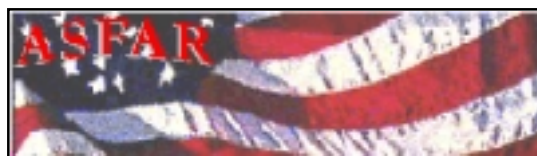


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# Youth Truth



Official 'Zine of Americans for a Society Free from Age Restrictions    www.asfar.org

**Inaugural Issue November/December 1999**

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## America Online Blocks Political Information

*Susan Wishnetsky*

On October 25, 1999, the internet service provider America Online added its nineteen-millionth household to its list of subscribers worldwide.<sup>1</sup> With the release of AOL 5.0, households may now include up to seven accounts — a “master” account for the person who pays for the service, plus six sub-accounts, for alternate nicknames or family members. So potentially another 114,000,000 people worldwide could be using sub-accounts, which can be created, deleted, or edited at will by the “master” account holder. The “master” account holder can also apply parental controls to the sub-accounts.

AOL provides four progressively restrictive parental control settings — *General Access (GA)*, *Mature Teens (MT)*, *Young Teens (YT)*, and *Kids Only (KO)* — to let parents “take charge of their child’s online experience to ensure it is safe, fun, and enriching.” It allows parents to limit their children’s e-mail, control online chat, block instant message notes, prevent downloading of files and software, and restrict access to the Internet.

Parents might think that these controls block access to sites of “hate groups” or those which contain pornography, explicit sexual discussion, or extreme depictions of violence. What they may not realize is that parental controls also block web pages of American colleges and universities, government agencies, libraries, and major political parties.

Yet they often do *not* block access to the sites of gun shops, beer distilleries, and some sexually descriptive material.

I tested the parental control settings on October 23-24, 1999. The *MT* setting, suggested for 16-17 year olds, seems to function as it is described. It enables the user to access, as far as I could tell, any site except those with explicit sexual material and images.

When I attempted to explore the Web as a *YT*, I did not find the experience “safe, fun, and enriching” — it was confusing, frustrating and disturbing. As a *YT* (13-15 year olds), I found practically no way to search the web with search terms at all. Users may enter search terms into the space for URL addresses or into a small keyword search box, but almost every term searched that way yielded only the message:

**The keyword you entered was not found. Please check your spelling and try again.**

Those few terms that were acceptable all seemed to lead to sites set up by AOL. There is also a search screen entitled *AOL Find*, which gave pretty much the same results. When I tried to open the search screen available to

*MTs* and adults, what appeared was the following message:

### **WEB RESTRICTED**

**You do not have access to this page as a result of the current Parental Control settings. To change or review the Parental Control settings, the master account holder must sign on, then visit the Parental Control area online.**

I was to view this message many times during my experiment. So as a *YT*, I was essentially unable to search the Web by subject, and could only rely on links provided by AOL for news, entertainment, or information. To access anything else, a *YT* must know or guess at the URL address of the web site they want to view.

So I tried entering some URLs. I began by exploring the home site of Northwestern University. The home page was available, but the page for athletics was blocked. The links to the Law, Medical and Business schools were all blocked, but oddly, the page for the Dental School was accessible. On the University of Michigan site, the situation was similar; the Law School was accessible, but the pages

*continued on page 11*

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**— PARENTAL CONTROLS ALSO BLOCK WEB PAGES OF  
AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES,  
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, LIBRARIES,  
AND MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES —**

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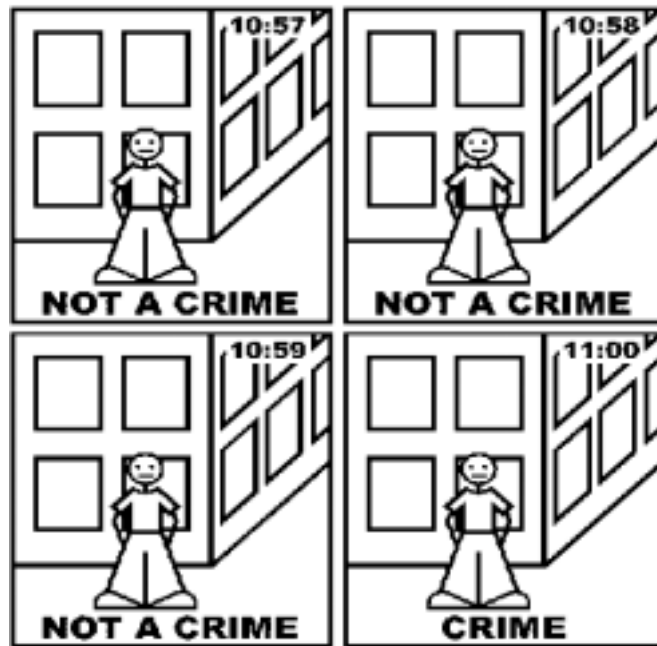
# BUZZ BUZZ BUZZ

## Breaking Curfew

Youth Against Curfew (YAC) has been and hopefully will continue protesting DC's tyrannical house arrest edict (a.k.a. its youth curfew law). For more info check out their web site at <[www.curfewprotest.com](http://www.curfewprotest.com)>.

ASFAR had a representative, Alex Koroknay-Palicz, at the last event on November 4th. Alex distributed flyers and participated in the protest.

We should note that at this time there is no formal affiliation between YAC and ASFAR; however ASFAR completely supports the goal of ending this and all other youth curfews throughout the nation.



## What do we want? SUFFRAGE! When do we want it? NOW!

In an important development for the youth rights community, Minnesota's House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee has a bill on the table that would lower the voting age to 16 in that state! However, the bill, HF1250, was proposed in March and hasn't even been given a hearing. It's time to correct this situation. ASFAR has launched a letter-writing campaign to get this bill heard, and to this end

has set up an e-mail address which automatically forwards mail sent to it to all members of the Committee. The address is <[mnvote@asfar.org](mailto:mnvote@asfar.org)>.

