

Foreword

A sign of a civilized society is reflected in how its children are cared for. Are children offered opportunities for growth, safe places to play, learn and discover? Do countries and communities offer universal preschool, free child-care, quality healthcare, affordable housing, clean air and water, food that is free of pesticides and contaminants, and places to recreate?

Children assume they will be physically safe in schools, parks, churches, temples, synagogues, concert venues, malls, and airports. They assume that the adults in their lives will care for them, provide a safe space for them to grow, explore, question, and buffer them from adult problems that cause tensions across all social classes and communities.

Yet increasingly, youth across the country and globe are at risk of not experiencing a happy and safe childhood. We are bombarded on a daily basis with natural disasters, conflicts and civil war, economic downturns, erosion of the family, and the largest mass migration of capital, goods, and people since the end of the second world war.

Children are expected to grow up quickly, be aware, be vigilant, and not talk to strangers or linger.

They are increasingly socialized to be suspicious, instead of compassionate, and even preschoolers are conditioned, through active shooter drills, to be silent in order to be safe in school. These external mandates hijack childhood innocence and joy, especially in the United States. Counselors and school personnel share that children, exposed to images on social media, breaking news alerts, environmental destruction of homes and routines, serious adult issues, and witnesses to trauma, feel anxious. Teachers and schools tasked with reporting and supporting students encumbered by events that are not childhood concerns, note that there's not sufficient funds allocated to

deal with the growing numbers of young people who require professional mental health services.

Children seem left to solitary solutions. Most young people think that no one else's story resonates with theirs.

But in the pages of this perceptive book, Craig Carpenter gently reminds them and us that other adolescents searched for answers as they, too, faced challenges and troubling events. The adults in their lives were unable to provide that safety net, quick-fix, or all-encompassing blanket of security to protect childhood and keep at bay the harshness that is often the world's experience.

Dr. Craig Carpenter provides readers with this heartfelt awareness: children may have lost their innocence, but not their sense of wonder. Through selected narratives of child authors, he gently reminds us that innovation, innate curiosity, and sense of discovery remain, in spite of tragedies, loss and difficult circumstances.

The initial chapters present a framework for the historical policies and regulations that affected children growing up during the American Revolution, the Civil War, westward expansion, industrialization, the civil rights movement, world wars and migrations.

Through narratives that are attentively crafted and written by young people, readers consider how a fair, just, and civilized society could not protect its youth—yet kids managed to survive and grow anyway.

The authentic narratives do not mince words. They situate us in the very places where the young authors experienced distress, betrayal, alienation, and destruction. The sobering stories in this collective work, capture our attention, activate our minds, and touch our hearts because of the young protagonists' determination, adaptability, and self-reliance.

Readers consider for a moment, that we are not alone in dealing with the daily psychological turbulence that occurs in our world, and, commonalities connect people, places, and environments across time, place, culture, and circumstance. The voices of the young authors cry out to us as their experiences illustrate universal themes of survival, loss, coming of age, finding your voice, and setting off on a new journey.

As a social studies educator and professor for nearly four decades, I noticed how teacher candidates and their students (K–12) are captivated by stories. Memorizing dates and random names are bland, distant and meaningless teaching strategies. However, when readers consider what it means to walk in the shoes of another and reflect upon the voices of young authors, whose stories are presented through richly descriptive prose, the place within themselves that researchers term “the text- to-self connection” is activated.

Dr. Carpenter knows that it's really all about writing and researching a book that kids relate to. How did someone their age cope, subvert, escape, and triumph?

What I most admire about this work is how it presents an historical timeline of what I term, “potholder topics”—historical events that are too hot to handle. Dr. Terrie Epstein (2009) notes that “a pedagogy of silence,” persists when teachers and adults purposefully ignore, discourage, or avoid students’ questions that deal with “uncomfortable” issues, events or concerns.

We all know that history repeats itself. So how do we assist young learners in making sense of people, programs and policies that cause harm? There is little comfort in offering “thoughts and prayers” or a moment of silence in the aftermath of tragedy, trauma or troubles. Anyone who has ever met a young child knows that they always ask, “Why?” Their search for answers propels them to discover for themselves.

Dr. Carpenter recognizes this essential element of child development and dedicated himself to researching voices of young people across time and place and writing an inspiring book that transcends disciplines.

