

**Madonna/St. Joseph Center  
A Journal: 1990-1993**

**ELIZABETH F. KITTLE**

**MAY 1996  
UPDATED, JULY 2013**



**DEDICATED TO MY FATHER, E. MCCLUNG FLEMING**  
**And my mother Patricia C. Fleming who loved this Madonna sculpture**  
**Letter dated, September 22, 1991**

I've been re-reading James Hillman, who writes that "soul" makes the difference between an "event" and an "experience." You know my belief in the observation that the important thing is not how much experience you've had, but how much reflection you've devoted to your experience.



## A letter from my father six months before he died.

114 Kendal at Longwood  
Nov. 25, 1993

Dear Betsy,

RE: Your notes on your experience at Madonna/St. Jo., 10/18/90 to 8/3/93

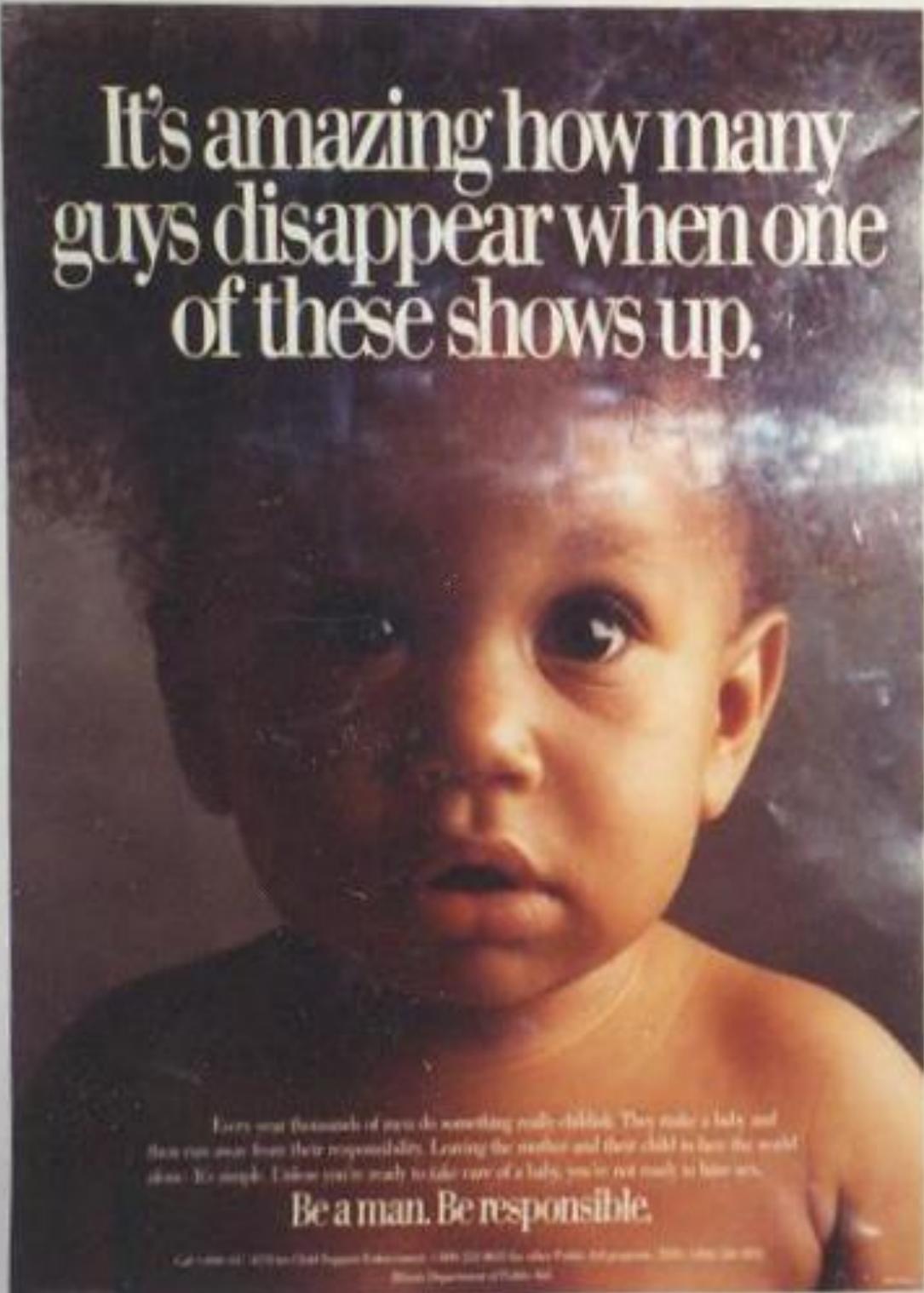
RE: journal notes on one's experience:

a. Innumerable writers have found that informal, on-the-spot notes written down in a journal about what is experienced, make an indispensable quarry from which to get their marble. No one can record everything experienced, but good notes can help to recover associated material. Of course it helps with accuracy, credibility, realism, the actual ground of how it was. The facts can be shaped, combined, transposed,

b. Motivation and journaling: It takes strong motivation to make the time and take the effort to write down notes that will really help later. Many writers know that they want to be writers, and are potential writers, and feel the mission to work at their craft, and so build note-taking into their way of life (and work).

c. Your notes: are excellent. They are concrete, specific, graphic, personal rather than general. Very good character sketches of the girls (Dina, Maribeth, Robin ...Michelle, Lavoche). They are real people. What one finds in your notes:

1. The facts about different kinds of pregnancy; labor, delivery, and the choice of whether to place or keep.
2. A bit about the character of the girls - strengths, weaknesses
3. A bit about their families: parents, - father, mother, relatives.
4. rather little about their sexual partners; or their motivation in having intercourse, their expectations, their feelings about being pregnant, their feelings about their sexual partners, about the church, about the system.
5. a whiff of sociological detail: the econ-soc-background of the families from which the girls come. Schooling? any connection between literacy and pregnancy? Any role of sex education in the schools?
6. a whiff of psychology: feelings (fear, anger, panic, self-confidence, deviancy....
7. a few good personal bits: your own feelings about ~~with~~ these girls and what they were going thru. About the ethics of the Catholic Church. Flash-backs to your own experience with pregnancies and your children. A few memories of what your mother said to you. Some of your thoughts about this whole phenomenon of young, teen-age girls being thrust into one of life's most dramatic, perilous, momentous experiences.



It's amazing how many  
guys disappear when one  
of these shows up.

Every year thousands of men do something really childish. They make a baby and then run away from their responsibilities. Leaving the mother and their child to face the world alone. Be a man. Unless you're ready to take care of a baby, you're not ready to have one.

**Be a man. Be responsible.**

Call 1-800-441-4477 for Child Support Enforcement. © 1994 U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare. 5010-1089-200-0000  
Black Department of Public Aid



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# Madonna/St. Joseph Center

## Albert P. Weisman Memorial Scholarship

### I. BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

My project is the publication of a three-year journal I kept while employed at the Madonna/St. Joseph Center, a home for unwed pregnant women. The journal is a combination of individual case histories, national statistical information and my personal maternal experience as a non-custodial parent.

### II. WHAT MY PROJECT IS AND WHAT I HOPE TO COMMUNICATE; DETAILED:

- A. My journal has three voices: I use a narrative voice to introduce individual women, their case histories and their decisions to keep or place their babies. The second voice is my personal story. I use a personal voice to work through my decision to be a non-custodial mother. Sometimes this decision is put to the test when I "mother" other young women at the center. The third voice is statistical and objective. I use graphs, numbers and data collected from research to illustrate national trends in teen pregnancy and general illegitimacy.

Teen pregnancy is a growing epidemic. National illegitimacy rates are sky-rocketing. Most of this problem is a "class" problem with the underclass getting larger. Poverty, inadequate health insurance, joblessness, limited access to daycare and education are all linked together to create long-term dependency for this growing population.

Clearly paternalism will have to re-value the female in the future. This devaluation of women and children will have long-term ill effects for society as a whole. The same is true for our country's continuing racist policies and attitudes. Gender and racial inequality will destroy future peace and happiness for all Americans.

- B. The first part of my journal is subjective and pretty faithful to my original journal; the second part of my journal when M/SJ contracted with Columbus-Maryville is more objective and has been pieced together from case histories of different young women. This happened largely because our later clients, as wards of the State, already had written histories—a mandatory bureaucratic component of the welfare system.

While all of the stories are individual in nature they are really composite women for the purpose of this publication.

### PARTICIPANTS:

Jeff Lyon	project advisor	Science-Writing, Journalism Dept.
Omar Castillo	desktop publishing	Journalism Dept.
Paul J. Dillard	editing decisions	Consultant
Linda Kraus	social worker	Madonna/St. Joseph Center
Jim Sulski	editing decisions	Journalism Dept.



## NOTE ON REVISED EDITION:

Over twenty years have passed since I worked at Madonna/St. Joseph Center (M/SJ). In that time, the babies I helped deliver have grown up and most likely have become mothers and fathers themselves. Fifteen years after I left M/SJ, my next vocational step was teaching Developmental English at Truman College (the City College closest to M/SJ). It's quite possible I ended up teaching some of the children I helped deliver. In the meanwhile, I'm proud to report that my own children have finished college and have become successful, productive adults.

I have updated a few statistics in my update, but my goal has been to retain the flavor and tone of the years I worked at M/SJ and wrote the Journal. For instance, in twenty years the long term prognosis of AIDS has improved, (1) but most of the issues related to poverty and teen pregnancy have not. The question of unwed pregnancy itself has become a complex issue as illegitimacy is no longer considered a stigma. Hollywood, for one, has made marriage after childbirth common place. (2)

Also unchanged is the systematic and targeted attack on black males through the prison system instead of through the education system. See chart on racial discrimination in drug arrests from *All in with Chris Hayes* on the MSNBC. (3) This is disgraceful and it is no wonder there is still racial dysfunction and disenfranchisement across the US today, but particularly in urban areas.

Also unchanged, but critical to my own story, is that a non-custodial mother is considered a pariah to society at large but especially to those with Republican family values. According to the 2011 U.S. Census Bureau, about 1 in 6 (17.8 percent) were fathers, proportions which were not statistically different from 1994. (4) Determining physical custody reminds me of an old proverb when King Solomon decides to cut a son in half to solve a custody issue between two women who live in the same house. (1 Kings 3) Someone has to back down or the children will really be screwed up, not just broken.

Why am I still asked whether my husband had a job when I say I paid child support to him? Besides, aren't both parents responsible for their children's financial well-being? Where has women's liberation gone? Are mothers afraid to allow fathers to fully function, or are fathers afraid to step up? My one suggestion regarding court-ordered child support is that non-custodial parents should be allowed to keep their wages beyond their highest income for a forty-hour work

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1. Michael Mugavero. "Engagement in HIV Care: Glass half empty. . . or half full?" *AETC* <<http://blog.aidsetc.org/engagement-hiv-care-glass-half-empty%E2%80%A6or-half-full>> and <<http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/newsroom/docs/2012/Stages-of-CareFactSheet-508.pdf>> (July 2013).

2. Stephanie Ventura, "Changing Patterns of Nonmarital Childbearing in the United States." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. May 2009, (No. 18). <<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/unmarry.htm>> (July 2013)

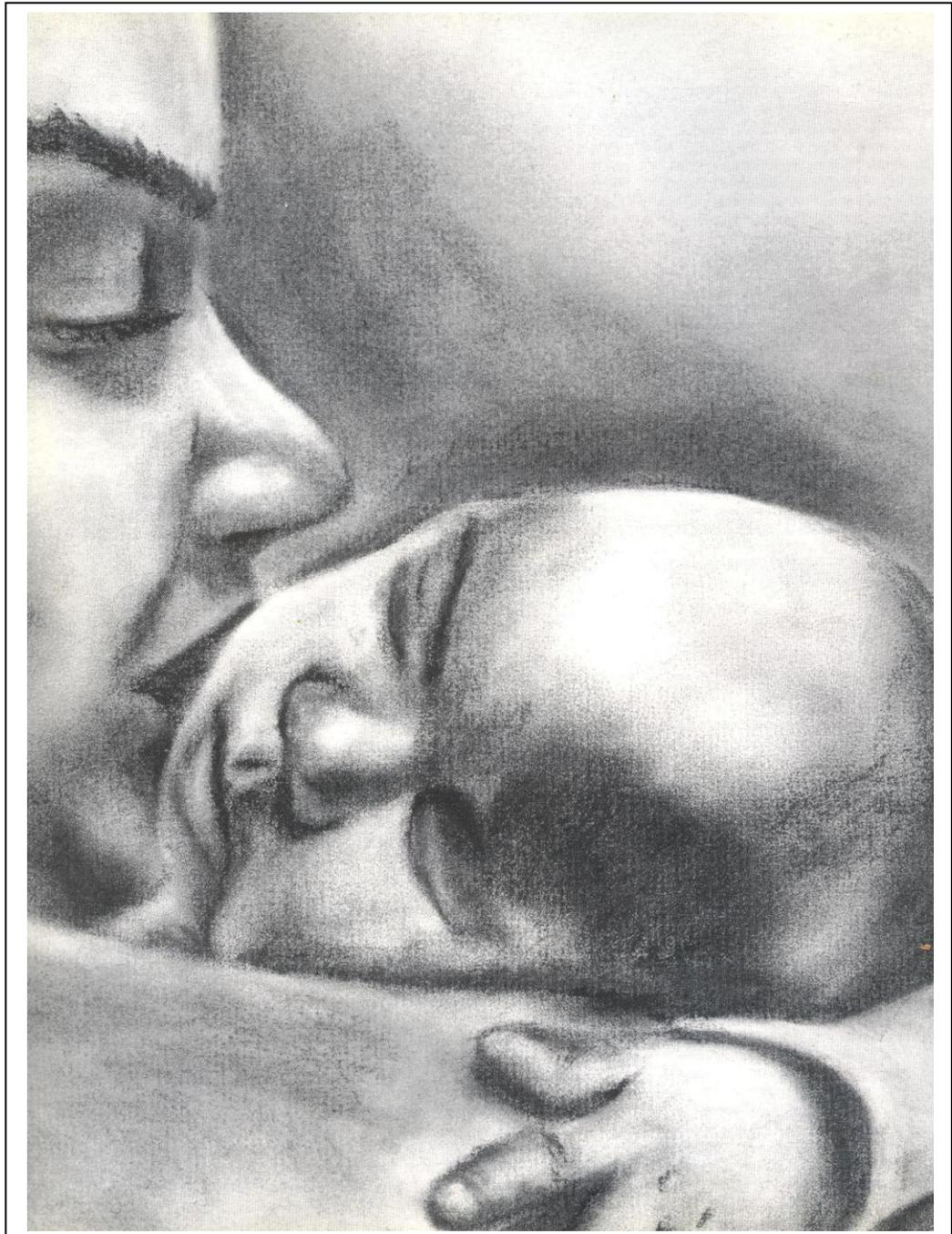
3. Ned Resnikoff, "Racial Disparities in Marijuana Arrests are getting worse." *All in with Chris Hayes*, <<http://tv.msnbc.com/2013/06/04/report-marijuana-possession-arrests-disproportionately-affect-black-americans/>> (July 2013).

4 Timothy S. Grall. "Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2009." Dec. 2011. *U. S. Census Bureau*. <<http://singleparents.about.com/gi/o.htm?zi=1/XJ&zTi=1&sdn=singleparents&cdn=parenting&tm=12&f=10&tt=11&bt=4&bts=4&zu=http%3A//www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p60-240.pdf>> (Sept 2013)

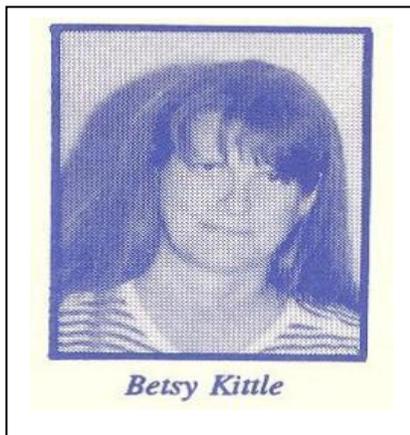
week. I know personally how defeating the system is when 25% of my sixty hours from two jobs went to child support; non-custodial parents can never get ahead financially, so many disappear or work under the table. (See my journal entry about “Just doing my part” on page 49.)

The photos of the residents were taken shortly after I left M/SJ in 1994. I have lost track of the young women, but would like to give photo attribution if they get in touch with me. Finally, I have added the lovely charcoal drawings Brenda Rienke, an art student at Columbia College, illustrated for an article called “Discovering Madonna” in *Echo Magazine*, 1997. I have not tried to get in touch with her, but would like to put a shout out to her and hope her art career has flourished.

Betsy Kittle  
July 2013



## STAFF BIO FROM "HEART TO HEART": 1990 & 1993



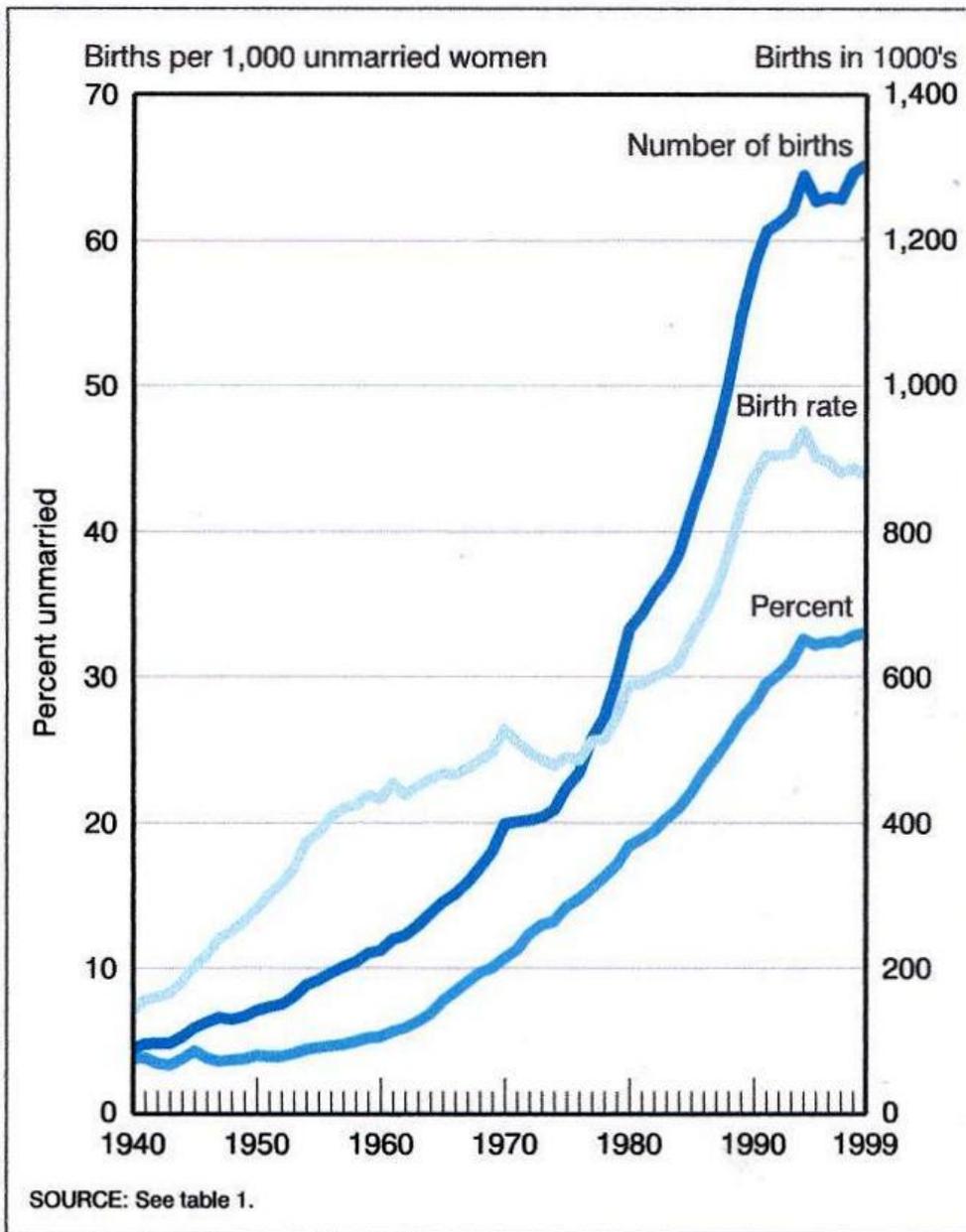
### New Staff/Changes

Three new staff have joined the Madonna/Saint Joseph Center since the last newsletter. Betsy Kittle began in October as a Group Care Worker and replaced [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] began her "semi-retirement" and is now working only one job instead of two! Betsy holds a bachelors degree from DePaul University and has an extensive background in "people oriented" employment. In addition, Betsy is the mother of two children, Julia age 6 and David age 4. As Betsy has stated, "I know firsthand the fear and excitement of having children, as well as the pain. I feel that I can lend encouragement and support to those women facing labor for the first time."

### **BETSY KITTLE, GROUP CARE WORKER**

I have found my work at Madonna personally rewarding. I explain to first-time mothers that a baby will be an all-consuming job. It's constant and forever, and I want our residents to take this job seriously.

I teach our residents to care for their own needs (maybe for the first time), so that they'll be able to provide for the needs of a child. I want our residents to know that babies will love unconditionally, but they will require the same from their parent. Are the girls ready? Some are, but most are not.



**Figure 1. Number of births, birth rate, and percent of births to unmarried women: United States, 1940–99**

Stephanie Ventura et al. "Nonmarital Childbearing in the United States, 1940-1999." *National Vital Statistics Reports (NVSS)*. 18 Oct 2000.

<[http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr48/nvs48\\_16.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr48/nvs48_16.pdf)> (July 2013).

## **PART 1:**

## **INTRODUCTION**

July 1989

Finding parking in mid-July at North Avenue Beach in Chicago is cut-throat. Why? The walk to the beach is one of the shortest in the city of Broad Shoulders, where the lake front is "Open, Free and Clear" thanks to Daniel H. Burnham, architect and creator of the Chicago Plan of 1909 which proclaimed this so. North Avenue Beach is popular also because the public bathrooms are open, free, and NEAR . . . a requirement with recently potty trained children. For these reasons and probably 1000 others, on good beach days the parking lot is filled to capacity by 9:30 a.m.

The day was a Tuesday. I'm certain of that because my weird part-time work schedule gave me most of Tuesdays and all of Fridays off with my children. All together I worked a 40-hour week (three days at the Latin School of Chicago and four hours an evening, five days a week at the Chicago Board of Trade), but half of my work time was the "alternate" shift.

My ex-husband and I had been separated a year at this point. After months of marriage therapy, our weekly sessions with a psychiatric social worker became "divorce" therapy, and I moved into an apartment a couple of blocks away from the family. Our counselor encouraged us to let our children live in one house rather than trying to split their physical custody evenly. That way they would have just one sense of "home" and not two. Recent psychological studies had shown that this arrangement was easier on children emotionally. These sad studies revealed that one week with Mom and one week with Dad, or Sunday through Thursday here and the rest of the week there was disruptive to psychic wholeness for children of divorce.

I felt I could provide a sense of ME whether I lived in a two-flat or a two-room apartment, so in legalese, I moved out of the marital home. Even though the reasons I moved out are just as clear and painful today as they were then, I have never regretted the actual move—just the list of mutual marital (or is that martial?) atrocities that made the move necessary in the first place. But, the reason I moved out (and my husband did not) was because he paid the mortgage on our home, and I felt that gave him the right to live in the (his?) house. Additionally, I didn't want to be economically dependent on him for my fixed living costs as are so many single mothers.

We agreed to split the out-of-pocket daycare expenses and the children's medical bills, and I went back to work. A friend of ours taught at the Latin School of Chicago; she knew that the school's business office was looking for a part-time secretary. Thankfully, I got the job. Other friends of ours knew a recent college grad from Ohio looking for an apartment in Chicago.

She moved into our basement apartment and provided daycare for Julia and David three days a week. My ex became Mr. Mom—and a good one at that, and I became the best part-time parent I could be to my 4-year-old daughter and 2-year-old son.

Back to the high July day at North Avenue Beach in 1989. After an hour or so at the water's edge, my kids started playing with another little boy about their age. He was Mexican and spoke a little English but not a lot. Language isn't as important for young children as it later becomes. The important thing was that this little boy was not afraid of the water and he could build sturdy sand castles too.

Soon his mother and I were sharing the contents of our lunch baskets: apples, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, cheeses and chips were swapped. Juice boxes and beach toys ringed our overlapping blankets and towels; tubes of sunblock trailed my toe-headed children. Eventually, but with great hesitation, I told the other mom that my kids lived with their father and that at 4 p.m. I had to drop them off with him and then go to work.

Ethnic and social stereotyping are as easy as breathing, as automatic as a reflex. "Uh-oh," I thought. "Here we go. Why did I tell this nice Latin (family-oriented, child-centered) mother that I didn't live with my children? What kind of woman does she think I am? Could I still be a caring and loving (normal?) mother even if I lived apart from my children?"

After some contemplation but much to my surprise, she responded in a way I haven't heard before or since. She said, "It probably is better for the children because a mother will never leave her children, but a father might become distracted by his work. If he doesn't see his children every day, they will become secondary. Then the children will lose both a family and a parent."

July 1990

Back to Square One. My part-time job at the Latin School was turned into a full-time job and given to an employee of ten years. The bad thing about Square One is the obvious: Find a Job. The only good thing about Square One is that it's a slightly different experience each time it's visited after the initial pass-through. But I hate the painful soul searching and forced introspection at such a vulnerable time; I can't bear the personal confrontation with my resume and inane cover letters; I loathe the ingratiating, infuriating job interviews . . . Why does it look so easy for other people?

The weird time restraints on my job search made finding the perfect part-time job 1000% harder than my last time out visiting Square One. I still didn't want to parallel the Dad's work schedule, and I still wanted to have some daylight hours alone with the kids. Weird, part-time

jobs rarely provide health insurance which is another problem. In fact, it was the health and dental insurance at the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) that "lured" me away from waiting on tables at a pizza parlor on Chicago's North Side at 2:00 in the morning.

But money is by far the biggest issue: My overhead and fixed costs (not to mention food and entertainment, shelter and public services) had been, up to now, *just* within my budget. During my job search, the kids still needed daycare and our daycare provider expected payment even if I kept them all day. My support money to my ex was becoming a loaded issue that would send us in and out of court several times in the years to come. (See Letter to *Chicago Parent*, April 1994 below)

Time restrictions, insurance, money . . . Square One had taken on a peculiar shape and I was getting nervous about finding the right job container before my money ran out.

### MOM SEEKING 'SENSITIVE MALE' IN COURTS

In this day and age of gender liberation, the sensitive male has won the nod of the head. *Chicago Parent's* "Daddy Track" by Ken Trainor is a regular column. His column is always well written and has a nice homey quality to it. He makes it seem so easy. Where are the other sensitive guys?

I am a non-custodial mother. I hope that does not make me an uncaring parent or an insensitive woman. Probably it would be politically correct to say I'm a career woman but I am not. Yes, I have jobs but not anything I would call a "career." Not only do my children live with their dad, but I pay 25 percent of my net earnings for our two children in child support. My ex-husband lives in the suburbs and the kids visit me in my funky Bucktown apartment on alternate weekends.

...Five years ago our marriage exploded. It was clear that one of us had to back down and move out; I found an apartment five blocks away from our Bucktown home and went back to work.

Our children were 2 and 4 years old and I wanted to have as much time with them as I could without tripping

over the dad. I found jobs during the evening and overnight shifts that would let me have daytime access to my children.

...The arrangement worked better for me than I would have thought...until that fateful day my ex told me he was engaged to and moving in with an old girl friend from high school. She lived in Bartlett, Illinois. (Where?) The Bucktown house was sold, the children started in a new school system and I was left to sort out my feelings about being a noncustodial parent. I didn't like it one bit.

...After three months the relationship fizzled and the kids and their father moved to a different suburb and a different school. Up to that point, I had paid him token child support and we had split the out-of-pocket expenses because I had "daytime custody." His move changed everything and he took me back to court for the percentage increase. There was an automatic formula and it was his to have no matter what I had done to be a part of my children's lives before the move.

A year later he took me back to court for 50 percent of the out-of-pocket day care expenses which apparently had not been legally corrected the year before when he was given the percentage increase. Again, he was awarded the decision plus the 13 months I was in arrears. Needless to say, the matter is being contested.

My real point is not that we have "Daddy Track", but that "Mommy's Home" isn't topic *au courant*. But then after what I've just gone through I guess I understand. I mean how many of your divorced readers get 25 percent of their noncustodial parent's wages, the health insurance and 50 percent of the day care costs thrown in? Court decisions like that help me understand why Americans have become legal and insurance hogs, and why we have so many deadbeat dads and probably why more women are afraid to play the game with the big boys who may or may not be sensitive.



