

# Children, lost and found [US] <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Trafford, Abigail

**Source:** The Washington Post

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 1 Oct 2001

## AVAILABILITY

Text below

### EXCERPTS:

Isaiah, Christian, Samantha, Megan, Joseph, James, Jessica, Clint and Natalie . . . and thousands more. These are the children who lost a parent in the Sept. 11 attacks, their hearts and lives suddenly broken by unfathomable trauma.

We grieve especially for them. And we search for words to comfort the millions of other children who witnessed the catastrophe on television and then were afraid to go to bed at night.

After all, our role as parents is to make the world safe for those too young to look after themselves. As the plane sliced through the second tower of the World Trade Center, we couldn't keep this promise. Writer Martin Amis calls it the "disappearance of an illusion" & the obliteration of our belief that we could keep our children safe.

"Mothers and fathers need to feel that they can protect their children. They can't, of course, and never could, but they need to feel that they can," he wrote in the British newspaper the Guardian. That feeling is now buried in the rubble of Manhattan and buzz of war throughout the world.

And so we do what we can to re-create the illusion and bring our children back to a zone of safety. We rush to the aid of families wounded in the attacks with special funds and support programs and memorials the way so many rushed to donate blood to the injured while the sirens were blaring. The American Red Cross alone is giving \$100 million to affected families.

The outpouring of support to the victims of Sept. 11 gives us back a piece of ourselves that was attacked by the terrorists: our warm, open, generous heart. We find in the debris our basic instinct to help each other & especially the children who cannot fend for themselves.

What is stunning is the disconnect between our embrace of children in crisis and our neglect of them in ordinary times.

The day before the attacks, researchers delivered yet another scathing report on the plight of children at the National Governors Association meeting in Washington. Compared with many other industrialized countries, the United States has the fewest public programs to support young families.

This is the gap between the rhetoric of caring for children and the reality of leaving many of them behind.

"Attentive care should be every child's birthright," says the comprehensive report, "Caring for Infants and Toddlers," sponsored by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

But every child is not getting such care. Many parents, for example, can't take time away from work to care for an infant beyond a few weeks & or find qualified child care.

The Family Medical Leave Act, which protects the jobs of those who take time off to care for a baby, covers fewer than half of all workers in the private sector. The benefit under the 1993 legislation is limited to three months and the time off is unpaid. In practice, many parents are able to work out longer leaves, and high earners are more likely to receive some payment. But most low-wage workers do not get any compensation and they cannot afford to take unpaid leave.

In European countries, leave policies are more generous. Parents can stay home longer & on average about 10 months. Parents receive much or all of their regular income, and these leaves are available to all workers.

In the United States, child care options, especially for infants and toddlers, are "scarce, expensive and disappointing from a quality perspective," concludes the report. That puts many parents in the breadwinner/caretaker stalemate. They can't afford to stay home to care for an infant and they can't find good care for their child while they work.

Who suffers the most?

America's children.

The prevailing attitude on child rearing is "Family, fend for yourself." This rugged-individualist approach ignores two recent developments.

First is the recognition that the first three years of life are crucial to a child's future development. We, the people, have a stake in making sure infants and toddlers get proper nurturing, just as we have chosen to be responsible for their education after age 5.

Second is the labor revolution that has put women en masse into the workforce. More than 60 percent of mothers with a child under 3 were employed in 2000, compared with 34 percent in 1975.

"Scant public funding exists to support any of the options families use to balance work and caregiving," warns the report. "Proclaiming the rights of families to make their own work and caregiving choices is mere rhetoric unless it is backed up by supports that offer families across the income spectrum viable options for remaining home, securing good child care, or combining the two."

Sept. 11 has changed us. We can't guarantee the world will always be safe & but we can guarantee that each child will be cared for & not just in crisis, but every day.

We owe that to Bobby, Kevin, Ali, Seth, Sean, Michelle, Brian, Alex, Jason . . . and all the wounded children of Sept. 11.

reprinted from The Washington Post.

**Region:** United States <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** poverty <sup>[3]</sup>

---

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/01/10/children-lost-and-found-us>

#### Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/01/10/children-lost-and-found-us> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7865> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/poverty>