EMANCIPATE THE CHILDREN!

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[Assignment: In his essay, "Anonymous" argues that children ought to be able to "escape" from their parents as they did in medieval times, when children left home at puberty to become pages or apprentices. Write a cause and effect essay exploring the effects or consequences of such an idea.]

(1) Think of today's skyrocketing rate of homeless people. Now imagine adding to these homeless people the millions of teenagers who would be forced into a similar situation should "Anonymous" system of liberating children from their parents ever be implemented. The author of "Confessions of an Erstwhile Child" has obviously not thought through his proposal to emancipate the children of the world from their parents. Such a system would not only undermine society's organizational pattern, but would also contribute to the development of economic as well as emotional chaos.

(2) Teenagers, if given the opportunity to leave home, would be doing so mainly because they refuse to follow the rules and regulations that their parents establish for them. The majority of problems parents have with their children, or vice versa, relate to the child's refusal to follow rules, such as curfew or doing chores around the house. If children leave home because they refuse to follow their parents' rules, then what makes anyone think that these kids will obey the laws that the government imposes upon them? Emancipating all children from their parents would only lead to higher rates of criminal activity and delinquency, not to the "justice for children" (36) that "Anonymous" claims would result. Evidence of this can be seen in the existence of such activities as begging and stealing among some of the homeless people, practices they have resorted to in order to survive.

(3) Another problem with the anonymous author's idea is that kids would be more likely to suffer from emotional disturbances if they were continually shuffled around from family to family, as if they were pieces of property. Instead of "relieving children of unwanted parents" (48), such a practice would make kids feel lost and alone. If children were not required to reside with their parents until age eighteen, they would not be able to develop any personal attachment to an adult who would be willing to assist them. Even now, many adopted children feel unloved because they are not with their biological parents. As a result, some of them spend years searching for their "real" parents in order to find out why their biological parents did not want them. In a nutshell then, by freeing kids from their parents, society would end up with a group of people who would be unable to function in the real world because they have no true connection with the older generations; this, in
turn, could cause permanent and unalterable rifts between the generations.

(4) The most significant problem with "Anonymous'" idea is that there is no adequate support system for those young children and teenagers under seventeen who would be on their own financially. Children under fourteen are not legally allowed to hold a job. Even at fourteen, they are only allowed to work three hour shifts each day and not over a total of twenty hours a week. Until age seventeen, a person is allowed a maximum of twenty-five hours a week under the child labor laws. Most of the limited number of jobs that are available to adolescents pay only minimum wage, which gives a person a maximum of eighty-four dollars a week before taxes are taken out. The question is, how do you find a decent place to live, pay for utility bills and transportation costs, and buy food and clothing on eighty-four dollars a week?

(5) These "free" children cannot even go on welfare because most of them are not parents themselves and the majority of the welfare benefits, aside from food stamps, are directed toward persons with dependent children. Our society is not benevolent enough to help out these kids despite "Anonymous'" claim that children "are the children of the entire community, for which the entire community takes responsibility" (48). In reality, people are more likely to deny the existence of the situation or to completely ignore it than they are to attempt to rectify the situation. Just as President Reagan denies the existence of homeless people in America, the American people as a whole would be unlikely to do more than criticize the children who could not obtain jobs or earn enough money to support themselves. Many people would be inclined to attribute the plight of these individuals to their own incompetence, rather than to the real problem—legal limitations placed on the youngsters who are on their own.

(6) "Anonymous'" idea of liberating the kids of the world would cause many more problems than it could ever solve. By emancipating the children, all we would end up with is chaos. The results would be increased criminal activity, more people in need of emotional help, and more people with nowhere to live and no way to adequately support themselves. The system we have now of staying with our parents until age eighteen not only works well but provides us with the opportunity to reach a position wherein we can adequately support ourselves without ending up homeless. So why should we try to change a system which meets our needs?

Works Cited