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Children should be cherished, not lied to, abused and neglected

By David Whitfield | The Olympian's Diversity Panel • Published November 2, 2007

'Every day, some 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes — one child every five seconds'

It is that time of year again when millions of parents will lie to their children about Santa Claus.

When I was eight I looked up through our fireplace chimney and concluded that Santa Claus could not get through it. I told my siblings there was no Santa Claus, and when they asked me how I knew, I told them he couldn't come through that chimney because he was too big; that he couldn't go to all those houses in one night because there were too many.

They cried, ran and told our mother. I received nothing that Christmas and one of the worst beatings of my childhood — for telling the truth. Children should hear the truth even about Santa Claus.

Some of us can't handle the truth. Not only do we lie to children, we also abuse them sexually, physically, psychologically, educationally, and the list goes on.

Children are to be cherished!

We don't cherish them by abusing them, lying to them, depriving them of food, medicine, clean drinking water and other necessities. We don't treasure them by sexually assaulting them. We don't value them when we don't provide them the best education possible. It happens locally and globally.

Locally, approximately 40 percent of the hungry in Western Washington are children. Despite Washington's agricultural richness, one out of four Washington children is hungry or at risk of being hungry, according to Food Lifeline.

"Washington as a state has the second highest rate of hunger in the country," according to a March 2006 study. And as the French writer, Nicholas De Chamfort, says, "Society is composed of two great classes — those who have more dinners than appetite, and those who have more appetite than dinners." Food Lifeline says 39 percent of the hungry people they feed are children.

Children should go to bed with a full belly. In 2004, the most recent year studied, 13 million children went to bed hungry. Why do we allow that?

Depriving children is also global. Despite much hype about the booming, progressive, global economy, “Every day, some 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes — one child every five seconds,” according to a study done by researchers, Black, Morris and Bryce. That’s almost 700 children per hour — dying, not to mention medical deprivation.

AIDS kills 2.9 million people annually. Most are children. Diarrhea takes 1.6 million people per year, again mostly children who don’t have clean drinking water and no oral dehydration therapy: water, salt, sugar.

“Malaria kills an African child every 30 seconds,” according to the World Health Organization and UNICEF. This for lack of a \$6 mosquito net. Last, and by no means least, measles takes one million per year for lack of a \$1 vaccination.

What are we thinking, spending \$500,000 per minute in Iraq? Much of that money could buy food, mosquito nets, measles shots, clean water, school supplies, etc.

Yale sociologist Charles B. Perrow says we are cognitively limited. The efficacy of our mental faculties (with some exceptions) is deficient, defective, depleted and void of an ethic of care.

As author Martin Heidegger says, we need to think about our thinking. Some of us think and don’t act; others don’t think at all. Children are the future and that should be our focus.



