
Youth Truth



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Summertime Blues

Susan Wishnetsky

On February 14, 2002, the Shays-Meehan campaign finance reform bill was passed by the U. S. House of Representatives. At the time of this writing it is being debated by the Senate.

When campaign contributions reach the point where they function like bribes, it is argued, legislators may use their power to favor certain businesses and thwart competition. This may allow monopolistic corporations to buy out or choke out other companies, leaving them free to overcharge for their goods and services, harming the public. Legislators can also use their power to give tax breaks to businesses, or to make sure that a company's misconduct or pollution is not stopped. So the main purpose of campaign finance reform is to limit the influence of the richest businesses and other special interests, to prevent the interests of the wealthiest contributors from superceding the needs of the country.

Whether you agree or disagree with the above argument for campaign finance reform, it is hard to see how its purpose is served by the section in the bill which reads:

An individual who is 17 years old or younger shall not make a contribution to a candidate or a contribution or donation to a committee of a political party.

Yes, it's in there. It is section 319, on page 79 of this 89-page bill. You can view the bill, H.R. 2356, at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/campaignfinance_HR2356.pdf.

Why was this section included? One possibility is that it was one of many "poison

pen" amendments designed to get the bill defeated. But that seems unlikely; few congressmen would be hurt by the meager loss of campaign dollars from people 17 and younger. More likely it was proposed by some politician eager to appear concerned with protecting children (even from other politicians), someone who will trumpet this "concern for children" in future elections. Other members of the House would have had no problem with leaving the section in the bill—after all, who would oppose such a section? Kids? The idea is laughable. They can't even vote.

While politicians ignore the views of youth, they do respond to the constituencies of parents, teachers, and child welfare workers whose interests lie in keeping youth ignorant, helpless, and dependent. These "advocates" have been remarkably successful in promoting *those* interests, but their advocacy has not helped young people in other ways; for example, the proportion of American children living in poverty in the past decade ranged from 22-23%, compared to around 15% of the general population. (In light of this fact, kids are not likely to be large donors to political campaigns or parties anyway.)

Youth are forced to be dependent on others, not only for political advocacy, but for their financial welfare as well. Laws preventing or limiting the employment of minors were supported not only by well-meaning folks trying to end the harsh exploitation of children by employers (of the kind which is now prohibited by law anyway, for people of all ages), but also by labor unions wanting to ensure full employment for their adult

members. Child labor laws established in every state now severely limit the number of hours that kids may work at jobs. So if they are poor—or in any way dissatisfied with their lot—they cannot vote themselves out of their situation, they cannot work their way out of it, and, with the passage of the Shays-Meehan bill, they won't be able to donate their way out of it, either.

Without the right to vote, and with restrictions on the right to work, kids are still required to pay taxes. Any dependent who earned more than \$4555 in the year 2001 will owe some tax. Taxes are withheld from the paychecks of minors, and they must file returns to get refunds. This obligation *should* entitle young people to the rights of full citizenship, but this argument is ignored by lawmakers—simply because there is no political clout behind it!

President Bush, in his State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, encouraged children all over America to donate their pennies to help children in Afghanistan. If children may be encouraged to donate to a cause that the President believes is important, why should they be forbidden to donate to a cause that *they* feel is important?

Corporations with big money to contribute may exercise undue influence and wield excessive power over legislators, but a group of people that can neither vote nor donate money has *no* power to represent itself; consequently its views are seldom heard and never taken seriously. The Shays-Meehan campaign finance reform bill may reduce the power of big businesses and other special interests, but within it lies yet another erosion of the few rights remaining to youth.

Letters

On the January/February “President’s Pen”

I could sit here and write all day about why I think one movement is more important than another, but I see little point in doing so. People put their effort into certain differing aspects because that is where their heart is. Yours is obviously with youth rights. Mine is with the environment. Despite arguments in favor of a certain movement, I see nothing to be gained in bashing one another saying that youth rights is the most worthy cause is the same as arguing that Catholicism is the one true faith. You’ll probably find that you’re not going to convince someone to change their focus by attacking what they feel is true. You may even find that there are things you do not know about other movements, the same way they may not about yours.