Trauma is not limited to the classroom. Teacher candidates, doctoral students, professionals and practitioners across the health spectrum, from emergency medical technicians, to firefighters, counselors, social workers, psychologists, and special education directors witness the effects of childhood PTSD and neglect. While social media offers opportunities for children to be in touch with kids across town and across the globe, a pervasive emptiness persists, not only rooted in poverty, instability, or transiency, but through a sustained lack of acceptance—or the profound void of not belonging.

A colleague at my university supports victims and families of violent crime, through a federal grant. His task: reach out to children who have suffered trauma, exposure to violence, loss of a parent, loved one, or classmate, their own terminal illness, deportation, transiency, homelessness or depression.

Teachers and helping professionals can rely on this book to initiate discussion and stimulate kid-thinking. The child authors who share narratives of resolve, resiliency, and reinvention, in spite of policies, laws, entanglements, and circumstances beyond their control, assert hope for a better tomorrow. Readers who position themselves within the text can relate to the poignant narratives that authentically teach about how an issue, situation, policy, dictum, or decision affected a child in real time.

Dr. Carpenter reminds us why we study the past. The past sheds light on the present—and supports us in coping with injustice and unfair outcomes. This book reminds us that historically, kids have managed on their own, raised themselves and others, and dealt with traumatizing experiences. I don’t think there’s anyone who will be left untouched when reading the solitary accounts of children: growing, grieving, and seeking amazing grace

Born with a Spirit of Protest, is well-researched, relevant, and relatable. The activism and triumph of the youthful human spirit across centuries is a torch handed down to children and teens taking action now to change our world.

Barbara Torre Veltri, Ed. D.
Scottsdale, Arizona

REFERENCES

Epstein, T. (2009) *Interpreting National History, Race, Identity, and Pedagogy in Classrooms and Communities*. New York: Routledge.



Born with a Spirit of Protest

Giving Children a Voice of Importance



CRAIG CARPENTER

"Praise to Dr. Craig Carpenter for including in this book the work of Alfred Adler and Rudolph Dreikurs. I consider Adler and Dreikurs to be two of the most profound experts regarding the encouragement of children."

—**Carolyn Crowder**, PhD, author of the national bestselling book, *Backtalk*

"Dr. Carpenter provides parents, teachers, and students with useful information for the prevention of school shootings. He provides the reader with heart-wrenching stories about discouraged children who experienced suicidal thoughts and actions as well as eating disorders. He brilliantly describes the idea of encouragement groups as a viable answer to solving the discouragement epidemic facing children and adolescents. This book is a must-read!"

—**Donald R. Kearns**, PhD, Arizona State Department of Education (retired)

"For too long, children have been sold short on their capacity to partner in tackling humankind's knottiest issues like gun violence and bullying. Dr. Carpenter asserts that children are capable 'beyond what we believe' in problem solving. The youth movement has energy, insight, and practical ideas that must be embraced and tapped. Carpenter illustrates that with an exhaustive litany of examples of how children historically have helped push the frontiers forward. Ever valuable is his call for 'encouragement groups' where youth can safely unbundle the forces they confront and grow into veritable changemakers."

—**Lawn Griffith**, former editor of the *Tribune*

"Children are the most vulnerable population at the time of ever-present bullying, domestic violence, gun violence, sexual abuse, and human trafficking, among others. At the same time, however, children are the most resilient, powerful, vibrant population who can unleash their creativity and imagination to create social change. In this book, Craig Carpenter offers compelling arguments about ways to empower children, facilitate their capacity to put into action, and cultivate their democratic imagination for social justice. Carpenter brilliantly centers his discussion around children's capabilities that are often undermined, in order to showcase their stories of courage and inspiration. Focusing on historical and philosophical accounts of the role of children in the democratic society, Carpenter makes an undeniable intellectual contribution to the field of education, inspiring educators to work with children to further humanize our future. This book is a rarity."

—**Jeong-Hee Kim**, PhD, professor of curriculum studies and teacher education, College of Education, Texas Tech University

Craig Carpenter is a retired licensed professional counselor of thirty-eight years with doctoral degrees from Arizona State University and Drew University (Madison, New Jersey). He and his wife have been married for over fifty years and have four boys and six grandchildren.

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