

## WHY IS THERE MORE AND MORE VIOLENCE?

by **Karina Tenenbaum**

When we ask ourselves about violence these days, we cannot ignore the question of authority. What place does it occupy? In contemporary culture, the issue of violence is interrelated with authority.

When there is a conflict or a fight between two children, adults are expected to bring order and establish the rules. It is normal and expected for human beings to have conflicts and develop rivalries; however, the rules are also expected to work. The use of words helps adults resolve their problems; The word allows us to prevent a quarrel, and "ideally" help us resolve a conflict. If conversation fails then there are laws, the police, and judges, etc. These are called 'symbolic resources' which allow for conflict resolution in a civilized manner. When violence arises from a conflict it is because none of the symbolic resources are working, or they are ineffective. Resorting to violence means that the symbolic resources are weak, words are not efficient enough to resolve the conflict, and authorities are also weakened.

Many positions of authority, which were historically respected, have now lost much of their power. Teachers, parents, and a person's word of honor are losing credibility and we resort to the law to regulate differences or failures in human relationships. A long time ago contracts and lawyers were not required to reach a trustworthy agreement. When someone gave his/her word, that was enough to expect an agreement to be fulfilled. Let's take a look at the parents as authority figures in the family.

Parents are subject to laws and rules that control and regulate them. They are subordinate to another authority that can sometimes diminish their level of authority. In the past, a father's word was very much respected; Currently a child can threaten to report the parents to the police if the parents are acting toward the children in ways that go beyond the acceptable parameters. As a result, child abuse by parents is believed to have decreased because of the available resources that create checks and balances for the safety and well-being of minors; but these same resources have certain effects on the authority roles of parents. If a child can threaten his father with the police, this places parents and children in a parallel level of authority. We could say that the parents are limited in the authority they represent to their children. Situations which were previously easily solved with the use of a stern tone are regulated by the law and this also has consequences. The parents' role has deteriorated. Parents are no longer considered representatives of the law; their function has been replaced and they are themselves under the law. There is a lack of an authority figure in parents whose image is disgraced.

Home affairs are not so private anymore. School affairs go beyond schools and resort to the law for authority. In the city of Miami, Florida a 5 year-old girl was arrested and handcuffed, after she threw a tantrum in which she hit her teacher and another school employee. The school secretary

called the police who sent four officers to deal with the little girl; 'I don't want to go to jail', said the girl before she was taken away in a police vehicle "[\*] [1]

The implementation of more laws to regulate these matters and others is increasing. Who would have thought 50 years ago that schools would require metal detectors or security officers to keep students under control?

However, if so many 'external' laws are needed it is because something pertaining to our internal law is not working; apparently, we require more laws to regulate human matters.

**LAWS ARE INTERNALIZED OR INCORPORATED. YOUNG CHILDREN NEED TO BE TOLD NOT TO TOUCH ELECTRIC PLUGS, BUT AS THEY GROW UP THEY LEARN THAT DOING SO IS DANGEROUS AND THE PARENTS NO LONGER NEED TO TELL THEM WHAT IS ALLOWED AND WHAT IS NOT. IF EXTERNAL LAWS ARE NECESSARY TO PUNISH WRONG BEHAVIORS, IT CLEARLY SHOWS THAT INTERNAL LAWS ARE NOT WORKING AND EXTERNAL CONTROLS ARE NEEDED.**

The inner guilt that any individual might feel for doing something wrong is then transferred to someone else's external guilt who applies a punishment when something socially wrong is done.

Capital punishment or death penalty is used and accepted in certain parts of the United States as well as in other countries; However, the crime rate has not decreased. "Executions are at a historical high. About four thousand people were executed worldwide in 2004, the highest figure recorded in the last decade, according to Amnesty International \* [2].

What are the methods used to control children when they are behaving violently? Punishment is one of them.

The Mental Health Scientific Commission presented a report stating that 909,000 children and teenagers take antidepressants. Medication is a quick fix also used to address the problem of violence and to disguise a problem.

This is not to say that punishment or medications motivate violence, but they are not a solution either. The laws that we have to increasingly implement to regulate behavior are not the cause either. We can certainly state that all - external laws, medication and punishment - are the result of situations that are increasing and hard to approach.

So, what place does love have in this reality?

**“ BECAUSE WE LOVE OUR PARENTS, WE RELINQUISH MANY INNER IMPULSES. GIVING UP SELFISH AND AGGRESSIVE TENDENCIES IS A SIGN OF LOVE; IT IS BECAUSE I WANT TO BE LOVED AND ACCEPTED THAT I DO NOT HIT MY BROTHER, I SHARE MY TOYS AND I EVEN TAKE CARE OF HIM. IN THIS WAY, WE CREATE A BOND OF LOVE. IN SCHOOL I WANT TO BE LIKE MY TEACHER, I IDENTIFY MYSELF WITH HIM/HER, I TAKE HIM/HER AS A GUIDE, AND I IDEALIZE HIM/HER. I DO NOT FIGHT WITH MY CLASSMATES BECAUSE I DO NOT WANT TO BE REJECTED BY THOSE I LOVE.**

**”**

That is to say, through the path of love, beginning with the love for our parents, teachers, God, knowledge, country, and the need to be loved and to identify with certain values, ideals, principles, is how we hold on to some authority.

Love is the resource that human beings possess and which allows us to bond with each other, to build relationships and to be supportive.

If there is violence there is no love; on the contrary hate prevails. Parents, teachers, and those figures we idealize are fading; and instead they are being replaced by other principles in which there is no need to renounce to those primitive and impulse-driven conducts because there is no other to support, to honor or admire.

**THE INTERNAL LAW WE MENTIONED BEFORE, IS BASED ON LOVE AND EVERYTHING WE RELINQUISH BECAUSE OF LOVE. WHEN LOVE IS ABSENT AND VIOLENCE APPEARS THEN, THERE IS AN EXTERNAL LAW COMING INTO PLAY, A RIGID LAW WHERE PUNISHMENT IS PREVALENT. HOWEVER, THIS IS NOT SUSTAINED BY LOVE BUT BY VIOLENCE, AND BECAUSE OF THIS, AN INTERNAL LAW CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO APPEAR, DEVELOP OR EVEN EXIST. WE WILL HAVE TO KEEP ADDING NEW EXTERNAL LAWS TO KEEP ORDER AND AUTHORITY; BUT IT IS THROUGH LOVE THAT VIOLENCE WILL GRADUALLY DECREASE AND EVENTUALLY VANISH IN THE PURSUIT OF BEING LOVED BY OTHERS. ¶**

*Notes 1. News telecast April 25, 2005*

*2. <http://www.amnesty.org/>*

*\* Miller. J. "The Other does not exist and their ethics committees.*