I feel that all we can do is respect diversity of people, movements, tactics and each other. We must try to support each other in a struggle that is so big on so many levels that we can only win if we are all together in solidarity. Bosc

Our president is one guy with one opinion, and as president he does get a forum in *Youth Truth*. This item, in fact, is very different from the one he wrote in v. 1, no. 2 called “The Really Big Tent” ... ASFAR is for everybody who believes in eliminating age restrictions: Democrats, Republicans, Socialists, Anarchists, Libertarians. Animal rights activists and those who think the notion of animal rights is silly. People who don’t want to pledge allegiance to the flag and people who think all Americans should. If we all agree that whatever system and rules we live under should apply equally to all, regardless of age, then we’re all together. Susan W.

My first problem with the article in question is that it makes me feel like I wouldn’t even want to hand that *Youth Truth* out to animal rights activists cause it might rub them the wrong way and turn them off before they’ve even considered joining. Daniel McGuire

There are no factories where under-18s are kept in cages too small to move in, forced to reproduce, killed, and eaten. That is a very simple reason why one might choose extreme action on behalf of animals and not on behalf of under-18s I’m not arguing for or against animal rights here; I’m explaining why militant animal activism is a coherent position. On another note: you managed to work *way* too much of your personal position on animal rights into that essay. ASFAR is not inherently a libertarian organization, it just happens to have a lot of libertarians in it. Please remember that. Ian M.

ASFAR’s President Responds

It was a philosophical essay; “my position” is *inevitably* going to come through in it, especially when dealing with *three* controversial issues (Youth Rights, Animal Rights, and the Morality of Militarism) articles in *Youth Truth* are not meant to represent “the opinion of all ASFAR members”. This is easily confirmed by the oft-contrasting viewpoints expressed in my articles and, say, Susan’s book reviews I think that’s a *good* thing, personally. It shows the diverse backgrounds from which ASFAR supporters can come, and exposes you to different perspectives on issues. Heck, even in this conversation, while no positions of mine were changed, you helped me get a better understanding as to why people of other perspectives would do/think certain things. That’s a definite good :-)

Justin Mallone

Safe, Secure, and Out-of-Business

I just wanted to say something about a mall here in Chattanooga. Hamilton Place, the second largest mall in the state, slapped a curfew on everyone under 18 a couple months ago. If you are not 18 or older, you are restricted from the mall (unless accompanied by your legal guardian) after 6:00 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. They did this to cut down “violence, drug trafficking, and shoplifting”. Since then, their profits have gone way down and a whole bunch of stores went out of business. When you go into that mall, there are almost no customers. Kelley

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Opinions expressed may not reflect the views of ASFAR.

Waaaaar : What Is It Good For? Killing Lots of Young People.

The draft stands as the most despicable, vile, wretched, tyrannical, and murderous age-based law in existence. Entire generations of young people—for the crime of having been born in the target range most desired by bloodthirsty lawmakers eager to dispatch their conscripts to serve “national greatness” (while the closest they’ve come personally to a “combat situation” is getting a dirty look from someone on the other side of the aisle in Congress)—are denied their most fundamental right: self-ownership. The draft makes the State’s implicit threat of total ownership over its subjects terrifyingly clear: submit to the government and fight in a war you might not support, risking life and limb, or be subject to the consequences.

Many people might be under the mistaken impression that this Law for the Mass Enslavement of Young People had gone the way of slavery. But no, the Selective Service Administration still exists, only waiting to be activated given sufficient crisis. Like a cheesy villain from a bad action movie whom the audience thought dead, the Draft lies in wait, under its own smoldering ashes. Having been pummeled by the anti-war movement into seeming irrelevance, it lies in wait, biding its time, preparing to claw its way out of the rubble and wrap its hands around the collective throat of America’s young, cheered on by Elders and Statesmen who are all too happy to have fresh blood to sacrifice on the battlefield for their own sense of safety and glory, egged on, perhaps, by a certain complicity among many of its victims, who foolishly and sadly believe that resisting it would be dishonorable, and that bowing one’s head and submitting oneself to age-based enslavement is the only true path towards “honor”.

