

# OPINION

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## Taking Stock in How We Treat Children

### America's ideals for justice fall flat

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

At the beginning of a new year, many of us choose to take stock of where we are in our lives and compare it to where we hope to be. Some of us might count numbers on a scale or in a savings account. If our nation took stock by measuring how we treat our children, what would we find?

We'd learn that a child is abused or neglected every 35 seconds—906,000 a year—and dies from abuse or neglect every 6 hours in America. The number of children abused and neglected each year would fill the city of Detroit.

A child is born into poverty every 36 seconds in America; 12.9 million children are poor and 5.6 million of them live in extreme poverty. The number of poor children equals the population

of the state of Ohio or the nation of Zimbabwe. The number of extremely poor children exceeds the population of Maryland or the nation of Libya.

A baby is born without health insurance every 42 seconds. More than 9 million children are uninsured; 85 percent of them have at least one working parent. Their number exceeds the populations of New Jersey or the nation of Haiti.

A child is killed by a firearm about every 3 hours—almost 8 a day; 96,000 children have died from firearms in America since 1979. They would fill Boston's Fenway Park nearly 3 times.

Every 75 seconds a baby is born to a teen mother. The 432,000 babies born to teen mothers each year amount to more than the population of the city of Atlanta or the nation of Luxembourg. Every 4 minutes a baby is born to a mother who had late or no prena-

tal care, enough to fill the city of Bridgeport, Conn. Every 19 minutes a baby dies in the first year of life; the U.S. ranks first among 30 industrialized countries in health technology yet ranks 25<sup>th</sup> in infant mortality. And

can't read or do math at grade level including more than 5 in 6 Black and Latino children. Our educationally ill-prepared 4<sup>th</sup> graders exceed the population of Houston, Texas or the state of Nebraska. A child drops out of

adult supervision after school when they are at greatest risk of getting into trouble. Children in need of after-school programs equal the population of Washington State.

And if we were counting, we'd see that millions of poor children are hungry, at risk of hunger, living in worst case housing, or homeless in America. Almost 7 in 10 poor children live in working families.

What do these numbers tell us about whom we are and hope to be? God has blessed the United States of America with great wealth and power. Why do we choose to let children be the poorest age group in our nation and choose to let millions of children suffer preventable sickness, neglect, abuse, mis-education and violence?

Why do we continue to mock God's call for justice for the poor and our professed ideals of freedom and justice for all?

*Marian Wright Edelman is president and founder of the Children's Defense Fund.*



*God has blessed the United States of America with great wealth and power. Why do we choose to let children be the poorest age group in our nation.*

every 22 hours a baby's mother dies in childbirth.

Millions of American children start school not ready to learn and millions more lack safe, affordable, quality childcare and early childhood education when their parents work. A majority of all American fourth graders

school in America every 9 seconds of the school day. The almost half million children who dropped out of school in the 2003-2004 school year would outnumber all of the children in the state of New Mexico.

More than 6 million children are home alone on a regular basis without

### Alito Would Jeopardize Civil Rights Dislikes legal remedies for discrimination

BY JULIAN BOND

If Judge Samuel A. Alito is confirmed by the Senate for a seat on the U.S. Supreme Court the civil rights and civil liberties of



slavish allegiance to a narrow and extremely restrictive view of our Constitution has prevailed.

As a judge on the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals, Alito has disagreed with and dismissed widely agreed upon remedies for racial discrimination, equal

never ruled for black plaintiffs in employment discrimination cases. He has never written a majority decision for the Third Circuit in favor of an African American plaintiff on the merits of a claim of race discrimination.

If Samuel Alito's views had prevailed, I would never have been elected to public office in Georgia in 1965, nor would thousands of other minority candidates have had a chance to offer to serve their communities. He has disagreement with a series of court rulings in the 1960s that enabled more African Americans to become successful candidates.

All or any of these voting cases, so basic to the very foundations of our democracy, is reason alone to reject his nomination to the high court." Alito's record taken whole or piecemeal, argues forcibly for his rejection.

*Julian Bond is chairman of the NAACP National Board of Directors.*

The NAACP opposes the

*In his 15 years on the federal bench, Judge Alito has almost never ruled for black plaintiffs in employment discrimination cases.*

confirmation of Alito because of his past indifference to the impact race and racism has on American society. Whenever and whenever the rights of racial minorities have conflicted with his radical conservative views, Judge Alito's

opportunity protections in the workplace, the universally accepted principle of one-person, one-vote, and valued protections long established in our criminal justice system.

In his 15 years on the federal bench, Judge Alito has almost

## Rosa Parks Tribute

### Her internal flame spread

BY MICHAEL HUDSON

Many people are not aware that the most important candle used in the Jewish holiday celebration of Chanukah is the one used to light the eight other candles of the menorah. This candle is the Shamash.

To me, Rosa Parks was the Shamash for the civil rights movement.

In December 1955, when Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man in Montgomery, Ala., she ignited the heart and soul of America to react to the injustice of segregation.

This year as a Jew, as in every Chanukah season, I lit candles each night of the celebration. The first night, I lit one candle, two candles the second, three candles the third until Jan. 1 when I lit a total of eight candles. The first night one burning candle gives off a slight amount of heat and light while on the final night eight candles burns a fire that is bright and warm.

As the Shamash for the civil rights movement, Parks played a major part in reducing racial oppression in America. I sometimes think of what was going through her mind as she made her decision to keep her seat. Just as the single candle makes a difference, Parks as an individual made a difference.

Mother Theresa once spoke about why she took a stance to help the poor in India. She said, "What we do is nothing but one drop in the ocean. But if we didn't do it, the ocean would be one drop less."

The Talmud, the Jewish sacred text of oral law and tradition, states "Save one life and you save the world." In the same manner of thought, Rosa Parks inspires me to strive to

make ethical decisions even in situations where I am acting as an individual. Our one drop in the ocean can inspire others to act in a positive manner.

Parks was frequently asked why she made her fateful decision in 1955. She never boasted about the importance of her actions. However, when speaking to others, she spoke of the importance of leading an ethical life. She once was quoted as saying, "Each person must live their life as a model for others."

Even in the midst of despair, one can be inspired to do good deeds. Although she feared capture by the Nazi's, Anne Frank wrote in her diary, "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

Rosa Parks, faced with the oppression of life in the South, chose her moment in time to

*As a single candle can be used to ignite a Chanukah menorah, Rosa Parks ignited the heart and soul of America to react to the injustice of segregation.*

improve the world.

U.S. Rep. John Lewis of Georgia told the Cable News Network, "By sitting down, she was standing up for all Americans."

I will always remember Parks as a woman of courage, who whose action inspired a movement that changed the world. May we be inspired to share her determination and realize the power of one person's actions to make a difference.

*Michael Hudson works in labor relations from Los Angeles. His "Black and Jewish" webpage can be reached at [www.angelfire.com/ca/dorseydon](http://www.angelfire.com/ca/dorseydon).*

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The Portland Observer Established 1970  
USPS 959-680

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Portland, OR 97211

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PUBLISHER: Charles H. Washington

EDITOR: Michael Leighton

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER: Mark Washington

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