November 4, 1997

Press Contact: Julia Morse
(773) 702-8359
morse@uchicago.edu

Should a child ever be called a “super predator?”

A panel at the University of Chicago debates the merits of the juvenile justice system

Children who kill are called “super predators,” “people with no conscience,” “feral pre-social beings"–and “adults.”

William Ayers, author of *A Kind and Just Parent: The Children of Juvenile Court*(Beacon Press, 1997), says “We should call a child a child. A 13-year-old who picks up a gun isn’t suddenly an adult. We have to ask other questions: How did he get the gun? Where did it come from?”

Ayers, who spent a year observing the Cook County Temporary Juvenile Detention Center in Chicago, is one of four panelists who will speak on juvenile justice at 6 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 20, in the C-Shop of the Reynolds Club, 5706 S. University Ave.

The panel, which marks the 100th anniversary of the juvenile justice system in the United States, is part of the Community Service Center’s monthly discussion series on issues affecting the city of Chicago.

The event is free and open to the public.

Ayers will be joined by Illinois State Sen. Barack Obama, Senior Lecturer in the University of Chicago Law School, who is working to block proposed legislation that would throw more juvenile offenders into the adult system; Randolph Stone, Director of the Mandel Legal Aid Clinic at the University of Chicago; Alex Correa, a reformed juvenile offender who spent 7 years in Cook County Temporary Detention Center; Frank Tobin, a former priest and teacher in the Detention Center who helped Correa; and Willy Baldwin, who grew up in public housing and is currently a teacher in the Detention Center.

The juvenile justice system was founded by Chicago reformer Jane Addams, who advocated the establishment of a separate court system for children which would act like a “kind and just parent” for children in crisis.

One hundred years later, the system is “overcrowded, under-funded, over-centralized and racist,” Ayers said.

Michelle Obama, Associate Dean of Student Services and Director of the University of Chicago Community Service Center, hopes bringing issues like this to campus will open a dialogue between members of the University community and the broader community.

“We know that issues like juvenile justice impact each of us who live in the city of Chicago. This panel gives community members and students a chance to hear about the juvenile justice system not only on a theoretical level, but from the people who have experienced it.”

http://**www-news.uchicago.edu**/releases/97/971104.juvenile.justice.shtml
Last modified at 03:50 PM CST on Wednesday, June 14, 2000.

University of Chicago News Office
5801 South Ellis Avenue - Room 200
Chicago, Illinois 60637-1473

(773) 702-8360
Fax: (773) 702-8324
Contact Us