## CHAPTER 1

September, 1990

On a beautiful fall evening in 1990, I went to a baseball game at Old Comiskey Park. The White Sox were in a division playoff; the 1990 bitter-sweet season would be the last in the old stadium. Construction was almost complete on the new park and the South Side fans were already nostalgic about the end of an era.

It was here that I ran into my old friend and mentor, Linda Kraus.<sup>(5)</sup> I used to see Linda almost every day when she was the director of the Lincoln Park Family Focus, a drop-in center for parents with children up to 4 years. Emotionally, Linda was there for me when my son was born critically ill, when my marriage fell apart, and when I made the decision to move out on my own. Linda was like a flesh and blood sister for me. She became what we now call "extended family"—she knew all of my warts and wounds and still thought I was worth keeping.



A year or two ago Linda found a job working at a home for unmarried pregnant women; I hadn't seen her for months. Here, within the swirling crowd of fans and the hub-bub of street vendors at Old Comiskey Park, I told Linda I was looking for a job. She thought for a moment and then said she was looking for an overnight supervisor at her maternity home. I took the address and telephone number and called the next day to schedule

an interview with Paula, the executive director.

I had the wild thought that I should interview in my pajamas, as Linda told me that when the residents were in at night and the doors were locked, the overnight staff could go to bed too. The job description was this: to drive a resident to the hospital and be her labor coach if she went into labor in the middle of the night; to enforce the midnight curfew and other house rules; and, when necessary, to report a runaway resident to the Chicago Police Department (CPD). Later in the program, a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) ward of the State, who broke the curfew, needed to be reported to both the CPD and to the DCFS hot line.

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<sup>5</sup> Other than Linda Kraus, the names of the residents and staff have been changed throughout.

I expected to see a rundown, boarded-up Victorian home, perhaps heavily shrouded in drapes as I knew that at one time the home had been a convent. Old-time Chicagoans knew of the place because every year on Cubs' opening day, TV news reporters would show footage of the nuns pocketing—right into their habits—the cold cash they collected for parking. Apparently a little of good-ol'-boy Chicago politics filtered down even to these sweet little old ladies.

Catholic Charities moved the nuns into another convent when only a few sisters were left living at Madonna. In the mid-1970s, the former convent was converted into a maternity home for teenagers. In 1989, M/SJ merged with Gehring Hall, an adult (over 18 years old) maternity home in Lincoln Park founded by the Daughters of Charlotte, a sister organization to St. Vincent de Paul. Saint Joseph Hospital provided prenatal care to the residents of both homes, so the merging of the two homes didn't require a major philosophical adjustment, just a physical one. M/SJ is the only residential facility of its kind in the state of Illinois. The *MISSION STATEMENT* of the combined programs is:

*"To provide an opportunity for personal growth and medical care for pregnant teens and adults in an atmosphere of dignity, respect and support."*

October, 1990

I have finished my second week at the Madonna/St Joseph Home and my first impression is that these young women are terribly brave to carry unexpected children to term. In the face of instant everything these days (and most of the girls live on McDonalds, Popeyes, Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, and other fast foods) it seems out-of-step to be willing to sit out nine months to have a baby—an unplanned, maybe an unwanted baby at that.

Personally, I'm Pro-Choice. I believe a woman has the right to make her own decisions about her life, particularly whether she chooses to abort or not. It's her decision, not that of society. But now I realize that Pro-Choice has another whole dimension: it's not just about abortion; it's also about adoption.

Polly Young-Eisendrath, a friend of my parents, wrote a book called, *Hags and Heroes, a Feminist Approach to Jungian Psychotherapy with Couples*, and I reread the chapter: "What Do Women Really Want?"<sup>6</sup> Polly and her husband, Ed, give workshops for couples who are having marital problems. Their workshops are great, but my marriage ruptured anyway. One of the messages Polly and Ed try to impart to couples stuck in control issues is: What women really want is autonomy, self rule, the freedom to make choices for themselves.

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<sup>6</sup>Polly Young-Eisendrath, "What Do Women Want?" *Hags and Heroes, A Feminist Approach to Jungian Psychology with Couples* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1984) pp. 16-18.

To illustrate, *Hags and Heroes* borrows from a medieval story in which King Arthur has agreed to ask his nephew, Sir Gawain, to marry the Lady Ragnell as payment on a debt. In the folktale a curse has been cast on Lady Ragnell that changes her into a "hideous old hag," but the chivalrous Sir Gawain still has agreed to marry her anyway. Presto, after their first kiss Lady Ragnell transforms into "a lovely and graceful woman with beautiful grey eyes."

The question she asked her new husband is whether he wanted her to be the hag by day for all in the castle to see and the beautiful princess at night in the privacy of their bed chamber, or the other way around. Either way but not both, the cruel requirement of the curse. The handsome Sir Gawain would have my vote for Congress. His answer was, "It is your choice, Ragnell, because it involves your life. Only you can decide." Of course, the wicked curse was broken. Lady Ragnell became the beautiful princess both night and day and the hideous old hag was never, ever seen again.

I think the same is true with the abortion/adoption question although Pro-Choicers often overlook the latter as a solution to the problem, and Pro-Lifers have gone to contradictory extremes to show their disapproval of abortion. In truth, I wonder how many women can live with either the abortion or the adoption choice. Is that why national birthrates (including illegitimacy rates) for women of all ages is skyrocketing?

[**Update: May 13, 2013:** Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said that the Supreme Court should have avoided a broad-based decision in *Roe v. Wade*. She said, "the sheer sweep of the controversial 1972 decision short-circuited the development of a political groundswell that was building at the state and local level—not only on the issue of abortion—but on all phases of women's rights."] (7)

But are the women/girls here at Madonna just delaying another question? The question whether they should parent or place their baby for adoption creates another double-decision after the baby is born, as I would find out quickly. It didn't seem to matter that the resident had planned to place the baby for adoption all during her pregnancy, biology and the natural preservation instinct of the species will strongly tug at the now-lactating woman. It takes a determined, goal-oriented woman to carry through with adoption plans while she still has milk in her breasts.

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7. Allen Pusey. "Ginsburg: Court should have avoided broad-based decision in *Roe v. Wade*." *ABA Journal*, 13 May 2013.  
<[http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/ginsburg\\_expands\\_on\\_her\\_disenchantment\\_with\\_roe\\_v\\_wade\\_legacy/](http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/ginsburg_expands_on_her_disenchantment_with_roe_v_wade_legacy/)>  
(September 2013)

October 14, 1990

So far there have been two babies born since I joined the staff. Amber, a 15-year-old African-American girl, was one of those young women who didn't look even vaguely pregnant when you saw her from the back. Ant-like, her petite frame and spindly arms and legs seemed to contradict her incredibly huge stomach. From the point of view of someone like myself, who had already gone through two vaginal deliveries, the fragile yet voluminous Amber was almost a painful sight. Overtime, I learned that women who carry their babies high and tight like Amber usually give birth to boy babies; an over-all weight gain and lower belly fat were usually girl babies.

We were all relieved when Amber was scheduled for a Cesarean (C-section)\*(8) two weeks past her due-date. The night before her surgery the teens were anxious. I let the 10:30 p.m. lights-out rule slide so they could release some of their nervous tension. I knew they would gather somewhere on the sly just as soon as I had gone downstairs, so I sat down on one of the beds in the triplet room to talk openly. I thought Amber might get some sleep if the others weren't lurking around undercover, whispering loudly.

As if by osmosis, the young residents had absorbed Amber's fear and a lot of the girls had questions about the operation. My two ectopic pregnancies suddenly acquired some meaning in my new job. An ectopic pregnancy\* is a biological mistake. A fertilized egg starts to grow outside the uterus and its urgent removal resembles a C-section almost exactly, except there is no baby with the ectopic . . . just the acute realization that without the miracle of modern medicine, one would eventually have died from infection or internal hemorrhaging.

I answered questions about the recovery period and, to myself, hoped that Amber would be given time to mend once she was released from the hospital. Although I was 32 and 33 years old (twice Amber's age) at the time of my surgery, I had needed the full six-week convalescence each time to get back on my feet. Moreover, I wasn't burdened, as Amber would be, with a newborn dependent on me. And I didn't have, as Amber would have, an active household with younger siblings who needed supervision. At home, Amber was the oldest child of four brothers and sisters and two young cousins. Amber's aunt, her mother's baby sister, had dropped the two children off over a year ago and hasn't been seen since.

At 5:30 a.m. Amber and I drove to the hospital. In her arms, resting against her enormously pregnant stomach, she clutched her tattered old teddy bear. As we drove in the predawn darkness, a chiaroscuro effect was created when the street lights crossed her face: Madonna-to-be-with-Teddy. Amber was quiet and tense, her eyes black with fear. I struggled to

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8. \* See Glossary Terms

think of upbeat things to talk about. "What about them Bears?" would have been the safe "guy" thing to say, but whatever small talk we could have managed was silenced by our pounding hearts. As the blocks swept by and the distance to the hospital shortened, Amber pulled her stuffed teddy in closer. The 1990s Chicago Bears hadn't been doing well anyway—Walter Payton had retired and the 1985 Bears Super Bowl win (and their wonderfully jazzy "Super Bowl Shuffle") were light-years in the past, Pro-Sports' memory-style. . . way back when Amber was 10 years old. I turned on the radio.

*Were we a part of the natural biological side of life or were we symptoms of our times? Being a single mother at 15 couldn't be considered an historical anomaly, but with today's extended life span, 15 just seemed awfully young to me. One thing was clear: Amber's fast approaching surgery would cut into, derail, and all but jettison her childhood into cyberspace. This was the end of it, this short ride to the hospital. Would she still sleep with her teddy bear after the surgery, or would she put teddy in the crib with her baby?*

Unbelievably, Amber's baby boy weighed 9 pounds. OUCH! Even though Amber had given some thought to placing her baby for adoption, she ended up taking her son to her mother's house four days after delivery.

October 15, 1990

Carmen is a 17-year-old Hispanic girl. Her pregnancy was confidential to most of her family and friends. Her parents were separated and her father and older brothers were unaware of her pregnancy. Carmen seemed to know what she wanted to do: place the baby for adoption and then go to cooking school in Rhode Island (which is where her father thought she was right now). Of all of the Madonna residents, Carmen seemed to have figured out a workable future.

Suddenly at midnight, her bag of waters\* ruptured. Carmen was caught by surprise because she wasn't having contractions and she wasn't due until the first of November, another two weeks away. Normally Carmen was the definition of organization and control, but this spontaneous biological act of her body threw her into a panic. She returned to her chronological 17 years, frightened that her body had taken control of the moment. We went to the hospital where she was admitted to the labor and delivery (L. & D.) ward. It's a rule: When the birth sac discharges its amniotic fluid, a pregnant woman is admitted to the hospital. The doctors will either induce labor with a synthetic hormone called pitocin or do a C-section within the next twenty-four hours because there is an increased risk of infection for both mother and baby.

When it became obvious that Carmen's labor was stalling, the nurses gave her a sedative so she could rest up for an early morning delivery and I went back to Madonna. At 6:00 a.m. the

doctors induced her with the pitocin drip, and several hours later Carmen gave birth to a baby girl. Overnight, Carmen's mother had been able to rearrange her work schedule to be with her daughter during her labor. Maybe a human's bonding is similar to a gosling's bonding imprint but in the reverse: The connection from parent to child is made in that initial glance. At the last minute, Carmen's mother and older sister talked her into keeping the baby. They found a culinary school in Indiana where Carmen could start the first of the year. When her father was finally told, he surprised everyone by supporting Carmen's parenting decision and welcoming her baby. Carmen's parents were able to reconcile their differences, and the father moved back in.

Of course, most of the Madonna stories do not end like this. Today I wonder whether this storybook ending is still holding up. I also wonder whether Carmen was able to start and finish her cooking school AND parent her daughter as she had planned.

October 18, 1990

Colleen, a 23-year-old Irish Catholic girl from a terribly dysfunctional family, still can't decide whether to place her baby or not. At 11:30 p.m. last night, her bag of waters broke, so we drove to the hospital. Colleen didn't start having intense contractions until we pulled into the hospital driveway.

Her brother, a Catholic priest, met us there as did the substitute labor coach, and later the real labor coach, both old-time girlfriends of Colleen. I had also brought one of the Madonna residents, not knowing at that point that a pregnant woman was not allowed to be another's labor coach because she herself might go into sympathetic labor. Women are so tuned into each other's biorhythms that roommates and best friends will often menstruate at the same time. [I would find out much later that hot flashes in menopause were sympathetically shared between women as well.]

Her brother, the priest, and I ended up in the solarium at 2:00 a.m. The solarium was a peaceful, quiet room overlooking Lincoln Park and parts of Diversey Harbor. The room was heavily decorated in a Catholic motif with a full-sized Blessed Virgin Mary (acting as Fertility Goddess) in the corner.

*The solemn intensity of the occasion and the somber religious quality of the room reminded me of the time I worked as a home health aide in New England. At the opposite end of the birth-death cycle though, my patient was an elderly man who was dying of cancer. As his disease spread, more and more Catholic talismans were brought into the room. Photographs of Massachusetts' slain Catholic saint, John F. Kennedy, were considered just as sacred as traditional Catholic images back in the mid-'70s. In a strange impulse, icons, religious and*

*otherwise became magic symbols in hopes of breaking the cancer spell. John Kennedy ash trays and plaques, Blessed Virgin Mary statues, and plastic Jesus crucifixes multiplied in the sick room. All of the religious ornaments in the house eventually were transported to the man's room as though trying to appease Hades, the Death God.*

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross has written about a bargaining period as being one of the stages of death. The other stages are denial, anger, and for some lucky people, an acceptance of death which allows time for closure with friends and family. I think these stages hold true for most major life events such as divorce, job loss, and other life changing traumas.

Back to life and birth in Chicago. Right now, in the solarium next to the Virgin Mary, the brother (the priest) seemed to need a stranger with whom to share Colleen's story. He and Colleen came from a typical Catholic family. The mother had a child a year for six years. The priest was one of the older children and Colleen was the youngest. She was born several years after her mom had taken a break from the yearly birthing regimen. Colleen was the baby of the family, and as everyone's favorite, was coddled, pampered, and perhaps sheltered temporarily from the need to make grownup decisions. Their father was an alcoholic, and he and the mother were divorced after a turbulent marriage. The mother remarried two more times. The second husband died of a heart attack after a short marriage, and the third husband was another drinker.

Colleen was confused and unsure of herself after she graduated from high school. Without a strong father figure, without career goals or a strong desire to go to college, she moved to California to live with friends while trying to sort it out. Things did not jell for her there. She was unable to get or keep a job to meet expenses and she was forced to return home. Colleen was humiliated by this one botched stab at independence and the move back with her mother represented defeat. Maybe unconsciously Colleen knew she was pregnant when she planned to return home; however, when the mom found out the daughter was pregnant, out went Colleen.

This was when the brother stepped back into Colleen's life. He suggested to her that she probably couldn't live with herself psychologically if she aborted the baby. He knew of the M/SJ and moved Colleen in during her eighth week of pregnancy. He paid the \$85.00 weekly rate, which covered prenatal visits at St. Joseph's Hospital, a weekly counseling session with a Catholic Charities social worker, and room and board at the Center.

The priest now wanted her to place her baby for adoption. During her seven months at M/SJ, Colleen had not been able to come up with a post delivery plan, and lately I noticed that she was beginning to have second thoughts about this adoption idea of her brother's. Now I question her brother's right to interfere with Colleen's initial decision making process. I'm sure

Colleen wouldn't ever have aborted the baby, but she had continued passive denial of her pregnancy right up to delivery.

*Anyway, I feel I can be honest with these girls. I'm trying not to back down on issues; there would be anarchy if no one did her chores or didn't return at curfew. I'm trying to impress on them the importance of long-term goals. Goals that involve the health and well being of the as yet unborn child.*

*In Colleen's defense, though, I know how hard it is to talk concretely about something that hasn't taken physical shape. As a practical person, I hated those questions that started, "Theoretically speaking, if . . ." or, "Hypothetically, suppose you were . . ." and I would have to imagine some unreal experience—perhaps a confessional experience on the high seas. Sometimes these hypothetical tests were boring mind games to me; other times they were blind mental jumps into the unknown without bungee cords firmly attached.*

*On the other hand, my father loved those mind game and was one of those Myers/Briggs Thinking types. He described imminent metaphysical change like this: "A trapeze artist is happily swinging on his perch, back and forth, back and forth, when, out of nowhere, an empty trapeze comes swinging towards him! Quick as a flash (and my father snapped his fingers), the trapeze artist knew he would grab at and then occupy the empty swing." Part of the trapeze artist's decision to move/change/evolve will involve a moment in mid-air without tangible hands-on support.*

*To me, this heightened moment of free-fall IS the spiritual impulse. This energized moment is the spark of faith needed to get Jesus into Heaven, and the flash of superstition required to feel a voodoo doll's pin-prick. On a conscious level this moment of suspended belief allows one to be able to embrace the metaphysically unknown . . . and then, maybe, just maybe, think concretely about something that hasn't taken physical shape. (Yes, I'm an Intuitive/Feeling type.)*

*For me, imagining the love a mother will have for her unborn baby falls in this category. Before I had children, I never could have imagined how fast I'd bond to my first born nursing infant or my second born "special needs" baby. As a '60s flower child and a former zero-population-growth ("Z-P-G") person until my own biological clock ticked well into my mid-30s, my maternal experiences had comprised the care and feeding (and over-feeding) of two spoiled cats . . . We'll see if I can stay firm.*

October 20, 1990

*So, there are different stories for each girl/woman. The unsettling reality for me is that at night, after the p.m. staff leave, I am the only woman in the building who isn't pregnant. The on-call staff, who live in the basement in case I have to go to the hospital, aren't pregnant, but they aren't always visible or accessible to the girls. Technically, the on-call staff members are not on the payroll because they have free room and board in the exchange. The two women who live there now are Loyola University undergrads.*

*The one common denominator for the M/SJ residents is pregnancy, and they seem to bob and float from room to room like buoys in ocean waves. At first I felt overwhelmed by so much fertility, by the obvious physical reminder of sexual activity and by such young women—girls, really. Each resident has aches and pains, and almost all have bladder infections; all have gas, heartburn, and pressure "down there." A thought I had the night Colleen went into labor, and the night before Amber was scheduled for her C-section, was that collectively the house behaved like an amoeba poked at its edge. What one person felt at the perimeter of the house was shared by all—amoeba-like and fluid, shifting and regrouping collectively.*

*Later I would see that one woman's labor could seem to trigger another's labor prematurely, which was the reason it was a mistake to take a resident as a labor coach. Sometimes a resident just needed the individual attention the laboring woman was getting from staff; other times she would misinterpret her body's first or second trimester preparations for labor, called Braxton Hicks\* contractions, and magnify them into full-fledged labor contractions. It is easy for the mind to play tricks on the first-time pregnant woman, especially at night.*

All pregnant women who take Lamaze\* classes are instructed to have a hospital bag pre-packed within a couple of weeks of their delivery date. All of the Madonna residents take Lamaze classes. Carmen panicked, in part, because she hadn't packed her hospital bag yet. Normally efficient and prepared, she thought she still had a cushion of time to go before delivery.

Colleen hadn't packed her hospital bag either, even though she was four days past her due date. Still in denial, she was not prepared—what a surprise. Between Colleen's contractions all of the residents were in her room helping her get out the door. "Do you want your hairbrush? Toothbrush? Where's your bathrobe?" All were envisioning their own future labor; all were in labor with Colleen. A lucky girl off to the prom with the cheers and support of the entire sorority. They all hoped for a girl baby and that is what they got.

October 21, 1990

Poor Colleen looks terrible. She's been crying for three days. The baby is in temporary custody.\* The social workers and staff all seem to know that the longer the girl delays signing the adoption papers, the more likely she will keep the baby.

October 23, 1990

Last night I was talking to Cassie, a 19-year-old "adult" resident. (An adult resident at M/SJ is over 18). Cassie was feisty and would often verbally spar with staff. She said that one of the favorite black staff members wore "do-me" pants because when she wore fashionably tight leggings with a large over-sweater, she could have seduced a man out of a coma. Cassie said that staff treated them like children. I said that I thought they ACTED like children, and I reminded her of how I had lost my temper the previous night.

What had happened was that a teenager named Jameka had requested permission to speak with an older girl, Lydia, after the teen quiet-hour and lights-out time and I had said "okay." Then, at midnight, I found Jameka downstairs in the kitchen heating up two chocolate donuts in the microwave. Although she frequently complained that she had gained eighty-three pounds, she had lathered both donuts with melted butter.

Jameka was breaking two rules by being in the kitchen: 1) being in the kitchen after hours and 2) taking advantage of a special privilege. The kitchen was off limits to residents after 10:30 p.m. unless permission was given ahead of time. In this case, Jameka had only asked to speak to Lydia—not to go down to the kitchen and make food (even if you don't consider chocolate donuts dripping with butter, "food").

When Cassie and Lydia crept into the kitchen/living room area to join Jameka on the sly, I blew up. They all knew the rules and knew they were breaking them. I told Cassie that if she couldn't keep up with the M/SJ rent (she was three weeks behind) and couldn't manage to live by the M/SJ rules that she claimed made her feel like a baby, she wouldn't find it any easier in the real world.

*I told her my landlord came to my apartment on the first of every month and took the rent money in cash. Okay, this was not totally true, but he had insisted on two and a half months up-front just to "secure" the space. A one-month security deposit is standard for renters; not two months, or as in my case, the two-and-a-half month deposit. To Cassie, I said this was just the rent part. Food was another issue all together. I spent \$35.00 a week on food and my children lived with their father (presumably eating most of their meals there). Then there would be baby*

sitters, diapers, formula, (beer, cigarettes), and the shockingly high cost of cleaning detergents, health and beauty products.

*And what about child support? Of the few women I've met who are the noncustodial parent, I'm the only woman I know who pays child support to the father. OK, I haven't actually met ANY non-custodial mothers, but most people ask, "Doesn't he work?" All of the custodial parents I know are women, and all of them receive only a small percentage of their ex-husband's income, if they are lucky to get anything at all. Only a few of these women can count on health insurance for their children, and none could beg the system for extras such as the additional money for daycare my ex-husband was eventually awarded.*

*Perhaps I'm the wave of the future: Fathers will start asking for custody of their children, then demanding (and receiving) more from their ex-wives than women have ever received for child support when mothers were considered the traditional primary parent. Is the legal system misogynistic? Does a noncustodial mother get punished by the courts? Did the judge overrule my objection to my husband's double-dip of the system? (Remember my article "Mom Seeking 'Sensitive Male' in Courts.") No, Cassie wouldn't understand this at all. Who could?*



#### NON-CUSTODIAL CHILD SUPPORT

(SEE MY JOURNAL ENTRY AT THE END OF THE CHAPTER)

Nationwide, during 1979-1988, the number of single, head of household women under the age of 30 rose 23% to 3.2 million. Only one-third of these women received any child support in 1987; the average annual payment was \$1,946.<sup>9</sup> Only 58% of all single parent households have court orders for child support—only half actually receive the support due to them.<sup>10</sup>

In Illinois, non-payment of child support is a primary reason almost 500,000 children in Illinois receive public aid. Parents who do not pay child support shift the cost of caring for their children to the taxpayers of Illinois. Since the Illinois Child Support Enforcement Program was established in 1976, it has collected more than \$1 billion for children in need.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>The Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI), *Sex and America's Teenagers* (New York, 1994) p. 59.

<sup>10</sup>"Child Support Enforcement," *Illinois Department of Public Aid, Fact Sheet*, (September 1994)

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

Most states have a formula to determine how much the non-custodial parent owes in child support to the custodial parent. In Illinois, the non-custodial parent owes a percentage of his/her net income depending on how many children are involved: The rates in 1996—no matter how many total hours worked:

1 child:	20 %	4 children:	40%
2 children:	25%	5 children:	45%
3 children:	32%	6 children:	50%

[Update: Demographic Characteristics: U. S. Census Bureau, 2009

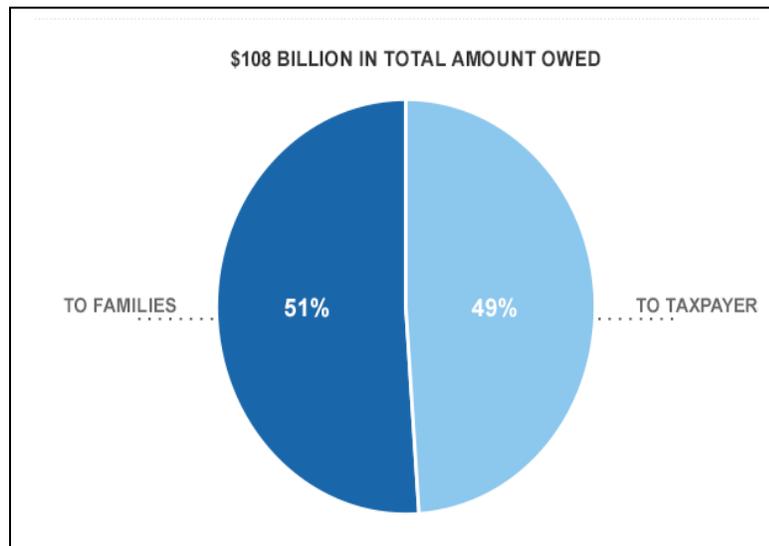
The majority of custodial parents were mothers (82.2 percent), and about **1 in 6 (17.8 percent) were fathers, proportions which were not statistically different from 1994.**

The distribution of custodial parents by marital status differed between mothers and fathers.

About 44.2 percent of custodial mothers were currently divorced or separated and 36.8 percent had never been married.

Custodial fathers were more likely than custodial mothers to be divorced or separated (53.5 percent) and less likely to have never married (24.7 percent).] (12)

**[Deadbeat parents cost taxpayers \$53 billion, 2012. (13)**



- With child support payments set at 17% of one's income for one child, it doesn't take long out of the workforce to rack up tens of thousands of dollars in debt.

- Over \$100 billion is owed in unpaid child support—nearly half of that to taxpayers supporting children on public assistance.

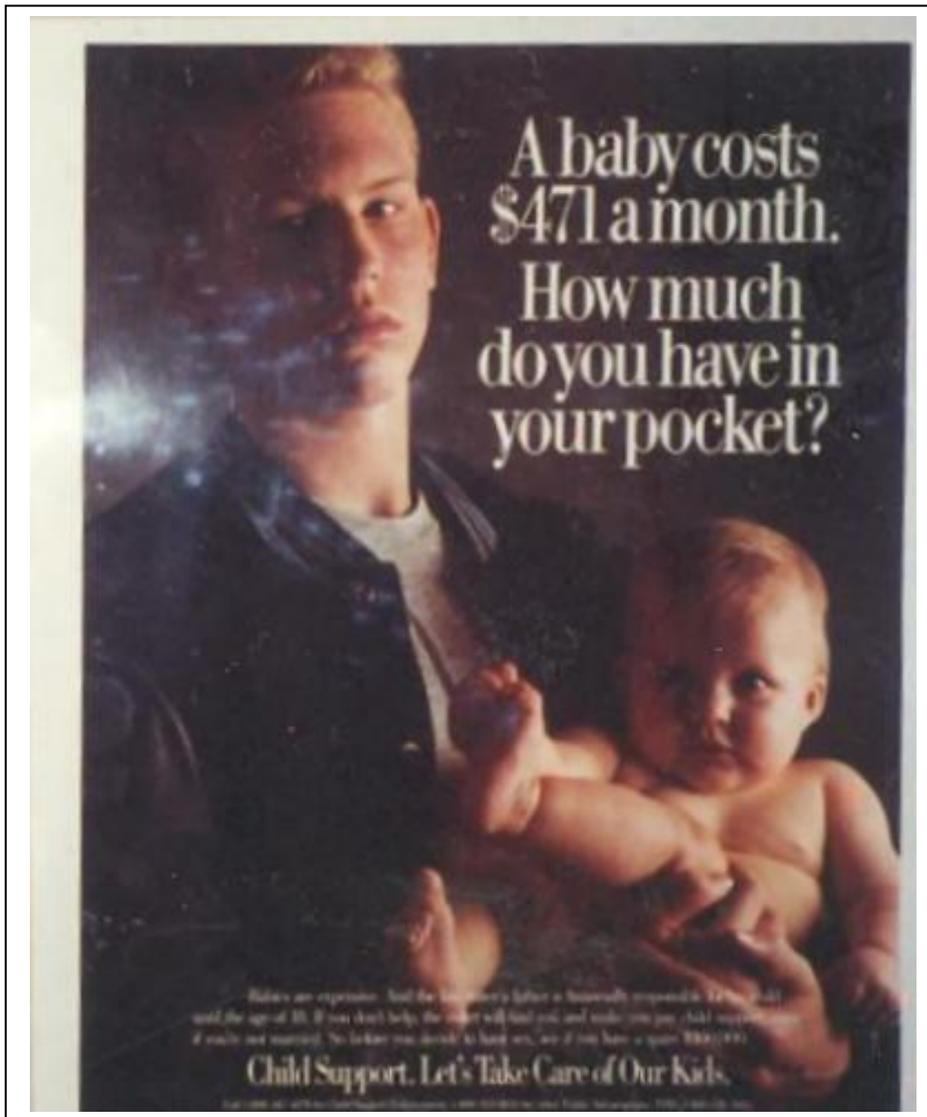
- According to the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, \$108 billion in total back payments was owed to parents with custody of children in 2009.]

