverty, and environmental preservation all need input from young people. The only sure way to provide this input and make sure that the information hits home is a meaningful vote, in which case the government would be forced to take youth interests seriously. It is obvious that other methods of informing policy makers of youth opinion are dysfunctional.

High school is a great medium for political awareness. Middle schools have a common practice of holding mock elections for the president. Sadly enough, traditions like this do not carry on to high school. Public schools are a great place for political debate. And if the voting age were lowered, it would create a more politically-aware adult. It's well known that 18-29 year olds are demographically significant, but democratically insignificant when election day comes.

Young adults are well known for being one of the most motivated and influential age groups, but only when a common goal unites them. It takes a lot to get most teenagers really interested in a political topic. I believe we would have a more informed and educated society if the voting age were lowered.

As occurred with women's suffrage, this unconventional way of thinking will most likely be met with contempt. I anticipate ridicule, derision, and perhaps as the idea catches on, misunderstanding. However, the greatest problem that will come to bear is

adults' refusal to acknowledge that children suffer from political discrimination and exclusion. The common perception amongst adults is that children are not people, but helpless, inexperienced, defenseless things that need protection. Even I, a competent, capable individual, still experience this at the age of sixteen. This attitude must be challenged and refuted if young people are ever to secure any kind of political equality.

The following is a sort of question and answer session covering arguments as to why teenagers shouldn't be allowed to vote, and why the thoughts are unfounded or untrue.

Teenagers and children are not mature enough to vote independently of their parents. Neither are adults. According to some statistics, if both your parents belong to the same political party, you are only 6% likely to join a different political party, regardless of what ethnic or social class you belong to. Let me add that I support the complete abolition of any voting age restriction because the age of maturity is reached at different ages by different people. Children at the age of eleven are allowed to testify in court and jurors are generally instructed to treat their testimony the same as the testimony as an adult.

Teenagers are more easily swayed by advertisements than adults are. Not true. It has been shown that by the age of nine, children know the difference between right and wrong, and can easily recognize advertisements for what they are: one side of a story. Children also seem to be better at recognizing lies than adults.

Also, adults with busy lifestyles often don't take the time to research politics. Teenagers are frequently better informed about society because they have time to think about a subject before finalizing an opinion on it. This extra time also translates into more interest in voting.

Teenagers do not have enough real world experience to vote responsibly. If an adult came down with amnesia, would you strip away their right to vote? Although that person is rather unlikely to vote, it would be considered extremely unconstitutional to take away that right. Lawsuits would fly like a flock of pigeons. So how can one argue that teenagers do not have enough real world experience if by the same token you would allow an adult with absolutely no real world experience to vote?

Teenagers should not have the right to change policies affecting themselves. This statement betrays a double standard for human beings. Any adult who cannot treat me for the human being I am, irrespective of my age, is not mature enough to have my respect. Such logic comes from that type of person, and it upsets me quite a bit to see someone who can not remember what it was like to be young.

Besides that, adults haven't exactly proven themselves mature enough to make policy relating to teenagers. Just look at the recent fad of trying voteless teenagers involved in crimes as adults. Several states have policies such as this. I don't support criminal activity, but this policy of trying teens as adults laws has gone so far as to say children as young as fourteen years old can be charged and sentenced as adults for a range of crimes (including murder) and serve the exact same prison term as an adult in the same situation, including execution. Everyone should have the right to change policy affecting themselves. The reason the voting age was reduced in the first place was that no one wanted to be forced into dying for a country and a war they had no political control over. Likewise no one wants to be killed by a law they had no part in making, no hope of changing, even through the indirect method of elected representatives.

Teenagers are not interested enough in politics to want to vote. Why bother? I am interested enough to have written this paper. Surely if I choose to take the time

to write a detailed two-page essay on the subject then at least a relatively significant percentage of the teenage population would turn out to vote. Never mind the fact that a 1992 survey of 12-17 year olds conducted for the Washington Post found that 73% were *very interested* or *fairly interested* in politics, while only 27% were *not very* or *not at all* interested. About 95% of these young people viewed voting in a presidential election as *very important* or *fairly important*. The claim that "teenagers are not that interested in politics" is totally unfounded. Oh, and that blatant misrepresentation leads me back to adults being incapable of representing a teenager's opinion...

