

Dawn of Tomorrow

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THE JUDGE AND YOUR KID

The voice is mine, but the tongue is that of the accused, unfortunately named, "Juvenile Delinquent." I shall let the accused speak for himself:—

"I am the composite juvenile delinquent: the boy and the girl, the child and the adolescent, the black and the white, the Christian and the Hebrew. I am a product of a cross section of America; I am the son of the poor and the daughter of the rich and I am the offspring of the middle class. I am the sneak thief, the thrill seeking girl, the stay-out. I am the bigot and the desecrator of churches and temples. I am the purse snatcher and the automobile thief, the disobedient pupil, and the hooky player.

"My middle name is 'anti.' I am anti-social, anti-law, and anti-religion. I seem to be anti-everything. My hero is the gangster, and my heroine, the wise-cracking gunmoll.

"I live in slums. I see no trees. My room was intended for one but, it is occupied by four. It matters not if I come home late or not at all. My big brother is out with the boys, and my big sister with the girls. My parents are too busy to observe me, too indifferent to correct me, and too disinterested to guide me. I get little sympathy and less understanding. I run out of the house as fast as I can.

"I cannot distinguish right from wrong. There are none to set an example. Doing the wrong thing is often a temptation and always an adventure. I account to no one for time spent, things done, or left undone.

"School is a burden, and books merely take up space. I show little respect for my teacher, and less for my classmates. My classroom is overcrowded, and my classmates underfed. My teacher is too overworked to be concerned with my individual problems.

"The school and is dark at night. The street corner, the poolroom, and the cellar club, became my hangout. The community furnished nothing better, if anything at all.

"The church or temple is just another building in the neighbourhood. The spirit within it missed me completely. It has been years since I have seen the inside of it.

"I am confused and bewildered; I need help desperately!

"I am guilty of these charges, but the guilt is not mine alone. I don't want to pass the buck, but you must share my guilt. You neglectful parent, overworked teacher, selfish big brother, indifferent big sister, apathetic community—all of you—are more to blame than I.

"Reform school or jail is not the answer. Sending me there will rid you of me for only a while. I may even emerge worse than when I entered. Neither you nor I will gain by it.

"When the enemy from without struck at Pearl Harbor, you united with lightning speed. The manpower of the nation was harnessed. A nation at peace was transformed overnight to a nation at war. You

spent billions for arms, ships, planes, ammunition and material. That enemy was liquidated.

"I, 'juvenile delinquent,' am your enemy from within. It is I who weaken the foundation of the community upon which your city, state, and nation are built. It is no use to confute the enemies from without, and be conquered by the enemies within. Spare me the future of a gangster. A delinquent child is the forerunner of a racketeer. It has been wisely said, 'a journey of a thousand miles is begun by a single step.' Prevent me from taking that first step.

"You have talked a lot about juvenile delinquency. You have done very little. It is too late for theorizing. Let's get to work.

"Eliminate the slums in every section of your community. Make my house a home. Let me know the beauty of a tree, the fragrance of a flower.

"Priest, Rabbi, and Minister, teach me tolerance of my neighbor, and respect for his religion. Show me the beauty of all religion. Free my mind of prejudice, be it racial or color.

"Teacher, make my problem your concern. Share my thoughts; correct my views.

"Community, give me an interest in life, and make me a useful citizen.

"Give me a youth center, where I can relax and play; where I can rest and read. Where I can swim and box. Where I can wrestle and dance or just look on.

"Bring there, men and women, authors and painters, doctors, lawyers and others, who will serve me as an inspiration, and whose work I can try to emulate.

These thoughts on juvenile delinquency were written by Judge Hyman Barshay, who is a County Judge of Kings County, New York. A man of rare understanding, Judge Barshay's great belief in democracy embraces the rights and equality of all people. The New Review is honored to present the writing of so noted a jurist.



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