12 . Timothy S. Grall. "Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2009." Dec. 2011. *U. S. Census Bureau*.

<<http://singleparents.about.com/gi/o.htm?zi=1/XJ&zTi=1&sdn=singleparents&cdn=parenting&tm=12&f=10&tt=11&bt=4&bts=4&zu=http%3A//www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p60-240.pdf>> (Sept 2013)

13 Steve Hargreaves. "Deadbeat parents cost taxpayers \$53 billion" 5 Nov 2012 *CNNMoney*.

<<http://money.cnn.com/2012/11/05/news/economy/unpaid-child-support/index.html>> (Oct 2013)



During the four years I worked at M/SJ, I would see that establishing paternity was the obvious dark hole in this growing illegitimacy epidemic. Paternity was one issue and, sadly, child support was quite another. The fact that I paid my ex-husband 25 percent of my net income (sixty hours from both of my jobs) for my two children wasn't a concept Cassie could imagine.

Naming the father of the baby seems to me to be a pretty basic part of the birthing process, but somehow our laws have let this particular point slide. A culture of bastards is a careless world, one without morals. Without fathers, our mothers marry the State. The cost to all of us is enormous—particularly the financial burden of teen pregnancy.

*[Update 2013, I am surprised that being a non-custodial mother still connotes an unfit mother. What has happened to women's liberation? Being liberated means equality for both sexes; both can nurture and both can provide financially, but one might have better extended family support (as was the case with my divorce). Above all else, everyone needs to put the best interest and well-being of the children.*

*Yet this is what was reported by National Parents Organization in 2009: "It's true that non-custodial mothers have one additional complaint that their male counterparts don't. Public perceptions of mothers without custody are predictably negative. Since women are assumed by popular culture to be natural parents who place the highest value on childrearing, mothers without custody can feel stigmatized."(14)*

*Back to the question I'm asked even today: "Didn't your husband work?" Yes he did, but I was still responsible for my children, and I paid my fair share and more. However, I think more non-custodial parents would pay their fair share if overtime and second job pay—i.e. wages beyond the forty-hour work week—could be factored out of the child-support tally. See letter at the end of the chapter about my effort to keep my child support current.]*



### **HIGH COST OF TEEN ILLEGITIMACY**

The estimated 1 million pregnancies and 521,826 births among women 15-19 years old in 1990 exceeded the pregnancy and birth rates of teens in most developing countries.<sup>15</sup> Of these one million teenage births, about 80% of the mothers are poor or of marginal income. From 1985 to 1990, the public costs (e.g. through Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Medicaid, Food Stamps) related to teenage childbearing totaled \$120.3 billion.<sup>16</sup> Nearly 53% of the funds given out by AFDC goes to families formed by a teenage birth.<sup>17</sup> An estimated \$48.1 billion could have been saved if each teen birth had been postponed until the mother was at least 20 years old.<sup>18</sup>

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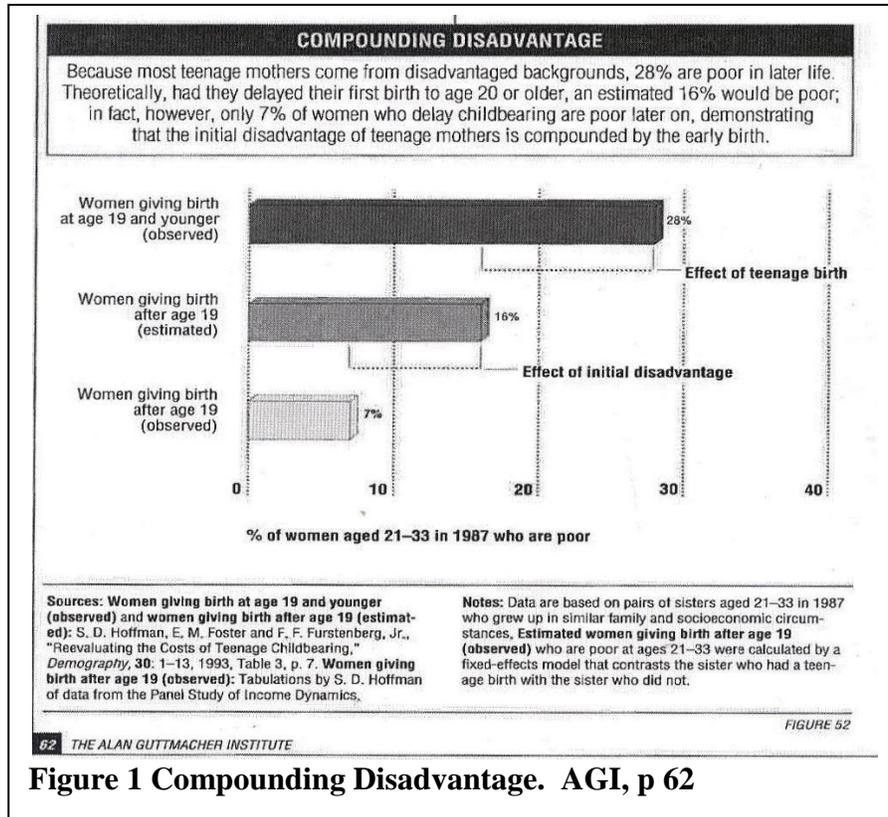
14 Robert Franklin. "Non-Custodial Moms More Likely to be 'Deadbeats' Than NC Dads." *National Parents Organization*, 17 Feb 2009. <<http://www.fathersandfamilies.org/2009/02/17/non-custodial-moms-more-likely-to-be-deadbeats-than-nc-dads/>> (June 2013)

<sup>15</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Special Focus: Surveillance for Reproductive Health," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, 42, No.SS-6 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1993) p. 1.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p.25.

<sup>17</sup>*Op. cit.*, *AGI*, p.59.

<sup>18</sup>*Op. cit.*, *MMWR*, (Vol 42, 1993) p. 26.



**Figure 1 Compounding Disadvantage. AGI, p 62**

**[Updated Stats, 2011:**

- Almost 330,000 babies were born to teen girls between the ages of 15 and 19.
- Teen childbearing costs U.S. taxpayers between \$11 and \$28 billion a year through public assistance payments, lost tax revenue, and greater expenditures for public health care, foster care, and criminal justice services.] (19)
- **NOTE: According to Stephanie Ventura, Teenagers accounted for just 23% of nonmarital births in 2007, down steeply from 50% in 1970.] (20)**



19. "Teen Pregnancy and Childbearing." *Office of Adolescent Health, US Department of Children's Services.* <[http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-health-topics/reproductive-health/teen-pregnancy/health-impact.html#\\_ftn1](http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-health-topics/reproductive-health/teen-pregnancy/health-impact.html#_ftn1)> (August 2013)

20. Stephanie Ventura, "Changing Patterns of Nonmarital Childbearing in the United States." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.* May 2009, (No. 18). <<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/unmarry.htm>> ( July 2013)

October 26, 1990

Very few of the residents involved their boyfriends in their pregnancies. Maybe that was due to the anonymous nature of the Madonna program, but after only a few weeks at M/SJ even I thought of the fathers of these to-be-babies as just "sperm donors," nothing more. At our staff meetings and in our group care workers log notes we carefully avoided naming the father even if we knew his name. At first I was offended that, as social workers, we referred to these "sperm donors" as the "Alleged Fathers" ("A/Fs" for short). But after a while, even I could talk about the "A/F" without having an ironic tone in my voice.

In the long run, however, we sadly continued the legal language which let men off the hook. "Alleged," or innocent (of paternity) until DNA tested positive in the lab and therefore held accountable in court, and then maybe for insurance and child support. This was a long road for a teenager who probably couldn't stand the sight of the A/F by now and was on to someone else anyway. Welcome to the instant world of teen love but grown-up responsibilities.

October 27, 1990

*I remember what my mother had said about her pregnancy with my second oldest brother. My father was at war in the Pacific and the women in our extended family had formed "compounds" near each other. In chemistry, a compound is a combination of two or more elements. A compound is one of the strongest chemical bonds as it takes a chemical reaction to make or break it down. I like the idea that families can form compounds too, although we usually think of the Kennedys when we think of "compounds." During wartime, it is probably an animal nesting instinct to put the woman and children in one safe place which could be protected by all the males of the clan. My mother told me that with the support of other women, her second pregnancy and delivery were effortless. Perhaps the extra dose of estrogen in the air neutralized the testosterone, so the birthing process was hormonally in tune and cosmically connected.*

*A woman's first pregnancy and delivery are normally stressful but in my mother's case even more so because her mother had died in childbirth; certainly cosmic revenge would happen swiftly during her own labors. Perhaps my mother's second pregnancy was less stressful simply because she had made it through her first pregnancy in one breathing piece.*

*Personally, I'm drawn to the idea of the "female-only compound" because my labor and deliveries brought out the worst in me, my husband, and our relationship, but maybe we weren't alone in this. Researchers at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas (1991) found that "the presence of a supportive companion (known as a "doula") throughout labor reduced rates of cesarean section and forceps deliveries." "Doula" is a Greek word for an experienced woman*

*who assists a new mother in infant care. Although most U.S. women today are helped through their labor by their spouse or partner, the researchers in Houston suggested that a doula might have a better effect on a woman's labor and outcome "because of her personal experience and calm, objective presence." Doulas were able to reduce the patient's anxiety level which lowered the level of circulating catecholamines (enzymes released by stress) which then led to an easier labor."*<sup>21</sup>

*That is not to say that my labors would have been any easier with a doula, but maybe my husband and I would have been spared the additional emotional scarring my labors produced. I had back labor with my second pregnancy, and the nurse took control and told my ex to knead my lower back. We were barely speaking to each other by that point, and I was grateful that she gave orders that could not be ignored. He somehow thought I was exaggerating the pain and kept telling me to stop my whining and moaning. He told me that I was embarrassing him and that I was upsetting the other mothers.*

*Was my mother's belief in the need for strong female bonding during pregnancy an example of a "Mother's intuition?" . . . of "female intuition?" Oddly, my mother died during my first "real" pregnancy, several years after those ectopic pregnancies had threatened my own fertility. Death and pregnancy are, therefore, strangely linked in my family. Sometimes I wonder how I ended up being a doula of sorts to these Madonna girls. This thought is especially intense when I want to be home cuddling and holding my own children at night, not sleeping on guard in my single bed at a maternity home waiting for a shoe to drop or a baby to arrive.*



### **MALE PRESENCE IN CHILDBIRTH, HISTORICALLY**

Margaret Mead noted that in primitive cultures all over the world, the elderly woman, rather than the skilled man, was the predominant attendant during labor. Out of sixty-four primitive cultures whose childbearing practices she studied, almost one-half excluded men from witnessing even the most normal deliveries. Close female relatives and friends formed the support group for the laboring woman in these cultures.

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<sup>21</sup>"Companion During Labor Lessens Woman's Need of Obstetrical Intervention," *Digest, Family Planning Perspectives* 23 (September/October 1991) pp. 238-239.

Current (male-dominated) health care systems have produced innovations in childbirth procedures that have made birth more difficult for the woman in labor particularly, Mead noted, her isolation from female support . . . <sup>22</sup>



October 28, 1990

Anyway, I think Cassie is out the door. She's behind in rent and can't seem to focus on getting or keeping a job. She now only comes back to M/SJ at curfew; and when she's pushed to make plans for when the baby arrives, she says she is going to "stay with friends" and then hook into the welfare system. Another one lost. The key to the pattern is how dependent women are on men economically, particularly non-welfare single women with infants in our patriarchal society that offers little support for families, broken or otherwise. Daycare is a crap-shoot and health insurance is nonexistent for most American women, especially those caught in middle or lower income groups. "The Feminization of Poverty" was a phrase coined in the late 1970s by Diana Pearce.<sup>23</sup> The system sometimes coerces a woman to grab at any man even knowing that emotionally and psychologically she'll be bankrupt as soon as the sexual honeymoon is over. Bad selections are repeated over and over again, such as Colleen's mother choosing alcoholic men, simply because the struggle to stay above water is too financially exhausting for most single mothers.

*My high school friend, Jacque, did the opposite of my "Z-P-G" and ended up having three babies with two different men by the time she was 25 years old. She told me she "sacrificed" the soul/ego of one of her children (usually a son) with each new relationship after her second divorce. Jacque doesn't even try to mix men into her life anymore; she prefers to keeps her liaisons sexual and separate from her family.*

Unfortunately, not all women have this financial flexibility or the emotional strength to keep everything tidy and sorted. Psychologists (e.g. Carl Jung) would say that my friend Jacque had been able to develop her "male side." Jung believed that the feminine instinct pulls together and merges as the masculine instinct pushes away and keeps separate. Neither instinct is "bad" or "inferior," and of course, a little of both is needed to create anything . . . a baby, or even a whole and healthy person.

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<sup>22</sup>Signe Hammer, ed. *Women Body and Culture, Essays on the Sexuality of Women in a Changing Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975.) pp. 281-290.

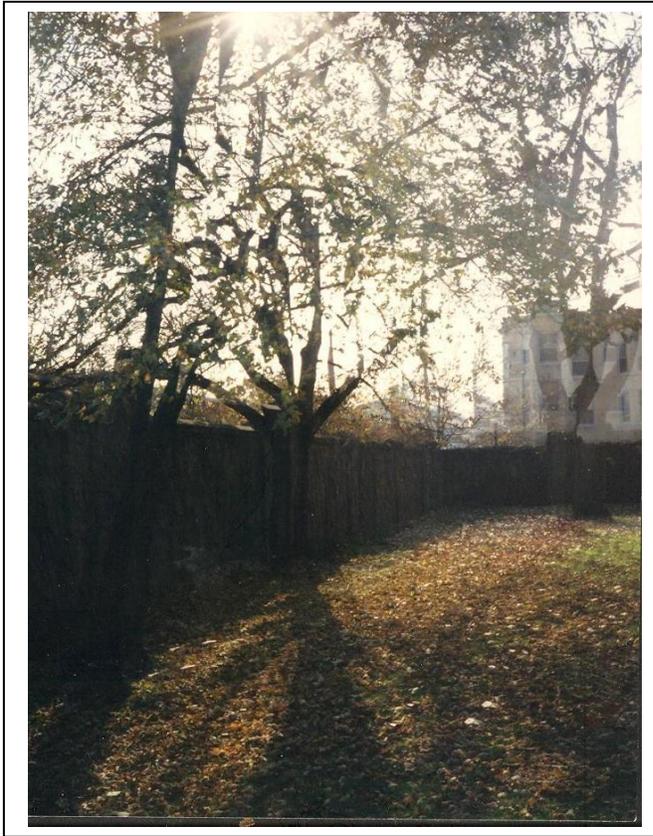
<sup>23</sup>Ruth Sidel, *Women and Children Last, the Plight of Poor Women in Affluent America* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986) p. 15.

November 1, 1990

Last night was Halloween, and for some reason Emily, a 17 year old teen from a small town in Indiana, was looking out of her corner window at 4:15 a.m. She saw two boys scale the wall and then walk across the grounds. Emily came to get me, and, sure enough, I saw two white shirts dart across the yard.

What to do? The building behind M/SJ is a home for battered and abused women and children. These women needed a policeman to discourage an enraged male from marching in to recover his "property." At one time the two buildings on the property shared a police guard. Some of the older cops in the district remembered those days when they could moonlight at M/SJ and make some extra cash from an easy assignment.

Several years ago, both homes needed to tighten their budgets. A chain-link fence was



installed at the driveway and the off-duty cop was dismissed. A large and tall brick/stone wall encircled the property; the metal gate with "DANGER! HIGH VOLTAGE!" was to discourage only the crazy ones. For me, the arrangement seemed even more surreal; the gate clearly separated my two work environments into female- and male-only spheres. An hour before my shift started at Madonna, I was in the night bond pits at the Chicago Board of Trade. At the CBOT, "testosterone" and "trading" are almost synonymous words.

But back to M/SJ. It was the overnight staff person's job (ME) to pull the gate shut and secure the padlock at midnight. Sometimes that would involve shoveling snow or chipping at ice chunks

just to be able to move the gate. The gate proved to be an absolute nightmare when I drove a girl in labor to the hospital; once out, I rarely would remember to stop to relock it ("Just hold your contractions, honey. Be right back!"), so the whole point of the gate, on some nights, was moot.

With any luck, this wouldn't be the night Archie Bunker, Fred Flintstone, Stanley Kowalski, or Ralph Kramden went ballistic and stormed the wall. To me, it seemed strange and a little feudal to literally lock out all men except those who were unborn to the Madonna residents, or those poor little boys at the shelter next door. Castle moat flooded and intact with gate locked at night; castle moat drained, gate unlocked during the day. Chain-link, suit of armor installed over property as needed. Men and their aggressive, out-of-control hormones were physically blocked from venting on those they had grown to abuse. And somehow, in our day-to-day world, many of us seem to have grown to accept this as "normal" or at least "typical" male behavior.



### MALE PHYSICAL VIOLENCE TOWARD WOMEN

According to the Justice Department, three out of four women can expect to be victims of at least one violent crime during their lifetime. Each year, three to four million American women are beaten; every eighteen seconds a woman is beaten. FBI statistics show that rape is increasing at four times the rate of other crimes; a woman is raped every six minutes. The U.S. rape rate is thirteen times higher than Britain's, four times higher than Germany's and more than twenty times higher than Japan's.<sup>24</sup>

[Update Globally, June 20, 2013: (25)

The World Health Organization reported that one-third (35%) of all women globally will experience physical or sexual violence. The report's key findings on the health impacts of violence by an intimate partner were:

- **Death and injury:** The study found that globally, 38% of all women who were murdered were murdered by their intimate partners, and 42% of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of a partner had experienced injuries as a result.
- **Unwanted pregnancy and abortion:** Both partner violence and non-partner sexual violence are associated with unwanted pregnancy; the report found that women experiencing physical and/or sexual partner violence are twice as likely to have an abortion than women who do not experience this violence.
- **Low birth-weight babies:** Women who experience partner violence have a 16% greater chance of having a low birth-weight baby.]

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<sup>24</sup>Eloise Salholz, "Women under Assault," *Newsweek*. (16 July 1990) p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> WHO report highlights violence against women as a 'global health problem of epidemic proportions.'" 20 June 3013. WHO <[http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2013/violence\\_against\\_women\\_20130620/en/](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2013/violence_against_women_20130620/en/)> (September 2013)

**[Update in Chicago, May 2013:**

In *Chicago Magazine*, Whet Moser wrote, “The only category that outranked domestic battery [in prison] was possession of controlled substances. Those are arrests, not convictions, but the fact that arrests for domestic battery outrank every offense but drug possession is notable.”

MSU professor, Angie Kennedy, and her colleagues surveyed "180 female high school students in a poor Chicago community," and came up with more startling findings:

- 85 percent witnessed domestic violence.
- Half reported witnessing an injury to an adult in the home from domestic violence.
- 72 percent were abused. (26)]



But, now at 4:30 a.m. on Halloween I had a problem. Even if I called 911 and got the police to the front gate, I would have to walk solo to the gate and unlock it to let the police in so they could look around. And then after the inspection, I would have to relock the gate which locked all of the men (and the policemen) out of our vulnerable female world and then, with any luck at all, get back inside M/SJ safely. And that is what happened. By the time the CPD got to Madonna, the two boys had already cut across the grounds and out the other side.

Looking back on this incident the whole thing seems ludicrous. In truth, I have never really felt physically threatened, but that is beside the point. I'm tall and strong and I think would-be molesters would rather prey on the more delicate types of my gender. But shortly after this episode, we got an electric fence that could be operated from the inside. I guess not all of the staff felt bullet-proof.

So in addition to thinking I should have interviewed in my pajamas, I was wondering if I overlooked the part of my job description that said, "Must be able to defend oneself from drunken, Halloween guys gone astray."

November 4, 1990

Cassie is out the door but in handcuffs with a police escort. She has been stealing money from the family for whom she baby-sat. They set a trap for Cassie, with Linda's collaboration,

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26. Whet Moser. “Domestic Violence Is Alarmingly Common in Chicago.” *Chicago Magazine*. (17 May 2013) <<http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/The-312/May-2013/Domestic-Violence-Leads-to-Violence-on-the-Streets/>> (July 2013)

and the family pressed charges against her. As it turned out that wasn't the end of Cassie's mischief; she had also been ready to remove linens, towels, and canned food from M/SJ. She had them neatly packed in boxes and suitcases which we found in her closet . . . God knows what she did end up taking.

November 9, 1990

Colleen has decided to keep her baby girl—what a surprise. She had been at M/SJ since her eighth week of pregnancy and still couldn't make up her mind three weeks after delivery. I was impatient with her because all she seemed to talk and think about was how much weight she had lost. Colleen's brother, the priest, had practically disowned her by this point because all of his hard work was on the verge of going down the drain, along with her fragile college plans. Then suddenly, out of the blue, Colleen's mother (of course, now the baby's grandmother) rounded up all the baby supplies. She prepared a nursery and all that Colleen had to do was take the baby home, which is just what she ended up doing.

At one point, I tried to tell Colleen that there would be losses for her no matter which decision she made. I think we are all conditioned to think that there will be one complete, satisfying answer and one morning we will wake up and know what's what, and all of that "other" data will become miscellaneous, superfluous, and unnecessary and will therefore recede into the background. What I wanted her to know was that she was in a no-win situation and she would lose some piece of herself no matter what. The key was to find that one piece she could live without (spleen? heart? mind?) (mother? brother? baby?)

I guess it would have surprised me if she had decided to make an actual decision for herself. If she had placed her baby for adoption, the pattern would have been broken, and Colleen, her daughter, and maybe her future granddaughter would not have to face the prospect of living their lives as victims.

November 20, 1990

Fourteen-year-old Jennifer gave birth to a little girl. Jennifer herself was adopted, and she's going to place her child with a biracial couple as the A/F is black and Jennifer is white. Going to a Chicago public school pregnant instead of cheerleading in the green fields of Palatine must have made a very strange high school experience for her. Her suburban friends think she's away at boarding school and her parents rarely call or visit. Jennifer's forced isolation at a time when most teens are doing things in groups has made her tentative and withdrawn. At Madonna, she is shy in the teen group and her Catholic Charities social worker says she is still guarded.

I asked her how she liked Lakeview High School and she said, "Oh, some of the kids are nice to me." (Just some?) Who will ever forget one's intense need for social acceptance in high school? Will Jennifer be haunted by "most of the kids who weren't nice to her" well into her adult years? Will that social isolation affect her marriage and career choices? Or will she learn emotional adaptability and self-reliance early?

December 1, 1990

Heather, a twenty-year-old from Des Plaines, has been diabetic since she was a little girl. Under normal conditions, she knows how to keep her blood sugars on an even keel, but as soon as she became pregnant, her body developed a mind of its own. Her blood sugar levels began to skyrocket then plummet, swinging crazily. One night a few weeks ago she did her blood levels and when I came back to check on her, she was slumped down in the couch. Her blood-sugar reading was dangerously low and she was in pre-shock. Orange juice pulled her around, but I was amazed at how quickly her body reacted and then readjusted to her self-produced chemicals.

But now, the Sunday after Thanksgiving, Heather is at St. Joseph's for her diabetes so they can monitor her. Even though she's a veteran diabetic, the excitement of spending the weekend at home must have triggered a mixed-up message to her body to produce more insulin, and her family rushed her to St. Joseph's yesterday. None of the staff thinks she will be back out again until after she delivers because she only has a couple more weeks to go. I'm relieved she is under real medical supervision.

December 16, 1990

When I arrived at M/SJ tonight, Gina was at St. Joe's with premature contractions. M/SJ's antiquated heating system does not have centralized humidity control. Gina was dehydrated, as would be two other residents in the next two weeks. I am sensitive to dry air also. The moisture loss has irritated my lungs; parched yet water-logged from drinking glass after glass of water at bedside, I cough all night long. A month ago, I tracked down all the humidifiers I could find. I bought one for myself but guarded it selfishly, even from the weekend overnight staff. After the dry-heat shock passed and our bodies became acclimated to living in the Sahara Desert during the Ice Age, and after the girls had been bullied into drinking more water, winter moved into Madonna.

But, 17 year-old Gina is frail and hardly looks the seven and a half months pregnant that she is. She is fragile, beautiful and bashful, and terribly vulnerable to her Italian machismo heritage. Her boyfriend, Butch, is a Male Chauvinist Pig to the 10th degree who pretty clearly wanted only a boy clone—the master race, the No. 1 sex. We all worried what would happen to

Gina's future (and the future of the baby) if she made a mistake and received an X chromosome from him. Butch would see a girl baby as Gina's "problem," even though all high school biology classes introduce the sex chromosomes (XX are female; XY are male), and explain that the male determines the sex of the child depending on whether he adds an X or a Y chromosome when he fertilizes the egg.

Although we were pretty sure that Butch didn't physically abuse Gina, we could tell by her slumped over posture that he was being pretty cruel to her psychologically as her belly continued to expand.



### **PHYSICAL ABUSE DURING PREGNANCY**

The number of pregnant women who have been assaulted by the men in their lives is high: Researchers interviewed 1,203 women who used prenatal clinics in Baltimore and Houston. Of these women, 14% of the adult women and 21% of the teens had been physically abused at some point during their pregnancies; 56% of the teens, 65% Of the adults had been abused more than once. Abused women get prenatal care late and are twice as likely to have a low weight baby<sup>27</sup>

The June 12, 1996, Oprah Winfrey Show, "Women Abused during Pregnancy," put the national statistic at 25%. Winfrey said, "Incredibly, one in four women will get beaten while they are pregnant." Also, the report added that teenage girls are often more severely beaten and abused than pregnant adult women, and that in many states, women aren't allowed to get divorced while they are pregnant (e.g. Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas.) (28)



December 18, 1990

Butch threatened to break off the relationship with Gina several times, and he often discussed other women he would like to "do." Presumably these other more desirable women could still see their waistlines. But too many boyfriends and husbands, not just the Neanderthal Butch, make "their" woman feel fat or unattractive during or right after pregnancy. Certainly mine did. Who really wants to be fat when images of emaciated women are glorified in

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<sup>27</sup>"Physical Abuse During Pregnancy," Update, *Family Planning Perspectives* 26 (September/October 1994) pp. 196-197

28. Oprah: The Oprah Winfrey Show. "Women Abused During Pregnancy. *Harpo Productions, Inc.* (12 June 1996).

magazines, on billboards, or MTV? How does the normal bulge of pregnancy fit into this media saturation?

However, what happens when the spouse is "only" psychologically or emotionally abusive to his wife? What happens if he uses *droit de seigneur* (male privilege) to make the conditions and "the rules?" What about mind games and name calling? What happens when he gives or denies her the household allowance based on his interpretation of her behavior? Or when he controls her access to her friends and family by taking the car keys or by not paying the telephone bill?

There is emotional blackmail used in this language when the marriage is unhealthy to start with. None of these "acceptable" forms of torture leave visible scars, but what happens to the woman's psyche and soul when she is attacked at this particularly vulnerable time? And then, after the crisis is over, how is she to tuck away that dehumanizing information about her husband when she is no longer physically vulnerable, as emotionally dependent, and the babies aren't so unpredictably demanding?

Emotional abuse, isolation, using *droit de seigneur*, intimidation, economic control. None of these leave noticeable scars, but unfortunately almost all women are familiar with some of this list first hand. Of the women I know who have experienced both physical and psychological abuse have said about the latter, "If only he would just HIT me and get it over with."

We had an in-service and were given this "Physical-**Violence**-Sexual" chart to discuss. We were taught to listen for examples of violence in our residents and those who might need intensive psychological follow up.



*Sadly, I could identify with all of the pie pieces and I was white, educated and middle class. Apparently physical violence is color blind and class neutral. I had been a 1960s flower child who had postponed having babies until the last possible moment (which might have explained the ectopic pregnancies); now I felt I was too old to cope with the demands of irrational toddlers. I was overwhelmed and unhappy. My husband and I argued all day and night, his construction business went bankrupt, and that was when two generations of mother-loss crept into me. And darkness fell. The more I retreated, the more my husband criticized me and closed in. In a sad journal entry I wrote:*

*March 3, 1987: I feel like I'm a painting that's too big for its frame and he is nipping and tucking at the "right" places. Nothing I do seems to be what is expected. And then I hate myself for withdrawing into myself, for building the shell so tight that I can't hear or remember my dreams.*

*As my world began to fragment, my husband started to question everything about me, including my sanity. I was desperate for privacy so I could pull myself together. I moved out of the house and three years later we were divorced. Finally, at last, my mother started revisiting my dreams. Four years after she died in 1984, I bundled up her letters and tried to inhale her remaining scent. That was when I began the journey to locate the woman within me. (29)*

December 22, 1990

Kyle was a wonderful 20 year old, black-eyed Irish girl enrolled at a Catholic college in Wisconsin until she found out she was pregnant. At that point, she transferred to DePaul University and hardly missed a beat—or a semester. Kyle, unlike Colleen, was sure of her decision right from the start: to place her baby for adoption.