The reason this issue is now shockingly relevant to our times is that individuals in Congress are seeking to revive this monstrous institution. Introduced by Reps. Nick Smith of Michigan and Curt Weldon of Pennsylvania, H.R. 3598, a.k.a. the Universal Military Training and Service Act of 2001, would require 18-22 year old men to receive mandatory “basic military training and education for a period of up to one year”. While not a call to battlefield service, the obvious intent here is—by denying young people their right of self-ownership and putting them in a military training atmosphere—to pave the way for the more egregious violations to follow and to create a culture where *not* having served is viewed as a sign of weakness and anti-Americanism.

Here are some additional “features” of this bill (blatantly ripped from the webpage <<http://www.afsc.org/youthmil/200202/notdraft.htm>>):

Just In My Opinion

Justin Mallone
President, ASFAR
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Bill Highlights

Permits women between the ages of 18 and 22 years to volunteer for enlistment.

(Editor’s note: A historical first! It is good to see their age-based enslavement is tempered by a worldview amenable to gender equality.)

The military service required would include basic training and education for 6-12 months.

Conscientious objectors would be required to participate in basic military training and education that does not include a combatant component and may be later transferred to a national service program.

Very low pay for draftees (approx. \$340/month maximum)

It’s past time to start writing out those letters, getting at your Rep. through the Capitol Switchboard (202-224-3121), and staking this villain in the heart before it rises again and consumes us all!

A Note:

You may have noticed that the name of this column has changed (please, excuse the lame pun, it was the best we could do on limited time). I felt this necessary due to the reaction to my previous column (some of which is over in the Letters section).

When being interviewed about ASFAR or asked questions about our positions, I am speaking in the official capacity of the President of this organization, and do my best not to misrepresent my own personal positions as those of the organization. It’s a task I think I’ve done quite well. However, in this publication, I regard my column as somewhat of a sounding-off board for me to elaborate on issues *related* to youth rights. But a bit beyond that, I like to go into my personal philosophical reasons for supporting Youth Rights, discuss other movements—that some of our members may support—that I may have issues with (as I did with the animal rights movement in the previous issue), and in general be the opinionated nuisance that I am! :)

Unfortunately, some have (quite reasonably) misinterpreted my bimonthly ramblings as official ASFAR positions; the former name of my column, “President’s Pen”, did not do much to alleviate this confusion. Thus, the name change!

Perspective

Daniel McGuire
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Why look at cyber kisses and smilies when the closeness and realness of other human beings is possible? How much more *real* is a warm hug from a breathing human being than a *hug* being read over the computer screen? How much more depth is felt from speaking to and being with real live wise men and women than from reading about them in fairy tales? How much more rewarding is it to actually develop the skills it takes to become a hero or character rather than fantasizing about it through games and stories? Games and stories should serve as toys, teaching tools we use to realize our own potential. Fantasize as a child, but know we have those potentials. It's a tough step to begin *living* our dreams rather than just dreaming them, but the rewards are enormous. No more plastic existence. No more conformity. No more feelings of being trapped, a slave to society, simply being tossed about like a cork in the ocean.

In activism, the internet is an effective tool for organizing and exchanging ideas, a tool never before seen by the world, where people from the United States can chat one-on-one with individuals from China, Jordan—anywhere, as long as a common language is spoken. With such potential, has activism benefitted? Undoubtedly yes. But have human relationships suffered? Yes and no. Along with the extended communication (the “upgrade” the internet offers) comes drawbacks. Addiction potential.

How much less of a life is it to have adventures in cyberspace when what is available in meatspace is ignored? What about hitchhiking across the continent? Riding a boat across the ocean and traveling to Europe? Hopping a train? Riding a bike across the country or even the state? Taking a road trip with friends? How many of us think of doing such things? How many actually do them? People need excitement, challenges to their situation, stresses, experiences that will make them stronger. People need to go through things together and have a sense of community, or at least family. If not with biological relatives, then with a clan they've found, a group, a troupe. TV screens, computer screens, and windows allow us to watch such connections and perhaps learn how it's done, and, in the case of the internet, participate in some new forms of it, but none of these screens are suitable replacements for real life experiences. Experiences that involve exercise of the body and the mind, and some would say the spirit. Experiences that bond people together, sometimes for the rest of their lives. Shows such as “Survivor” and other “reality TV” shows are a drug. The popularity of such shows should serve to show people what we crave. We crave adventure. We crave *existence*. We crave thrills and learning and teaching.

