



A Kind and Just Parent: The Children of Juvenile Court

Bill Ayers

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Most people know juvenile offenders only from daily headlines, and the images portrayed by the media are extreme and violent: predators and even "superpredators." Distorted and incomplete, these pictures shape the way Americans think and feel about city kids, poor kids, children of color.

A Kind and Just Parent gives us a transformative view of kids caught up in the justice system that we could never get from nightly news and newspaper stories. William Ayers has spent five years as teacher and observer in Chicago's Juvenile Court prison, the nation's first and largest institution of juvenile justice, founded by legendary reformer Jane Addams to act as a "kind and just parent" for kids in need. Today, immensely confused and confusing, it serves as a perfect microcosm of the way American justice deals with children.

Through brilliant storytelling, Ayers captures the lives and personalities of young people caught up in the juvenile justice system. The book follows a year in the life of the prison school. Its characters are three dimensional: funny, quirky, sometimes violent, and often vulnerable. We see young people talking about their lives, analyzing their own situations, and thinking about their friends and their futures. We watch them throughout a school year and meet some remarkable teachers. From the intimate perspective of a teacher, Ayers gives us portraits, history, and analysis that help us to understand not only what brought these kids into the court system, but why people find it hard to think straight about them, and what we might do to keep their younger brothers and sisters from landing in the same place.

Unsentimental yet wrenching, *A Kind and Just Parent* is a riveting look at kids and crime. It will change the way Americans think about juvenile crime and juvenile justice.

A Kind and Just Parent: The Children of Juvenile Court Details

Date : Published June 1st 1998 by Beacon Press (first published 1997)

ISBN : 9780807044032

Author : Bill Ayers

Format : Paperback 224 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Cultural, Education



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From Reader Review A Kind and Just Parent: The Children of Juvenile Court for online ebook

Caitlin Condon says

The stories within this book are amazing. However, Ayers is an ass and exploited the stories of others just to write this book.

Jan Notzon says

Despite my differences of opinion on policy, I found this book well-written and interesting. Not a page-turner but it kept my attention and is a very easy read.

Lauren says

I bought this book as required reading for a Juvenile Justice class at Portland State University this summer. I started reading it ahead of time during a moment of boredom and was instantly captivated by Ayers' stories of the children in the system. I couldn't put the book down that night. After reading half of it, I was super disappointed to find out that I wouldn't be able to take the Juvenile Justice class after all. I mean, for the first time, I was ahead of my school work and actually enjoying it. But, I finished the book, I loved it, and I'm going to be taking the class this fall! I might even read it again before the term starts...

Max Bronsema says

All persons that advocate for punitive punishment should read this book. A great recap of what juvenile detention was originally intended to do and what it has now distorted into. William Ayers sheds light into the dark halls of the Audy Home in Chicago and brings hope to those that push for restorative justice.

Deborah Cleaves says

Too much pontificating, too little effective story-telling. Disappointing because the author didn't do what he said he set out to do.

Abby says

I started this book months ago, by the crazy William Ayers, Barack Obama's terrorist buddy. I actually had this book as required reading for a Juvenile Delinquency class I took at BYU (many years ago). I got an A in the class but never read the book, so I kept the book, thinking that if someday I read it, I would have honestly

earned my A. Somehow.

This time as well, I never technically finished the book (I probably deserve like a C- in that class). I mean, I read far enough in it to see Barack Obama's name mentioned on around page 70-80ish. The rest I kind of flipped through. I am purging my bookshelves, because I need to empty one completely out for space purposes. First off I'm ridding myself of books that I have already read and will never read again, as well as books that are boring as snot. This book would fall into the boring snot category. Maybe not for everyone, because some people find snot interesting. Like my mother in law, for example. Every time my two year old is sick, she asks what color his snot is and listens attentively as I explain.

The book is about different kids in juvenile detention awaiting trial for tiny infractions of the law, like grand theft auto or homicide or something. I totally don't get why we don't just let these kids out and give them a shot at a normal life! I mean, just because they beat their mother senseless and then stole her car to buy drugs and accidentally shot two children to death while fighting with the drug dealer who turned out to be in a rival gang after fleeing a drug bust(not actually a true story), that doesn't mean they should be locked up in prison. Don't you think that's a little harsh? I mean, what scared 17 year old infant hasn't stumbled upon an accidental felony here or there and still grown up to be an outstanding citizen?

I kind of think that's the gist of Bill Ayer's thinking. But I could be wrong, as I did not actually read the whole book.

Jon says

A must for anyone considering working with youth in any sort of institutional setting.

Fatima says

Wasn't a huge fan of this book. It was interesting to learn about the juvenile court system, but I really don't trust this author's account of events. At times he seems like he over embellishes just because he wants his writing to stand out more than the actual subject.