What made Kyle's story unique was that the A/F was an integral part of her stay at Madonna. Financially, he paid half of her M/SJ living expenses; emotionally he made an effort to be with her on the weekends, and he was her Lamaze coach. We all got to know this man's kind, gentle ways, and we knew how hard the two of them struggled with their placement decision. They had been together for three years in college. Together they made the decision to place the baby so that they both could finish college . . . and together they selected and met with an adopting family.

Kyle didn't want Colleen to know any of the details of her delivery because she went ahead with the placement and was home in time for Christmas. I guess everyone is sick of Colleen's whining, not just staff. Colleen still calls Linda and other staff almost every day. She visits often and looks war-torn and weary. She no longer walks and talks like a teenager; she has the emotional weight of a middle-aged woman. She is hag-like just as Lady Ragnell was pre-transformation. Angry and unhappy, Colleen has become frozen in others' projections.

December 28, 1990

Christmas is for Christians. Catholic Charities, through all of their programs (M/SJ included), tried to get as many of the residential clients home for Christmas as possible. Linda was able to negotiate Christmas plans for all of the M/SJ girls, except Jessica, a 16-year-old Caucasian girl in her ninth month of pregnancy. Jessica's pregnancy was under wraps to all in

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29. My journey led me to an analysis of my grandmother's letters. "With my pen directed home,' Letters of Elizabeth Cole Fleming 1895-1910," 2005 MA thesis, DePaul University. My grandmother was an 1897 Smith College graduate, a Traveling Secretary with the YWCA of Illinois, and, with my grandfather, a missionary in Lahore, then India.

the extended family. Christmas Day was a logistical problem because the aunts and uncles would confront her enormous belly unaware. In short, Jessica was not welcome home.

Again I realized how young 16 really was. Jessica was in tears for weeks before the 25th. I'm not sure what Linda said to make the parents feel guilty. They finally relented but told Jessica she would have to stay in the bedroom when the grandparents came by. I was scheduled to be on-call all of the Christmas weekend. I offered to stay at Madonna with her (instead of carrying the beeper and being paged if she went into labor), but she decided to comply with her parents' restrictions and went home to her bedroom.

I think I was more rebellious when I was a teenager, but then I wasn't a pregnant teen; I was just a long-haired hippie who questioned "The Establishment" and its rules. Perhaps, though, I've minimized the idealistic tug Norman Rockwell has on all of us Americans. During the Holidays, one yearns for the Family-Ideal no matter how unloving or uncaring the Real Family truly is.

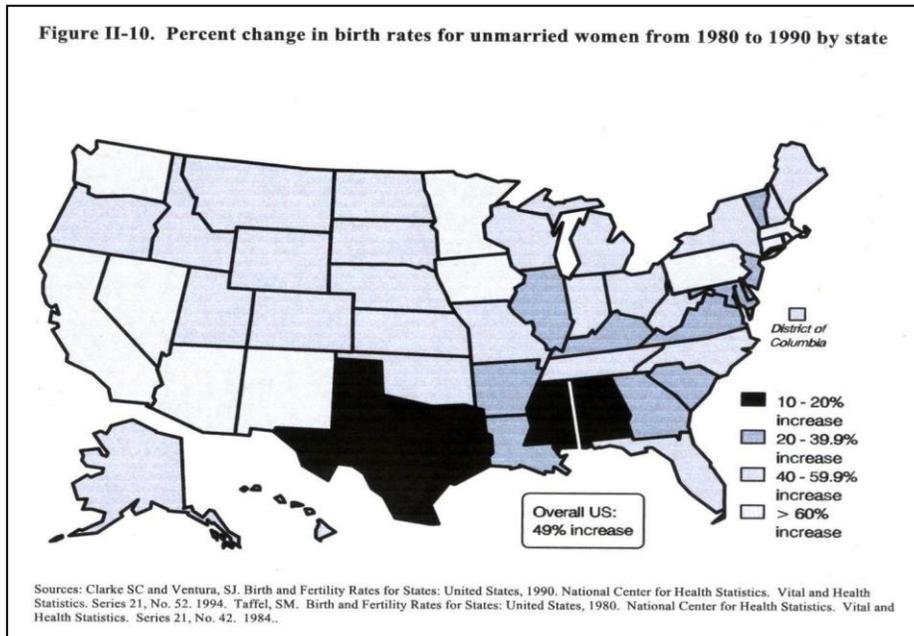
This situation seems to be the most typical of the teen pregnancy no-win scenarios: parents are angry and embarrassed with their sexually precocious daughter; defiant daughter needs to show (strut) her independence. Neither side will listen to the other. Jessica will want to parent her baby; her parents will try "tough love" with her to teach her limits. A day late and a dollar short.

Jessica will run away with the baby and try to make it at "friends' houses," or she'll gradually ease out the door and her parents will end up caring for her baby, which is exactly what they don't want to do. Unfortunately they are all now just pawns in the statistical wave of growing teenage pregnancies.

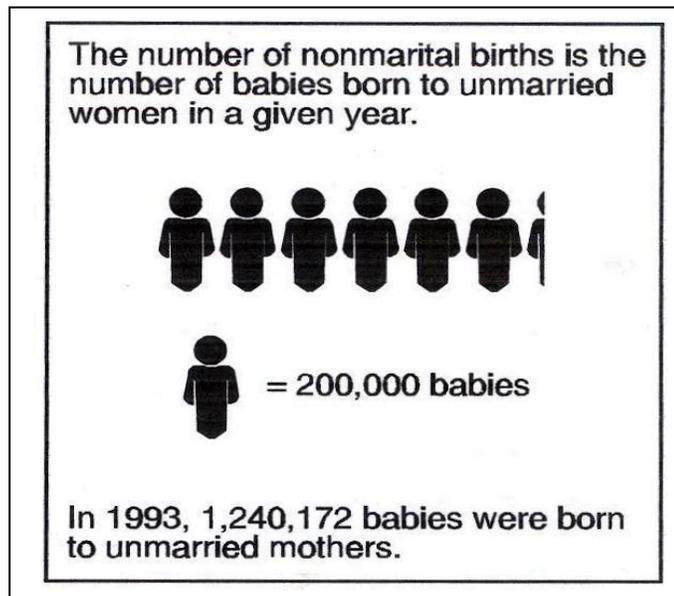


## NUMBER OF OUT-OF-WEDLOCK PREGNANCIES ON THE RISE

**Fig 1A (30) Percent of unwed birthrate change by state: 1980 & 1990**



**Fig. 1B. (31) Visual representation of nonmarital babies born, 1993**

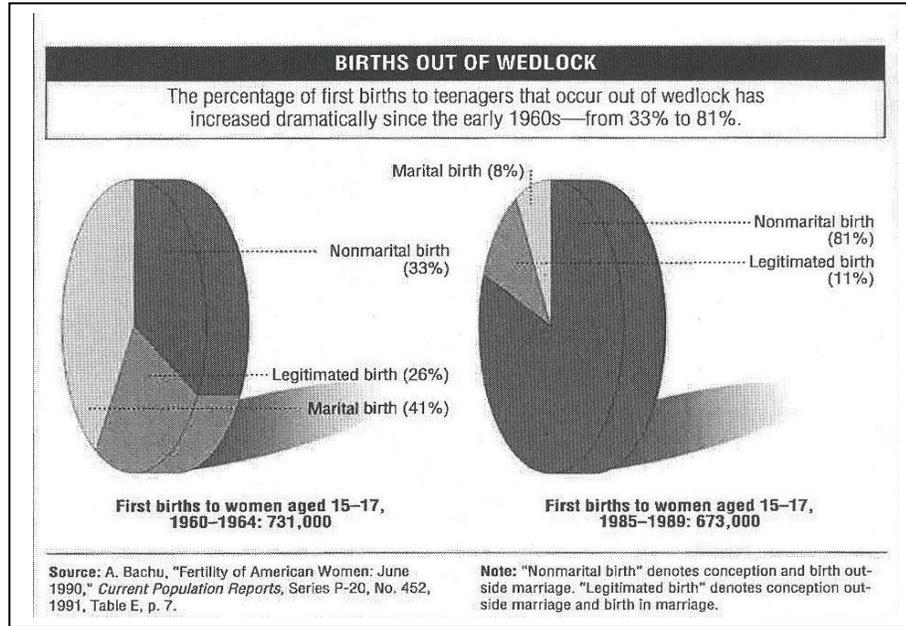


30. Stephanie J. Ventura et al. "The Demography of Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing." Report to Congress on Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing. *Department of Health and Human Resources*, (September 1995) p. 19

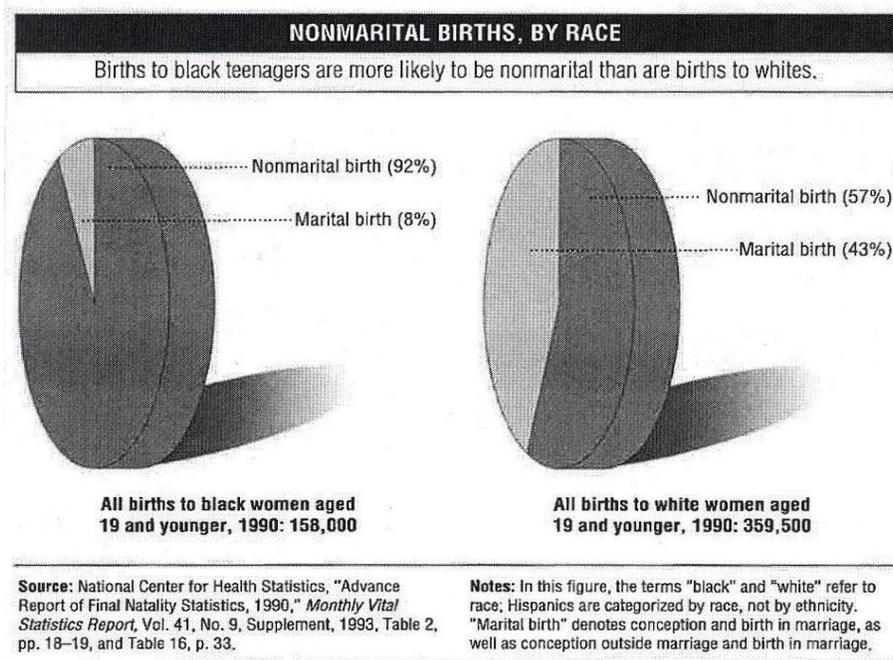
31. *Ibid* p. 5

## NUMBER OF OUT-OF-WEDLOCK PREGNANCIES ON THE RISE (Cont'd)

**Fig 1C. (32) First births to teenagers 1960-1964 and 1985-1989**



**Fig 1D. (33) Nonmarital births By Race, 1990**

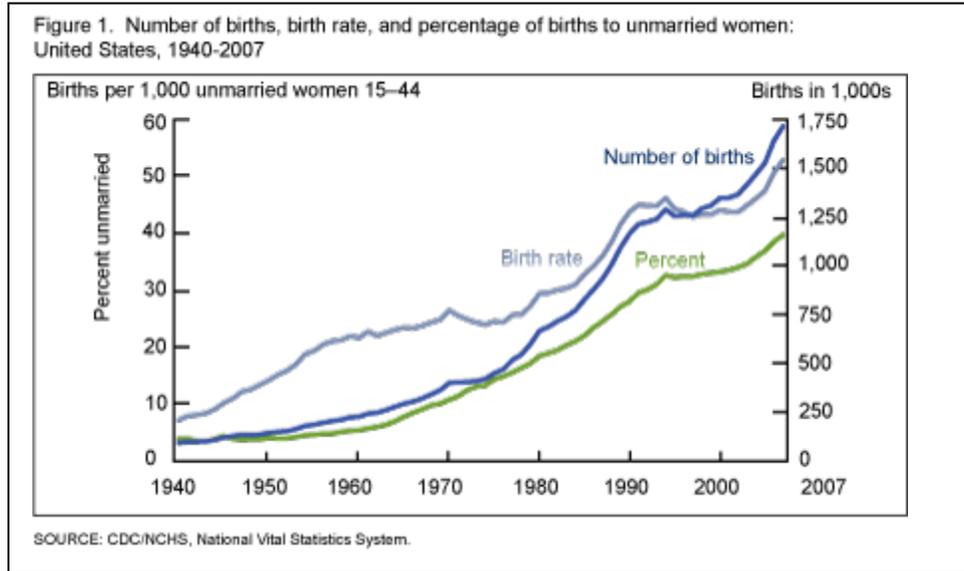


32. The Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI), *Sex and America's Teenagers* (New York, 1994) p. 55

33. *Ibid* p. 57

## UP-DATE ON OUT-OF WEDLOCK PREGNANCIES (2007) (34)

**Fig 1F. Births to Unmarried Women, 2007:**



### Key findings

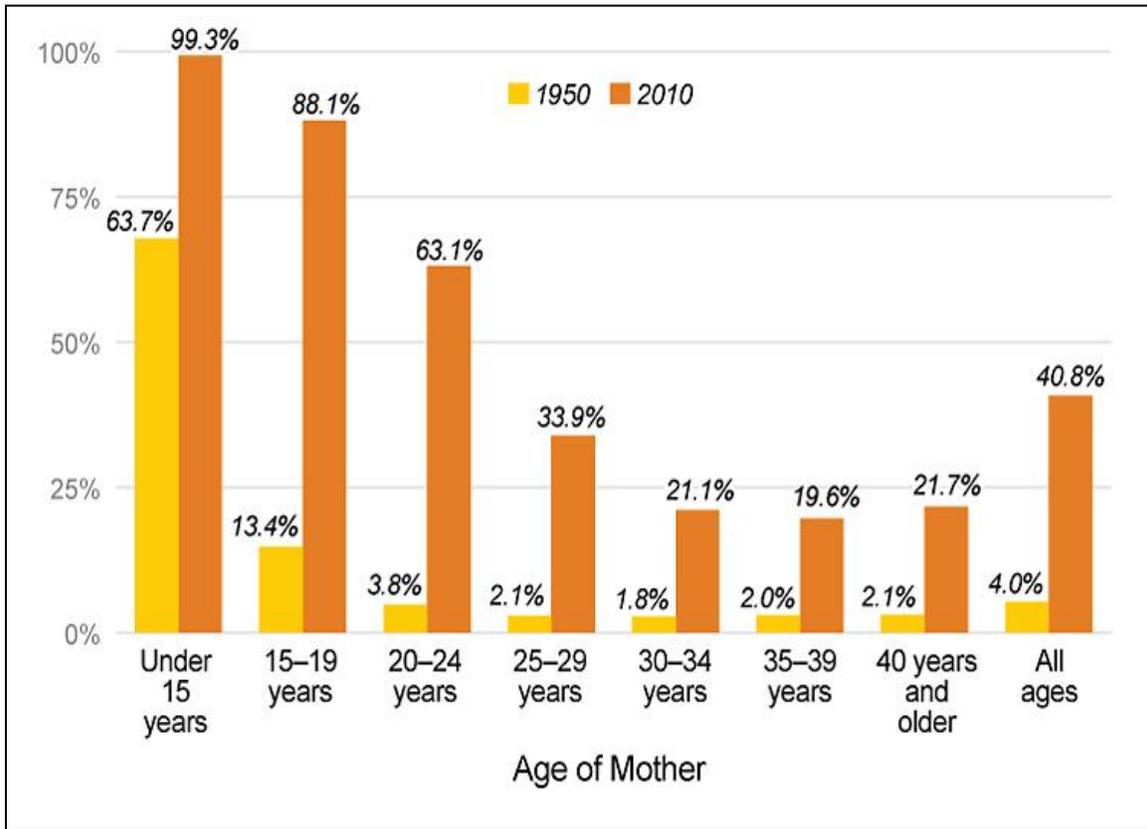
Data from the Natality Data Sets, *National Vital Statistics System* (NVSS)

- Childbearing by unmarried women has resumed a steep climb since 2002.
- Births to unmarried women totaled 1,714,643 in 2007, 26% more than in 2002. Nearly 4 in 10 U.S. births were to unmarried women in 2007.
- Birth rates have risen considerably for unmarried women in their twenties and over, while declining or changing little for unmarried teenagers.
- Nonmarital birth rates are highest for Hispanic women followed by black women. Rates for non-Hispanic white and Asian or Pacific Islander women are much lower.
- Most births to teenagers (86% in 2007) are nonmarital, but 60% of births to women 20–24 and nearly one-third of births to women 25–29 were nonmarital in 2007.
- **NOTE: Teenagers accounted for just 23% of nonmarital births in 2007, down steeply from 50% in 1970.**

34. *Op. cit.* Stephanie Ventura, “Changing Patterns.”

UP-DATE ON OUT-OF WEDLOCK PREGNANCIES (2010) (35)

FIG 1G. Unwed Childbearing by Mother's Age, 1950 & 2010



Unwed childbearing has increased dramatically, regardless of the mother's age.

- Today, nearly nine-in-ten children born to teenage mothers are born outside of marriage: a more than six-fold increase since 1950.
- The increase among mothers in their early twenties was especially pronounced: a 16-fold jump.
- The increase among unwed mothers age 30 and older is at least 10-fold.

35. "Unwed childbearing has increased dramatically, regardless of mother's age." *Familyfacts.org*. <<http://www.familyfacts.org/charts/207/unwed-childbearing-has-increased-dramatically-regardless-of-mothers-age>> (July 2013)

**MY CHILD SUPPORT, 1993: "JUST DOING MY PART" EQUALS  
AN ADDITIONAL \$110 A YEAR.**

Child Support An Essay 4/93

It shocks me that so many men have gotten off scot-free. Money has been taken out of my checks from day one - but not quite from day #1:

When my child support was a personal check, I would give Brian \$200 on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month. The court decreed that the CBOT take over and it did but two/three months after the Oct. court date.

The CBOT started deducting money in Jan, 1992 but told me that their cost for "special handling" was \$2<sup>50</sup> per check x twice a month.

The Illinois Child Support division wrote to me in Aug, 1992 to say that the three months of child support: Oct - Dec needed to be verified or I was in contempt of court. (of course this all happened during the Brian/ show.)

I wrote letter to Springfield but they said I needed photo copy of checks from bank + list of payments from Child Support Division.

My bank told me it would cost \$1<sup>00</sup> per check (photocopy front + back) but were happy to provide. Child Support Division needed to be written to twice but I did get the list of payments (x2 also).

Then Brian took me back to court for an increase in child support with a \$450<sup>00</sup> lump sum for the retro-active date of summons.

The CBOT increased the amount immediately (to \$1500?). Catholic Charities at first agreed to take the \$275<sup>00</sup> on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.

It turned out they were unable to do this in payroll so the Mar 15<sup>th</sup> check was the full paycheck without child support. They said they would take 1/2 out on 15<sup>th</sup>. It wasn't done.

Meanwhile, I had sent \$275<sup>00</sup> check to Child Support Division and they returned because they don't take personal checks.

(Why hadn't they told me?) So when Catholic Charities forgot to take out 1/2 on the 15<sup>th</sup>, I added it to the amount for a money order... cost: \$4.00. Catholic Charities does not charge their employees when they have to garnish wages. (They could take a percentage of amount?)

However, the Child Support Division charges a \$30<sup>00</sup> monthly fee for handling the accounting.

To date then, I have paid: one year.

CBOT = \$70<sup>00</sup> Court Ct = \$36.00 Banking \$3<sup>00</sup> + \$4<sup>00</sup>  
or, over \$100<sup>00</sup> just in doing my part...

January 2, 1991

With two inches of dark roots, eight inches of long, blonde hair and many inches of highly teased bangs, Hailey gave birth to a baby boy. Using divine inspiration she dug deep into her imagination and came up with the name Steady Eddie for the birth certificate but "Junior" to everyone else. Hailey had an endless New Year's weekend of labor that reminded me of my two labors. She never did believe me when I told her that true labor pains were like the Rocky Mountains compared to Braxton Hicks foothills, a tidal wave compared to a little rough surf.

*Before both of my painful and long 24-hour labors, I couldn't imagine what a woman DID during a full day of labor. Knit booties? Watch TV? Read New York Times editorials? HA! Maybe a 35-year-old woman was pushing the envelope of fertility; maybe there is a reason a teenager is more fertile than a soon-to-be middle-aged woman.*



### FERTILITY RISKS/AGE

A sexually active teen (like Hailey or Jessica, Jennifer or Amber) who does not use protection has a 90% chance of becoming pregnant within a year.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, women over 30 (like me) take longer to get pregnant and the risk of having an unhealthy child is 11%; the risk increases by 3.5% every year after that.<sup>37</sup> Amniocentesis was ordered for my second pregnancy at 36, but not for my first at 34. Higher-order multiple births (because of fertility drugs) and the risk of having an ectopic pregnancy also increase for older women. (See Graphs 2A & 2B at the end of chapter.) Babies born with heart malformations, chromosomal anomalies, and Down's Syndrome increase significantly as a women get older.



January 8, 1991

Jameka, the 17-year-old kitchen rule-breaker, is all upset because she wants a white family to adopt her baby which isn't likely to happen. *Frankly, I didn't know whether she was bluffing us or not. From my point of view, even though I knew my two paternal (prim and proper) East Coast aunts "loved" me, \$10.00 says that if I had been a teen mom in the '60s,*

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<sup>36</sup>*Op. cit.*, AGI, p. 30.

<sup>37</sup>"Pregnancy Less Likely After 31," Update, *Family Planning Perspectives* 23 (September/October 1991) p. 197.

neither aunt would have offered to adopt my (fatherless) progeny, their own brother's bastard grandchild. My aunts were normal, Caucasian suburban women; they weren't uncaring, Joan Crawford/Mommy-Dearest, snake-women . . . it just wasn't done. What would the neighbors say? Besides, didn't Jameka know she wasn't being politically correct?

In 1972, the National Association of Black Social Workers shook the adoption world by declaring that transracial adoption was "cultural genocide." Morris Jeff, Jr., former president of the black social workers' group warned, "It is their [white families] aim to raise black children with white minds."<sup>38</sup>

Linda said that blacks raised their own babies or babies related to them; they didn't use adoption agencies. Data from the National Committee for Adoption (NCFA) confirms Linda's statement:

Race	Before 1973	1973-1981	1982-1988
All women	8.7	4.1	2.0
Black	1.5	0.2	1.1
White	19.3	7.6	3.2

*Note: Percentages are based on combined data from the 1982 and 1988 NSFG and refer to premarital births that had occurred to women who were 15-44 years of age at either survey.*

**Figure 2A. Adoption by Race**

"Among never-married black women, fewer than two percent of children were relinquished before 1973, and the rates do not appear to have changed much since then."<sup>39</sup> (See Figure 2A)<sup>40</sup> And, "although whites and blacks are almost equally likely to adopt, whites are more likely than blacks to adopt an unrelated child."<sup>41</sup>

So Jameka's choices are: 1.) she parents her child, or 2.) she has an auntie offer to take in the baby (which doesn't seem likely at this point as she has alienated all in her extended family), or 3.) the baby goes into a foster home. Option 4.), the baby goes into temporary custody waiting for adoptive parents to materialize, which probably won't happen. It seems to be a double whammy for Jameka: second sex, invisible race. But I think Jameka is hopeless . . . . chocolate donuts with melted butter resulting in eighty-three-plus, extra pounds.

Snippy, nasty 20-year old Lydia had a baby boy. I didn't like her very much and was glad when she delivered at the beginning of December and moved out. Jameka and Lydia's kitchen violations on my shift were minor infractions compared to their subtle bullying tactics on the weekends, which included television tyranny and kitchen domination. Oh, nothing overt, but

<sup>38</sup>Steven Waldman and Lincoln Caplan, "The Politics of Adoption," *Newsweek*, (21 March 1994) p. 64.

<sup>39</sup>Christine A. Bachrach and Kathy Shepard Stolley, et. al. "Relinquishment of Premarital Births: Evidence from National Survey Data," *Family Planning Perspectives* 24 (January/February 1992) p. 29.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>41</sup>"Adoption Declines in the 1980s," Update, *Family Planning Perspectives* 22 (March/April 1990) p. 52.

cat-like and sneaky, and always the constant, unspoken threat to the other residents—those who were lucky enough to have weekend privileges AND have somewhere to go—that they might or might not get their telephone messages when they returned on Sunday night. It boiled down to territorial blackmail.



[This photo of a resident was taken much later in the program when babies could stay, but within twenty years, modern technology has made the pay telephone obsolete. Two years after the Jameka and Lydia show, I would wonder what to do with a resident whose brothers had beepers and used the payphone incessantly while their sister was in labor.]

Staff would have to maintain constant vigilance against this slick team. Lydia, the older resident, was clever and coy, while Jameka was just blunt and loud. As soon as Lydia left, Jameka lost her partner-in-crime and the house collectively neutralized the acidic chemistry the two had produced together. Of course, pessimistic alchemy

between two or more residents was hard to predict during a new resident's first couple of days, but the toxic connection could be produced overnight. Being "a bad influence" is a subjective concept and something I thought only parents of teens talked about, but when bad influences are broken up in a residential home or in a high school homeroom, the sense of calm is instant. Residents and staff alike took a deep breath of relief.

January 14, 1991

Jameka didn't give birth to a dozen donuts or to a box of cereal. She had a 10-pound baby boy. She was discharged from both the hospital and M/SJ quickly. I don't know what she'll end up doing about parenting versus placing. Linda said that male African-American babies were harder to place than female African-American babies. Social workers put it another way: families prefer to adopt (the more docile, socially malleable) black girl babies. It is the

reverse for the more patriarchal Caucasians, of course; white male babies are needed to perpetuate family names so aren't usually even up for adoption.

But back to Jameka, I hope she places; however, knowing that the boy wouldn't be adopted right away or perhaps not at all, would be enough to cool off the idea at least for me. Bottom line, though, she can't stay at M/SJ if she decides to place her baby because she has bent too many rules. A resident in good standing who places a baby for adoption can live at M/SJ for three months postpartum. This transitional time, if used well, can be a way to get ahead emotionally and financially. Linda tries not to discharge residents from the program before their deliveries, but she will over-rule their options to come back to M/SJ after delivery.

January 21, 1991

My Julia is 6 years old today, and as if I needed a reality check, the incredibly young 13-year-old Latasha moved in last week. The fact that the incredibly young Latasha is even fertile shouldn't be a big shock: birth statistics are given for 10 and 11 year old girls. Lately, researchers have linked the increase of chlorine in our drinking water to smaller, and sometimes misshapen penises in wildlife, lower sperm counts in males, and to an earlier onset of menses for females. If that's true, I'll have to get accustomed to discussing sex and menstruation with Julia . . . like yesterday.

But, for some reason we group-care workers are all to feel better knowing that Latasha will be 14, not 13, when she delivers. The fact that Latasha plans to take her baby home doesn't surprise me as much as it would have a couple of months ago. Just as Linda said, someone somewhere, directly related or not, will take in the baby. For African-Americans, the adoption process is in-house, not via anonymous liaisons such as the social service agencies Caucasians use. A stranger will not raise Latasha's baby, or Jameka's baby, or the baby of the formerly, hugely pregnant Amber who had the C-section. As a matter of fact, Linda heard that Amber left her son with an auntie for a week (a month ago). In her brief motherhood, does Amber yearn for those just-teddy-bear days already?

January 22, 1991

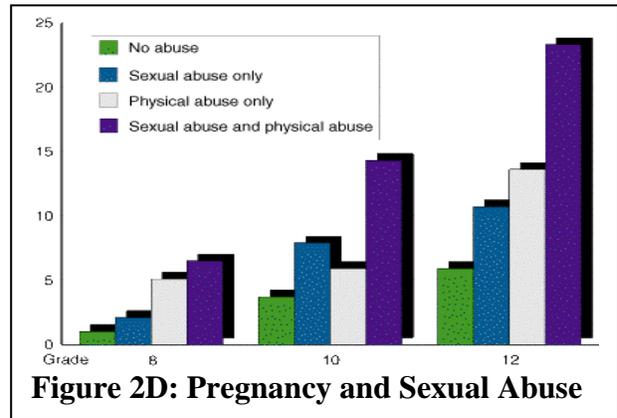
When Latasha was 6 years old, she was sexually abused by her step-father. A horrific thought for me, somehow even more sickening when I look at Julia asleep, so young, so trusting. Somehow DCFS was alerted about Latasha and she was then placed with various foster families. Several years later social workers discovered that she had been sexually abused by most of the foster fathers in her different placements. Victim or martyr—who knows? Today Latasha's

reality is so skewed that, in psychological babble, she "presents" a little outside of herself. Biased and without personal limits, Latasha describes in minute detail, to almost anyone, the particulars and variations of her sexual abuse.