We hope that all individuals who support the advancement of youth rights let their voices be heard on this one. The Minnesota legislature will return from recess on February 1, 2000, so we have some time to have an impact!

## Editor's Note

Welcome to *Youth Truth*, ASFAR's new 'zine!

In this exciting inaugural issue, we have quite a few interesting articles, including the first set of our regular columns, a book review, some interesting letters and other great stuff.

The staff here at *Youth Truth* hopes you enjoy the first of many issues of our new 'zine. And remember, no matter how bad it gets, always keep up the fight for the right!

*Youth Truth* (ISSN 1527-4489) is issued bimonthly, six issues per volume, by Americans for a Society Free from Age Restrictions. New volumes begin with the January issue of each year. The electronic edition is available at [www.asfar.org/zine/](http://www.asfar.org/zine/) and is free of charge. Annual subscription rates for the print edition: Members \$2.00 per year; Nonmembers and Libraries \$10.00 per year. Printed copies of single issues are available at \$2.00 per issue. Checks should be made payable to ASFAR. Special rates may be negotiated.

Questions regarding the electronic version may be directed to <[editor@asfar.org](mailto:editor@asfar.org)>. Questions about or requests for subscriptions to the print version may be directed to <[swishnets@aol.com](mailto:swishnets@aol.com)> or to *Youth Truth*, P.O. Box 11358, Chicago, Illinois 60611-0358.

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# The President's Pen

*Eric Anderson  
President, ASFAR  
andersep@slu.edu*

## — IT IS VERY EASY TO LOSE ONE'S RIGHTS AND VERY DIFFICULT TO REGAIN THEM —

**N**ow is not the time to be silent. Now is not the time to be apathetic.

George Carlin said, "They found a cure for apathy, but there just wasn't much interest in it." The lack of rights for youth today is in part a direct result of apathy and disinterest on the part of young people. Those of us in the youth rights movement scratch our heads and wonder why many young people seem to be so oblivious to their own fate.

Practically every day, even more rights of young people are being signed, sold, and delivered away by the government, at the behest of special interest groups like MADD and AAA.

How many teens have had no problem with their town enacting a curfew until they get pulled over for violating it while returning home from working late? The sad fact is that when people are comfortable in their own lives, most seem to simply not care about threats to their rights. Some even notice the threats, or even are victims of the threats being carried out, and believe they must "deal with it" because of their age and because society demands it.

It is very easy to lose one's rights and very difficult to regain them.

Are you aware that even your right to read a book of your own choosing has long been in doubt? Right now, it is being threatened around the country even further in libraries, schools, and Congress.

How hypocritical is it for the United States to present itself as the vanguard of human rights around the world, when its own young citizens are routinely handled as property in divorce settlements?

Even if you do not believe you are personally being harmed by age discrimination, chances are good that you are, either directly or indirectly.

Waiting and doing nothing while every lobbyist in Washington contributes their ideas for restricting your freedoms is not going to make things any better.

It is time for the youth of America to wake up and stop hitting the snooze button. We live in a country that espouses freedom, liberty, and justice for all, yet the very future of this country is routinely denied all three.

As a citizen of the United States, you have a right and a duty to stand up for your own rights and the rights of your fellow citizens. Regardless of your age.

How can you do this? First, you need to be aware of what is going on in the world around you.

Learn to read through the lines. Don't assume something you read in the newspaper, discover on the Internet, or see on television is true. There are so many sources of news today that there are ample opportunities to get a wide range of viewpoints.

Secondly, consider joining ASFAR and actively participating in our fight for the rights of young people.

Finally, remember that only one person can make a difference. Not only a small difference, but sometimes even a great one.

Don't wait until it is too late. Take interest in the cure for apathy now, and young people of the future will have you to thank.

## — TAKE INTEREST IN THE CURE FOR APATHY NOW, AND YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE FUTURE WILL HAVE YOU TO THANK —

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# Perspective

Justin Mallone  
Vice President, ASFAR  
<editor@asfar.org>

## Age Restrictions: Protecting Whom? And What?

Let me be clear. Government-imposed restrictions based on age, while perhaps more benevolent in their aim, stand on no higher moral ground than those based on ethnicity, religion, race, or gender.

The primary reason that such laws are tolerated is because the public believes they exist for the “good of the children” (the fact that some of these children are more mature than their parents is another subject for another day).

But what “good” can come from laws which deny millions of people their freedom based upon nothing more than the particular order of the numbers on their birth certificate? This is where the fundamental issue of morality comes into play. Exactly how moral is it for the government to deny individuals their rights based on date of birth? Especially when it’s entirely possible to protect those who truly need protection without resorting to the fundamentally-flawed legal tool of age restrictions anyhow! (More on that later.)

And exactly what is the standard of the “good” here anyhow? Are we talking about the good from the perspective of a consistent and rational respect for the rights of the individual, or are we talking about the good from the perspective of a wanna-be politico who’s trying to score brownie points by putting everyone below age X under house arrest during the time his parents made sure he was home, lest he get a whoopin’?

The fact is that the only real standard of “good” here is that of freedom and equality under the law. To say that ALL individuals should be guaranteed the basic rights of all human beings, including youth, and to further say that youth should not be denied the rights of adults on the basis of age, but should at least have a fair, impartial hearing on the matter, is the message of ASFAR.

A common argument from the more reasonable defenders of age-based restrictions, who perhaps oppose curfews and other such nonsense, is that without certain ones, like minimum driving age laws, minimum drinking age laws, minimum gambling age laws, or age of consent (for sex) laws, young people would hurt themselves or be abused by evil adult predators.

Obviously, as a defender of youth rights, I would not advocate a position that I know would end up with youth having their rights violated. That would be contradictory. So, allow me to take these two examples and show how one can be completely consistent with the principle that government-imposed age based restrictions are wrong, while ensuring that the rights of youth are not violated.

