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meadow would say the same thing. Society has to be restructured. These kids aren't that anomalous, really. They attract a lot of attention; some of them will commit some pretty serious crimes, but the problems they have are not that unusual.

I used to do a treatment group called "Alternatives to Violence" and on this one occasion I asked kids what causes violence.

A.H.: *They made a list.*

J.G.: Yeah. That is a great list. I think this pretty much sums it up.

The first one is single-parent families, where the single parent simply does not have enough time to supervise their kids. Well, I don't think we're going to solve the problem of divorce in this country, but what we can do is make things a little easier for that single parent. If she's able to work, there should be daycares. I know legislatures and Congress don't want to spend money; some of them aren't even sympathetic. But always looking at the long term, it's a good investment: daycares. If mom is not able to work because of illness or disability or drug addiction, daycares are still offered. So that's one thing.

People who are addicted — there should be help for them. Maybe not every drug should be illegal. I'll just say flat out, I think marijuana, for one, should be legal. The main draw of using marijuana for kids is that it's a sign of rebellion. If you take that sign away, so that yeah, you can smoke marijuana, but so what, I think it wouldn't be as attractive for them.

Then: Violence in the household or nearby. In my own mind at least, I would look at a kid as kind of a conduit. Violence goes in, and violence comes out. Day in, day out. That abstraction really worked for me. If the kid was doing something violent to other people, well, what was under this kid?

We had a boy who was pretty severely retarded, and on one occasion I and another

staff had to take him down. I got him by his arm, got him to his room and flopped him on his belly on his bed. He became hysterical. That level of hysteria, that pure primal hysteria: I knew that something bad had happened to him. A few weeks later they were able to contact a counselor he had had on the outside, and sure enough, he had been raped.

But he was also in for rape. He'd raped a disabled woman.

In prison he was really likable, really sweet. But you knew that he couldn't be on the outside, he was dangerous because he could not control his emotions or desires. He was the kind of person, pretty rare, that you want to keep locked up for his own sake and for the sake of his potential victims.

Some kids — boys at least — who had been sexually violated, as horrible as it was for them, would start to do that to others. When I was doing that group Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse, most of the boys who were in there were afraid they were going to do it to somebody else. But statistically, most kids that that happens to don't do it to somebody else. Some do, but most don't. And I would try to reassure them.

A.H.: *You wrote that you enjoyed working at this place because it allowed you to feel some of the things that you felt in Vietnam. Like what?*

J.G.: Well, I came back from Vietnam with post-traumatic stress, the full blown disorder — probably. In those days there wasn't anybody to help us. I had a psychologist tell me that he didn't want to help me because I'd been in Vietnam.

It was pretty miserable for about 10 years. But ultimately I got to a point where the symptoms that remained — because many of them simply dropped away — those that remained I kind of liked. I think the psychological term is "hypervigilant." I'm always, I think, a little more aware of my surroundings than most other people.

I used to have pronounced startle reaction. If somebody came up behind me and touched me or tapped me on the shoulder, I'd spin around ready to fight, ready to hit them. I'm not like that now. I don't act on it, but the sensations of startle are still there.

When I'd get kids that I knew had had violence in their lives, I'd always ask them do you get this symptom or that symptom, whatever. If they had a startle reaction, and many of them did, I would tell them that it's normal. Then I would tell others: Watch this kid, he's got a startle reaction. But that's because I could bring that to the job.

Teaching them how to deal with themselves would help me. I used to do this other training called aggression replacement training, and it reduced recidivism. Part of it we called anger control or anger management: I'd teach them how to do exercises for when they would want to hit or hurt somebody, they could use this exercise to calm themselves down. One was deep breathing. That's been invaluable for me. ()

A.H.: *So it was a matter of being a teacher for these kids at the same time as learning yourself.*

J.G.: Yeah. It's the same principle as a person who has an alcohol problem being a counselor in the rehab cottage. I had a problem with the impulse to lash out. I should say I never have lashed out, but the impulse is not pleasant. I don't know if you've ever been angry and don't do something about it, but it can be physically painful not to do it.

A.H.: *A sensation in your hands ...*

J.G.: Yeah. Your heart. It's just it's beating so hard because the impulse is to do something, and you don't allow yourself to, so you just feel it throughout your body.

A.H.: *It sounds like sometimes the kids were*

part of your team — the soldiers, your fellows.

J.G.: Well, I used to consider them — the gang kids at least — I used to call them in my own mind my little soldiers. It isn't so much that they were part of a team, but they were born and grew up in an environment that essentially was a place of low-intensity warfare, what we used to call guerrilla warfare. In certain areas you could be reasonably safe, unless somebody from the outside comes in and shoots you up. In other areas — which could be only a few feet away — you're not reasonably safe, so you don't go there, unless you go in force. That's the kind of edge you're living with all the time, although in their case they don't know there's any different way to live.