ASFAR started out on the internet. We've come very far, but have far to go. Our members come and go, some of them going off to school, others undoubtedly taking other paths. Continuing to learn, sharing ideas and experiences, and occasionally bringing youth rights up in conversations—this is how the movement grows. The

evolution of ideas, constant, flowing, changing, issues within our cause being front page, to no pages at all, ups and downs, membership surges and membership stalls, ideas flowing and ebbing, interests waxing and waning. Cycles, like life, slowly expanding, always revolving. And our cause, a collection of ideas floating around the vast ocean, rising, sinking—but mostly rising. Competing with more outdated views, conservative illusions based on the idea of safety. I think we know, with all that's happened in the last 6 months, that safety very well may be one of the biggest illusions of all. Experience is where it's at. Developing the courage even to begin living like we know how, free. Bravery. Developing wisdom. Learning love. These are the things I'd like to spend my time doing, while standing firm on sound principles.

I take what comes and accept the consequences of my actions. I speak my mind and I stand up for what I think and feel is right. From primarily internet activist for many years, I finally am beginning to learn and apply what is needed to continue to do what I love, only in real life. It's exciting. It's sometimes scary. And I've already been arrested for it. I love it!

It's been a long winter. Not just the weather, but in our minds. A winter filled with fear and uncertainty for many people, dread and maybe impatience. With the spring that is coming, I hope comes renewal. It is the time for it. Renewal of our minds. Renewal of our organization. Renewal of our lives. I hope people break free from fear in all its forms and live like they have always known how.

A Transition From Internet to Flesh World

News Links

Males Blasts Brain Theory

Our supporter Mike Males has written a wonderful editorial in the L.A. Times, which appears at <<http://www.latimes.com/templates/misc/printstory.jsp?slug=la%2D000012158feb17>>, taking issue with theories presented in the recent PBS special “The Teenage Brain”.

Editor's note: Content of reviewed books may not represent the views of ASFAR.

Casella, Ronnie. *At zero tolerance : punishment, prevention, and school violence*. (Adolescent cultures, school & society series ; v. 17.) New York : Peter Lang, 2001.

Books that are “sympathetic” to youth, criticizing the harsh policies our society imposes on them all seem to share the assumption that kids are different creatures from adults, needing special guidance and education before they “enter society” and become independent. They all pretty much accept the idea that segregating kids and denying them basic human rights is the sensible—or the humane—thing to do.

Ronnie Casella's *At Zero Tolerance* is no exception, I'm afraid. The author seems at times to display the point of view of a professional looking down upon inner city housing projects and schools from a lofty and distant perspective, denouncing the devastation to the population of urban youth caused by poverty, drugs, guns and child abuse. There's even a waffling section addressing media violence, in which the author at first rejects a causal relationship between films, TV, or video games to violent behavior, but then, strangely, acknowledges that exposure to violent images can “shape thinking about violence”, citing various studies. Elsewhere, describing his interactions with individual students or his assessments of their problems and needs, he sounds like a typical, kindly “grownup”, condescending and superior to these unfortunate creatures.

But here and there are moments when the author truly seems to “get it”, like this one:

In health classes, when violence prevention is taught, there are often lectures and follow-up discussions about revenge, being disrespected and retaliating, and reprisals in the form of gang-banging. This is true of DARE classes as well. However, rarely do teachers or police officers teaching DARE raise topics of revenge in reference to school, particularly in terms of students lash-

ing out against school Students lash out physically against administrators, teachers, and each other, with pent-up frustrations with classes, relationships with people in the school, and feelings of worthlessness in school.

At Zero Tolerance is not terribly coherent, often wandering far from its topic. Despite its 2001 publication date, the frequent mentions of the Jonesboro, Arkansas school shooting (with no mention of similar, more recent tragedies) makes the book seem a bit dated. A chapter giving a brief and spotty history of theories of and approaches to schooling and juvenile justice seems to have been added as filler material. One section on Junior ROTC programs was fascinating and would have made a good article. In fact, the whole book probably would have been more effective and readable as a series of articles.

