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## Newt Gingrich's War on the Poor

Republican presidential candidate Newt Gingrich launched a nuclear attack on the needy last week by using ugly stereotypes to argue that people are poor because they are lazy and the solution to widespread poverty is scrapping child labor laws and putting poor kids to work in menial jobs.

He said in a speech in Council Bluffs, Iowa: “Start with the following two facts: Really poor children in really poor neighborhoods have no habits of working and have nobody around them who works. So they literally have no habit of showing up on Monday. They have no habit of staying all day. They have no habit of ‘I do this and you give me cash’ unless it’s illegal.”

What planet does Gingrich live on?

My entire childhood was spent in poverty and I can't remember a time that my mother and stepfather didn't have a job. In fact, I can't remember a time when Mama didn't have at least two jobs. I've held jobs since I was in the 6th grade, jobs that included cutting the grass of my elementary school principal, delivering newspapers, washing dishes at the University of Alabama while I was a student at Druid High School in Tuscaloosa, and working as a waiter on trains during Christmas breaks while enrolled at Knoxville College in Tennessee.

Evidently, my experience was not atypical. An analysis of Census Bureau data by Andrew A. Beveridge, a professor at Queens College in New York, found that most children live in a home

### THE CURRY REPORT

George E. Curry



where at least one parent works. In fact, three of every four poor working-aged adults have jobs.

The problem isn't that those living below the poverty line are unwilling to work. The problem is that their jobs don't pay enough to lift them out of poverty, which is

except when it comes to illegal activity. His solution is to repeal child labor laws and put poor kids to work as library assistants or assistant janitors.

Federal law already allows young people to work.

The Department of Labor notes, “The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) sets 14 as the minimum age for most non-agricultural work. However, at any age, youth may deliver newspapers, perform in radio, television, movie, or theatrical productions, work in businesses owned by their parents (except in mining, manufacturing or hazardous jobs), and perform babysitting or perform minor chores around a private home.”

My entire childhood was spent in poverty and I can't remember a time that my mother and stepfather didn't have a job

defined as \$22,050 for a family of four.

According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, “Nearly 15 million children in the United States – 21 percent of all children – live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level – \$22,050 a year for a family of four. Research shows that, on average, families need an income of about twice that level to cover basic expenses. Using that standard, 42 percent of children live in low-income families.”

Gingrich falsely asserts that poor children don't have a work ethic

Republicans have a record of railing against welfare, labor unions and the poor as part of their political strategy. During his 1976 presidential campaign, for example, Ronald Reagan told the story of a woman from Chicago's South Side who had 80 aliases, 30 addresses, 12 Social Security cards, collected veteran's benefits on four non-existent husbands, received Medicaid, got food stamps and collected welfare under each of her fake names, netting her tax-free income of more than \$150,000. It was later determined that the woman resided

only in Reagan's head.

Like Reagan, Gingrich has sought to eliminate many federal programs that assist poor people.

In 1994, he proposed kicking young mothers off of welfare and using that money to create Boys Town-like orphanages. The New York Times observed in an editorial, “The party that professes to support family values seems excessively eager to yank poor children away from their mothers and dump them in institutions.”

He also opposes extending unemployment benefits for those unable to find a job.

In an Aug. 12, 2011 e-mail to supporters, Gingrich claimed “the extension of unemployment benefits has given people a perverse incentive to stay on unemployment rather than accept a job.”

The only thing perverse is Gingrich's inability to understand that most people do not choose to be either poor or unemployed.

In an attempt to smear President Obama, Gingrich has repeatedly called him “the most successful food stamp president in American history.”

Gingrich asserted, “We have people who take their food stamp money and use it to go to Hawaii.”

We should not be surprised by anything Gingrich says. This is the same person who claimed he “helped balance the federal budget for four straight years [1998 to 2001].” He wasn't even in office those last two years.

Gingrich will say anything, even if he knows it is a lie.

Read the rest online at [www.theskanner.com](http://www.theskanner.com)



## Bullying and Its Consequences: Suicide

I hope you watched Extreme Home Makeover on Dec. 2, as I did. For me it was an opportunity of pride, as Bennett student Dominique Walker was featured, with her family, for a trip to Los Angeles, and a home upgrade. Why? Her family remained in pain because their 11 year old brother killed himself after vicious bullying.

Carl Walker-Hoover was hazed because folks thought he was gay. He was bothered, bullied, and besieged. He tried to talk to folks, but he eventually found out that no one wanted to hear what he had to say. He hung himself at home, and the family avoided his bedroom because they were in pain.

Our pain. The child was bullied and badgered and he couldn't take it. He was like more than 1 in 6 young people who say that bullying is part of their life. Many manage, and many manage by becoming bullies themselves. Many don't manage. They are left out, dropped out, worn out, pulled out with parents so oblivious to the effect of bullying that they think it is just a childhood thing. A game young people play with each other. Not.

The worst of it is that the Internet compounds what used to be simple schoolyard chatter



### BENNETT COLLEGE

Julianne Malveaux

doesn't simply whisper, it yells. Young people's reputations are on the line because bullying has taken on an Internet space.

The worst of it is that the Internet compounds what used to be simple schoolyard chatter

Carl Walker-Hoover, an 11 year old, was “outed” as gay when at 11 he probably was only different. Young people decided to play with him in the worst way, picking at him and on him and around him and through him. One day he awakened and told himself he couldn't take it anymore. Now his life can be our light and his family can be a symbol against bullying.

What is it about us, human beings that allow us to batter each other? Does it make us feel better? Do we grow when others shrink? Do we flourish because

they shrivel? While we pay lots of attention to young people and their bullying, shouldn't we also pay attention to the adult among us, those who think that we gain because others lose, we rise because others fall, we use our tongues in a way to diminish, not flatter? As I watched the pain of the walker family on Extreme Home Makeover, I realized that perhaps few meant harm, but many contributed to the utter tragedy that family had to manage.

We are all indebted to ABC and the Extreme Makeover team for deciding to help this family. They remind us that pain and passion reverberate. I say lots of ads following the special, and into the next few days, of young people talking about the effects of bullying. Carl Walker-Hoover's suicide puts a face on bullying and reminds us that there is a possibility of an anti-bullying movement. The ads tell the story, but can the people tell more?

Here's the bottom line. We have all been bullied, one way or another, with a friend or colleague with

a vicious, ugly mouth. And because we have all been bullied, we have all been bullies in our space. Humanity requires us to understand that the behavior we model is behavior that young people replicate. It requires us to understand that everyone can't meet a bully, face to face, eye to eye, and resist the nonsense that can be called hazing.

For whatever reason, Carl Walker-Hoover could not stand up to his bullies. He had enough. He shared how much of enough he had with his suicide. Who knows what he might have been – an author, a scientist, a leader. When he died he was a young black man whose life spread out before him, a life he chose to end because he could not endure bullying. How many more lives will we lose? How can we learn to value every life, and to kick bullying to the curb?

I am so proud that Carl's sister, Dominique, is a Bennett student. We hope to use her knowledge to help us grapple with the many ways we choose to hurt ourselves. She is a survivor of this bullying nonsense, as so many are. She is one of the leaders we have been waiting for!

*Julianne Malveaux is President of Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, North Carolina.*