

TEACHING KIDS HOW TO FIGHT INJUSTICE

by Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Martin Luther King said, "If a man hasn't discovered something that he will die for he isn't fit to live."

James was a ninth grade student at my school. Timidity could have been his second name. He looked to be the sort of person that if you came up behind him and said, "Boo!" he would collapse in a shivering heap on the ground. He looked like a victim and became a victim to those with predatory natures. After being assaulted and hurt by a bully in the classroom James was brought to my office. (The teacher had been momentarily out of the room when the incident occurred).

John was a classmate who had known James for years, had seen him victimized many times and had stood up for him before. He came to me as a witness to the assault and was the one who had pulled the bully away from James. The bully apparently intimidated James on a regular basis, but feared to do this to bigger students who might 'punch his lights out'. Funny that!!

John did not seem concerned about his own safety and was prepared to put himself on the line for his friend. John stood up for the injustices against James and did the right thing by bringing it to my attention so it could be dealt with. Our schools have too many bullies and this problem needs quick and severe consequences.

Our society perpetrates many injustices on the poor and needy, on children and on parents. I know what it is like to be a legal immigrant and sometimes feel the brunt of people's ignorance. I know what it's like to be employed for less than the minimum wage even though I had four university degrees. Some people will prey on the weak, the unfortunate, the 'trapped', or the elderly as we so often see through scams and 'white collar' crime. You can make your children aware of injustices and help them stand up for people who have no voice or are intimidated.

As parents we have to remember to get the truth, the whole story, before we stand up for our children against authorities and other significant people. I have had my pedigree named by a number of parents who stood up for their children even though two or three professional adults witnessed the child doing something wrong. That only teaches children to be deceitful and to lie, knowing their parents are going to bail them out. That behavior is counter-productive. How can you ensure your child will have a keen sense of right and stand up for injustice?

Most importantly, model it. Clearly teach your child what is right and what is wrong. Make your child aware of his own rights and responsibilities and teach and practice your core family values. Discuss societal injustices and their history when your child is old enough to understand. Communicate to your children practical ways they might relieve some of those inequalities. When you see situations on TV use those occasions to have some teaching time. Similarly when your child feels unjustly treated at home or school. As a family, support a child from another country where injustice has led to hardship or where genocide or disease has left millions of children orphans. This is something the whole family can get behind. Encourage your children to include other children in their activities who are not otherwise being noticed.

I learned these things from my parents. My parents had a few friends that were a bit odd. Nobody else seemed to give them any attention. We would ask our parents why they bothered with these folks. It's weird, you know. My wife and I did the same and our kids asked the same question. What's even weirder is that our children do the same thing. The way we act often becomes the behavior of our offspring whether good or bad. By standing up for injustice we help make the world a better place and our children will take up the mantle. The Bible tells us that God is on the side of those affected by injustice. What side, therefore, do you want to be on?

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.