

A story for children

It is five minutes to eight on a Tuesday night in September 2000. Another bomb exploded in Cape Town - among the injured is an 11 year old girl. This is the 20th bomb in 24 months for Cape Town - those who count them claim.

Earlier on the same day, a child was buried in a small white coffin in the same city - yet another victim of a brutal crime campaign against our children. One of many murders of children in and around our 'mother' city.

Bombs and murders. Children and death. A city and a people at war with itself and in pain. It is not just Cape Town, but Cape Town does bring the issues into painfully sharp focus - like the midday sun through pair of cheap sunglasses.

Why children? Perhaps I push the issue too far even thinking that they may be a specific target. Perhaps some paranoia on my behalf? Maybe. Truth is though, that they are being hurt and killed. All the while, almost daily we watch the stupefying tennis-like volley as the ball of blame swings across the court of our lives (and television screens) between politicians and police, but never ends up anywhere other than, ironically, 'love all'!

Are our children being targeted because the adults of our society are becoming too 'wise' to the tricks of the perpetrators of these crimes? Are the children now the even softer targets for the often faceless anger, violence and madness that we live with - and are hostage to? I think so. I think that it is more than coincidence that increasing numbers of children seem to be becoming the victims of murder.

Bombs too, placed in parks, under trees and on pavements are not intended to injure any specific 'enemy' or opposing side at war, but rather the general population - and that includes our children. Interesting too then, that children living on the street found a bomb and deactivated it in Cape Town a few months ago. These children, in their curiosity (and possibly because of their lack of more constructive entertainment or glue induced confusion), picked it up and played with it, possibly aiding the work of the bomb disposal experts who arrived later to officially declare it 'dead'.

We as social workers can and do respond to the issues that arise from this situation. We must continue to focus on the protection of our younger generation and to work constantly at creative conflict resolution initiatives. We must help our children to become resilient and creative. Resilient in their ability to survive this onslaught on their young lives. Creative in their ability to find solutions for societies which develop in such a destructive way that they attack their own future.

We must stand up and call for accountability from our leaders and our security forces. We should not care which of them specifically should take responsibility for stopping this crime - everyone must. The game of blame must stop. As too must the crime against our young citizens. Our children have the right to feel safe and secure. To enjoy the promised fruit of our democracy.

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