The first thing regarding “no minimum driving age” that people opposed to or uncertain about ASFAR bring up is “So what, you want five-year-olds to drive?” The answer is no. I don’t want any group of individuals to drive per se, based solely on their age. I want those capable of getting a license to drive. It’s that simple. If the imaginary five-year-old in question did one day pass the license test and drive, I would certainly be surprised, but if he can pass the tests and get a license, on what basis can he be denied the ability to drive? Of course, barring a considerable evolution in the human species that causes the growth stage of children to be considerably sped up, its unlikely you’ll see any five-year-olds on the road anyways, given that their feet can’t even reach the pedals.

In regards to drinking, we see that the minimum drinking age forces many establishments to deny entry to anyone under the age of 21, even though many times the youth entering the establishment simply want to spend time with their friends who are 21 or older.

Furthermore, pushing drinking underground causes young individuals, who might otherwise drink moderately and openly, to binge when they have the opportunity. And it solves nothing that a non-age based approach couldn’t handle. For instance, why not abolish the drinking age, and simply base an unemancipated minor’s legal ability to drink on reality? If an unemancipated young person can consume alcohol with no imminent risk to their health, then why in the heck should they be legally barred from doing so? There are undoubtedly young people under 21 who can handle their drinks better than those over the magic age. Of course, if parents let an unemancipated young person drink himself into the hospital, the parents are just as responsible as they would be if they let that same young person play in traffic while they watched. But, following the analogy, any drinking age is tantamount to arresting parents for letting their children cross the street. And doing this for 20-year old “children” borders on the insane.

Regarding gambling laws, the simple truth is this: if a young person doesn’t have any money, he can’t gamble. If a parent gives the young person money for a specific purpose (say, buying lunch at school) there’s a very low probability he’s going to take the \$5 and run off to Las Vegas. And if young people work and earn the money on their own, they should be able to do as they please with it. Even gamble. Even buy glow-in-the-dark sneakers. You earn it, you spend it. Isn’t that the American Way?

And here we are, at the powder-keg Age of Consent issue. Let me be clear. I think that ANYONE who rapes an individual of ANY AGE should be put away for a VERY, VERY long time. This does not affect my opposition to the concept of an “age of consent.”

*continued on page 5*

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## Sue's Review

Susan Wishnetsky  
Secretary, ASFAR

**Mike A. Males. *The scapegoat generation: America's war on adolescents.*  
Monroe, Maine : Common Courage Press, 1996.**

Kids are in the news lately, and the news has not been good. Stories of teen pregnancy, of youth violence, of smoking, drinking and drug use by kids appear nightly in our homes. Every news commentator seems to have an opinion on what is making kids go bad, and how to fix it. The villains are guns, cigarettes, video games, television programs, rap or rock music, lack of discipline ... or sometimes the villains are the kids themselves. Politicians are racing with one another to find tougher ways punish kids and keep them away from harmful influences. Adult America is angry and eager to embrace any solution.

Mike Males is angry, too, that America's policy makers are ignoring the data on youth which is there for all to see. In *The Scapegoat Generation*, Males presents a tremendous body of research which shows that the main problem that youth experience, which leads them to crime, gangs, drug abuse, and unplanned pregnancy, is poverty. Poverty is the factor which leads people of *all* ages to anti-social and self-destructive acts, but the number of *children* living in poverty in the United States rose about 60% between 1975 and 1995, while the number of adults over age 40 living in poverty declined. A 1995 study of the National Science Foundation of industrialized

nations found that the United States had the highest child poverty rate; even after welfare payments were counted, 21.5% of our children fell below the poverty line. And the situation promises to become worse, as assistance to impoverished families is cut off.

Males' data shows that, once the influence of poverty (and the child abuse which often accompanies poverty) is accounted for, kids of today are probably less violent and more responsible than their counterparts of the past. He reveals how politicians and special interest groups have ignored or misused — or even lied about — statistics to support their own agendas. *The Scapegoat Generation* is packed full of its own statistics: the book includes 65 tables and figures from reliable, fully cited sources, which supplement the statistics cited throughout the text.

Males criticizes the vicious double standards imposed on children by the criminal justice system, which deprives minors of rights on the basis of their status as children, but considers them "adults" when it enables them to mete out harsher punishments. He exposes the psychiatric community, eager to welcome "troubled" kids into their mental hospitals when the parents' insurance

will pay the bills, but leaving the children without insurance coverage to the juvenile justice system and its prisons. And he condemns the hypocrisy of adults who complain about "teenage mothers" without holding the *fathers* — mostly adult men — responsible as well.

The book is well organized and readable, with healthy doses of outrage between the statistics. Since the book was published in 1996, there are a few small comments that are already out-of-date, but overall the information remains current and pertinent. There is a bit of repetition of facts, as if the author did not want a certain point to be missed. One could argue that Males' research was one-sided; since his research was intended to dispute widely-held beliefs, it is not surprising that he chose the statistics that would do so most effectively. However, his citations are largely of government documents and reports of research agencies, so there is little question of their validity.

The paperback edition costs about \$18. Get a copy if you can and read it out loud to your parents and friends; that's what I did. If you can afford an extra copy, donate it to your school or public library. *The Scapegoat Generation* contains information worth sharing.

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### Age Restrictions

*continued from page 4*

There are many different alternatives available besides deciding based on age whether a sexual relationship was rape or not. It's possible to do case-by-case reviews (which we already pay for anyway, since every accused criminal is innocent until proven guilty. Thus, we might as well do it the right way, no?)

Another theory is the right to sex based on legal emancipation, assuming, of course, that the criteria for emancipation is objective as opposed to age-based. I have my own problems with this, given that it would not be as effective in the area of stopping improper criminal

charges from being filed as would case-by-case review, but such a position would undoubtedly be an improvement over the current "you're under X, you're over Y, you had sex, go straight to jail, do not pass Go" system.