A.H.: *You asked yourself early on how much more tragedy you could handle in this environment. What was the answer? The last line in your book was that you'd stayed years too long at this place.*

J.G.: What I meant by that line was that I was angry and I couldn't get rid of that anger. Mainly because of what happened to Norah (a young girl who was left in maximum security months longer than protocol mandated, without an explanation). But then other things happened later to other kids that were even worse. We had a kid that was in maximum security for two years.

As far as tragedy was concerned, or at least when I would start feeling overwhelmed by it, I learned that if I just hung in there at least my feelings about it would pass. I experienced that more than once, just feeling overwhelmed by other people's sorrow. But it did pass.

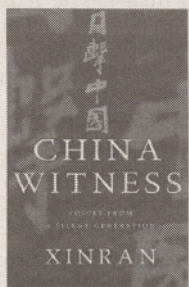
Actually, I'm not really sure it would pass. It might have just gone somewhere else in my psyche, where I couldn't recognize it as readily.

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BOOK REVIEW

Recording the voices of those afraid to speak

BY THOMAS VINCENT
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"China Witness: voices from a silent generation" by Xinran Xinran

Imagine you have been given the assignment to chronicle an entire generation. All the hopes, fears, tears and laughter of 20 years' worth of graduating classes are to be combined into a single book. Imagine further that your subjects, now in their 80s and 90s, have been traumatized by poverty, war and repression, and have grown up in a country where being open and honest with your feelings was not only culturally frowned upon, but often could subject you and your entire family to public humiliation, imprisonment, even death. In her book, "China Witness," author Xinran faces just such a daunting challenge and emerges victorious, giving us a fascinating glimpse into the lives and experiences of a people few in the West know anything about.

A collection of interviews with elderly Chinese, "Witness" is not as much a history book as it is a series of testimonials by people who witnessed history. The book has been compared to the writing of Studs Terkel, whose book "Working," was so successful at chronicling a generation of Americans. But "Witness" is even more impressive than Terkel's work because of the immense governmental and cultural hurdles Xinran had to overcome to get her subjects to open their hearts. In contrast to America, where freedom of speech is the norm and where a single question can often garner a person's entire life story, getting Chinese people, particularly older folk, to be frank and open is as easy as trying to pry apart a bear trap with a pair of tweezers. As Xinran says in her introduction, "Almost no one in China today believes you can get their men and women to tell the truth."

Xinran's most telling quality as an interviewer is her absolute sincerity. By sharing her own emotions honestly and openly with each of her subjects, she subtly invites them to respond in kind. The results are remarkable, as the lives and feelings of a generation steeped in denial begin to shine through like rare sunbeams on a cloudy day. More than just a record for future generations, the interviews themselves also offered many of her subjects a chance to come to grips with their own history. The book is full of interesting paradoxes. Many of the old folks who are proud of China's future plans for growth are also saddened and confused by the death of cultural traditions such as lantern making, herbal medicines and tea houses that inevitably result when a country like China ignores its own cultural identity in favor of "progress." Time and again interviewees display an almost pathological personal humility, while at the same time clinging to an intense sense of national pride. In the words of Yishujia, a woman acrobat and one of the few people in the book to have traveled abroad: "Behind closed doors we all admitted that they (the Western world) were advanced and we were poor, but we couldn't bear for anybody else to say that Chinese people were bad, or that we were deprived. How can I put it? Dogs don't hate their homes for being poor."

Perhaps the greatest paradox in the book, however, is the juxtaposition of maintaining devotion to country and party even when that devotion runs smack into traditional ideals of duty to family. When asked if they have any regrets, almost to a person, Xinran's respondents express sadness that they were not able to devote more time to their families

or do a better job raising their children. Though many of them willingly spent years of their lives in severe hardship, toiling for the state, most recognize, on looking back, that one of the casualties of their sacrifice was the love and education they could have passed on to their children. In the words of one highly decorated petroleum engineer: "The children were left at home with no one to take charge of them. Now my children think badly of me because they had no chance to go to school, they missed out because of me." Ironically enough, though many of Xinran's subjects are spending their last years "atoning" by helping to raise their grandchildren, few of them have even tried to make their own children understand the sacrifices they made. The shame they feel is too great to overcome.

Ultimately this is what makes the book so poignant. By writing down the stories of a generation that lived through World War II, the Cultural Revolution and even the present day modernization of China, Xinran provides a conduit through which they can communicate with future generations. "For Chinese people, it is not easy to speak openly and publicly about what we truly think and feel. And yet this is what I have wanted to record: the emotional responses to the dramatic changes of the last century. I wanted my interviewees to bear witness to Chinese history." For the "silent generation," for generations to come, and for the rest of the world, "China Witness" is that rarest of gifts: a book that will stand the test of time.

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