## SEXUAL ABUSE AND TEEN PREGNANCY

Studies have linked childhood sexual abuse to teenage pregnancy. Researchers found that nearly two-thirds of 535 pregnant adolescent teens in a Washington State study (1988-1990) had been sexually abused. (See Figure 2D.) (42) Most of these teen moms had been sexually molested when they were 9-years old, but 24% were like Latasha and had been molested before they were 6-years-old. The average age of the offender was 27.4 years and he was a family member.



Another study concluded that sexually abused teens were more likely to have been hit (60% with a belt), slapped or beaten by a partner and to have exchanged sex for money, drugs or a place to stay. Abused young women are also more likely to have repeat pregnancies, to be pregnant by different men, and to be single parents with less parental involvement in childrearing. They are more likely to report that their own children have been abused or have been taken from them by child protective services.<sup>43</sup>

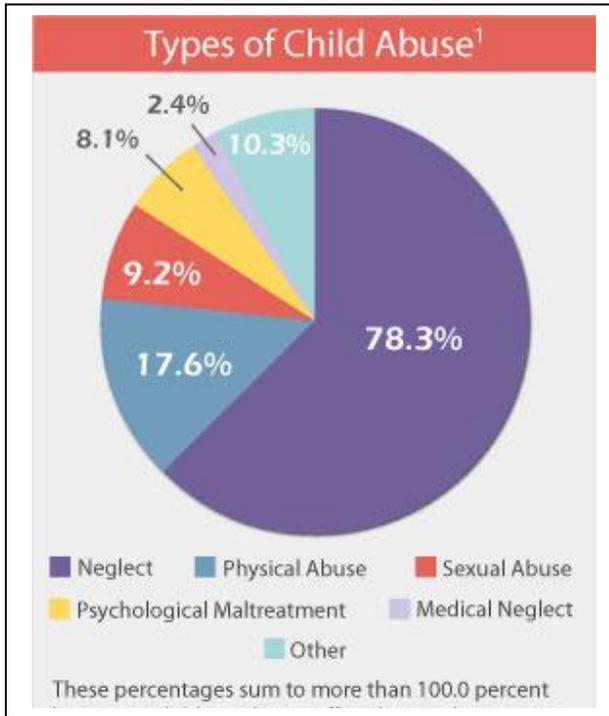
**[Update on Child Abuse, 2011:** More current data on Sexual Abuse and Teen Pregnancy from ChildHelp.org, an organization that focuses on prevention and treatment of Child abuse: “Children are suffering from a hidden epidemic of child abuse and neglect. Every year 3.3 million reports of child abuse are made in the United States involving nearly 6 million children

42. Jacqueline L. Stock et al. “Adolescent Pregnancy and Sexual Risk-Taking Among Sexually Abused Girls.” *Family Planning Perspectives* 29, (September/October 1997).

<<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/2920097.html>> (August 2013).

<sup>43</sup>Debra Boyer and David Fine, "Sexual Abuse as a Factor in Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Maltreatment," *Family Planning Perspectives* 24 (January/February 1992) pp 4-11.

(a report can include multiple children). The United States has the worst record in the industrialized nation—losing five children every day due to abuse-related deaths.”] (44)



The results of abuse:

Abused children are 25% more likely to experience teen pregnancy.<sup>5</sup>  
 Abused teens are less likely to practice safe sex, putting them at greater risk for STDs.<sup>5</sup>



February 4, 1991

Emily, from the corner room, had a baby boy. She had a long labor like mine and like Hailey's—in and out of the hospital all weekend with her contractions speeding up to every four to five minutes and then tapering off to a slow, every ten to twelve minutes. On Friday night, Emily's mother came up from Indiana and stayed in her room at M/SJ. I hoped that neither of them would have sleep-deprived insomnia and wake to see the flotsam and jetsam of Uptown/Lakeview float over our wall and cross our yard as Emily noted last Halloween night.

After two days of false alarms, Emily's bag of waters ruptured and soon after that her baby boy arrived. She held him close at her bedside until it was time to sign him over to the adopting couple. In Illinois a baby can't be legally adopted before it is seventy-two hours old. During those three days however, Emily's resolve almost weakened completely, and she nearly backed out of signing the adoption papers. If Emily had decided to parent her son at the last minute, a monkey-wrench would have been thrown into "The Relinquishing Ceremony"

44. "Child Abuse in America: National Child Abuse Statistics, 2011." *Childhelp.org*. <<http://www.childhelp.org/pages/statistics>> (July 2013) [This webpage offers reference information and is full of statistics.]

celebration and reception the two families had planned at the little Catholic chapel within St. Joseph's Hospital.

Again and again at Madonna, I would see that the birth process injects a pretty strong hormone into a woman to MAKE her a mother—to suddenly BE a mother. The physical symptoms of birth are obvious: lactation, painful uterus contractions, bleeding, and the itch/burn of the occasional episiotomy. The mothering hormone, harder to describe in list form, is more subtle. This bonding hormone injects a feeling that has to do with unspoken animal instincts and protective behavior (preservation of the species?) toward the baby.

Semantically, it's the difference between "becoming a mother" and "being maternal." The birth symptoms welded to the subliminal mothering hormone make a very strong compound. Of course, this biological/psychological compound is a good thing for us as humans as reproducing animals, but is a terribly confusing thing for women who plan to place their babies for adoption.

February 5, 1991

Emily had planned all during her pregnancy to place her baby for adoption and then finish college. She found a family through Lutheran Social Services that not only wanted to adopt a biracial baby but would also allow liberal visitation rights for Emily. The adopting mother herself had been adopted at birth, but she became disheartened later when she couldn't locate her biological mother through the adoption agency's anonymous red tape; for this reason, she welcomed Emily's need to stay connected with her baby.

Early in their marriage, this altruistic adopting couple had lived in Africa as evangelistic social workers with their church. While they were in Africa, they vowed they would adopt a racially mixed baby shortly after they were able to have their own baby. When they met Emily, their first born was 4 years old; they were now ready to make good on their original family plans. Lastly, as icing on the cake for Emily, this heaven-sent couple wanted a biracial baby because the husband's brother was married to an African-American woman who just gave birth to twins. Adopting Emily's baby would satisfy the adopting mother's need to adopt a baby (as in repeating adoption patterns, a statistic I am unable to find), would link the adopting father to his brother, and then would link the two families together with a shared heritage through the cousins.

Well, the pieces fit perfectly. The adopting couple and Emily's mother (the biological grandmother) were all three in the birthing room when the baby boy was born. But this time the urge to keep the baby (as happened when Carmen decided to go to cooking school closer to

home and to parent) was defeated by left brain logic: the overwhelming logistics of becoming a last minute, single mom.

Despite Emily's resolve and the serendipity of having all the individual components mesh, she hesitated and faltered at the last hour and right up to the "Relinquishing Ceremony." Her father and step-mother, up to this point nearly invisible and certainly anything but supportive, offered a roof to Mom and Baby if she wanted to keep "it." A lot of support, very late.

Emily had a rough time, but the open adoption plan seems to have worked well for her. Personally, I like it. In theory, love should give birth to more love which should produce even more love. Too often in real life this very commodity is withheld to gain power, to teach lessons, to deny closeness with the other. The withholding of love or the giving of conditional love are all patterns in abusive relationships that unfortunately seem more commonplace than this unusual birthing team of "strangers" who were brought together for Emily's pregnancy, delivery, and adoption plan.

February 8, 1991

Another woman at Madonna had an open adoption at the same time. Mary Ann, a 26-year-old college grad, had two previous abortions and was in the middle of tremendous life changes when she found out she was pregnant for a third time. Mary Ann moved into MS/J to get away from a physically abusive A/F, but her immediate catalyst for life change was her father's death a month after she found out she was pregnant. Psychologically, the incredibly strong Mary Ann was in deep mourning in addition to coping with the huge hormonal changes pregnancy brings.

As if this weren't enough change, Mary Ann needed help recovering from alcohol. Normally, women who confessed to a drug or alcohol problem were not accepted into the Madonna program. Linda made an exception for Mary Ann because she had been sober for three months—even during her father's death—and it was clear that she was motivated to make personal life changes. In a signed contract with Linda, Mary Ann agreed to immediate expulsion from the M/SJ program if she slipped off her wagon. During her stay at Madonna, Mary Ann met weekly with a social worker who helped her come to terms with and end the abusive relationship, she attended daily AA meetings, and she held a part-time job.

Mary Ann, like Emily, wanted to be involved in her child's life, but she felt a child needed two parents. Again, because her child was biracial, the number of prospective adopting parents who would also welcome an open adoption dwindled. Against all odds, Mary Ann also

found the right couple. The adopting father was black, the mother was white. In typical formula, the couple met during college and got married right after graduation. Later, after this kind and loving couple had been lucky enough to have had the perfect, all-American, two-child family (older son, younger daughter) they thought their family was complete. That's when she got her fallopian tubes tied, a sterilization process much more effective than his vasectomy would have been. However, when their daughter went off to kindergarten, they realized they wanted another baby. That's when they found Mary Ann. Not only did they like Mary Ann right away, they loved the fact that she was a college grad too.

Emily and Mary Ann delivered babies within a month of each other. Both M/SJ birth-mothers had joint outings with their babies and both of the adopting families became friends. A camera with a wide-angle lens was needed to photograph this unusual extended family that would stretch even further when Emily's brother-in-law (by-adoption) and family were in town, or when Emily's mother joined the ranks. For several years after Emily and Mary Ann left Madonna, photographs with eleven to sixteen smiling faces were sent back to the Center. It was enough to make a cynic's heart swell to see all of that happiness encompassing the full human pigment range in just one glance.



### **OPEN ADOPTION: NOT REALLY A MODERN CONCEPT**

During the Depression years and into the 1940s, social workers were able to convince legislators in every state to pass laws sealing adoption records. For decades, standard social work practice in adoption stressed secrecy, anonymity, and confidentiality. This was "Closed Adoption." By the 1970s, the traditional family was undergoing huge demographic changes, and female-headed households and out of wedlock pregnancy had become more commonplace. Additionally, adult adoptees had become angered by the secrecy that denied them access to their origins and identities, not to mention inherited diseases. They became more vocal about closed parental records. These events helped shape current adoption trends move toward partial disclosure and full disclosure (open adoption).

A survey of young women at a maternity home who were undecided about adoption said that they would consider placing if they could stay in touch with their babies with regular updates.<sup>45</sup> Answering concerns adopting parents might have about "too much openness," James L. Gritter, M.S.W., says in *Adoption without Fear*: "Birthparents in open adoption do get on

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<sup>45</sup>Debra Kalmuss and Pearla Brickner Namerow, "Adoption versus Parenting among Young Pregnant Women," *Family Planning Perspectives* 23 (January/February 1991) p. 17.

with their lives. We find that the amount of time spent with the family generally diminishes after the first year, sometimes with the profound disappointment of the adoptive parents."<sup>46</sup>



February 17, 1991

When 17-year-old Gina did give birth to a baby boy on Valentine's Day and I was relieved, I asked Linda to tell me why I was angry at myself for feeling relief that Gina had a boy and not a baby girl. Linda said we all needed to get together after/before work and let our hair down, shake a leg, VENT. I was showing signs of emotional fatigue; I was psychically caving into Butch's patriarchy, but I wasn't alone and it wasn't just Butch.

February 20, 1991

First it was Butch, then it was a spoiled little rich kid from the suburbs, and now I guess the honeymoon is over between me and my job. Michelle, 19, was at Madonna for less than two days before she was discharged. Michelle came from a well-to-do Evanston family and she was seven months pregnant. The A/F was her African-American drug dealer. Michelle's parents did not want her at home because they said they couldn't handle her. M/SJ seemed like the best alternative after family counseling got things stirred up.

Michelle drifted around until 2:00 a.m. on her first night at M/SJ, but because I was keeping a close eye on another resident who was in premature labor, I wasn't paying much attention to her. Michelle wandered around the first floor and basement under the pretense of doing her laundry, but she seemed to be having trouble figuring out the washing machine. (Why aren't household appliances standardized anyway?) I had already closed the gate and the house was shut down. Most of the residents had been in bed for a couple of hours. The adult residents in the program did not have a scheduled bedtime hour, but they were expected to work or finish high school if they hadn't already. Michelle had a diploma from Evanston Township High School, but as she was new in our program, she didn't have a job yet.

For employment options, M/SJ had a couple of corporate sponsors who would employ our residents. The St. Vincent DePaul Day Care Center was an obvious placement where some of the women were employed who couldn't decide whether to parent or place their babies. The other sponsor was a market research firm that hired many of Madonna's college-track women. This seemed a fairly innocuous placement because surely the interviewee couldn't see that the hugely pregnant voice on the telephone wasn't wearing a wedding ring. Mary Ann had found her

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<sup>46</sup>James L. Gritter, *Adoption Without Fear* (Corona Publishing Company, 1989)

vocational niche working with them and was promoted several times during the three months she lived at Madonna postpartum. She ended up working there for several years after she left Madonna.

Anyway, I remember thinking as I saw Michelle float around that first night that she seemed very withdrawn and sort of emotionally "flat." In fact, I thought she looked like she was on drugs, but silly me. I thought, "She can't be on drugs!! She's pregnant!!"

The second night she came home half-an-hour after curfew. When I started working at M/SJ, I thought this would happen all the time but strangely it didn't, at least not during the first two years. When Michelle showed up at 12:30 a.m., I grounded her for the rest of the week and took her front door key. She had very little reaction to this and then sort of drifted upstairs.

I went into the staff office to write up the notes and had only been in there a few minutes when Michelle found her way back downstairs. She had a quilt wrapped around her and looked like she hadn't slept for days. Quiet, with dark-rimmed eyes she sat next to me and then started to cry. Finally! Some emotions! "I want to go home. I want my mother," Michelle said clearly and to the point. It broke my heart to realize how young she really was.

Of course Michelle wanted to be home and with her mother. No matter what a child's reality is about his/her parents, it's an instinct to want to be cocooned by Mother-Ideal when things get emotionally over-whelming. Judith Viorst mentions this in her book, *Necessary Losses*: "It doesn't seem to matter what kind of mother a child has lost or how perilous it may be to dwell in her presence. It doesn't matter whether she hurts or hugs. Separation from mother is sometimes worse than being with her when she is the bomb (itself)."<sup>47</sup>

Before I knew it, Michelle had curled up in a ball on the floor and started shaking and weeping. I knew I was out of my league. I hadn't had this kind of training. I wasn't a "real" social worker—I was just a mom. I didn't know whether to give her orders: "Go to bed!" or weaker still, "Stop crying!" or try to soothe her with soft words and a glass of juice.

I asked Michelle if she could make it up to the staff bedroom where there were two beds: one for the overnight staff and one I used for a resident during those nights of early labor and premature contractions (like last night). I wanted to keep an eye on Michelle to make sure she slept and didn't wander around the house another night. Plus, I didn't want Michelle waking her roommate a second time that night as the roommate had to work in the morning.

Again, my mind scrambled over my job description: "Staff must be able to carry 160 pounds in a prone position up one flight of stairs," but Michelle said she could negotiate the

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<sup>47</sup>Judith Viorst, *Necessary Losses, The Loves, Illusions, Dependencies and Impossible Expectations That All of Us Have to Give Up in Order to Grow*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986) p.26.

stairs and she did. She slept until noon the next day. Linda called Michelle's parents to tell them that she refused to have a drug test and would have to leave the program. Michelle moved back home to Evanston in time for dinner.



### **BABIES BORN TO MOTHERS ON DRUGS**

Nationally, the cost of cocaine use during pregnancy is \$500 million. The postpartum hospitalization costs for both mother and baby are higher than the average postpartum costs: \$500 more than a mother not on drugs and \$12,000 for a cocaine baby placed in the intensive care nursery.<sup>48</sup> In October 1992, almost 25% of the *very* low birth weight infants (under 3 lbs, 4 ozs) in Cook County Hospital were in custody of DCFS because they tested positive for drugs.<sup>49</sup> In a 1988-1989 study at Hutzel Hospital in inner city Detroit, researchers found that 44% of the 3,010 newborns tested positive for at least a trace of cocaine, morphine or the active chemical of marijuana. According to the results of anonymous urine testing among 30,000 pregnant women in California, one in ten women used drugs, smoked cigarettes, or drank alcohol shortly before giving birth. In 1992, 76,000 California newborns were exposed to drugs or alcohol in utero. Annually 40,000 babies are born with alcohol-related birth problems.<sup>50</sup>

[**Update 2013:** About one baby is born every hour addicted to opiate drugs in the United States, according to new research from University of Michigan physicians.

- In the research published April 30, 2012, in the Journal of the American Medical Association, U-M physicians found that diagnosis of neonatal abstinence syndrome, a drug withdrawal syndrome among newborns, almost tripled between 2000 and 2009.
  - The majority of the mothers of babies born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome were covered by Medicaid for health care costs. The average hospital bill for babies with the syndrome increased from \$39,400 in 2000 to \$53,400 in 2009, a 35 percent increase. By 2009, 77.6 percent of charges for babies with the syndrome were charged to Medicaid.]
- (51)



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<sup>48</sup>"Maternal Cocaine Use Raises Delivery Costs, Need for Neonatal Care," Digest, *Family Planning Perspectives* 24 (March/April 1992) p. 94.

<sup>49</sup>Deborah Pinkney, "Tiny and Sick, They Fight On" *Chicago Sun-Times* (11 October 1992), pp. 32-33.

<sup>50</sup>"Prenatal Exposure to Tobacco, Alcohol or Other Drugs Found for More Than One in 10 California Newborns," Digest, *Family Planning Perspectives* 26 (March/April 1994) p. 95.

51. University of Michigan Health System. "About one baby born each hour addicted to opiate drugs in U.S." *ScienceDaily*, (30 Apr. 2012). <<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/04/120430190537.htm>> (July 2013).

February 20, 1991

Staff is having a major conflict with Paula, our executive director. Paula is demanding and demeaning and has no problem siding with a resident's crazy story over the staff's much saner version. In our communication log (a spiral notebook), Paula questioned why I allowed Michelle to sleep in the staff bedroom. She wrote: "Please do not let girls sleep in any other room than the one assigned them." I wrote back: "I guess more than anything, I would like to think that when we need to make exceptions to the rules, our decisions will be understood and supported even if they aren't the decisions one would make in another situation with a different resident."

To add to this exchange, I wrote: "Without staff getting positive input or support, we'll start second-guessing our instincts. We Intuitives won't feel connected and you Introverts won't be heard." Yes, the Myers-Briggs test has brought out some interesting results, and I used it as ammo against this horrible woman. Later in the program, one of the residents told me the girls knew Paula would cave into their goofy, half-baked excuses if they cried. They all could cry on demand.

By October 1992, things would heat up and boil over, and we staff wrote a four-page list of complaints that ranged from simply annoying behavior such as "inconsistency in policy as they apply to residents and staff" to "inability to admit personal errors promptly," to more serious concerns such as "failing to maintain confidentiality of client records" and "unprofessional communication and behavior." Each point was supported with specific examples. At one point Catholic Charities Payroll Department threatened to withhold staff paychecks two weeks in a row because staff hours were not sent out in time. This was happening when Linda was on maternity leave—how we missed her.

March 8, 1991

Developmentally challenged (delayed?) 20-year-old Nichole moved in. When the p.m. staff introduced Nichole to me as I came on shift at 10:30 p.m., Nichole sneezed violently into her hand and then stuck it out for me to shake. The other staff didn't know what to say and I didn't either. Which set of manners get reinforced and which get modified? I guess I'll keep my cold another week.

As Nichole's pregnancy progressed, she became tenacious about parenting her baby. She had been talked into placing her first baby over a year ago, but this one she wanted keep. With a sub-par IQ, staff got concerned about Nichole's parenting abilities. Nichole was given a baby doll and was to pretend the doll was a real baby. I've heard of sex education classes that use a

ten-pound sack of flour just to emphasize the real weight of a baby; other classes have used a raw egg to stress the baby's fragility.

Every three hours around the clock, Nichole was to feed and then change "the baby." Twice during the night I would wake her and say, "Nichole, your baby is crying and is hungry!!" or "Nichole! Her diaper is wet." After three days, Nichole's interest in parenting waned.

A year later we would try the same technique with another IQ-challenged resident but this one balked and wouldn't play along with a pretend baby. Maybe this second resident, Olivia, was a little more with it than Nichole; when she was told to feed the baby or change the baby, she would say, "That's not a real baby." "Well, of course it isn't honey," but what would be the politically correct thing to say to that?



### **RETARDATION: SOME THOUGHTS ON IQ**

A person's lifetime IQ is relatively stable; an IQ at 4 years old will be about the same at 18 years and again at 38 years and so on. Although two-thirds of all Americans (250 million) have an IQ between 85 and 115 (normal is 100), almost 65.2 million (like Nichole & Olivia) measure below 75 in the Very Dull range.

#### **IQ TESTS:**

Very Dull: 0-75

Dull: 76-90

Normal: 91-110

Bright: 111-125

Very Bright: 126+<sup>52</sup>



A year later Olivia ended up parenting her baby. For the first and probably only time I disagreed with the Catholic Charities' social worker who felt the baby would do better with his natural parent (such as she was) rather than a foster parent. Maybe the worker was worried she wouldn't find a permanent placement as the retardation factor was a difficult case to sell to prospective adopting parents.

Madonna staff helped Olivia find and then move into a dirty little apartment on the North side. Olivia and the A/F had become parents. A gruesome thought, particularly knowing that she and he went to the emergency room late one night three or four weeks after the baby was born because the baby was fussy. It turned out that the baby was impacted with feces. How long

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<sup>52</sup>Tom Morganthau, "IQ: Is it Destiny?" *Newsweek* (24 October 1994) pp. 56-57.

had the baby not had a bowel movement? For about a week Olivia and the dad had kept the feeding schedule unchanged even though the baby was seriously constipated.

The trick was to try to alert DCFS to the situation before the baby was damaged beyond repair, but a report couldn't be filed until there was proven neglect. Impacted feces and no bowel movement for a week were not in that neglect category but shaking and striking a fussy baby who wouldn't finish his bottle was. Of course, Big Brother would have installed a hidden camera in the TV and a wire tap in the telephone.

Speaking of Big Brother, both of these women needed State intervention to parent. Without public aid, Olivia and her baby would not have been able to live anywhere. Nichole (the first resident) returned to her state-funded group home in Indiana after the birth and placement of her second baby, but what is to prevent a third pregnancy for her? Most Americans feel uncomfortable talking about sterilization, and almost anyone in the Pro-Choice camp would say that abortion is not a legitimate form of birth control.

The solutions to these problems are expensive because in our free society we still regard the rights of the individual over society as a collective. As a society, we silently budget long-term care for both babies and their mothers and keep our morals and politics to ourselves. Basically, no matter how I feel personally about the subject, this freedom is why our country (and not China's forced sterilization) is still okay with me.

About abortion, one of the most wonderful, big-hearted, group care workers darkly muttered, "Why not just shoot it after it's born?" Of course . . . a joke!!! Ha! Ha! Of course, not to the moral majority, or to the women who are biologically unable to have children, or the 5.3 million infertile couples in the United States in 1995.<sup>53</sup>

March 10, 1991

The one delivery I have been in so far was not that joyous occasion people talk of when they mention the miracle of life. For starters, the 16-year-old resident was placing her baby for adoption. Just like Emily and Mary Ann's babies, Rachel's baby was biracial. Rachel, the daughter of a South Shore alderman, was sent to Chicago to have an anonymous pregnancy followed by a quick placement.

Between contractions, Rachel told us repeatedly that she wanted to be put on the medical floor directly after birth—NOT the obstetrics ward (the O.B.). Rachel did not want to see her baby, hold her baby, smell her baby. Clearly her maternal instincts were short-circuited somewhere, but more likely she sabotaged those instincts to protect herself from bonding with

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<sup>53</sup>Sharon Begley, "The Baby Myth," *Newsweek* (4 September 1995) p.40.

her baby. She softened a little from this position moments after the baby was born, when she asked me to go over to take a look at him while the nurses were cleaning him. I'm glad she did because I wasn't sure what to do at that point; she was my first priority, but he was my first delivery. The novelty of a brand new baby crying and fussing just across the room was hard to ignore, and I instantly wanted to split my loyalty to include this minutes-old baby.

*Emotionally, however, I supported Rachel's desire to move to the surgical floor. I remembered my first ectopic pregnancy and how my intuitive doctor made sure I was put on a general surgery floor directly after because she didn't want me to get depressed seeing the new mothers or hearing the new babies. Naively, I didn't really make the connection between my surgery and the miracle of birth. What was removed from my fallopian tube was no baby; it was a death-seeking predator to its host—ME!*

As Rachel was taken off of the delivery table and placed on the gurney to go back to the recovery room, she noticed two small halos of blood from where her buttocks had rested on the bed. She said, "Oh, gross!!" What she didn't see was the complete bloodshed everywhere else. Blood was everywhere—on the floor, on a half dozen blue chucks, and on the blankets and sheets. The multi-colored afterbirth was clotted in a mass in the stainless steel basin. Perhaps the birth was so bloody because a team of two doctors and two nurses sucked the baby out with something clamped on the baby's head that sounded like a vacuum cleaner—probably today's version of forceps.

When Rachel's birth stalled at the end requiring the delivery clamps (vacuum), an older doctor was called in to oversee. I could hear him across the sterile room. He cocked his head toward the charge nurse, nodded over at me and said, "Is she the grandmother?" Again, I confronted the reality of second- or third-generation teen pregnancy and the resulting collapse and multi-layering of generations. It was true that most of the Madonna teen residents had grandmothers my age (early 40s) or even younger. Three, almost four, generations had happened in their families where two had barely been squeezed into my family's reproduction cycle. I still don't know why I wanted to shout to doctor, "My daughter is only 6 years old!!" I mean, who really cares? It's just life.

Several days later, I heard that Rachel finally did hold the baby and she bonded a little with him before signing the adoption release. The old-time staff at Madonna all felt relieved when she did this. There is a saying, "You must say hello before you say good-bye."

March 17, 1991

For the first time since I started working in October, the program was almost filled to capacity; capacity was seven teens (13 to 17) and fourteen adults (18 and up). The women were from different economic, educational, and ethnic backgrounds. Each woman was interesting and different from the other; the only similarity was their protruding bellies. Despite the fact that M/SJ had a strong religious component, only three women were referred to M/SJ by Catholic parishes between 1989 and 1992; most were referred by private social agencies.

At this point, the adults outnumbered the teens almost two to one because the M/SJ focus was still idealistically aimed at those last good/nice girls in America who needed an anonymous pregnancy. There was a long and growing waiting list for the teen rooms. I was beginning to see that the teens mostly parented and the adults mostly placed their babies. I guess the more the woman had experienced in life, the more she realized she would give up trying to parent at this point. Gradually over the next year, M/SJ would tap into this teen market almost exclusively.

The Caucasian residents outnumbered the African-American residents by two-thirds. In fact, for some reason, the African-American adult residents did not seem to survive the program through delivery. I think it had to do with restricting basic freedoms. The curfews, room checks, house chores, and mandatory Wednesday house meeting followed by the "Pregnancy Related" classes sent most of these women running out the front door.

**Stats and Profiles of older Caucasian women who left before delivery  
[LBD]:**

**1989—72%**

**1991—67.8%**

**1992—52.2%**

**Laura L.** Laura, a 26 year old divorced mother of two children, came to the Center in her 7<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy. Her pregnancy was highly confidential. She was from out of state and was interested in receiving counseling and adoption services. Laura's stay at the Center was brief. She missed her family a great deal. When she chose to tell them of her pregnancy, they were very supportive and offered to allow her to come home and raise her child.

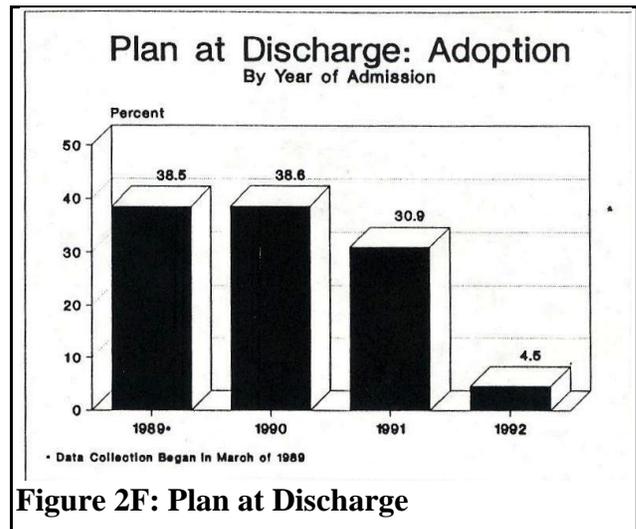
**Patty M.** Patty, aged 21, a single mother of two children came to live at the Center at 6 ½ months of pregnancy. She was planning on adoption and was concerned about confidentiality. Patty's mother was supportive, though upset about her pregnancy. Her father did not know of her pregnancy. Patty left before delivery. She was having difficulty interacting with the other residents.