The fact is that with ANY issue that can be brought up, there is an objective, impartial, AGE-RESTRICTION FREE alternative to current law.

Another question that comes up often is "Why? Why write all these things, go through all this effort, and put all this energy into abolishing, say, the driving age, when you freely admit that

those whose rights you're defending probably won't exercise them anyways?"

Allow me to ask you this hypothetical: if no women voted, would that be justification for a law denying women suffrage? Would you fight such a law, EVEN IF no women would make use of the right you'd be fighting for?

The matter here, my dear readers, is PRINCIPLE. P-R-I-N-C-I-P-L-E. Once you get the funny idea into your head that something is wrong, immoral, and unjust, you will fight it until the day upon which you take your last breath. I know I will. I hope you'll join me.

## Land of the Free?

When the Declaration of Independence was written over 200 years ago, we called ourselves free. But African-Americans stood helpless in the shackles of slavery. When Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, again we called ourselves free. But women were barred from the voting booths and belittled in the shadows of men. African-Americans and women now stand equal on the steps of liberty, but is the struggle for justice over? The answer is no.

A group that has so long been ignored must now take the foreground in the seemingly endless struggle for equality; and that group is children. But as Rosa Parks and her single act of defiance so deftly proves, it is simple acts that will win this war.

The first battle will attack curfew restrictions. Laws that are in place in most cities. Laws that jail children in their own homes and violate their most basic rights. A curfew on the minors of America is ineffective and unconstitutional. Curfew laws are ineffective in both preventing crime and utilizing police resources. Officer Tom Dwyer, a sergeant in the Sacramento Police Department, believes otherwise, calling a curfew “an effective crime prevention tool.” But if in fact curfews are effective crime-fighting tools, why then are they not in place on all age groups? The only logical conclusion one could draw from this type of

blatant prejudice is that it is only minors who commit crimes. Obviously minors are not the only age group committing crimes.

Officer Dwyer's opinion is not shared by all those employed in law enforcement, especially not by Bernard C. Parks, the Police Chief of the entire Los Angeles area. In a statement to the LA Board of Safety, Parks said, “Curfews have not greatly impacted the number of violent crimes or the people who become victims of crimes.”

The reality is that curfew laws are not based on any justifiable law enforcement technique, but instead unfairly single out a particular age group because of a perennial stereotype against children and adolescents in general.

Not only are curfew laws ineffective, they are also unconstitutional. In our society, heavy consideration is placed on the rights of the individual. The question is, do these same rights apply to the youth of our society? In order to determine this, one must look to the backbone of our government, the Constitution. The 14th Amendment reads “All persons born or naturalized in the U.S. and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law, which shall abridge the

privileges or immunities of citizens in the United States. Nor shall any state deprive a person of life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness. Nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction equal protection of the laws.”

The 14th Amendment clearly defines anyone born in the United States a citizen — being under the age of 18 does not bar individuals rights as written in the Constitution. One does not have to sit on the Supreme Court to understand that literally holding a person in their own home against their will is a violation of all the ideals that make our country great. Curfew laws further violate the 14th Amendment by not granting equal protection under the law. The 14th Amendment was originally written in 1866 so that states could not pass laws that would affect some citizens and not others, such as laws forbidding blacks to enter public schools or dine in certain restaurants. Curfew laws are reminiscent of these dark days in our country, days that were filled with hate and injustice. Prohibiting the rights of minors is taking a giant step backwards in equality and liberty and at the same time doing little to nothing in the fight against crime.

- Scott Nishi

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## Teens, Parents & the American Spirit

Many people aged 13-17, termed teenagers, are characterized as going through a period of rebellion and revolt against their elders (parents, teachers, bosses). Those who accept this have diagnosed the symptoms but not the disease. I feel the term “*rebellion*” is not as appropriate as “*revolution*”, much like our own American Revolution. If you have ever taken an American History class the point drilled into your head over and over again is

“no taxation without representation”; this has profound meaning when describing adolescence. The fact that authorities pass judgment and hand down sentencing without any explanation or outside input is enough to make any country, colony, or adolescent revolt. Our forefathers understood that one could not live in a state where you had no say in how your lives were run. That is why they ended English rule of America, and

that is also why as soon as teenagers are legally allowed (or even sooner), they leave the house, often never to return.

Many may ask “Then why does this revolution approximately occur between the ages of 13-17 if it isn't a *hormone imbalance*?” The answer is simple: they now become aware of the injustices dealt toward them. Let's look at it in a historical perspective. During the Middle Ages

*continued on page 7*

A catalyst has been dropped into the bickering, splintered, mostly inactive pit that is the youth rights movement. We can do as usual and ignore it, or we can take action and utilize the key given to us.

The catalyst I speak of is HF1250, a bill introduced in March of this year by Representatives Kahn, Dawkins and Jaros of the Minnesota state legislature that would lower Minnesota's voting age in state and local elections from 18 to 16.

Once a bill is proposed, it is usually delegated to a committee (Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy, in this case) which determines the action to be taken on the bill. Currently the bill is *stuck* in committee. This means no action is being taken on the bill. If the committee wishes, they can let the bill die without so much as a vote. It is up to us, the youth rights community, to insist the committee take action on HF1250.

The events that happen in Minnesota may seem unimportant and far away, but this is quite to the contrary. They could have a rather profound impact on the future course of the youth rights movement. We can use this as an opportunity to share our beliefs with a greater audience and to further bring our message from the internet into the life of the everyday young person. Minnesota's actions can also set a huge precedent not only for other state governments, but the federal government as well. State and national congresses may finally recognize the disenfranchisement of capable youths to be unjust and grant them their voting liberty. Voting rights given to a larger group of young people would give greater leverage in the passing and repulsion of age discriminatory laws. With a greater number of constituents to please, and with those constituents being younger in age, politicians will be mindful of how the laws they pass curb the freedoms of young people, and may change the way they handle such laws that are already in existence but being protested. An era of greater respect for youth could dawn with a lowered voting age.