So I cannot really recommend this book overall, but then again there are these passages that make me feel a connection with the author, such as:

As students are vilified and held suspect, their every move is viewed as deviant. In one school, to wear a coat in the building (even when the heat was not working well) could lead to suspension. In another, students could not carry backpacks unless they were transparent. Rosemont High had a policy against PDA, “public displays of affection,” or kissing in the hallway.

In these cases, teenage clothing, accessories, and acts of affection are cast as criminal I have had too many students ask me, in the words of one young woman, “Why do schools assume we're bad just 'cause we're teenagers?” One student ... remarked,

Sue's Review

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“School is always trying to get us not to be prejudiced, but they are prejudiced all the time against us.”

Or this one:

Threats, bullying, and harassment are not only the actions of students; some school staff also bully, threaten and harass When these behaviors and others, including segregation, overmedication, and unjust placements, become institutionalized, the violence becomes systemic in nature. It remains deeply interpersonal, but has behind it the weight of the public sector; it becomes a kind of state-sanctioned imposition of dominance.

These moments of understanding of the feelings and frustrations of an oppressed group have appeared in other books I've reviewed as well. I always look for them and hope for them, but after a paragraph or two, the author always retreats from them, qualifying their statement or pretending that they were only toying with a novel and daring suggestion. They cannot jeopardize their status in the community of child advocates by seriously advancing full human rights and freedoms for people of all ages. Their livelihoods are, after all, dependent upon the perception of legal minors as a “special” class of humans.

It always makes me wonder how people—especially those who suffered the most as children—can forget and deny and reinterpret their experience so dramatically once it is over. And about these concerned, caring child advocates who come so close to seeing the true injustice, I ask the question that so many adults ask about kids: How can we get through to them?

Real Life

“I said GET AGAINST THE WALL!” the officer shouted to Cody, “Or should I give you another taste of my little friend?”

“I have rights, you know!” Cody retorted. “You can’t just come up here and hit me!”

“How old are you?” the officer asked.

“Seventeen!” Cody replied. “So you can’t do anything!”

“You’re an adult in my book.” The officer knocked Cody down with a quick blow to the head. “So you can just come with me!”

Cody, blood flowing from the back of his head, staggered to his feet. “I can’t be out past ten, I can’t drive, and I’m a slave to my parents! How am I an adult?”

“You get in the car now! And give me your phone first. We’re gonna call in the other little kids on your list...they could be in on this too.”

Cody didn’t have much choice anyways, since the officer had slapped the cuffs on before Cody had been hit. He was shoved into the car, and the officer began to drive. *What the hell?* Cody thought, *How can this happen? What’s up with this system?*

The officer finished a few calls before cracking the window between the front and the back. “We’ve already found a few of your friends. Do you want to stand trial together or separately?” The officer had suddenly taken on a civilized tone.

“What are we being charged with?” Cody asked.

“I can’t tell you that...you haven’t had your rights read to you!” the officer replied like one would when telling a child that the sky is blue.

“You’re taking me in your car...to try me as an adult...but you can’t tell me because I’m a minor and my rights haven’t been read yet?”

“Oh you won’t be tried today. You need to be cleaned up and we have paperwork to deal with. Your parents have to decide if you even contest it. I’m just taking you to the detention center.”

“My lawyer will never let this go...”

“That’s up to your parents,” the officer said as he closed the window.

What followed was complete hell for Cody. He was strip-searched, and all of the money he was carrying was taken as “compensation” for the cost of his arrest.

He was given one phone call. “Hello?” a tired and groggy voice on the other end replied.

“Allen, are you there? We have a fight to fight!” Cody was glad he had gotten through. “I’ve been arrested, and they haven’t told me why. I don’t get to do anything. They said I can’t testify in my defense unless my parents say so. Now I’m in jail and I don’t...”

“Who is this?” Allen replied.

“This is Cody Davidson...guy who just started the new YCLU chapter!”

“Oh...ok...I’ll call our lawyer and see what I can do...” Allen was cut off by an officer slamming the phone onto the hook.