**Sharon B.** Sharon, aged 35, came to the Center after being evicted from her apartment. The baby's father was twelve years younger than her and there was a great deal of tension in the relationship. Sharon was interested in gathering information concerning the decisions facing her. She received a great deal of support and counseling from the staff, as well as weekly meetings with her social worker. Sharon left the Center prior to delivery. She was having difficulty following some of the program rules. We heard that Sharon had a baby girl and decided to parent. The baby's father did not want to be involved and he moved out of state.

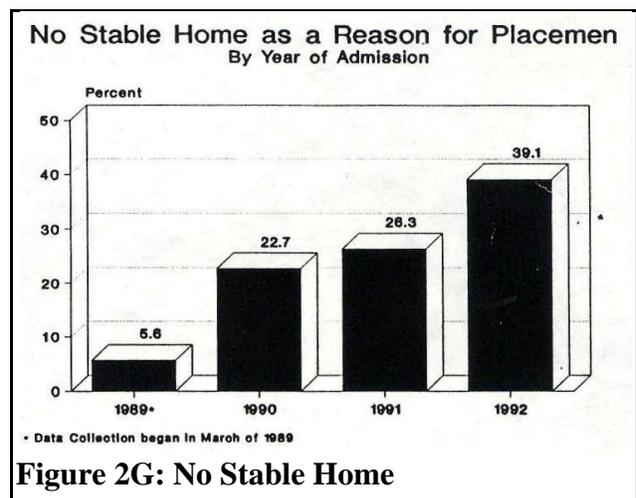
During the spring and summer months of 1991, the number of babies placed for adoption was almost equal to the number of babies who went home with a Madonna resident (12 to 13) and again, most of the babies who went home went with African/Americans and with teens. The college-track Caucasians placed their babies.

Over the next year, however, things would change at M/SJ. The number of residents who would place their babies would drop from 30% to 4.5% (See Figure 2F),<sup>54</sup> reflecting the program change during the summer when M/SJ signed a contract with DCFS. After that point, the Madonna resident is almost twice as likely to have come from an unstable home environment, have a history of drug use, and to have an income below poverty level. (See Figure 2G.)<sup>55</sup>

Nationally, the number of children who lived below poverty rose significantly in the 1970s and 1980s. Partly this was due to the disintegration of the family and escalating



**Figure 2F: Plan at Discharge**



**Figure 2G: No Stable Home**

<sup>54</sup>Independent Consultants: M/SJ (1992)

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

divorce rates. Federal funding to programs that supported daycare and families living on the edge of poverty were also cut. Forget health insurance totally.

Today in the 1990s, many of these sub-poverty kids were now having babies themselves. As reflective of the national trend then, poverty begets poverty . . . early and often.

April 1, 1991

A fine April Fool's Day for some but not for Sarah whose adoption plans went awry. Sarah, 19, was pregnant with an African-American man she didn't know very well and so she planned to place the baby. Normally, Catholic Charities gave each resident a portfolio about potential adopting parents and the resident would pick two or three to interview and then select the lucky family.

The adopting families had already been through the wringer themselves. Most endured years of frustrating and humiliating fertility tests followed by the realization (and acceptance) that if they wanted a baby at all and couldn't afford in vitro fertilization (which could cost as much as \$67,000 to 114,000<sup>56</sup>), they must adopt. For years, Catholic Charities had a corner on the market for just this problem. Their criteria were restrictive to many but who could be fussy at a time like this?

When Sarah selected her family, all that was needed was to sit back and wait for the blessed event . . . or so she thought. When the family went to the hospital ready to fall in love with their little bundle of joy, they decided that the baby had been in the oven too long. Could they, instead, have one that wasn't so dark?

*Maybe it's just me. I'm an East Coast idealist from the '60s. I didn't truly believe that blatant racial segregation existed until I moved to Chicago and got on the State Street "L" in the Loop at 5 p.m. All the blacks were on one side of the "L" platform going south and all of the "others" were on the other side heading north. Was I the only one who felt uncomfortable with this arrangement? According to Barbara Sherry of Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago is a "hyper-segregated" city. (57)*

*A Star Trek episode jumped into my mind. The Starship Enterprise had been asked to intervene in a planet's civil war. The Haves and the Have-Nots were at war. Clearly, those whose faces were black on the left side and white on the right were preferred to those with black on the right and white on the left. (Or, was it the other way around?)*

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<sup>56</sup>"In Vitro Bankruptcy," Update, *Family Planning Perspectives* 26 (September/October 1994) p. 197.

57. Barbara Sherry. "Chicago: City of Hypersegregation."

<<http://www.uic.edu/orgs/kbc/contestedcities/Chicago/segregation>> (Sept 2013) (The links to Harvard University do not work.)

*From what I had seen at Madonna, most of the residents had gone out of their way to make a racial blend of our future generations. Had I over-looked the "L" stop where the North Side and the South Side could conjoin not to mention copulate? Happily, from my idealistic sense of racial politics, I figured we were on our way to beige soon. And then this! Too dark? What?*

Madonna's staff was racially mixed. Our staff meeting concerning Sarah's wavering adoption plans, more than a hundred years after the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation, was one moment I never want to live twice. Racism and segregation are two different ways to violate the 14th and 15th Amendments; my heart sank as I looked around the room and I wanted Scottie to beam me up to the Enterprise right away.

How could M/SJ's gracious and kind black co-workers sit in the same room with Linda and me and the other white Have-Everythings? How could these intuitive, loving women not become angry and apathetic with a society that constantly devalued the color of their skin—even in this do-good, life-giving social service setting?

I'd like to say this was extreme racial intolerance and that it was an isolated incident, but it wasn't. It happened at least two more times while I worked at Madonna—even after heightened bureaucratic screening was applied to the issue.

*April 12, 1991*

*The women I had most trouble relating to at this time were the ones most like me. This sense of "me" I felt conflicted with was not just the 40ish me of today but also the me I was as a teenager. I wanted to shake some of the girls into taking control of their lives. If it wasn't boyfriends that controlled their decisions, it was drugs.*

*No, I'm not a Pollyanna. Perhaps, though, I'm conflicted with that same paralyzing Cinderella Complex I saw in the residents. As Colette Dowling mentioned in her book, The Cinderella Complex, I too wanted to be marsupialed within the skin of another . . . a blend of Nurturing Mommy, Protective Daddy, je ne sais quoi Husband, but certainly this "He" would be the combo plate: "Mr. Right," a "Knight in Shining Armor," and with luck, "Daddy Warbucks."*

*In Cinderella thinking, only then could I get on with the business of living my life. Oh, Lord! Please save me from being me! I'm a total disgrace to the memory of Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, and Gloria Steinem and to their belief in a woman's authentic existence as separate from a man's.*

*I know the residents felt my conflict. It really came down to: "Do as I say, not as I do." How could I comment on their boyfriend choices when mine weren't house-broken either? Plus,*

*I had a twenty-year head start on them refining and fine-tuning my bad judgment. My hard-fought battle for independence from a suffocating marriage hadn't stopped me from still more Cinderella thinking searching for my Prince Charming.*

*Aside from that, I hated being separated from my children and was angry that I had to choose between their rights to a "normal" Mom or my own sanity. Regarding the Madonna girls and choices, I found it difficult to remain neutral about ANY parenting decision; I felt they were looking at life from the wrong end of the telescope. Just getting the layette together doesn't make you "A MOM."*

*But then I felt I had to redefine all of those basic words so I could include my own fragile relationship with my children. In particular, I had a semantics conflict with the very word "parent." Maybe I had bought into the subliminal media message more than I was willing to admit, but to me the word "parent" connoted two, a pair, a team as in TWO parents or: "pair-ents." Didn't these women know how hard it would be to parent alone? Wouldn't "single parent" be an oxymoron in my new dictionary?*

*It was hard for me to muddle ahead, stay connected and financially a-float, and I was lucky to have this strange job during which I could sleep (or at least try). Plus, I had my part-time evening job at the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) that gave me full-time insurance, I had a college degree, by now a benevolent landlord who kindly kept the rent affordable, and happiest of all—many supportive female friends. Working the overnight shift at M/SJ let me be a day-time mom to my children, but I lived in constant psychic fear. Living my "real" life seemed to put me in uncharted waters. Where was my script? Not to mention my Mr. Right?*

*Dowling says about her own divorce experience that, "Like an adolescent I enjoyed my new-found freedom but when anything disturbing happened, I longed for the protection of the old days. Inwardly I had established a moratorium on growth. Out of fear, I lived within certain rigid boundaries that prevented me from learning . . . what I might actually be capable of doing."<sup>58</sup>*

May 4, 1991

Tracy, a 17-year old suburban referral from Lutheran Charities, has flip-flopped in her decision to parent or not almost daily. She often waits until I start work at night to share her updated pros and cons list about parenting or placing. The A/F occupies only a small portion of her deliberations; his input is never really considered when she is deciding whether she should

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<sup>58</sup>Colette Dowling, *The Cinderella Complex Women's Hidden Fear of Independence*, (New York: Pocket Books, 1981) p.26.

keep the puppy or not. Sometimes these coin-toss decisions are decided when the grandmother comes through with the layette as happened with Colleen or Carmen.

Wendy, blonde with curly hair and cute freckles across her cheeks, is another troubled teen. To me, she probably represents the voiceless female more than anyone else. Unlike Tracy though, Wendy is totally unable even to make the lists. Jungian analysts have a psychological language developed about adolescent girls (women in general) who mistrust or simply can't hear their inner voice . . . or who wait in stun position for Mr. Right to come along. They call this a Puella girl—a woman who mirrors back any and all projections without taking her own personal growth and maturity into account. As incongruous as it seems, even Walt Disney had something to say about female voicelessness in *The Little Mermaid*—Ariel gave up both her family and her voice to be with a man.

Voicelessness and bitchy, hag-like behavior are opposite sides of the same coin but neither way reveals the woman's true feelings. Both Cinderella and The Hag are reactions to a masculine dominated environment that devalues the feminine—neither translates the woman's personal language, as Lady Ragnell was finally able to do.

What I didn't know until later was that 16-year old Wendy was strung out on heroin. Again I realized I had been gentle to my own parents. Long hair, marihuana, cigarettes, booze maybe, but not I.V. HEROIN!!! Ultimately, Wendy ended up placing her baby but it took trial and error. I think her daughter was a couple of months old when she was placed for adoption. Now, for the teenager-me this could have caused another lifetime of guilt and endless see-saw behavior. A non-decision from a voiceless person would be a reality I might have obscured in drugs and denial for a long time, as I'm sure Wendy has done.

May 29, 1991

Victoria is one of the most interesting of the women at the center and is probably the prototype envisioned when the program was started. After she graduated from college, she joined the Peace Corps and was sent to Africa. She took her work seriously and soon was accepted by the tribe where she lived. More than accepted, she was courted by the chief's son whose baby she now carried. However, when the Peace Corps H.Q. heard of this, she was given a one-way ticket back to Illinois.

Victoria felt that she had two choices: the first was to return to Africa so that the baby could be raised in its own loving environment. Unfortunately, there was no real way to determine at this point, whether the A/F's family—when it came to royal blood lines—hadn't seen that *Star Trek* episode in the reverse. The second choice was to try to sort through the list

of adopting parents at Catholic Charities for a suitable match. Parents, unlike Sarah's April Fool's Day nightmare for Pete's sake, who would rejoice in the baby's color (colour). What I admire about Victoria the most is that she can weigh both sides critically and honestly. Like me she is athletic and will walk, rain or shine, the two/three miles each way to the daycare center. Unlike me, she didn't vacillate in her decision once she found an adopting couple that would provide the African heritage she wanted the baby to have.

Catholic Charities tried to dissuade her when they realized that the adopting Nigerian mother would be over 40 years old when the baby was born. Even though the husband was in his mid-30s, in their bureaucratic eyes, the woman was just over their age limit for suitable adoption. Undaunted, 24-year old Victoria heard her own inner voice loud and clear. This "older" woman and her "younger" husband were selected to make a difference in Victoria's baby's life.

A few years later I read a letter from Victoria addressed to the group care workers at Madonna. It was from New Orleans where she had gone on to graduate school to get a degree in international relations. Oh yes, and by the way, she had met a wonderful man who had been in another part of Africa at the same time she was who had also ended up at the Tulane University Grad School. Wedding announcements were being sent out at this very moment.

July 10, 1991

I was with now-14-year-old Latasha all night last night. When Latasha entered M/SJ months ago, we were all relieved to know she would deliver at 14 and not at 13. It just made us feel better to say it. So, last night I went right to the hospital when I got to M/SJ; I never got into my pajamas at all. This was my first true all-nighter.

The day before yesterday the staff and residents had spent the day in Michigan City, Indiana, at a beach house belonging to one of the M/SJ board members. It had been a beautiful day and everyone came back to Madonna sunburned and tired. Latasha's due date was today, which didn't mean that she would actually deliver today but staff almost didn't take her along on Wednesday. On the way out of town they took her over to St. Joseph's for the doctors to take a look at her cervix. Teens often are not up on the dates of their last menstrual period, and the ultrasound they took could be off a week either way. Without contractions or lower back pain, they decided it would be safe for her to go and have a little fun before the real fun began.

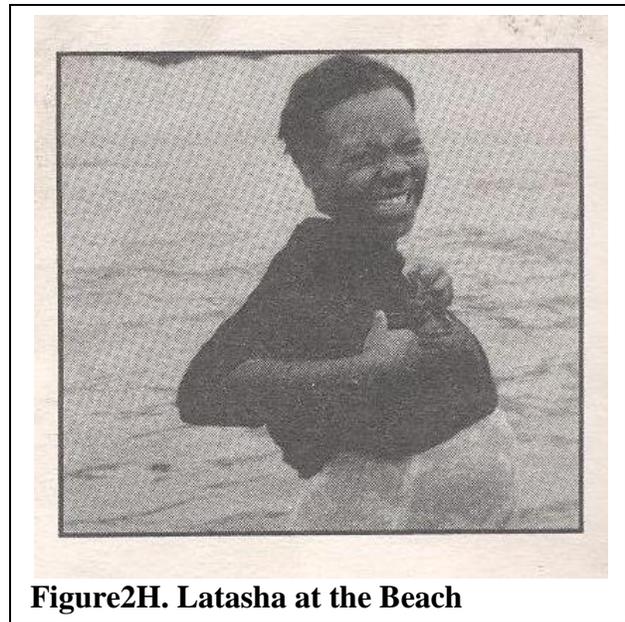
Latasha had gone swimming in Lake Michigan for the first time. One of the staff took a picture of her and her stomach (almost like two separate people already) squashed into a bathing suit as she waded into the lake. Her smile radiated happiness. How far away from sexual perversion was she now? Finally she looked like a kid at the beach. Okay, with a beach ball attached to her stomach.

But at dinner time last night, as youthful biology would have it, she started having strong contractions and the p.m. staff took her to St. Joseph's at about 7:30. She was already dilated to three centimeters, the magical you-stay-um number for the L. and D. ward, but she hadn't dilated any more in the last three hours. In fact, her contractions had slowed down enough for the nurses to prepare her for the night and dismiss the M/SJ p.m. staff. They wanted Latasha to get some sleep and would start her labor via pitocin drip in the morning. They knew that Madonna staff was just a phone call away anyway.

At 12:30 p.m., after I had shut the gate and closed up the house, I called Latasha to see how she was doing. She sounded faint and distant. Not the Latasha of yesterday. When I asked if she needed company, she quickly said yes, that she was scared. I grabbed my figurative hat and fled.

Even the nurses were surprised that her contractions had come back so strong. One thing I learned during the three years I ran laboring women over to St. Joes was that absolutely nothing was unusual when a woman went into labor. Even though books have been written about what labor is, every woman I was in labor with had a different experience from every other woman. It was uncanny, but the delivery nurses intuitively seemed to know what kind of labor it was going to be.

Latasha's contractions brought her up on all fours each time. The contraction waves on the monitor showed a plateau at the top of the strip only because the contraction wave had run out of room. Forget the Lamaze breathing. I had to grab her I.V. and both monitor cables when she inhaled her way up to her knees. Did she have a catheter at this point too?



**Figure2H. Latasha at the Beach**

Now the nurses wanted to slow things down. They gave her a sedative, and almost immediately everything responded just that way. I remember idiotically thinking about the "Three Little Bears" and their porridge, chairs and beds . . . wishing for my own bed. As if reading my mind, the nurse told me this would be a good time to go get a cup of coffee and a snack in the cafeteria. Latasha was snoozing between contractions, which were now spaced to about every ten to fifteen minutes.

I was gone no more than thirty minutes. When I got back to Latasha, she was in the room alone with the guard rails up. Her fickle contractions had suddenly returned to their full, nasty force. She clung to me with tears in her eyes and begged, "Don't go! Don't leave me *again!*"

*Echo: "AGAIN!" I was consumed in guilt for leaving Latasha, a feeling that quickly triggered into my personal life. Translated this guilt read: "How did I have the audacity for living away from my own children?"*

*Guilt, Shame, Despair, Sadness flew at me from out of Pandora's Box. When Latasha needed me, I'm off having donuts. I couldn't imagine fast-forwarding the tape to Julia's future (possible) labor in seven years and not knowing, caring, or even trying to participate psychically. I found it unbearable to think that Julia would be alone and scared even for a minute during labor.*

*I don't know, call me old-fashioned, but I wondered where the heck Latasha's real mother was. I knew her 32-year-old mother had a newborn of her own at home in addition to Latasha's two other sisters, 5 and 7 years old. Wasn't the grandmother around? It seemed to me she was, but Latasha was technically a ward of the State because of her mother's neglect in the sexual abuse issue. Why the other little girls were still at home living with the step-father would be one of those sleep-deprived conundrums.*

*And lastly, how could I, a virtual white stranger, be able to comfort Latasha? Sure, she knew my name and recognized my face, but my shift started when the teens were expected to be upstairs in their rooms (10:30 p.m.). I got to know the bad teens right away or the girls in premature labor, but until one of those events happened, the teen residents would only be names on room charts or dark lumps in single beds to me. As it turned out, Latasha and I had been to the hospital before for dehydration, so she knew me better than most of the girls.*

Unfortunately for me, Latasha was still laboring when I had to leave in the morning. She delivered late in the afternoon after thirty-two hours of labor.

I told Linda I felt awful that I had gone to the cafeteria when Latasha needed me. Linda shook her head saying that one of the young teens she had helped through labor called out for her mother several times when the going got rough. It broke Linda's heart to hear the young girl call out, "I want my Mommy!!!" "Where's my Mother?" between her contractions. Of course, it's unsettling and more than a little unnerving to be in labor under the best of circumstances, but sadly, this girl apologized to Linda afterward . . . good grief.

“Heart to Heart” 1990 and 1991

Oct./Nov. 1990

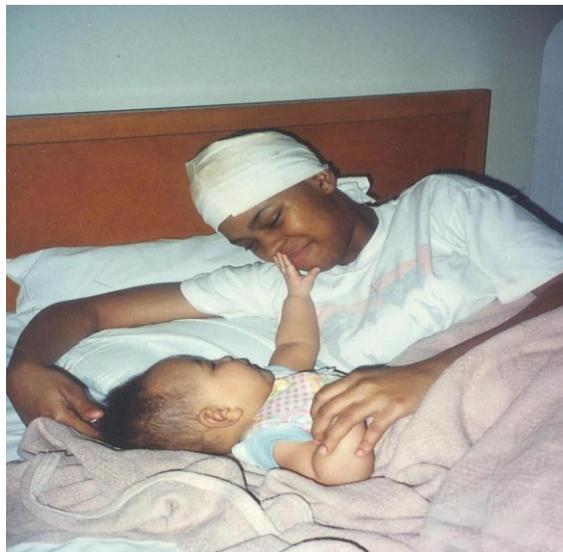
*Child of mine, flesh of my flesh,  
Please believe me, you are truly blessed.  
For you have many who love you,  
Some you may never know.  
As you learn to love and as you grow,  
Others will surround you, they'll help you to grow strong,  
They'll teach you about love and laughter,  
this is where you belong.*

*I'm giving you a good life as best as I know how,  
By gifting you with Parents who love each other  
and who love you now.  
These are wonderful people who want a child to call their own  
You are the answer to many prayers,  
their love for you is known.  
Now that they have you in their lives,  
their existence is so complete,  
They can fulfill a child's expectations -  
needs I could never meet.  
They have good lives and a stable home,  
a bright future for you to share,  
This is the only thing I can do to show you how much I care.*

*Our turn to set the table...*

[REDACTED]

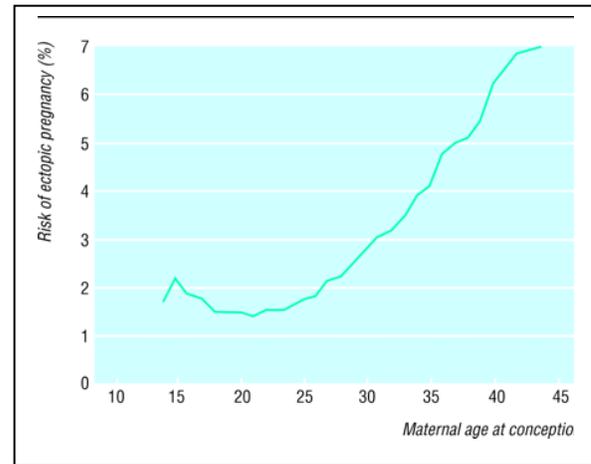
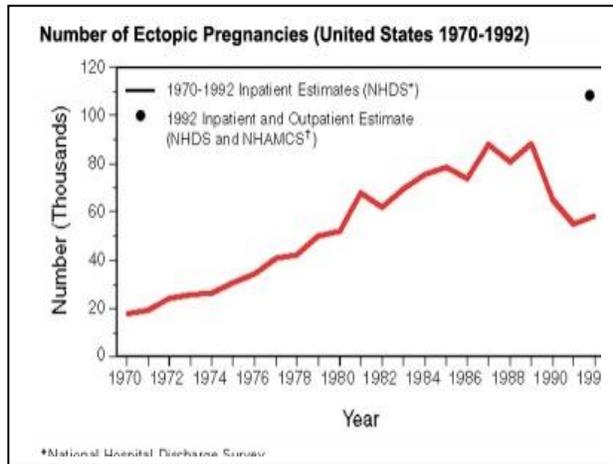
I stayed at Madonna/Saint Joseph Center last year until I delivered a beautiful little girl who I placed for adoption. While I stayed at the Center I learned to be more independent and more secure with myself -- thanks to the care and guidance of the staff at the Center. At that time of my life the staff at the Center made me feel like family and that is what girls going through placing their children for adoption need. They need to feel love and support, and that is what I felt.



## RISK FOR OLDER WOMEN

Fig. A2H (59) Ectopic Pregnancies 1970-1990-

Fig 2I (60) Ectopic Pregnancies, 2000



### Ectopic Pregnancies

- 1970 - 17,800 ectopic pregnancies
- 1988 - 80,700 ectopic pregnancies,  
the highest rate occurred among women ages 35-44 years  
(27.2 per 1,000 reported pregnancies)  
**(I was two of these: 1982 & 1983.)**
- 1989 - 88,400 ectopic pregnancies—a five-fold increase

### Higher-Order Multiple Births. (61)

#### **Twinning rates rose by more than 200 percent among women aged 40 and over.**

- From 1980 to 2009, rates increased 76 percent for women aged 30–34, nearly 100 percent for women aged 35–39, and more than 200 percent for women aged 40 and over.
- Historically, twin birth rates have risen with advancing age, peaking at 35–39 years and declining thereafter. Since 1997, however, twin rates have been highest among women in their 40s.

59. “USA Statistics.” *UNSW Embryology*.

<[http://php.med.unsw.edu.au/embryology/index.php?title=USA\\_Statistics](http://php.med.unsw.edu.au/embryology/index.php?title=USA_Statistics)> (July 2013)

60. Nybo Andersen et al “Maternal age and fetal loss: population based register linkage study.” *BMJ*. 2000 Jun 24; 320(7251):1708-12. <<http://www.bmj.com/content/320/7251/1708>> (July 2013)

61. Joyce A. Martin et al. “Three Decades of Twin Births in the United States, 1980–2009.” *NCHS Data Brief. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention*. (80) (January 2012).

<<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db80.htm>> (July 2013)



E. McCLUNG FLEMING  
144 KENDAL-AT-LONGWOOD  
KENNETT SQUARE, PA 19348

Sept. 22, 1991

Dear Betsy,

(You're the first person to get a sheet of my xeroxed, second-class stationery. Hope it doesn't look corny. But if I can't be economical with my family, when can I be so?)

I've just re-read your good letter of Aug. 30 about Madonna/St. Joseph and wonder how I failed to write to you about it sooner.

You note that every fall Madonna has a mass to celebrate "a woman's right to choose" Yes? How come? A Catholic outfit celebrating pro-choice? Do you mean it?

Madonna and her 36-hour labor! Of course she was scared -- at age 14. I loved the photo of her and her huge tummy. How wonderful that her family gave her support. Why don't you try writing ~~up~~ up her story.

My ~~friend~~ friend's "A Place to Hide" is superb. Did she write that without editorial assistance? You should keep track of her. What a terrific experience, and how thoroughly she understood and assimilated it!

I just couldn't help reading many, but not all, of the case histories. Very well written. And extremely moving. I re-read # 6 and # 8 several times. Some obvious reactions:

1. Do you call the world that these young women live in "the other side"? What a profoundly touching, utterly true-to-life, rock-bottom layer of experience. How these short bios illuminate in a flash a young woman's character and personality -- the terrible choice between parenting and adopting, the touchy relations to parents and siblings, the often miserable sometimes thrilling picture of the young father and his sense of responsibility. Have there been hundreds of articles written based on these records?

2. The absolutely superb mission of Madonna/St. Joseph! The terrible need for help, and the all-out response to this need, with what looks like very sensible, mature, loving, tough counselling. What a mission for an institution. What a mission for a counsellor!

You write that it was "very unsettling" to you. Of course, it unsettles me at this distance. But what a great experience just to have been part of this program for a while! Even though you may not feel called to work here, maybe you could try to interest some young social workers into going into this field.

3. The lightning-flash spot on the dark side of sex. Of our biology. How to help young men? How to help young women? More free condoms? More sex education? More Madonna/St. Josephs?

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You write that you "struggle with my own sense of self...". Good. Give time to it. You know my belief in the observation that the important thing is not how much experience you've had, but ~~the~~ how much reflection you've devoted to your experience.

(By the way, I've been re-reading James Hillman, who writes that "soul" makes the difference between an "event" and "an experience." I like that.)  
Give Heroine's Journey a good crack. Maybe Mom (Pat) had something to do with the synchronicity of your finding it. What I've read, I like. Love. ~~POD~~ POD

## CHAPTER THREE

July 25, 1991

*I have reread Latasha's delivery, and the part I get stuck on is the 32-year-old mother having a baby around the same time as her teenage daughter. I was 35 before I was finally able to get a fertilized egg into my uterus and out of my fallopian tubes; my mother would have been 65 years old (not 30- or 40-something). My genetics wanted to sabotage my bloodline, while Latasha's maternal stock reproduced easily, quickly and . . . regrettably, often.*

A well-worn woman Latasha was when at 16 she had 2.5 kids with three different men. Despite six or seven straight months of M/SJ's "Pregnancy Related" classes during which staff tried to stress the importance of finishing high school (rather than having more babies), Latasha returned two and a half years later with pregnancy No. 3. When Latasha returned to Madonna in the summer of 1993, neither of her two children was living with her; they were living separate from each other in two different in-house, foster families. Latasha met A/F No.3 in Cabrini-Green, one of the monolithic housing projects on the Near North Side. Reflecting the tragic African-American male situation, he was in prison for selling drugs. Unfortunately, Linda also heard that he had heavy hands toward Latasha.



### **African-American Males in Prison Drug Related**

America is the World's Number One Jailer.<sup>62</sup> (See Figures 3A and 3B at end of chapter.) We lock up more citizens today than does the Soviet Union or South Africa. Narcotics offenders occupy 61% of the beds in federal prisons. Even without an Apartheid system, one in four African-American men between the ages 20 and 30 are in the prison system. Representing only 12% of the population, Blacks comprise 44% of the prison inmates. In fact there are more black men in jail today than there are in college. Howard Peters, Illinois Director of Corrections, says "You don't lock them up and throw away the key; you lock them up and spend thousands of

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<sup>62</sup>Marc Mauer, "Americans Behind Bars: A Comparison of International Rates of Incarceration," *The Sentencing Project* (Washington, D.C., January, 1991) p.3.

dollars on them."<sup>63</sup> The ratio of tax dollars spent each day on an American public school student to the amount spent on a prisoner: 2:7. (64) (See graphs at end of chapter.)



July 28, 1991

When Latasha returned to Madonna late in the summer of 1993, there was not much left of the frightened little girl I had helped through delivery or of that joyous kid at the beach. Latasha broke curfew several times before she finally bolted from M/SJ sometime after her third week in residence. I guess even she knew life on the streets was less perilous than insulting Linda and ignoring Madonna's "back to school" message a second time with her third pregnancy.