Many methods exist for both residents and non-residents of Minnesota to help pass HF1250. If you are lucky enough to live in Minnesota, you can inform your friends and family of HF1250 and its importance. You can then organize petition drives and letter writing campaigns urging committee members into taking action on the bill. If you do not live in Minnesota, you can still help a great deal. The best action to take is to write personal, well-thought-out letters to committee members supporting action on the bill. If you don't have time to write your own letter, form letters are provided for you to download on several web sites involved in attempting to lower the voting age in Minnesota. All you have to do is sign your name and stuff it in an envelope.

If you wish to learn more about the Minnesota voting age, including the bill's progress and what action is being taken by the youth rights community, visit the ASFAR web site at <[www.asfar.org](http://www.asfar.org)>, or the web site of the Alliance (another youth rights group) at <[www.alcade.net](http://www.alcade.net)>. If you need to contact someone regarding HF1250, e-mail Eric Anderson, president of ASFAR, at <[andersep@slu.edu](mailto:andersep@slu.edu)> or Matthew Havens, a coordinator of the Alliance, at <[alcade@alcade.net](mailto:alcade@alcade.net)>.

Those concerned about youth rights can no longer blame the leaders of the movement for inaction. Action is being taken; it is now *your* turn to support it.

— AN ERA OF GREATER RESPECT  
FOR YOUTH COULD DAWN  
WITH A LOWERED VOTING AGE —

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### Teens, Parents & the American Spirit

*continued from page 6*

the common man had no say in his own life, and that was accepted. The common man also had no access to education and more or less had no way to think of why things were the way they were. In the 18th & 19th centuries the common man was much better educated and started to question why he must always do as he's told. This too occurs in the lifespan of an average modern human. As a person reaches the age of twelve or thirteen he

has gained enough intelligence and education to decide that he no longer wants to live under an authoritarian dictatorship.

So I propose that the most effective way of parenting is to allow your child, from an early age, to participate in how his life is run. When the child does something wrong, sit him down and explain what he did and why it is wrong. When he truly understands, work together to

formulate a proper punishment. And if you can teach him why he did wrong and why he should be punished then I guarantee he will not do that again. And in the future he will be less likely to get into trouble, because he will think things out and recognize very early on whether something is proper conduct or not.

-Alex Koroknay-Palicz

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# Redirect

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*The Laissez Faire City Times,*  
Vol. 3, No. 25, June 21, 1999

Many mainstream Americans are beginning to realize the degree to which their freedoms are being infringed or stolen outright by US governments, from the feds down to the local mayor. Some of the credit for this realization goes to freedom-loving individuals and organizations that work to educate people about the abuses of the state. Yet much of it is simply due to Clinton and Congress themselves for the freedom-stifling activity they've engaged in the past several years.

As the clamor begins to rise—and well it should—a new minority group is beginning to add its voice to the din.

This “new” group is the youth of the country. Many of them, with the assistance of their parents, or in spite of their parents’ “help”, understand that tyranny is around the corner. They are ready to take their part in the fight for freedom, and they are more than just “misunderstood kids”. They know that, when it comes to freedom, minors have been left standing on the street with their noses pressed against the glass for years. Unlike previous generations, however, these young people intend to do something to change the status quo.

Discontent is nothing new—that seems to be part and parcel of the teenage experience in this country. For that matter, the checking of the Bill of Rights at the schoolhouse door isn't all that new either; since the 1970's at least, courts (including the Supreme Court) have ruled that the first amendment does not apply to school newspapers, or to public school students who want to publicly acknowledge whatever god(s) they worship in school ceremonies. For years, young men in most states have been required by the feds to register with Selective Service upon turning 18, yet are unable to drink alcohol legally for three more years. Teenagers and enterprising children are expected to pay income tax on their earnings and savings, yet are not permitted to vote, the clearest case of taxation without representation there is. Over the years, however, the encroachment on kids' liberties has quickened on a pace outstripping that for adults' freedoms. Kids are learning some harsh lessons from their treatment.

Within the past five years, the number of young people being disciplined for violating school rules has skyrocketed. In the name of trying to curb “gang violence”, certain articles of clothing or colors of clothing have been prohibited in schools; many public schools require uniforms in an attempt to legislate the problem away. Under the “zero tolerance” drug policies of many schools, children who bring and use medicines from home without school permission have been suspended—even if the offending substance is only a cough drop.

## Bombing the Kids.

As a result of the Columbine school shootings barely two months ago, scores of students who've made any kind of reference to bombs or shootings at school have been summarily suspended. In one case, middle school students who waited a

day to report a friend who threatened to blow up the school were themselves suspended for not snitching fast enough. Schools have also tightened the pressure on anyone who is different in some way—such as the boy in Virginia who was suspended for dyeing part of his hair blue. Children who choose politically incorrect themes for creative writing assignments can find themselves in trouble too, as did the nine-year-old boy who was charged with writing “a threatening note”. The “note” was part of a class project to create a positive fortune cookie message; the boy wrote, “You will die with honor.”

What do youths learn from these cases? They learn that, despite their capabilities and intelligence, they are largely treated as second-class citizens. They learn that rights do not apply to them. They learn, from the very adults who are supposed to be positive role models for the children, that “freedom is for me and not for thee”.

The marketplace is also brutal in its treatment of today's youth. Malls have rules prohibiting “hanging out” or groups of teens walking around. In many stores, teens are routinely scrutinized as likely shoplifters, even with no probable cause. Despite the facts that many teens hold at least a part-time job and have more disposable income than many other age brackets, the stereotype of a teen as an irresponsible slacker leads to their being treated as potential criminals instead of valued customers. They learn that the saying “money talks” applies only if one is above a certain age.