“Hey, what gives?” Cody asked. Without a word, Cody was taken roughly back to the cell he shared with the six-time drug offender. *What’s going to happen to me?* he wondered, *What the hell is going on?*

Over the next few days, Cody remained in his cell, learning more about John, his cellmate. He’d been caught with marijuana, twice at school and four times in a car, the latest of which had landed him here. But Cody didn’t think it was his fault, since John’s parents *allowed* him to smoke pot. They smoked pot, and did far worse than that—one of John’s chores was to clean used hypodermic needles. The family had a garden out back in a small homemade greenhouse and a cigarette machine for rolling joints. John’s birthday presents were generally papers, a new bong, and hemp seeds. John hadn’t even learned that marijuana was illegal until he was caught lighting a joint outside school after his first day of fifth grade.

It was a real awakening for Cody, who realized that his parents weren’t the worst...but that might not help him out here. While John’s parents would fight the charge or handle it, Cody’s parents might decide to take the route most beneficial to them and plead no contest. Cody’s mother was a successful businesswoman and had a reputation to protect. His father was a local town figurehead, and a major financial supporter of the War on Terrorism. As Cody saw it, they would plead no contest instead of risking a stain that could slow their ambitions down.

Six days after Cody was tackled, handcuffed, beaten, and dragged to jail without an explanation, he was taken to talk with his lawyer.

“A lengthy trial could generate some attention,” his mother’s image consultant, Harry Jameson, explained, “A plea of no contest would be the best solution.” “It would save me some time,” the lawyer, Gerald Johnson, replied.

Cody was seated in a chair. He’d been unable to get a word in at all, no matter how hard he tried. The conversation had been going on for a while, between Jameson and Johnson. Then, the judge who would preside over Cody’s trial entered. “So, what’s the decision?” the judge asked.

“We plead no contest,” Johnson quickly replied.

There was a short pause, and Cody took his chance. “Before we plead anything, I want to know what I’m being accused of!”

“Your parents aren’t here. I’m not allowed to give you any information.”

“You can’t tell me anything because my parents aren’t here, but these two guys can make my decision for me?”

“I am your mother’s legal voice,” Johnson said. “I am authorized to make her decisions, and that translates to you as well.”

“So, the plea is no contest?” the judge asked.

“Yes,” Johnson and Jameson replied. “No!” Cody shouted at the same time.

The judge, taking no notice of what Cody had said, stood up and left the room. “It’s easy, Cody,” Jameson told the teenager, “You just go to jail for three weeks. We’ve used some of your mother’s corporate muscle, along with a donation from your father, and helped you out.”

The lawyer and consultant left, and Cody was taken back to his cell, where John was reading a copy of *A Clockwork Orange*. “Hey, John,” Cody started, “did you know they can’t tell me what I’m in trouble for without my parents here?”

“I didn’t know that. Of course, I always knew what I was in trouble for. Can I ask you a question, Cody?”

“Sure, what’s it about?”

“I came across this website when I was looking for ways to move away from my parents; it’s called the YCLU. Your name was on there as the local chapter president.”

“That’s kinda stretching it. I’m one of three members in the area. The others didn’t want to deal with any legal crap, so we agreed that I

would 'lead' our merry little band. We can't do much with only three of us. Our only fight was to get Chester Cheese to lower the required age to enter without a parent, and that didn't work."

"But you stand for something. Why don't you stand up to your parents?"

"Because I'm legally their slave!" Cody shouted. "I'd have to get emancipated from them, and I can't do that. I'm not beaten, starved, or given drugs. They're legally good parents, even though they only care about their images and not me."

"Wait," John replied, "I can get free of my parents? They can't make me stash their stuff, or take the hit when the cops find it in the car?"

"If you can prove that, and convince a judge that you can look after yourself, you've got a chance. I'll be 18 in a couple months, and I plan to move out on my birthday."

"How much longer are you in here?" John asked. "I've got a week left."

"I have two," Cody replied, "My mother's image consultant struck a deal with the judge, probably with some monetary incentive involved."

"Will you help me with this emancipation thing?"

"Sure thing. And...when I can leave home...we could share an apartment. It'd help me out, since I'll be trying to pay for a car too."