Almost one-quarter of teen moms have a repeat pregnancy within two years of their first born.<sup>65</sup> Another way to say that is that 25% of all babies born to teenagers are not first children.<sup>66</sup>

July 30, 1991

Of course Catholic Charities employees were not to discuss birth control openly. I told Hailey, of the teased-up bangs and endless labor who named her son Steady Eddie, AKA Junior, that:

TV Quiz Show: "Jeopardy"

The category is: Reproduction

The Question is: "What precedes Fertilization?"

AND THE ANSWER IS: "WHAT IS OVULATION?"

(THE ANSWER IS NOT: "WHAT IS HAVING SEX?")

We all know that skipping a menstrual period could mean a woman could be pregnant, but we rarely remember that it's ovulation that results in either menstruation OR pregnancy. When I was a teenager I thought of my fertility cycle in "chicken-'n-egg" terms instead of realizing that to menstruate, one must ovulate. And ovulation, unless the girl is really tuned into her body, is the big non-event.

During the miracle of life, ovulation usually takes place every twenty-eight to thirty-one days, but postpartum there is not much warning and it just seems to happen. A woman's body

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<sup>63</sup> Richard Lacayo and Jill Smolowe. "Lock'em Up and Throw away the Key." *Time*, (1994, February) 51-59.

<sup>64</sup> Harper's Index. *Buffalo News*, (22 September 1996) p. 15.

<sup>65</sup>Debra S. Kalmass and Pearila Brickner Namerow, "Subsequent Childbearing among Teenage Mothers: The Determinants of a Closely Spaced Birth," *Family Planning Perspectives* 26 (July/August 1994) p. 149.

<sup>66</sup>Barbara DaFoe Whitehead, "The Failure of Sex Education," *Atlantic Monthly*, (1994, October) p. 73.

changes so much after childbirth that it's hard to know which fluids or twinges are "normal" to pregnancy and which ones are "normal" to being a woman just getting back in cycle. So ovulation can be a secret surprise to a fertile teenager, and when it is, she can get pregnant again unknowingly, particularly if she is mistakenly waiting for her first menstrual blood before using birth control.

But that whole statement: "Using birth control" runs counter to the Pope and Just-Say-No Christians. During an in-service on HIV+ and AIDS, the nurse practitioner said that condoms reduced the spread of the virus—and a zillion sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)—but that Catholics needed a doctor's prescription for condoms; to use contraceptives was a mortal sin for Roman Catholics. Clearly, babies would be prevented along with the STDs and that was not allowed. This is a major political controversy which results in a Right to Life conflict, but whose life? Mother or unborn child?

August 4, 1991

When Allison Z. came to Madonna, she weighed 110 pounds, but she was six months pregnant. Highly intuitive, introverted in the extreme and punishingly self-critical, Allison was anorexic. What complicated her pregnancy was that her father was militantly opposed to abortion. He was one of those extreme anti-abortionists who staged sit-ins in front of abortion clinics.

What this father never figured on was the sex part of the abortion issue and how it would relate to his own daughter. Only a tramp or a whore would have sex but no husband. When Mr. Z found out that his own 17-year-old-daughter was pregnant, he turned into Archie Bunker, Fred Flintstone, Stanley Kowalski and Ralph Kramden all crammed into one stick of dynamite. No slack was offered to his fragile daughter even when she obediently dodged the abortion issue and moved into M/SJ.

It's hard to know which came first: the bully or the victim. Did the father's need for control cause his daughter's voicelessness or did Allison's natural introversion lead to self-destructive tendencies which needed controlling? Whichever came first couldn't matter now; instead of honoring Allison's Pro-Life decision, Mr. Z. viciously attacked her unwed fertility on the phone and by mail. And if there were any questions left unanswered about his daughter's morals, he carbon-copied his letters to Allison and mailed them to Linda. Let the record show one overbearing male pointing his finger at a rather interesting young pregnant woman.

Excerpt from a typical letter from Mr. Z.:

*Dear Linda,*

*We raised Allison. We are witness to what she has done. Her situation is of her own making. She engaged in a dishonorable relationship which resulted in her pregnancy.*

*If Allison is an addict, it is known that family, friends, and "professional helpers" can prolong addictive behavior for months and years trying to identify "problems" while the addict goes on being addicted. Recovering addicts state that there is only one action that really counteracts addiction and that is to stop the addictive behavior.*

*If we cut through all of this camouflage and false complexities . . . is she willing to*



### **Anorexia/Bulimia**

According to the Anorexia/Bulimia Association:

- Strikes 1 million Americans a year: 90-95% are women
- Every year, 150,000 American women die of anorexia
- Another 30,000 become emetic abusers<sup>67</sup>

Naomi Wolf's, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used against Women* (1991) takes a medieval image, the Iron Maiden, to make a connection between birth control and eating disorders. Wolf says, "Reproductive rights gave Western women control over our own bodies, but the weight of fashion models plummeted to 23 percent below that of ordinary women, and eating disorders rose exponentially."<sup>68</sup> Further, she states that "a cultural fixation on female thinness is not an obsession about female beauty but an obsession about female obedience."<sup>69</sup>



August 10, 1991

For Allison, in reference to diet, "obsession" and "obedience" almost share the same meaning. Similar to having a drug or alcohol problem, most women with fairly major psychological problems such as bulimia/anorexia nervosa weren't allowed into the M/SJ program. In a signed contract with Linda, Allison agreed to attend counseling sessions with a

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<sup>67</sup>Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth, How Images of Beauty Are Used against Women* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991) pp. 181-182.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.* p. 11.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid* p. 187.

Northwestern University therapist three days a week, and she also agreed to eat three meals a day (no problem for me and for most of us). If she no-showed to her therapy without good cause, or if the doctors at St. Joe's reported a low weight gain, she would be dismissed from Madonna's program and would have to go somewhere else.

Before Allison moved into Madonna, she had taken a month's worth of birth control pills in one night. Soon after that, she woke up in a hospital emergency room; she had passed out from months and months of self-starvation. Thankfully, Allison found her way to M/SJ. Slowly but steadily, she felt safe enough to retain food. And then good news: a second ultrasound said the baby was okay.

Thankfully this was during the Golden Age of my days at Madonna. Both the Spring and Fall M/SJ's newsletters, "Heart to Heart," featured poems and letters from Madonna residents to and for their unborn babies. Allison made friends and was accepted as she was.

The good karma of Emily and Mary Ann's open adoptions funneled through Victoria's strong inner voice and then into Allison's heart. It was like a high school yearbook legacy that seemed to blot out all the bad and illuminate only the good during a particularly volatile rite of passage.

When Allison returned to college after placing her son for adoption, no one was surprised when she wrote the group care workers to say she was majoring in nutrition at St. Norbert. In spite of this happy ending, though, Allison's residency marked the end of the "good faith" arrangements between potential M/SJ clients and the program directors. Times were a-changin'.



## “Heart to Heart” Spring 1991

### From Residents:

#### **A PLACE TO HIDE**

by [REDACTED]  
age 19

I wanted a hideout to deal with my unplanned pregnancy. I wanted to be far away from the gossipy gaze of my college community. I needed to hide from the angry stare of my father, the hurt look of my mother, my sister's embarrassment, my brother's sheepish avoidance. Most of all, I wanted to blind my own innersight which focused so clearly on the pain beneath my confusion.

I wanted to block everything out. I hoped that safe behind the stone walls of Madonna/Saint Joseph Center I could pretend that I wasn't nineteen, unmarried and pregnant. I could pretend that I wasn't the bad person society must see me as, that I was not the bad person I saw myself as, because of my situation.

However, Madonna was not a place I could hide safely behind their walls. It was a place where I had to deal with my feelings. It was not a place where I could cut myself off from other people. Instead it was a place where I had to deal with other women in the same situation. Through looking at the goodness in these women struggling to make the best decisions for their unborn children, I was able to look at myself with new eyes.

#### **THE PAIN**

by [REDACTED]  
Age 20

My heart fills with pain as the days go by;  
I just have to be strong or I'll crumble and die.  
I have done so well of blocking out my pain and fears;  
But the closer the day gets my wall slowly disappears.  
I know what I am doing is only fair;  
Because my baby needs more than my Tender Loving Care.  
I just wish I knew of another way;  
To have it where, with me, my baby will stay

Letting you go isn't easy for me to do;  
Because of all the love I feel for you.  
It pains me to know one day you won't be mine;  
This will happen in a matter of time.  
I know I won't want to let you go;  
I guess that is why I feel depressed and low.  
I feel as if I am abandoning you;  
But I know it is the right thing to do.  
I just pray that the guilt will go away;  
Because this goodbye isn't easy to say.

August 15, 1991

*I've been at Madonna almost a year, and I'm still amazed that such young women will take time out of their adolescence to have a baby. Most teens are in such a hurry, at least I was, that to get pregnant and move into Madonna sounded like a GI's basic complaint about the military: HURRY UP AND WAIT. Are these teens simply following their mating urge? That biological imperative we all feel at some point in our lives, some of us earlier or later than others of us? In college biology textbooks, the reproductive instinct is listed as one of the*

*characteristics of life—along with adaptation, metabolism, movement, development, and evolution to name some of the others.*<sup>70</sup>

*August 26, 1991*

*Many of my fellow 1950s baby-boomers started having fertility problems just as our 30-year-old biological clocks started ticking down faster and louder. Like most women in my generation, I had taken complete control of my sexual biology. My ectopic pregnancies were related to the intrauterine devices (IUDs) I had switched to after ten years of high-dosage, old fashioned birth control pills which deadened my libido and gave me constant yeast infections. I had three of those painful, disturbing little fish-hook IUDs inserted into the opening of my uterus over five years. ("Did I want to keep the old IUD?" I was always asked during the replacements. "Some women wear them as earrings.")*

*I knew other women who had postponed childbirth and then had developed endometriosis, a painful inflammation of the uterine lining. Cells from the lining of the uterus become implanted on other organs of the body and this increase in estrogen (the female sex hormone) mimics a positive pregnancy. The body reads this false pregnancy command and then obediently cancels the ability to become pregnant for real. One friend of mine took expensive male hormone pills which lowered her voice and produced facial hair. Somehow, by tricking her body, she was able to conceive one much-loved child but not another when her endometriosis raged back postpartum making her sterile.*

Endometriosis was almost unheard of 70 years ago. In the 1920s there were twenty-one reported cases; by the 1990s, 5 million American women had the disease. Some researchers think there is a chlorine connection. Because polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) mimic estrogen in nature, sexual development in both sexes has gone askew: Male sperm count (from 1938 to 1990) is down 50% while testicular cancer has tripled. For women, breast cancer is up: one in forty during the 1940s compared to one in eight today.<sup>71</sup>

*P.S. My Baby David turned 5 today. He has Lego-mania. His patience with those teeny tiny parts is unbelievable to me. His meticulous, (Virgo), hand-eye coordination is 1000% better than my sloppy, (Taurus), break-it-to-make-it-fit ways. When he is 41, I will be 78 years old. I wonder how many grandchildren I will have. Of course, there is that reproductive karma that might shorten things a bit for me when Julia gets pregnant, as it did my mother and grandmother.*

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<sup>70</sup>John H. Postlewait and Janet L. Hopson, et al, *Biology! Bringing Science to Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991) p. 5.

<sup>71</sup>Sharon Begely, "The Estrogen Complex," *Newsweek*, (21 March 1994) pp. 76-77.

September 1, 1991

Beverly, 35, was one of the oldest residents to complete the program during my time at M/SJ. She had a history of drug and alcohol abuse but had recently completed an in-house rehab program, so like Mary Ann, she attended AA meetings while at M/SJ. Also like Mary Ann, Beverly had had several abortions and couldn't justify another. (I wonder how many women "accidentally" get pregnant after an abortion.) Beverly's successful completion of an in-house drug treatment program was not considered as risky as Mary Ann's iron-will not to drink or Allison's good intentions to eat three square meals (i.e. the residents admitted to M/SJ in good faith).

Beverly had an infectious laugh and could jolly along even the most depressed residents. She probably had a lot to do with getting Allison to lighten up (and then bulk up). Beverly was also a fabulous cook and did more than her fair share of the dinner preparations.

When Beverly entered Madonna, she already had an adoptive couple selected from a personal ad in *The Reader*. These people paid for Beverly's expenses while at M/SJ. Like most of the residents though, she vacillated in her parenting/placement decision. Some weeks Beverly would tell the couple she wanted to keep her baby; some weeks she would tearfully tell them she couldn't imagine being a single mother and that they could have the baby after all.

What happened was a surprise to all. Beverly's baby girl was born with a hand deformity. Somehow the baby's hand got tangled up in the wall of the birth sac and the fingers on one hand didn't grow. Postpartum depression, guilt, and confusion were unleashed like insects out of Pandora's Box. Placing a "not perfect" baby for adoption now seemed out of the question for Beverly.

*I know personally how conflicted a mother feels at this point because David was born with multiple birth defects among them: missing thumbs. Two, eight-hour microsurgeries at Children's Memorial Hospital would give him the ability to grasp (as in opposable thumbs), but he will always live in base eight, not base ten. In shock and denial, right after he was born, I wanted more than anything to wake up from my nightmare and find a "perfect" child in that bassinet over there. After two months in the Intensive Care Unit at Children's Memorial Hospital and more than \$100,000 in (insurance paid) medical bills, I brought my fragile little bundle home so he could start his real job: fighting with his older sister.*

Intuitively I knew that Beverly would need much longer than the three-day period to bond with her daughter. Much work needed to be done psychologically and psychically before the threads would be strong enough to be broken. Beverly needed to nurse her daughter in a real and in a metaphysical sense.

September 4, 1991

Quite the reverse happened in Greek mythology. When Hera, wife of Zeus, first laid eyes on her deformed son, Hephaestus (born with a club foot), she flung him deep into the ocean where he hid for years. Hephaestus (Vulcan to the Romans), the God of the Forge, was the only Olympian god to work. As the divine blacksmith, he made Zeus' thunderbolts, Apollo and Artemis' arrows, Demeter's sickle, and Achilles' armor. Hephaestus also split Zeus' skull open so Athena could emerge. Strong chains forged by Hephaestus were needed to bind Prometheus to a mountain cliff. Prometheus' crime? Stealing sacred fire from Olympia and giving it to the mortals on earth.

To punish man for Prometheus' crime, Zeus asked Hephaestus to make Pandora, the first mortal woman. Her name means "rich in gifts" or "all-giving" and because she was modeled after Aphrodite, she was irresistibly beautiful. Beautiful maybe, but terribly curious and not very smart. When she opened a box Zeus had forbidden her to open, all evil—including sickness and death—were let loose into the human world. In this swarming hoard of miseries were: Guilt, Shame, Despair, Sadness, along with Distrust, Envy, Gossip, Greed, and Lies. Pandora was able to close the lid before HOPE, at the bottom of the box, could fly away too. Thus, Pandora is the giver of all gifts, those we welcome and some we would rather decline.

The myth sounds a little like Eve's fate with Adam, the snake and the apple in the Garden of Eden. Is it surprising that both Christianity and Greek Mythology have misogynous fables that blame women for sin and duplicity?

September 10, 1991

But back to Hera rejecting Hephaestus. It doesn't happen in real life. By all accounts, Hera already had a reputation for being an overbearing woman and "a jealous shrew" even before she tossed (literally) her broken child away. Hera seems a little like today's Mommie Dearest/Joan Crawford: They are both exaggerated female villains, almost prototypes of all that is bad in women.

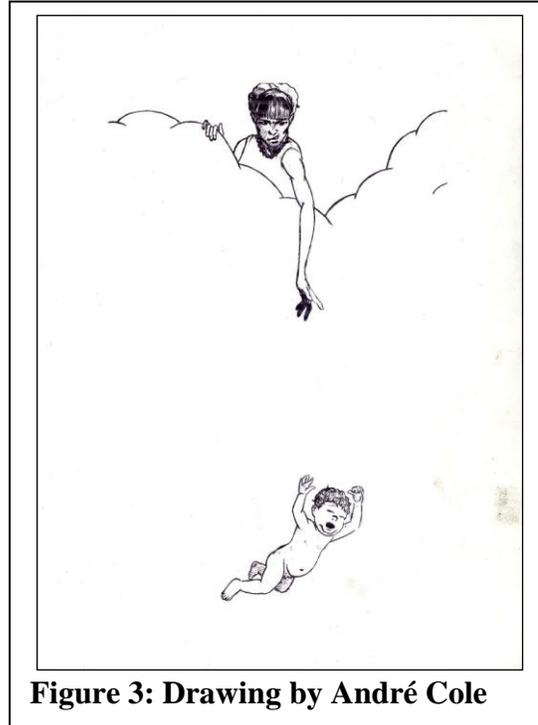
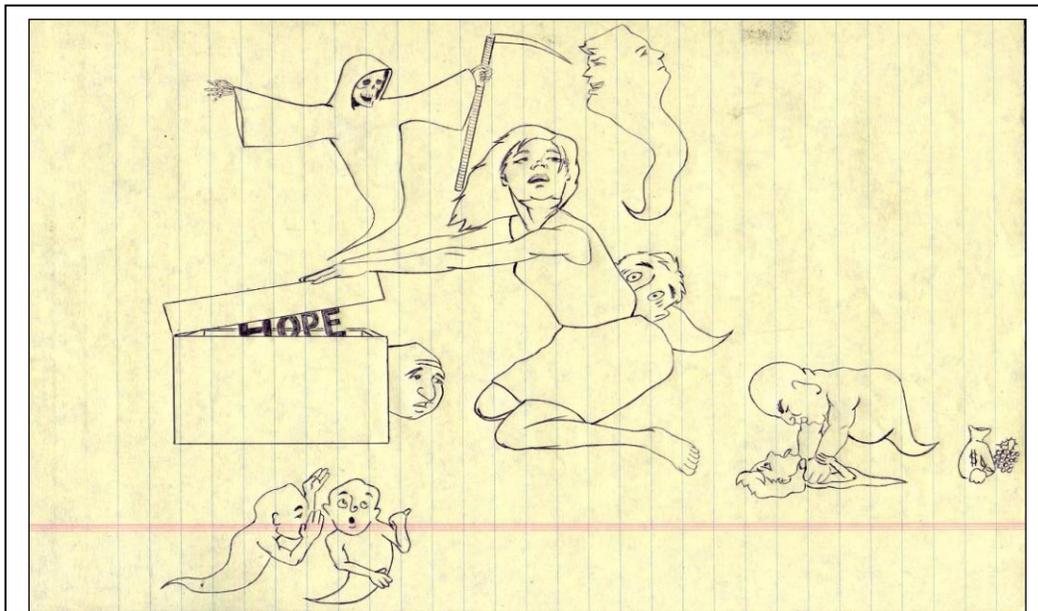


Figure 3: Drawing by André Cole

In real life, one would HOPE (at the bottom of the box) that a gentler, kinder, more human mother would try to nurture her broken baby back to health. And Beverly did just that. She injected Hope and Eros (Love) into her daughter; she nursed and held her baby for three months before she let *The Reader* couple adopt her.



**Figure 4: André Cole**

September 30, 1991

Cynthia, a recent college grad, delivered a baby at St. Joe's and placed him for adoption shortly after. Cynthia was an energetic 21-year-old Caucasian woman who worked at several jobs during her pregnancy. She was able to plan ahead, stay within her budget and even pay off some of her college bills. She never wavered in her post-delivery plans to place her baby, but her world started to wobble toward the end of her pregnancy when the doctors compared her ultrasound results with her delivery date. The doctors at St. Joe's thought the baby was dangerously underweight and therefore developmentally in danger. A C-section was scheduled so that the baby could get direct medical treatment. That alone frightened Cynthia, as it would anyone, but the baby turned out to be just fine. However, Cynthia's postpartum depression aggravated a pre-existing condition: a lithium imbalance and she was in the psych ward at St. Joe's for two weeks. Of course, the pre-existing lithium imbalance was not mentioned to M/SJ staff during her intake interview.

In retrospect, the Madonna staff shouldn't have been too surprised that Cynthia was so good at keeping personal secrets. She had kept her pregnancy a secret from her family until the

last month or two, but after months of weekly sessions with the Catholic Charities social worker, Cynthia finally felt strong enough to reveal her pregnancy to her parents.

Cynthia's emotions started to see-saw at this point. As a strict Lutheran minister, her father, like Allison Z.'s father, was unable to accept the fact that daddy's little girl had become a sexual woman. When he finally visited several weeks before the scheduled delivery and start of the lithium imbalance, he told Cynthia she had become a family embarrassment. She had sinned in the eyes of God and in front of him, her father. She was a whore, a family disgrace. She was dirty. I wonder whether honesty was the best policy for Cynthia.

October 18, 1991

Now, two weeks postpartum, Cynthia has been released from the psych ward and has returned to M/SJ. She seems fragile and distant. Last night she started to mention a strange feeling she had about her father. Her eyes focused far away in her memory and she went into a trance-like state. Her father used to "tuck her in at night." Could she have "been asleep" when he touched her hair and then climbed into bed next to her? Did he have sex with her?

She seemed to see and hear things. Her eyes followed an inner image and she cocked her ears as if trying to hear the conversation. Was she having an incest flashback? Do those things really exist? Sometimes she used the voice of a child and talked about her red bicycle. She called her father "Mr. Mean" and the St. Joe's doctor "Mr. Nice," and she changed her voice when she spoke for them. She talked about the little girl inside of herself. Holding up an imaginary mirror, she could see this little girl's pain. Couldn't you?

Again I knew I was out of my territory. I didn't have a clue what to say to Cynthia or how to make her feel better. Hugging and holding her clearly wasn't appropriate; offering her food at 2 a.m. didn't seem to be the answer either. "Thirsty? Juice?" I offered, hesitantly. She sort of "came to" after several days with the right amount of lithium. She was able to go back to work and she moved in with a girl friend several days later.

It shocked me to know how much inner turmoil Cynthia was in and then watch her go to work every day. Are there a lot of people who can neatly set aside such troubling emotional data but still continue on with their lives? Cynthia's story was just the beginning of seriously troubled women living at Madonna.

After the New Year, the contract M/SJ had made with DCFS would introduce me to another world of abuse, a whole other dimension of horror. Cynthia's problems would seem playful, almost bitter-sweet, for at least Cynthia had a father who had a job. She also had a

mother who cooked her dinners, took her shopping, and wasn't strung out on smack. Cynthia wasn't beaten or abandoned. She was "just" sexually abused and then emotionally assaulted . . .

November 10, 1991

Debby was a seventh grader when she started babysitting for a young couple who went to her church. The couple had a 2-year-old son and the mom was pregnant. Now two years later, Debby was practically considered a family member. Partly this was true because Debby's relationship with her own parents had become explosive, but Debby seemed also to have developed a special bond with the children's father who drove her home each night after babysitting. I guess, in the end, "special" doesn't quite describe their relationship—after one of their nights of sex in the family station wagon, Debby became pregnant.

Debby's parents wanted to press charges against this 30-year-old man, but she wouldn't cooperate. At this point, all communications broke down between Debby and her parents, so she moved into Madonna. In the end, as a 15-year-old minor child, she and he needed to get a court order to get married, which is what happened, just as soon as he got divorced. After Debby left Madonna, I half expected to see her squaring off against the former Mrs. on TV—maybe a slugfest on *Jenny Jones* or *Jerry Springer*.

Without mentioning this older male aspect when discussing the rise in teenage pregnancies, the epidemic seems to stall out over declining (female?) sexual morals. In many of the studies of age differences between the younger moms and older dads, mention was made of sexual coercion and forced sex (rape) being an issue. The Alan Guttmacher Institute's *Sex and America's Teenagers (1994)* says that on average the father is six years older than the mother. In 1988, 489,000 teens became moms while 195,000 teens became dads.<sup>72</sup> A 1990 California study of 60,000 births found that the younger the mom is, the older the father. When the mother is 12 years old, the father is 22 years old; when she is in high school, he is only four years older. Men over 25 father twice the "teen" births as boys under 18.<sup>73</sup> (See Figures 3E & 3F at end of chapter.) A 1991 study by the National Center for Health Statistics found that men over 25 cause more than 400 teen pregnancies every day. (74)

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<sup>72</sup> *Op. cit.*, AGI, p. 60.

<sup>73</sup> Mike Males, "Poverty, Rape, Adult/Teen Sex: Why 'Pregnancy Prevention' Programs Don't Work," *Phi Delta Kappan*, (January 1994) p 408.

74. *Ibid.*

December 15, 1991

The last of the yearbook legacy and the end of the Golden Age of Madonna is Elizabeth's story. Elizabeth is pretty and blonde and was just finishing college when she found out she was pregnant. Ozzie and Harriet (not her parents' real names) were proud of her decision to give her baby to a couple who couldn't have a baby of their own. She moved into Madonna, finished up some course work, and worked part time in an office nearby while she waited to deliver.

The absolutely mind-boggling part of Elizabeth's story for me was that her brother was her labor coach. I mean even assuming that your brother is "your very best friend" and all of that, what happens when that baby comes out of that private opening down there? When I got the nerve to ask her, she smiled benevolently at the sexually perverted middle-aged woman (ME), and said that her brother held her hand, put cool washcloths on her forehead, and helped her with her breathing.

I was amazed at how normal and natural this 21-year-old young woman could be about placing her beautiful, smart baby with this anonymous family. I tried to catch a glimpse of her soul to see how she could be so blessed, to see how different she was from the rest of us mortals. Did she realize how altruistic she was being? Did she feel more spiritually evolved than the rest of us chumps? No, she didn't and again she looked at me with a charitable tolerance.

December 16, 1991

*On the black market Elizabeth's baby would probably be in the \$30,000 to \$80,000 range. I knew of a couple who had given up trying to adopt a baby through the social service agencies because of the long waiting lists. Their solution was creative: they ended up giving an unmarried pregnant teen a college degree and law school funding in exchange for her (100% white) baby. I know that sounds a lot like babies-for-sale, but everyone was a winner in that story. Where do we as a society draw the line? There was negative talk about that couple who had another baby simply to grow and then donate its (future) spare kidney to their now-sickly toddler. For*

**One of the saddest occurrences that family workers witness is the buying and selling of babies for adoption. While this practice is not legal, there are ways to get around it. Private placement services combined with newspaper advertisements for children serve to bring babies into families that have not been well screened. Catholic Charities is extremely strict in their screening, in order to ensure that children are placed into healthy, happy families.**

**Figure 5: Rev. James F. Hurlbert, St. Pascal Parish,**

*Pete's sake, they weren't selling the kidney on the black market; they were just "personalizing" our capitalist system. Maybe we're not ready for tomorrow's genetic perfection.*

*Margaret Atwood's book, The Handmaid's Tale talks about a futuristic society where most of the women were sterile. The few females who could still breed were all called "Marthas," and most wealthy households had one. But unlike steamy paperback covers which show beautiful, buxom slave women fending off their brutish white owners, for Martha-the-Handmaid, her master and his wife who was also present for the insemination, reproduction was stylized and formalized in all aspects. It was no real surprise that most of the babies born in Atwood's Gilead society were sickly and died shortly after birth. Sethe, Toni Morrison's protagonist in Beloved, killed her daughter in order to give her the ultimate freedom in death rather than have her be subjected to life as a slave.*

*Some say the African-American slave market wasn't sustainable. Why? Does the lack of basic freedom cancel natural fertilization? Zoologists struggle to keep the panda (to name just one animal) population represented in zoos. Anti-drug TV commercials have led us to believe that a rat (in captivity) prefers and will choose a diet of cocaine—and certain death—over food and water. Demographic studies of the totalitarian Soviet Union have shown similar statistics plus a discouraging alcoholism rate and one of the highest abortion rates in the world. The average Russian woman has an average 3.3 to 4.5 abortions during her reproductive lifetime.<sup>75</sup>*

*Maybe the lack of basic freedom cancels out the natural instinctual requirement to reproduce for all animals, humans included. And maybe animals without choices would rather be drugged than just exist. "Existentialism Meets the Wild Kingdom" might be pushing the envelope of rational thought for most people though . . . but not by much.*

December 17, 1991

*What part does the mind play in this biological imperative question then? Is it mind over matter or the other way around? Is this reproductive instinct qualitative? Are women brainwashed into believing that the "American Dream" can be had through their biology even when they buy into a toxic relationship? Do they live their perfect lives like Stepford Wives, with their hopes and ambitions filled by other peoples' conditions and rules? In addition to wanting unconditional love, I think the teens at Madonna wanted some of that Dream when they had unprotected sex; maybe I did too.*

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<sup>75</sup>"Russian Fertility is Low, Despite Early Age at First Birth and Lack of Effective Contraceptive Methods," Digest, *Family Planning Perspectives* 24 (September/October 1992) p. 236.

December 18, 1991

These stories were not the Elizabeth story. The title of Elizabeth's story is: "The Last Nice (Not Good) Catholic Girl on Earth Places Her Baby for Adoption." Elizabeth chose the lucky family because they had a blonde cocker spaniel and she grew up with one too. It also helped that the adopting father was a toy manufacturer. Every kid's dream, but who could have guessed the importance of the dog in this highly charged selection process?