The state is perhaps the largest enemy of youth. From small towns to large cities, loitering laws are used to disperse groups of teens doing nothing more than gathering to socialize, curfews based on age are passed, and laws prohibiting bike riding, skateboarding, and rollerblading on public sidewalks leave kids no place to go—and little to do—to have fun. The federal government places age limits on a large number of activities, including working, in the name of “protecting” children. A bill currently being considered—the so-called “juvenile crime bill”—would tighten some of these age restrictions, and also would make juveniles tried as adults subject to incarceration with adults. So much for protecting the children!

This “justice” bill has some 55 amendments that allegedly focus on youth crime and violence, but many other rights-trampling proposals are hidden in its 600-plus pages. Among the most egregious of these are the provision enabling police to intercept electronic communications without a warrant, and the provision expanding asset forfeiture to include state laws—even misdemeanors. These apply to everyone in the US, not only juveniles. Young people learn many interesting lessons from such shenanigans. They learn that “protecting the children” is merely rhetoric, and a convenient cover for “whatever we can get away with”. They learn that burying nasty surprises in big packages is a successful tactic, as is bait and switch.

## Tomorrow's Allies Today

*Sunni Maravillosa*

*Opinions expressed may not reflect the views of ASFAR.*

## Hearts and Minds.

Today's culture enables or adds to the alienation and discontent teens naturally feel. In commenting on his failed proposal to prohibit the sale of explicit sexual or violent material to minors, Representative Henry Hyde (R-IL) said, “[T]he real problem is what's going on in our kids' minds and hearts and souls”(see <[www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/1999/06/16/gun.control/](http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/1999/06/16/gun.control/)>). Hyde is more right than he knows. The feelings of despair, of not being cared about, run rampant in today's kids. We see the results in the teen suicide rate, the date rape rate among teens, and the escalation of violence in once-peaceful suburban public schools.

But out of the youth population springs tremendous hope. The source is the aforementioned teens who understand and value freedom, and who are already active in the movement. Recently, winning essays of the Liberty Round Table contest for young scholars were published here, and demonstrated just how aware many youngsters—even as young as seven!—are of the important issues of today. Their context isn't one of Lyndon B. Johnson promising “The Great Society”, nor Nixon disgracing the presidency; they've grown up seeing the effectiveness of grass-roots activism in the environmental movement, and with the skepticism of politics-as-usual that Johnson, Nixon, Clinton, and so many others have helped create. The combination of street-smarts, youthful optimism and energy, and conviction make this group of individuals a force to be reckoned with. We adults who are engaged in the battle ignore these allies at our own peril.

Some of the issues important to libertarian youths are theoretically sticky—one twelve-year-old may be mature enough to make informed decisions regarding her budget, whereas many 32-year-olds have great difficulty in that area. The issue isn't so much about age, however, as it is about personal responsibility. What these young people are asking for is the same thing many libertarians claim to value—the right to decide for themselves, without the state sticking its nose into private affairs. If a young teen can support himself without welfare, and meets all his obligations under his own initiative, then why shouldn't he be able to vote if he wants to, or kick back a beer in the privacy of his own home? Being 14 should be irrelevant.

Adult libertarians would be well-served to heed the message of younger libertarians in their quest to end the second-class status of responsible minors. Helping them to win now by taking their issues and efforts seriously, working with them, and encouraging their participation in more general liberty-oriented issues will encourage them to stay active in the fight. That investment into today's youth will help ensure that our work continues after we are gone. Intergenerational cooperation will also help overcome the negative stereotypes many people have of young people, and will make it more likely that future generations of intransigent freedom-lovers will follow. That's the best possible legacy to pass along.

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## School Uniforms Lead to Fascism

J.C. Miller

*Opinions expressed may not reflect the views of ASFAR.*

— Those that would give up  
essential liberty for a little  
safety deserve neither liberty  
nor safety —  
Benjamin Franklin

Thirty years ago, a student by the name of Tinker was suspended from a Des Moines high school for wearing a black “peace” armband in protest of the Vietnam War. He sued, and the case went all the way to the Supreme Court. In *Tinker v. Des Moines*, the Supreme Court ruled that clothing was a constitutionally protected form of free speech and that students do not shed their constitutional rights when they enter a school. Born from this was the concept that government schools can’t regulate thought and expression.

But in an age where sex depends on what your definition of “is” is, phrases like “Congress shall make no law” and “shall not be infringed” don’t mean very much to legislators. Federal officials are quietly encouraging state legislatures to conspire against America’s youth and implement mandatory school uniforms, all in the name of Columbine.

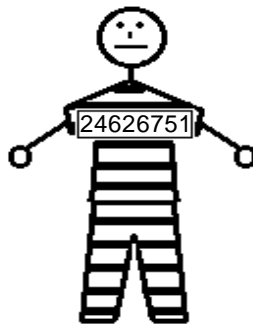
Sure, Britney Spears wore a school uniform in her music video. Saying that she looked hot in that outfit is as big of an understatement as saying that Led Zeppelin sold a few records. I do not, however, think that most schools will allow sexy uniforms that aren’t buttoned all the way. If they do require girls to wear skirts, isn’t that sexism? Are we going to set America back fifty years because of a school shooting?

Honestly, lack of a dress code didn’t cause Columbine. Mental illness, society’s shortcomings and persecution caused Columbine. One of the principal arguments in favor of school uniforms claims that all the persecution in schools comes from the differences between students, which are highlighted because some kids wear designer clothes and others get their latest fashions at the local megamart. Once again, that didn’t cause Columbine. Both of the killers came from wealthy families. But let’s take a look at the idea that differences between students cause strife and eventually violence.

Kids are very different from one another—some are white, some are black; some are poor, some are rich; some are Democrats, some are smart. Kids dress differently, too. Sometimes they even try to impress each other. Uniforms would supposedly prevent the divisiveness that expensive clothes bring about. Janice Rocque, a government teacher from Hudsonville High School, says that “school is for education, not to impress everyone with your \$200 Air Jordan shoes.”