Isn't it a bit of an undertaking to amend the United States Constitution? Yes, but who said we have to ratify the United States Constitution in order to change the voting age? The truth is that any state in the union can reduce its voting age independent of a constitutional mandate to do so. This basically means that any state can abolish or lower the voting age however they wish to, and this also correlates to presidential elections. Several foreign countries are experimenting with a reduction in the voting age at this very moment, and the results so far are all positive, even increasing adult participation.

Modification of the voting age at the state level allows for debate of the proposal, with success or failure determinable by the merits of the policy. Additionally, if something turns out as not expected, it is just as simple a process to restore the original restrictions as it was to enact their removal in the first place.

"It is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others?"
Thomas Jefferson, in his 1801
inaugural address

In 1776, John Adams worried about the liberalization of suffrage laws in Massachusetts. He wrote: "It is dangerous to open so fruitful a source of controversy and altercation as would be opened by attempting to alter the qualifications of voters; there will be no end of it. New claims will arise: women will demand a vote; lads from twelve to twenty-one will think their rights not enough attended to; and every man who has not a farthing will demand an equal voice with any other in all acts of state."

Voting restrictions used to include African Americans, Native Americans, people who did not own property, and women. Those restrictions used to be thought of as important, and that all these groups of society were once thought of as "too stupid to vote". Granting suffrage to high school aged people, who have been known to carry 40-hour work weeks by choice and still manage passing grades, is the next big step towards a society with equality before the law.

In a free society, people will recognize the mistakes the country has made with regard to age discrimination. The truth of the matter is that representation for youth in politics is amazingly weak, and as long as adults deny the fact that children and teens suffer from political discrimination and exclusion, we will never have a truly free society.

In a free society, people will realize that high school is a great medium for political awareness. It would be a more informed and educated society if the voting age were lowered. Young people will be able to develop knowledge and potential to a far higher level than they do today.

In a politically free society, any citizen will be allowed to vote as they choose.

What Is Abuse?

continued from page 1

Has the other member in your relationship ever:

- been insensitive to your feelings?
- refused to talk about a problem?
- treated you like you were inferior?
- said you couldn't manage or take care of yourself on your own?
- criticized the way you did household chores?
- demanded obedience?
- demanded that you dress a certain way or forced you to change your personal appearance?
- taken away your personal property?
- opened your mail or gone through your personal space?
- refused to let you have money when you needed it?
- withheld information about and access to family assets, such as bank accounts?
- prevented you from getting a job?
- disapproved of or criticized your friends?
- monitored your activities or made you account for your whereabouts?
- tried to keep you from leaving the house?
- restricted your use of the car?
- restricted your use of the telephone?
- used intimidation or threats to gain compliance?
- hit you?⁸

Of course, many women will find some of these behaviors quite acceptable in their relationship, or will overlook them if they happen only occasionally. They serve as indicators of an unequal balance of power, revealing the extent to which one person exerts control over the other.

However, if the 16-year-old female were still in the custody of her parents and truthfully answered all of the above questions about one or both parents with “Yes, all the time”, no agency in the country would be likely to consider the

behavior abusive. It would be called “parenting” — perhaps unusually strict parenting, but within acceptable limits.

There is little doubt that this type of environment is damaging for children as well as adults. Situations in which one has little or no control over one's life often cause the condition known as “learned helplessness”⁹, in which

- the individual expects that negative outcomes are always the most probable and that desired outcomes are highly improbable
- the individual believes that there is nothing he or she can do to change the likelihood of those outcomes
- the individual believes that negative outcomes are always caused by his or her own permanent, irreversible failings or negative characteristics, while positive outcomes are always the result of luck or outside intervention, and are undeserved

This syndrome generally persists into adulthood. An excessively controlled or protective environment in childhood has also been found to contribute to many other physical and psychological disorders in adulthood, including ulcerative colitis, anxiety attacks, schizophrenia, depression, and drug dependence¹⁰.

But so far, in this country, parental authority has been considered a “right” granted to any adult who bears or adopts a child. Unless the exercise of that authority crosses the line into the particular criteria for “abuse” of the local CPS agency, the parental “right” generally outweighs any consideration of “reasonable distress” or real psychological harm that may occur to the child.

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