



The Trashing of Innocence

The enigmatic John Mark Karr has succeeded in opening up a decade old wound with his alleged confession to the murder of JonBenet Ramsey. A media furor exploded and then died as quickly as it burst on the scene as charges against Karr in Colorado were dropped. Extradition to California and a plea bargain in a Santa Rosa court got him off on time served and 3 years of probation, if he would plead guilty to two of five charges of possessing child pornography. Speaking from the "twilight zone" his lawyer called Karr, "a Southern gentleman with a sense of humor."

LA Times columnists hit the nail on the head when they took on this subject and got beyond the cable news feeding frenzy. Rosa Brooks commented that with JonBenet back in the news it was hard for a parent to avoid paranoia. Why? The answer for Brooks was just a trip to the mall. Giggling pre-teens stood in front of one store and gawked at the tee-shirts emblazoned with "The Rumors are True!" and "Something about you Attracts me--I wish I could Put My Finger on It." Then there was the thong-like underwear for 7 year old girls and the toddler section that made 2 year olds look like Britney Spears. Even when Brooks bought diapers for her toddlers, she was looking at bare-midriff Disney princesses everywhere. Her point was simple, we live in a culture where the sexualization of childhood is big business with mega-corporations earning billions by marketing products to children too young to understand their significance. Is it any wonder that pedophiles feel emboldened? For example, the self-avowed "little girl lover" who offered a critique of the New York Times series on pedophilia and posted on an internet bulletin board, saying "they (the *NY Times*) fail to mention the hypocrisy of Hollywood selling little girls to millions of people in a highly sexual ways." Even the pedophiles get this one right! Now one has to wonder who is the real enemy, good old-fashioned American consumerism or the pedophile sneaking around the neighborhood playground?

Further tragedy is commented on by Meghan Daum of the *LA Times* who reflected on the tragedy of JonBenet's parents. Allowing for somewhat grotesque nature of JonBenet's child beauty queen pathway encouraged by her parents, particularly her mom, not a few Americans have tried and convicted the Ramseys long ago. Few tears have been shed for the beauty queen mom who died earlier this year, but she went to her grave with the scorn of millions her legacy and the horror of no resolution in her

daughter's death. The broken bodies, dreams and tortured existence of the Ramsey family are but a microcosm of the tragedy present when innocence is trashed and human dignity is exchanged for self aggrandizement. As a father and grandfather I can only imagine the eternal deepness of John Ramsey's continued existence as he lives through a hell that no human being is born to endure.

The *LA Times* columnists pose a critical juxtaposition that call the shrill voices from all religious, economic and social points of view to take a deep breath. The last sentences of the Old Testament record a clear directive from the Creator: either we treasure, above all else, the central task of valuing our children by protecting their dignity and significance as humans or there will be grave consequences in our lived existence (Malachi 4:6).

When John Mark Karr is positioned as a "southern gentlemen with a sense of humor" and 24 hour cable news overdose on such an image: is it any wonder that Jehovah God speaks in no uncertain terms about the consequences in our land?

BYRON D. KLAUS

Assemblies of God Theological Seminary
President