The much hyped “Trench Coat Mafia” wore gothic clothes. Was it the fact that they wore these clothes that made their peers reject them, or did they wear these clothes because they were rejected? The fascists who support uniforms don’t really care. My state senator, William Van Regenmorter, is one of them. He claims that because students are different they hate each other and the government needs to make them un-different.

### THE NEW SCHOOL UNIFORM



Supposedly, uniforms will make everyone look alike, and that’s a good start. What?! This is America! We’re supposed to be a melting pot. This is the country where we tolerate someone who looks different, acts different, and thinks different. Intolerant politicians who can’t leave us alone think they can make all students exactly alike. Well, they can’t. Uniforms don’t prevent violence—for every study that says they do, another says they have no impact. Uniforms are a fascist idea that breeds fascism—Slobodan Milosevic had to wear a suit and tie to school when he was a kid.

Public school administrators hate the sad truth—private schools do better. Instead of addressing the problems and waste in their system, Janice Rocque says “the public system thinks it can copy [the school uniform policies] and make a huge difference.” The fact that private schools use uniforms is incidental. By ignoring the truth, the public schools doom themselves to failure. The real question is, what’s going to happen when uniforms fail?

The thing about government programs that don’t work is that they spawn more programs in vain attempts to make them work. Britney Spears looks hot in a uniform, but some girls won’t. This will cause some girls to be jealous of others. What is a government to do? Get more involved! The classic science fiction work *Harrison Bergeron* tells of a future in which the government puts masks on pretty girls so they aren’t prettier than the average girl and makes strong men carry weights so they’re no stronger than the average man. It’s the only way the government can make everyone equal.

What about thinking alike? The Columbine shooters were Nazis (a specific type of fascist), so they obviously didn’t think like most people. So now the government needs to program everyone to think alike. Maybe they should control all churches so everyone prays to the same god, too.

This may sound way out there, but it’s all a part of the logical progression to make people identical. Rather than surrendering to tyranny, we can prevent violence by tolerating people as they are. Uniforms, and all the fascist rhetoric that comes along with it, are intolerant. The mere mention of the word “uniform” should send students into the streets with picket signs, but it doesn’t. Bad things, like losing freedom, come in small steps. High school student Scott Gordon put it simply when he said, “School uniforms are a bunch of crap.” If we let them regulate our free expression, what’s next? One day you could wake up as just another brick in the wall.

## Redirect

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*SpinTech*

September 12, 1999

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# Dr. Daniel Offer: In Search of the Truth About Youth

Lisa Freeman

Ask any parent of a teenager. Ask a high school teacher, a social worker, a youth counselor. Adolescence, they will say, is a period of life dominated by “storm and stress”. During adolescence, the theory goes, hormones take control of teenagers’ bodies and minds, causing dramatic mood swings and erratic behavior. Under the influence of physiological changes, teens lash out against their parents, their teachers, and themselves, leaving only their equally irrational peers as sources of support.

Dr. Daniel Offer, a psychiatrist at Northwestern University Medical School, disagrees. For the past forty years, Dr. Offer has collected data on adolescents in large scale, long-term studies of high school students in America and several other countries. His findings demolish the traditional view of adolescents, reducing the “storm and stress” theory to the status of a myth.

The adolescents that Dr. Offer has studied were not the ones generally seen by psychiatrists, or reported upon by the media, or written about in literature. In his studies, Dr. Offer found that typical adolescents generally share the values of adults, cope well with new responsibilities, and are optimistic about their futures. They maintain good relationships with their parents and other authority figures. The anxieties and other emotional responses they display are usually prompted by situations in their lives, not by uncontrollable, inexplicable “mood swings”. In summary, Dr. Offer states, “the normal American teenager sees him or herself as a competent individual who is able to resolve the problems that come his way during the adolescent years, without too much pain, suffering, doubt, or indecision.”<sup>1</sup>

Intellectually, American 16-year-olds are as advanced as the adult population.<sup>2</sup> Their reasoning and decision making techniques are the same as those of adults. Psychologically, adolescents suffer the same rates of mental illness as the adult population.<sup>3</sup> In light of such findings, why is the belief in adolescent incompetence and irrationality of teens still so prevalent? Dr. Offer presents several possible reasons in his many books and articles on the subject of adolescence:

- Many studies of adolescents have been based on populations of *disturbed* adolescents, the ones most likely to be available to psychiatrists for observation and research. Studies of normal adolescents, who are not in treatment for psychological disturbance, have supported Dr. Offer’s findings.<sup>4</sup>
- Adults may have their own need to perceive teenagers as less capable and more volatile than they really are, to justify their continued authority over them, or for other reasons. “Adults’ own fears and urges,” Offer states, “may interfere with their ability to correctly perceive what teenagers are really like.”<sup>5</sup>
- Psychological studies may be influenced by societal influences and trends. Dr. Offer cites a study of bias in psychological articles published over the past 100 years, in which researchers found that in times of economic depression, adolescents were portrayed as “immature” and “psychologically unstable”, whereas in wartime, the focus was on the competence of adolescents.<sup>6</sup>

The implications of his own findings are not lost upon Dr. Offer. He writes:

Lawmakers have had difficulty in deciding at what age the privileges of adult membership in society should be extended to an individual, and confusion and inconsistencies abound. For example, in virtually every jurisdiction in the United States, a 14-year-old adolescent cannot legally vote, buy alcohol, or obtain a driver’s license. Yet, if that same 14-year-old adolescent were to commit a murder, he or she could, in many states, be tried as an adult—suggesting that the adolescent has the maturity and decision-making capacity consistent with full adult responsibility for criminal behavior.<sup>7</sup>

It is hard to dispel any myth, but Dr. Offer’s work has not gone unnoticed. He was appointed Editor in Chief of the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, and has been honored with the Schonfeld Memorial Award for Research in 1985, and the John P. Hill Memorial Award in 1990. He has been a respected member of the faculty at Northwestern University since 1991.

