

Children's Rights

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<https://www.childrensrights.org/making-human-rights-real/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

By Ira Lustbader, Litigation Director, Children's Rights



Children's Rights work is part of a global movement to end violence against children.

Children's rights are basic human rights.

Sadly, children suffer abuse, neglect, and violence every day in America and in countries across the globe. Our work here at Children's Rights holding governments accountable for the safety and protection of vulnerable kids in America is part of a larger movement to end violence against children around the world.

That's why we were honored to author a chapter in the landmark new book [*Violence Against Children: Making Human Rights Real*](#) (Routledge 2018), edited by renowned scholar and children's advocate Dr. Gertrud Lenzer. This book explores forms of child violence internationally, such as child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, the use of children in armed conflicts, and child labor. In America, we see systems impose structural violence on children, from child poverty and homelessness to unnecessary and harmful use of prisons for youth. Racism reinforces these forms of violence at every level.

Ira Lustbader and Elissa Glucksman Hyne wrote about violence in U.S. foster care

We also need to disrupt structural violence in U.S. foster care. That's the subject of our book chapter, which I co-authored with Children's Rights Senior Policy Analyst Elissa Glucksman Hyne. Structural failings such as a drastic shortage of housing to meet children's needs results in unnecessarily placing kids in institutions, bouncing children repeatedly among homes and facilities, and destroying parent-child relationships. These conditions inflict real violence on children: emotional and psychological harm alongside actual physical harm to children's healthy brain development, as a growing body of research supports.

Structural violence is at the heart of our most recent civil rights reform lawsuit against the foster care system in Florida. As we allege in our complaint: Children are often moved 10, 20 or 30 or more times in a short period. Infants and toddlers are warehoused in emergency shelters and group homes, robbing them of a family-like environment. These harms do this violence to children and must be stopped. There's simply too much at stake.

I think about L.T., a remarkably strong and resilient 16-year-old in Florida foster care who has been moved 25 times and sexually assaulted while in the state's care, who asked: Why am I good enough for a week, but not good enough to stay?

I think about Emalee W., a former foster youth in the Texas foster care system (which a federal judge recently found was so dysfunctional it violated children's constitutional rights), who said: I lived in 20 places. Foster homes, group homes, shelters, institutions, you name it. I felt very alone, because I could never stay somewhere long enough to make friends, or get close to anybody.

I cannot think of a more worthy cause than fighting to give children a fair chance to thrive and have a stable loving home to grow up in. That's a basic human right.

Do you want to stay informed about Children's Rights work for neglected and abused kids across America? [Sign up for updates here!](#)

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