"What do you mean you won't take the case?" Cody shouted. "He wants to get emancipated, how hard is that?"

"It's quite difficult," Mr. Jordan replied. "I'd need proof that John is mature, *and* that his parents do drugs. That requires a warrant."

"That's fucking bullshit!" Cody shouted. "They did a 'random' drug test on *me* at school, just because I got out of jail yesterday!"

"You are a minor that attends public school," the lawyer said calmly. "You don't have very much going for you."

"Then I should take my business elsewhere?" Cody guessed. "Yes, you should," Jordan said, folding his arms. Cody and John walked out.

"Fuck! That was the last lawyer!" John shouted.

"Calm down." They sat in Cody's '84 XJR, a large 4-door Jaguar the color of pine trees. "We'll find another way."

Cody turned the key in the ignition. The engine coughed, then finally turned over. "This car sounds like it's about had it," John observed. "Sixteen years is a lot of crap for a car to go through," Cody replied. "I'm surprised it still runs at all."

The Jaguar pulled out of the lot and headed for Cody's house. "These laws are confusing," John commented, not wanting a silent ride.

"That's true. The few laws that give us rights are hard to find or understand. For example, did you ever get in trouble for being out late? And do you remember what time of night it was?"

"Yeah, a couple times. It had to be after midnight, or I wouldn't have been in trouble."

"That's the problem," Cody said. "Our town's curfew only applies under age 16, and goes from 1 am to 6 am. Police have told me and people I know that it goes to age 19. I've had friends stopped as early as ten o'clock. The police use lack of understanding to enable them to make up false laws. Youth have the most lack of understanding, and the most trouble."

"No kidding," John replied, "I didn't even know about this emancipation thing until I met you."

"You have to know your rights in order to keep them," Cody said.

Cody's cell phone began to play Reveille. "This is Allen Kimball with the YCLU," the voice said. "I'm sorry I couldn't help you in your case, but I understand that you need some help getting a friend emancipated?"

"Yeah," Cody said, "We can't find a lawyer."

"You're in luck. Our lawyer, Mr. Alred, is on the way. Your case has been filed with the court?"

"We appear in two weeks," Cody said.

"That's not much time. I'll issue a press release to your local papers. The YCLU is behind you."

Cody's cell phone battery failed him before he could thank Allen, but he knew Allen would understand. "We've got a lawyer!" Cody shouted.

John staggered up the fourth flight of stairs into the apartment, and let the box slowly down to the floor. "That's the last one," he said, panting. "You don't have much stuff, do you?" Cody asked.

"Everything else I own is related to drugs, and I'm leaving that behind," John answered.

Fiction

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"Good idea," Cody said, "You found a job yet?"

"I'm gonna work here as maintenance," John said, "I can't drive and can't really go anywhere."

"I traded the Jaguar for a used Eclipse; that'll give us a couple months rent." Cody sank into the couch from his parents' upstairs living room.

Cody and John had been lucky. Cody was an only child, and his parents had let the boys take all the furniture from the upstairs of Cody's house. "I told my parents I wouldn't take their college money unless they paid for both of us," Cody said. "What'd they say to that?" John asked.

"They won't pay for either."

"Ouch."

"I know. We can't afford to buy anything. I plan to save my money for college," Cody said. "You're lucky. You're still in high school. It might be restrictive and they will take all of your rights away, but you need to learn as much as you can."

"I've learned enough," John said. "We're young, exploited, and we can't do much about it. As soon as we get freedom, we're on our own, no matter how unprepared we are."

"That's true."

"My parents always told me that they'd give anything to be my age."

"So their lungs and brain wouldn't be half gone?"

"Very funny," John replied, "They always said that youth was wasted on the young."

"They're wrong," Cody said. "It's the opposite. Age is wasted on the old."

Author's note: The above story comes from "no personal experience...this is fiction"; the police and legal tactics described are not intended to resemble "the real world".

Editors' note: This story was edited due to space considerations. And based on stories we've heard, some of the situations portrayed above do actually occur sometimes.

