

children. Subsequent chapters on stress, trauma and adaptation are useful in the repetition of recognisable behaviours of children within different cultural settings.

The final section concerning *Service and Treatment* is understandably focused on provision of services within the United States. However so little has been written to date on mental health services for refugee children that the chapters presented will be of interest to anyone working with refugee mental health. Joseph Westermeyer's chapter on psychopathology among refugee children is a good example of identifying emotional problems within a cultural context, emphasising the need to always work within a cultural framework. The case examples illustrate this point, and he concludes with an interesting presentation of a model treatment programme, again pointing out that "therapeutic modalities are not uniquely culture-bound". Finally the brief presentation on pharmacotherapy and adaptations of therapy for different cultures stimulates important questions concerning such methods, especially within an emergency setting.

The information of service delivery in "Recovery and Rebuilding" is difficult to translate from resettlement to emergency settings but it includes interesting points for service providers to consider in their overall approach to children, families and linkage within a community. The book closes with a reminder of the importance of continuing efforts to research, document and prepare information on the crucial role the community and family play in children's survival under extreme trauma and stress.

"Survivors are the bridge between the past and the future. Their experiences have given them a view of life to be shared in order to spur personal and social change. They are the voices that challenge complacency and the denial of reality as they know it" (Families After Trauma, Moffat and Moffat, 1984).

Reviewed by Jan Williamson, International Consultant for Refugee Children's Programmes

There are No Children Here - The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America, Alex Kotlowitz, Anchor Books, Doubleday, New York, 1991 (323pp). (ISBN 0-385-26552-5). Price US \$12.

One might question the relevance of a book written in the United States to the developing nations of Africa. Yet the appalling reality of poverty and violence in US inner-city public housing projects portrayed by Alex Kotlowitz, a writer for the **Wall Street Journal**, is far closer to life in the impoverished, civil war-torn areas of some developing countries than most Americans would imagine or admit.

The book follows the lives of two brothers in a family of eight children over a period of two years, beginning from when they were nine and twelve years old. They live in a Chicago public housing project where their mother also grew up and now struggles as a single parent to feed, clothe and protect her children from the hostile environment surrounding them (an estimated 85% of households in the project are headed by single women). The project, located one mile from the city's prosperous business district, remains, in many respects, isolated and abandoned. Stores and homes stand in physical ruin, often serving as headquarters for gangs and drug dealers; shoot-outs are such a common event that mothers constantly fear for their children's lives.

Against this backdrop of urban poverty, chaos, cultural isolation and unpredictability, the author plays out the struggle of children exposed to almost unrelenting violence as they seek some sense of normality in daily routines of going to school, playing with friends, and finding some quiet space within themselves and their families for hopes and dreams to begin to grow. Despite the despair felt at the bleak social issues raised in this book, the author manages both an empathetic and hopeful portrayal of individual lives, focusing on the resiliency and sheer stamina of the main characters of the book, Pharaoh, Lafayette and Lajoe Rivers.

Throughout the book the author refers to statistics regarding American inner cities, particularly Chicago's predominantly black housing project areas. One in five children in the United States lives in poverty, according to the Children's Defence Fund (a lobbying group for children in the USA, with the numbers increasing to one in three children in cities like Chicago. Unemployment is officially reported at 19%, though unofficially, it is considered to be much higher. Lack of employment is partially due to businesses moving from inner city areas to more suburban locations, indirectly contributing to youth involvement in drug and alcohol use, gang violence and drug-related crime.

88% of the population in inner-city Chicago is black and 46% lives below the poverty level. According to the author, Mother Theresa of the Missionaries of Charity was so appalled by such conditions that she established a soup kitchen, a shelter for women and children, and a children's after school programme, following a visit to Chicago.

The author's discussion of the public school system is sobering. Up to 93% of students enrolled in inner-city schools in Chicago are black; most schools are extremely over-crowded, some requiring two sessions per day to accommodate enrolment. Between 50-75% of freshman students (first-year secondary school) never make it to their senior year and graduation. In 1985, senior reading test scores (of those who did make it) were in the 18th percentile nationwide. Some schools are so violence-ridden that plastic utensils are used in cafeterias, and security guards are employed to protect both students and teachers.

In reference to reasons for high school drop-out rates, the author discusses teenage pregnancy, involvement in drug-related gangs, the lack of belief in the value of formal education, and low expectations of both parents and children.

Some solutions to the problems of inner city youth are presently being explored by the Chicago Commons Association, a local social service agency that includes an expanded literacy programme, a drug rehabilitation centre for young mothers, and gang and drug prevention programme for children up age 17, called "Better Days for Youth".

In getting to know the Rivers family through the voice of the author, one senses a remarkable quality of hope and resilience in marked contrast to the overall setting of despair. The boys' (Lafayette and Pharaoh's) family is unusual in that their mother, Lajoe, has remained married to the same man who has fathered all eight of her children, regardless of the fact that they have not lived together consistently. One of the boy's cousins, Dawn supported by Lee Rivers, has graduated from high school. Although the married mother of four by age 17, Dawn is seen as a model for the rest of the family. Lajoe has placed high value on education for her children and had been a steady, caring mother, instilling a sense of responsibility and hope for the future in her children, despite the odds against them; she is counting on them to 'make it'.

The two boys, Lafayette and Pharaoh, are described as very different in character and in response to their life situation.

Lafayette, the older of the two and eldest of the younger five children appears to be a fairly sober and serious child, turning inward in the face of violence and despair. He has chosen to limit his friends, fearful that he could easily be drawn into a gang like his older brother. He has become involved in community service projects through the Boys Club and sees himself as a strong support for his mother. (One way he copes with disappointment and fear is by cleaning the family apartment).

Pharaoh, on the other hand, is portrayed as a dreamer and an achiever. He seeks quiet places to sit, even a small square of grass outside a building, or along the railroad tracks. He has developed a stammer (stutter) that becomes pronounced in threatening situations; yet, in spite of this, has done well in school and came in second in a school-wide spelling competition, emulating his cousin Dawn. He has also won a scholarship to a summer camp.

So, in spite of the inhumane qualities of inner-city life in Chicago, the author has managed to portray a most human and compelling life story of a resilient family without romanticising or down-playing their struggle. This is a book well worth reading in regards to urban poverty, racial inequality and violence, as well as the demonstrated resilience of individuals living in high-risk environments.

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