December 25, 1991

All of the residents had a place to go for Christmas this year. Elizabeth delivered and moved home to her parents' house for a little R. & R. before she started job/apartment hunting at the first of the year. This month, Mary Ann and Beverly both came back to cook special holiday meals for the girls. Mary Ann has been promoted to "Group Supervisor" at the market research firm. She looks competent and proud. Beverly finally placed her daughter with *The Reader* couple; she signed the adoption papers just before Thanksgiving. She looks profoundly tired but finally centered within herself.



**Figure 6 Drawing by Brenda Rienke**

## M/SJ Fiscal Year End and Wish List, 1991

### **F.Y.I.**

At the end of Fiscal year 1991 (6/30/91) Madonna/St. Joseph Center:

**Provided 5,178 days of care**

**Served 67 residents**

- 23 teens, aged 13-17
- 44 adults, aged 18-up

**Supported 18 residents in parenting**

**Supported 17 residents in placing**

**Assisted in 36 deliveries**

### **Madonna/St. Joseph Center's "Wish List"**

One of the ways you can help the center provide for its needs is to furnish items on our "wish list." If you have sources for any of the following "wishes" their donation to the center is greatly appreciated.

#### **WISH LIST**

Treadmill  
Toaster with Wide Slots  
Toaster oven  
Electric can opener  
Popular video tapes  
Electric carving knife  
Picnic tables  
Large 8 gallon storage  
containers for sugar, flour,  
rice, etc.  
Tupperware - Large sizes  
VCR  
Maternity Clothes  
Cubs tickets  
Croquet set  
Stationary bicycle  
Shower Curtains and Liners

# AMERICA IS THE WORLD'S LEADING JAILER

Fig 3A. (76) US vs. World Prison Rates, 1995

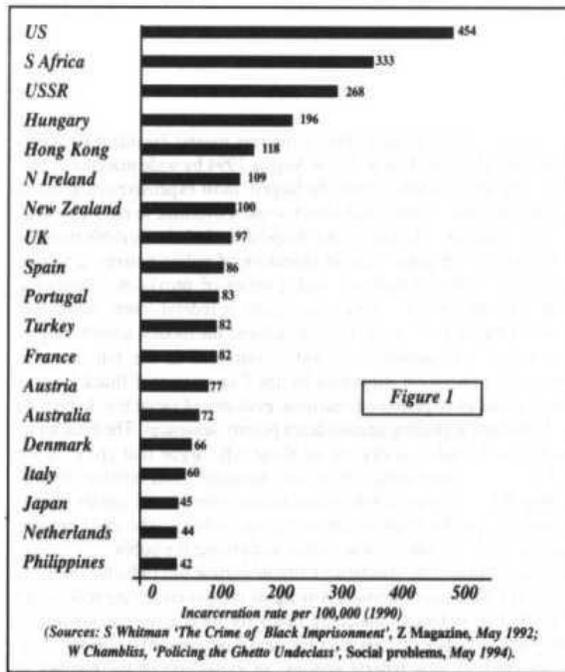
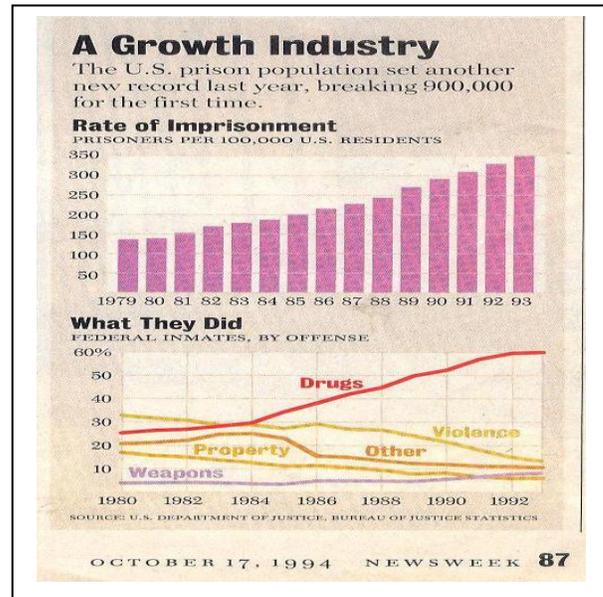


Fig. 3B. (77) US Invests in Prisons, 1994



## US Incarceration /Drug Related Offenses

- 1986. . . . .8.6%
  - 1991. . . . .21.3%
- \* Actual Rate of Violent Crime is on Decline
- \* 1990s Prison Construction Costs is \$37 Billion

## Without an Official Apartheid System

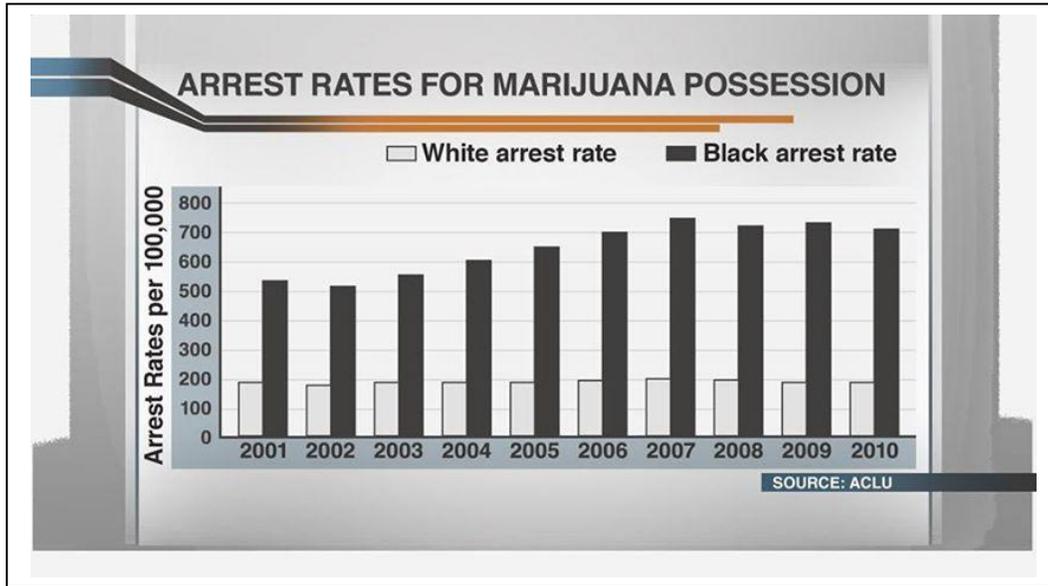
- Blacks comprise 44% of the prison population but only 12% of the U.S. population
- The U.S. spends \$7 billion to incarcerate African-Americans
- 1 in 5 black males (15-34 yrs.) have criminal records.
- African-American inmates make up 73.3% of all drug offenders in Florida

76. Phil Gasper. "Cruel and unusual punishment: the politics of crime in the United States." *International Socialism Journal* (66), 1995.

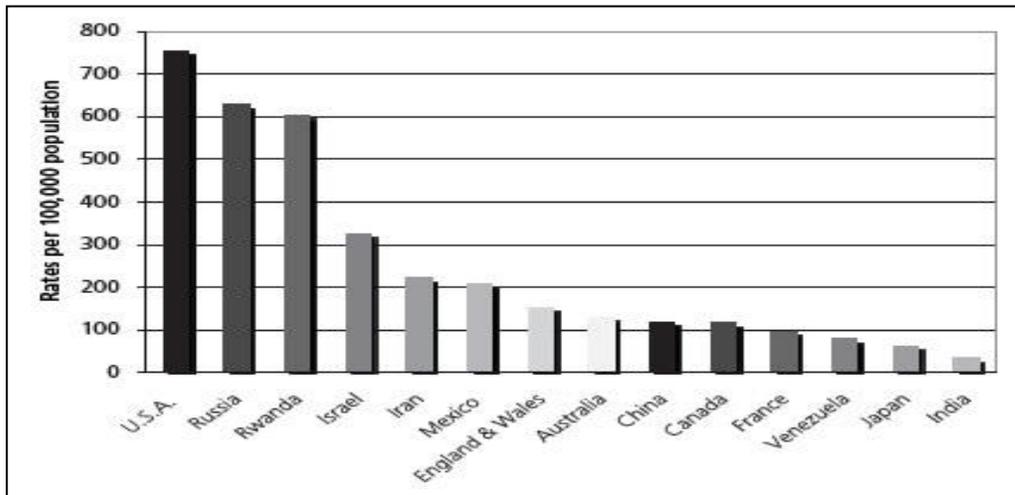
77. "A Growth Industry. Back to the Chain Gang." *Newsweek*, (17 October 1994), p. 87.

## UPDATED STATISTICS: RACIAL DIVIDE & US PENAL SYSTEM

**Fig 3C. Updated Statistics, 2013 for Arrest Rates for Marijuana Possession: Black/White] (78)**



**Fig. 3D. (79) The US Penal System in Crisis, 2009**

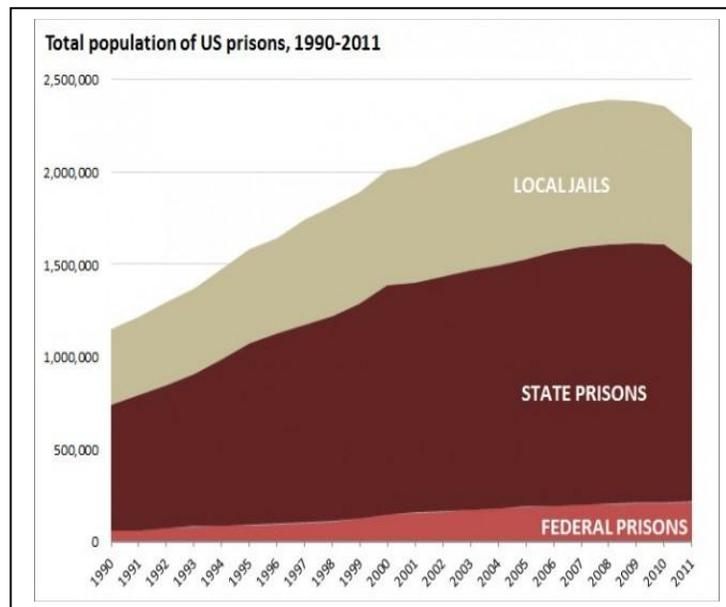


78. Graph from MSNBC “All in With Chris Hayes.” <[https://fbcdn-sphotos-g-a.akamaihd.net/hphotos-ak-ash3/p480x480/945298\\_181554875342879\\_1076470026\\_n.jpg](https://fbcdn-sphotos-g-a.akamaihd.net/hphotos-ak-ash3/p480x480/945298_181554875342879_1076470026_n.jpg)> (June 2013)

79. Hannah Holleman et al. “The Penal State in an Age of Crisis.” *Monthly Review*. Vol (June, 2009). <<http://monthlyreview.org/2009/06/01/the-penal-state-in-an-age-of-crisis>> (July, 2013).

**Attorney General Eric Holder, 2013: to issue fewer mandatory minimum sentences for low-level drug offenders. (August 15, 2013)**

At the end of 2011, there were 2.2 million Americans incarcerated, 854,000 on parole, and almost 4 million on probation, meaning just under 7 million Americans—or one out of every 34 adults—were being supervised by the criminal-justice system.(80)



**The Prison Industry in the United States: Big Business or a New Form of Slavery? (81)**

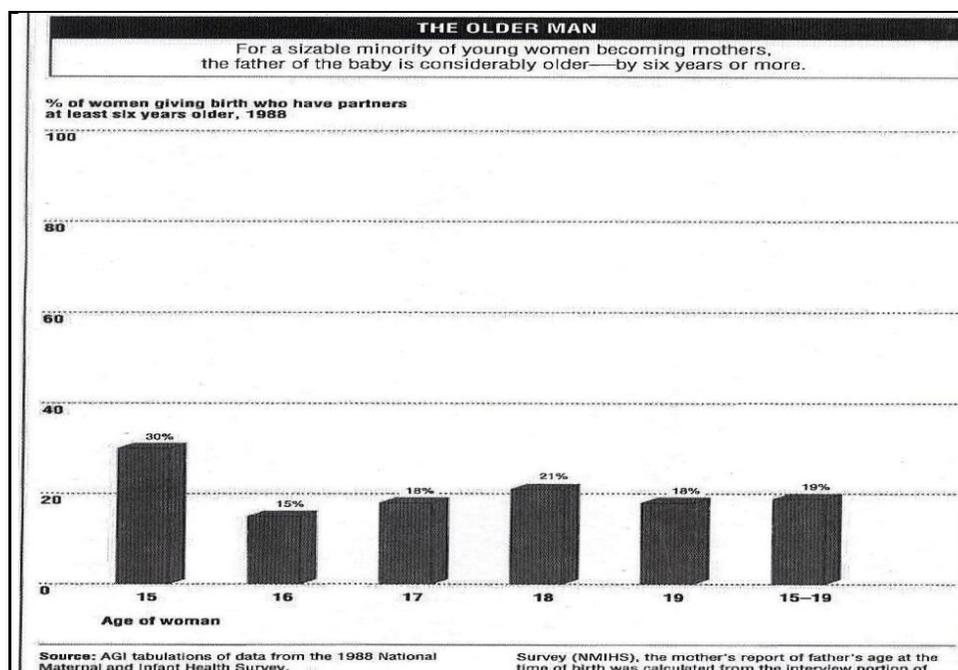
The prison industry complex is one of the fastest-growing industries in the United States and its investors are on Wall Street. “This multimillion-dollar industry has its own trade exhibitions, conventions, websites, and mail-order/Internet catalogs. It also has direct advertising campaigns, architecture companies, construction companies, investment houses on Wall Street, plumbing supply companies, food supply companies, armed security, and padded cells in a large variety of colors.”

80 . Paul Waldman. “Six Charts that Explain Why Our Prison System Is So Insane.” (15 August 2013) The American Prospect. <<http://prospect.org/article/six-charts-explain-why-our-prison-system-so-insane>> (Oct 2013)

81 . Vicky Pelaez. “The Prison Industry in the United States: Big Business or a New Form of Slavery?” (31 January 2013) GlobalResearch.org. <<http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-prison-industry-in-the-united-states-big-business-or-a-new-form-of-slavery/8289>> (Oct 2013)

# THE OLDER MAN AND TEEN PREGNANCY

Fig. 3E. (82)



3F. Mike Males reports (1993) (83)

<u>Mother's Age</u>	<u>Father's Age</u>
10-11	9.8 years older
13-14	4.6 years older
15-19	3.7 years older

“Among California senior high-age mothers, ages 16-18, 76% of fathers are post-high-school adult men averaging 22 years old and ranging in age (95% interval) from 17-31 years.”

82. The Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI), *Sex and America's Teenagers* (New York, 1994) p. 53.

83. Mike Males. “School-age Pregnancy: Why Hasn't Prevention Worked?” *Journal of School Health*, Vol 63, No 10 ( December 1993). <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1746-1561.1993.tb06075.x/abstract>> (July 2013)



## CHAPTER FOUR

January 3, 1992

When it became obvious that 26-year-old Ebony was miscarrying her baby, whether from self-inflicted attempts to abort or from her body's own spontaneous contractions, the St. Joseph's physicians would not help terminate the pregnancy in any way. Because the baby still had a faint heart beat, the Catholic doctors wouldn't start an I.V. pitocin drip, which would result in a simultaneous birth/death for the embryo-just-turned-fetus.

The doctors knew, by way of an ultrasound, that there was not enough amniotic fluid to sustain life, and Ebony told them herself that she got drunk on New Year's Eve, shot up some cocaine, and then tried to puncture her uterus with a knitting needle. Even so, the Catholic doctors would not intervene on the mother's behalf until (until!) she had a fever. Life at all costs—even though the life of the host (hostess) was jeopardized in the process (and not just theoretically or hypothetically speaking). They would only step in when (when!) there was a clear and present danger to the mother, i.e. infection, temperature, elevated pulse, shortness of breath. Did it not matter that Ebony had been bleeding bright red blood with clots since New Year's Day, now two days ago? Perhaps the Catholics would just wait until the baby started to rot. What century IS this and whose life is more important?

The emergency room nurses told the M/SJ staff to go over to the University of Illinois where they would take care of (murder) the fetus. A pitocin drip was started around 8 p.m. and soon afterward Ebony's temperature started to climb. A stalling labor without sufficient amniotic fluids or an infection hitting the blood stream would push her temperature up.

I joined Ebony at midnight after I had put the house to bed. The p.m. staff waited for me to link up with them at the University of Illinois Hospital. I felt relieved at the University Hospital; everything was efficient and up-to-date. After we were settled in, I asked the nurse if she was angry at the Catholic Hospitals for giving them the dirty work. She said it happened all the time. Holy Cross, St. Joseph's, St. Francis, St. Elizabeth's, St. Mary of Nazareth, Our Lady of Resurrection Hospital . . . normal routine by now.

I spent the night sitting at Ebony's bedside. Her contractions were still only eight to ten minutes apart, so this gave her time for reflection. She began to mourn the loss of her baby. She looked frightened as she picked at the hospital bedding. Her eyes were black with dark circles under them. How long had she gone without sleep?

It turned out that her grandmother and only living relative had died during the Thanksgiving weekend. Although Ebony's complexion was very light, almost a golden brown, the photograph of her grandmother showed a very dark, elderly woman. I'm not sure what the

real bloodline was between these two women if there was one at all. Ebony's parents died at different times during her early childhood; her mother died when she was an infant, and her father died when she was 8 years old.

From what I could piece together, the woman in the photograph was more of a grandmother than a step-mother, and she had helped Ebony's father when things got difficult. True to the African-American experience, an unrelated person had stepped in to act as family and then as godmother when Ebony's father died. (And, in fairness to my two sweet, suburban aunts, I'm sure my offspring and I would have been taken in at this point also.)

But, the thought of Ebony being intimate (having sex with a man) seemed bizarre. She seemed gender neutral, ascetic in the extreme. Was she orgasmic? Did she get pregnant her first time? Which leads up to the fact that Ebony did not have an immaculate conception, so where (the hell) was the A/F? He clearly wasn't part of her day-to-day life, or in her cocaine binge over Christmas, or consulted about this coin-toss decision to abort.

Now in the middle of the night, I was Ebony's connection to the outside world . . . or was she in the outside world thinking she could briefly join the inside world for a moment though her pregnancy? How was this 26-year-old woman supposed to muddle through life without a soul to care about her? Did she think about that? Did she think it "normal" to have sort of "hatched" into life? Where was her emotional baggage? Did she dare be introspective?

In addition to all of this isolation and loss, Ebony didn't really have anywhere to live once she left Madonna. She had sort of stumbled through M/SJ's front door via one of the few church referrals that I could remember. For valid reasons she was depressed and lonely. The thought of raising a child alone had overwhelmed her, although I don't know what comfort her ancient, fragile grandmother would have provided if she were still alive.

Finally at around 5:00 a.m. she dozed off. I went out to the nurses' station stiff and sore and said, "I feel like a pretzel," to which they said, "Ya hungry?" Ha, ha, ha . . . but before I knew it, a cot with blanket was rolled into the room.

January 10, 1992

The holidays are over. Winter has settled in and gray stillness has penetrated everything. Ebony wanted to show me pictures of her "baby." Already the dozen photographs were well worn and handled. It was unsettling to see Ebony's face up close to the little gray mass of flesh she called her "baby." Catholic Charities had found a special account so Ebony could bury her child. I don't know what I would have done if I had been in her shoes. When a friend of mine

buried her 8-month stillborn baby, complete with coffin and private blessings, it made me feel uncomfortable. I wanted to rush her through the pain; her sadness was just too intense for me.

I didn't know then that naming and burying the baby was a necessary part of the grieving period. Naming the pain is integral to any emotional recovery, just as Rachel needed to say "hello" to her baby before she could say "goodbye; ditto, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) credo that believes naming the disease helps treat the addiction.

I still didn't know whether Ebony felt remorse for her New Year's Eve fling, but no one seemed to be talking about that now. Somber religious tones had taken over. Questions about cocaine and knitting needles were oddly inappropriate now.

I felt that old familiar queasiness creep into my body when formal religious indoctrination hit my reality. As much empathy as I had for Ebony, I did not think she was exactly exempt from her actions even though she now wore an impenetrable veil of piety. Ebony left the program a week after her "delivery." I'm not sure which way she went. Again I was disturbed with the pro-natal Catholic position that put a woman's life in danger.



#### REGARDING CATHOLICISM AND BIRTH CONTROL

From *The Evolution of an Earthly Code, Contraception in Catholic Doctrine* (1991):

Would you really have a young teenage boy or girl die of AIDS than use a condom?" When Father Peter Stravinkas, a St. John's University theology professor, was asked this question, he protested a "false dichotomy," but then he answered it: "There are worse things than dying of AIDS, namely, dying in a state of mortal sin."<sup>84</sup>

**I have said before that while irresponsible sexual activity is a mistake, pregnancy never is. Pregnancy is a gift. And yet how that pregnancy is handled may be a mistake. Abortion is a mistake. Trying to raise the child yourself may be a mistake if you're not up to the task.**

**Figure 7: Rev. James F. Hurlbert, St. Pascal Parish, Newsletter, 1993**

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<sup>84</sup>*The Evolution of an Earthly Code*, "Contraception in Catholic Doctrine," 1991 p.1

From *The Pontifical Council for the Family, the Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* (Rome 1995):

Another abuse occurs whenever sex education is given to children by teaching them all the intimate details of genital relationships, even in a graphic way. Parents must also reject the promotion of so-called "safe sex" or "safer sex," a dangerous and immoral policy based on the deluded theory that the condom can provide adequate protection against AIDS.<sup>85</sup>



February 2, 1992

Without further ado, the Madonna/St. Joseph Center jumped into the world of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). M/SJ had been taking in DCFS residents since last July, but it wasn't until after Thanksgiving that we started to increase our number of DCFS clients deliberately. Through attrition, M/SJ's census gradually switched back to a younger teen population, but it wasn't until I dealt with Ginger that my '60s liberalism was truly tested.

Ginger was a 17-year-old Caucasian girl who had been in and out of the state system for at least the last ten years. She and her older brother caught the attention of DCFS when they were found tied together, naked in a water-shed. She was 7 years old and he was 9. They both had been sodomized (she had also been raped) by their "uncle" who fed them bread and water for the week he kept them prisoners in his private dungeon.

A couple of years later the children were found begging in the streets and eating out of garbage cans. Their mother had left them in the care of an elderly man who lived in the projects while she went on a drug spree. Abandonment, lack of supervision, abuse . . . and voila, into the State system. I couldn't figure out how the mother had been able to keep custody of her children after the first rather shocking episode, but that wouldn't be the first time I'd question Big Brother's judgment.

What kind of animal could Ginger be? When she first moved in, I wanted to give her a hug to show her that the whole world was not hostile. However, hypersensitivity toward the helping professionals (e.g. school teachers, priests, social workers) who had turned into sexual predators, had made any adult's physical sign of compassion to a child interpreted as an automatic invasion of his/her personal space.

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<sup>85</sup>*The Pontifical Council for the Family, The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, The Vatican, Rome 1995

"Don't fuckin' touch me!" or "Keep your god-damned hands to yourself!" would come flying out of the mouths of even the youngest residents for the softest, slightest signs of empathy. The whole thing seemed like a reverse conundrum for me—particularly with my own children, whom I now couldn't seem to hold and touch enough. I wanted to clutch at them and pull them to me at the very time they needed to push away and grow separately.

Ginger was an extreme case no matter what the protocol or posture was regarding our in-house treatment. Once she leaped out of her chair and slammed the door OPEN during her meeting with her social worker. The door had been eased shut, with all good intentions, by a group care worker who walked by the room. That Ginger was a little sensitive about closeness might be just a guess.

However, now Ginger is laying for me. She is furious with me because I told her she had to get her act together with the A/F. When I got to Madonna last night the p.m. staff told me that Ginger started having labor pains after the Lamaze class and that the A/F, who is also her labor coach, were still over at St. Joe's where the class was held.

Now that her due date was six weeks away, special arrangements were made every week so her boyfriend could go to the Lamaze classes with her. He lived in the State group home, Columbus-Maryville Academy, in the suburbs and had to be dropped off and then picked up at the "L" on those Monday nights. This effort required the cooperation of the staff at both homes.

I knew that Ginger could play the system like a fine, stringed instrument and she quickly saw Lamaze night as a way to see her boyfriend for a couple of more hours. Who could blame her, really? When I picked them up at St. Joe's, they both assumed that he would spend the night at Madonna.

(Exactly where?)

Clearly he was not allowed on the second floor.

(Males Forbidden.)

Was I naive enough to think that Ginger would sleep in her jammies upstairs while her man slept in a dark corner of the basement?

(I was born at night, but not last night.)

To make matters worse, I found out that his Maryville house-parents felt the same as Ginger and the A/F did. When I called the house-parents to say that I was dropping the A/F off at the "L," they put up resistance about retrieving him at the end of the line at 2:00 a.m. "Couldn't he stay at Madonna?" and "The M/SJ evening staff had suggested . . ."

I couldn't blame them, but were they buffaloes by these manipulative teens too? Did I really want the A/F spending Monday nights at Madonna starting a precedent for future residents and their boyfriends? Obviously a tangle of red tape confronted the human need for sleep. The bottom line was that I didn't want Ginger calling the shots. I had to take over, be the boss. I talked to Ginger and the A/F as though they were my own children and, sadly, the age difference was less than I wanted to admit.

I pulled the M/SJ van over to the side of the road exactly as my mother did with me and my brothers when things got out of control in the second seat, and exactly as I do now with my own kids. Maybe this was learned maternal behavior, maybe just a dramatic way to grab attention. With the van idling and the defroster blasting, I turned to confront Ginger and her meek, pimply boyfriend. I told them they had to get their act together. At 1:30 in the morning, I told them that we would not be spending our nights like this, that Ginger was going to school in the morning and that the boyfriend, in fact, was returning to Maryville that very night. Further I told them that childbirth was a serious matter and that they had to learn to communicate clearly. They had to be honest, direct, and be able to listen to each other because it wouldn't be any easier out there. Life in a group home with all services subsidized was a trip to the beach.

I sensed that the A/F was a little afraid to challenge Ginger, and truthfully, I was too. She had been institutionalized, systematized, streamlined . . . . She had everything and anything original and unique trained out of her. A type of Pavlovian behavior modification had been layered over her core personality. Of course that "core personality" had already been sodomized, raped, abandoned, starved . . . .

What remained were the anger, hostility and damage of a child toward a society not able to protect her as a parent could or should. Ginger's anger was not just frustrated, teenage angst. It was an aimless hate; an intense, demonical rage; a rage without remorse.

What can help her? I truly do not see rehabilitation and/or therapy as a way to help Ginger. In a society saturated with graphic visual images of bloodshed and sexual terror, is it surprising that our children are so violent? Violence begets violence. Ginger has become one of society's by-products and one of its brightest and best students. Imagine what an ardent teacher she will be!

I slept with my bedroom door closed last night—the first time since I'd been at Madonna. One of the teens had come to me as I walked through the front door last night and whispered, "Ginger is laying for you." Ginger told this teen that there wouldn't be much to prevent her from entering my bedroom and blowing my head off as I slept.

Perhaps my tenure as available, nurturing, empathetic night-Mom is over.

March 16, 1992

I stopped yearning for the pre-DCFS days at Madonna when I read a newspaper clipping Linda pasted in our staff log. It read: "Body Identified as Cicero Woman's." It didn't take long to find out that the body belonged to Rachel, the one resident I had been in labor with to date.

Last weekend was a particularly violent weekend in Chicago: the bodies of two young women were recovered from rivers in the area. It was hard to ignore the blatant misogynistic message in the double-shotgun headlines.

Back in the late 1970s, men used to tell me that the Women's Liberation Movement died on its own because it lacked a sense of humor; women just couldn't laugh at themselves. How could we? I was shocked to realize that a year ago I had shared a very intimate moment with a woman whose body was now in pieces. Her crime was that she had allegedly witnessed a gang murder.

Which of the two drowned women was I in labor with? The one who had been gang raped by four men, had her head shaved, was tortured with razor blades and branded with gang symbols before she was finally heaved (alive?) into the Calumet-Sag Canal . . . She had been beaten on the head with a blunt instrument—a later report said a 14 1/2-pound brick. Her hands had been tied behind her back and her feet bound with wire which were then attached to a manhole cover—(used to hold her down in the water).

The medical examiner testified that even though she had been severely beaten, she in fact had died by drowning . . . water was found in her lungs.

In June 1992, a fourth man was charged in Rachel's death. In January 1994, the first of the four gang "enforcers" to go before a jury was given twenty to forty years in prison. If the prosecutors could have convinced the judge that the gang member had been particularly vicious, he could be sentenced to 100 years. One can't even imagine what that qualification level might be.

The other murdered woman was simply killed by her ex-lover and discarded in the Des Plaines River.

On March 16, 1992, another Chicago weekend came to a close with two less women than it started with . . . at least as reported by the media . . . (Computer Graphic by Paul Dillard.)