News Links

Simpsons Too Strong for Canadian Mom

A new invention reported surpasses the V-chip in its ability to censor TV shows and videos. ProtecTV—the brainchild of a Canadian mother shocked by the language her sons heard on *The Simpsons*—blocks 400 words including “jerk”, “moron”, and “stupid”, according to <<http://wired.com/news/technology/0,1282,49505,00.html>>.

Supposedly Safe Driver Causes Chain Reaction

A 62-year-old Las Vegas woman recently drove across four lanes of traffic and caused a four-vehicle collision that killed one driver, according to <http://www.lvrj.com/lvrj_home/2002/Jan-22-Tue-2002/news/17922256.html>. The woman fled the scene and was arrested at her home.

New York City Prepares to Lock Up More Youth

Despite severe fiscal shortfalls, a 30% drop in youth crime since 1994, and plenty of space in juvenile jails, New York City has set aside \$64.6 million for construction and expansion of juvenile detention facilities. A Village Voice article at <<http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/0209/allah.php>> reported on a Valentine’s Day protest over this issue outside City Hall.

Budget Cuts Devastate Mississippi Schools

A February 13 article at <http://www.sunherald.com/mld/sunherald/news/breaking_news/2664634.htm> reports that \$56.7 million is being cut from the budget of Mississippi’s already-struggling public school system.

Midnight Detention Keeps Kids Out Late

Some Oklahoma schools are moving from suspension to in-school detention, according to <http://www.newsok.com/cgi-bin/show_article?ID=828690&pic=none&TP=getcapitolbureau>. Students in grades 7 through 12 who get in trouble may have to remain in school working on homework and “character-building” courses from 9 p.m. Friday to 1 a.m. Saturday. The school will not provide transportation, so police departments will be given lists of students in the programs, so those stopped for violating the midnight curfew will not be ticketed or arrested!

Everyone Having More Babies—Except Teens

In the year 2000, while childbearing among American women reached its highest level since 1971, the birth rate among teenagers dropped to an “all-time low”, according to an article at <<http://www.suntimes.com/output/health/cst-nws-birth13.html>>.

Georgians Come to their Senses

The State Senate of Georgia is considering a bill to put an end to automatic “zero tolerance” penalties in the state’s schools, see <<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,43541,00.html>>.

Age of Adulthood Attacked Again

The California Medical Association has approved a resolution to raise their state’s smoking age to 21, according to their press release at <<http://www.cmanet.org/publicdoc.cfm/579/207/PRESS/227>>. The physicians’ association will now seek a legislator to sponsor a bill that would put their proposal into law.

Researchers Inflate Teen Drinking Statistics

The Associated Press, the *New York Times*, and CNN were all forced to issue corrections after dutifully reporting the results of a study by Columbia University’s National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, which stated that minors drink 25% of all alcohol consumed in the United States. An article at <<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/27/national/27ALCO.html?ex=1015832372&ei=1&en=2b70a9d68679235e>> states that the actual figure should be around 11.4%. A February 2001 commentary in the *Columbia Spectator*, found at <http://www.columbiaspectator.com/vnews/display.v/ART/2001/02/13/3c7408ff4a7f0?in_archive=1>, criticizes the Center for prior instances of “questionable academic integrity”.

Pediatrician Takes Care of Her Kids

Dr. Ellen Feinberg, 43, a pediatrician who gave up her practice to stay home and raise her six- and ten-year-old sons, turned herself in to police on February 28 after stabbing the two boys. The older son was pronounced dead upon arrival at the hospital; the younger child arrived in critical condition. Two articles appear at <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-000015778mar02_story?coll=la-headlines-nation> and <<http://www.news-gazette.com/story.cfm?Number=11144>>.

Video Game Bills Proposed in Mississippi, Michigan

According to <<http://www.sunherald.com/mld/thesunherald/news/local/2511855.htm>>, bills have been proposed by Mississippi’s state legislature that would punish businesses allowing minors access to “inappropriate” video games. A similar law, passed as a city ordinance in Indianapolis (noted in our “News Links” in *Youth Truth*, volume 1, issue 5) was struck down by a federal court, and the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the town’s appeal. Even so, an article at <http://www.freep.com/news/mich/video5_20020305.htm> states that lawmakers in Michigan are also considering introducing a such a bill in their state as well.

Please Please Please!! Don’t discard this issue.
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