The psychiatric community has begun to accept Dr. Offer’s findings about adolescents. Now, if only the rest of the country could get the message.

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## — HIS FINDINGS DEMOLISH THE TRADITIONAL VIEW OF ADOLESCENTS REDUCING THE “STORM AND STRESS” THEORY TO THE STATUS OF A MYTH —

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## AOL Blocks Political Information

continued from page 1

for Medicine and many other science departments (such as the Physics Department) were blocked.

I further tested the *YT* setting with a list of political sites from the Government Documents Department of the Ingram Library of the State University of West Georgia.<sup>2</sup> Surprisingly, the page with this list was not blocked by AOL, so I was able to simply click on the links provided. With the *YT* setting:

- of the page's 33 working links to political parties, I was allowed to access 13.

- of the page's 34 working links to "Non-Partisan Sites", such as the Federal Election Commission, Common Cause, and the Gallup Poll (not blocked), and the Center for Responsive Politics, the Food and Drug Law Institute, and Junior State of America (blocked), I was allowed to access 8.

- of the page's 13 working links to "Media Sites & Publications," such as *C-Span*, *Congressional Quarterly*, and *The Hill*, I was allowed to access 6 (but on one of these, *The Drudge Report*, many of the articles were blocked).

- of the page's 162 working links to "Political Action Groups," such as the AFL-CIO, Boycott Nike, and the Christian Coalition (not blocked), and the Alliance to Save Student Aid, Child Support Reform Network, and Students for a Better America (blocked), I was allowed to access 50 (but on two of these sites, the National Rifle Association and Town Hall, little was available besides the home pages, as most of the internal links for the sites were blocked).

I was unable to figure out the possible criteria for blocking or permitting access to a site. Some sites, such as the ACLU site (which includes articles

on sodomy laws), are entirely accessible, perhaps because of the perceived clout of the organization and their perceived ability to challenge AOL's decision to block access. In other cases, the choices are mystifying. The site for Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety is accessible, but not the Center for Auto Safety. The site for Ozone Action is accessible, but not Save Our Sky. And sites for organizations primarily involved in youth rights activities, such as the National Youth Rights Association, Youth-Speak, Peacefire, and Americans for a Society Free from Age Restrictions, were all blocked.

Remember that this setting is recommended by America Online for people up to the age of 15, an age at which many young people might be expected to start considering colleges and universities, or becoming politically active. America Online seems to consider such activities inappropriate for 15-year-olds.

When I used the *KO* setting, which AOL suggests for ages 12 and younger, the library's web page with the list of links was no longer accessible, so I had to enter every URL manually. The results were even more limited:

- of the 33 working links to political parties, I was allowed access to 9 (of which the Republican National Committee was permitted, but the Democratic National Committee was not!)

- of the 34 working links to "Non-Partisan Sites", I was allowed access to 2.

- of the 13 working links to "Media Sites & Publications", I was allowed access to 5 (but many articles were blocked on 2 of these).

- of the 162 working links to "Political Action Groups", I was allowed access to 31 (but many internal links were blocked on 7 of these).

Come now,  
wouldn't you like  
a nice lollipop?



The *KO* setting is better than the *YT* setting in one way: a search screen is available which actually permits kids to explore the Web using search terms. The search screen looks different from the screen provided for adults and *MTs*, with bright colors, bold block letters, and links to special AOL sites for kids. It does provide a space, however, to enter subject terms to search the Web.

The results of those searches may be less than satisfying. A search for the term "bully", which yields 607 hits when performed by an *MT* or an adult, yields only 7 hits when searched by a *KO*. The results are supposed to appear in order of relevance, and they do. The top item listed in this search is an excellent site from the UK on how kids and parents can deal with bullies. The second item listed is about bulldogs. And the rest of the "hits" go downhill from there.

A *KO* interested in the topic of "curfew", which could easily serve as the subject of a school paper, will find one match when this search term is entered, a link to a citizen's handbook from the Parks and Recreation Department in College Station, Texas. An adult or *MT* entering this term finds 162 matches. A search for the term "puberty", which yields 331 hits for adult or *MT* settings, yields only one hit for a *KO*, a link to an article on epilepsy medication

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## **AOL Blocks Political Information**

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If a *KO* enters the term “drugs”, 114 hits appear, which is quite a few, unless you compare it to the 10716 hits that would have been found with the general or *MT* setting. The top match, which is supposed to be the most relevant, is a link to the “Drug-Free Children” program of the Church of Scientology, which opposes the use of Ritalin and other prescribed medications.

So in the world of AOL, a child’s first search screen is in fact a toy search screen, designed to introduce the concept of searching the Web without permitting the real searches to take

place. The *KO* search screen is like an “Easy-Bake Oven” with a light bulb used for heat, or a toy tool set with plastic hammers and screwdrivers, which let kids pretend harmlessly, without actually doing any cooking or home repairs.

Once a child is considered too old by AOL to merely pretend to search the Web, the toy is taken away, but

nothing is put in its place! A *YT* on America Online is no longer allowed to use the kids’ search screen, and must wait until the age of 16 to find the true wealth of information available online.

1. <<http://www.aol.com>> Press Release of October 25, 1999.
2. <<http://www.westga.edu/library/depts/govdoc/political.shtml>>.

**— IN THE WORLD OF AOL  
A CHILD’S FIRST SEARCH SCREEN IS  
IN FACT A TOY SEARCH SCREEN DESIGNED TO  
INTRODUCE THE CONCEPT OF SEARCHING THE WEB  
WITHOUT PERMITTING THE REAL SEARCHES TO TAKE PLACE —**

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Please Please Please!! Don’t discard this issue.  
Instead, pass it along to someone else.

