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NO! Against Adult Supremacy Vol. 18
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Thus adulthood is constructed both as the opposite of childhood (being "an adult"), and as the power-wielder in an unequal relationship with a young person (being "the adult"). Both constructions of adulthood feed into a mentality of superiority and control which only harms young people. Therefore, they need abolishing. I emphasize the individual nature of adulthood because I believe its abolition begins when young people recognize its construction within themselves.

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are stereotyped as self-centered, irrational, unreasonable, entitled, manipulative, untrustworthy; while adults are thought to be empathetic, rational, reasonable, honest, trustworthy. The qualities ascribed to children suggest that they need to be controlled, while those ascribed to adults suggest their ability to control children. Adulthood is thus constructed in opposition to childhood.

These stereotypes are perpetuated by mass media as much as–perhaps even more than–by individuals. But this cannot obscure the fact that the internalization of these stereotypes is individual. The individual grows up surrounded by the message "adults good, children bad." Unable to claim adulthood, they construct a specific notion of childhood that excludes themself. "I'm not an adult…but at least I'm not a child!"

The toddler insists "I'm not a baby, I'm a big boy!"; the 11th grade student avoids the stigma of hanging out with a 10th-grader. (S Bonnischen)

The individual enters adulthood having constantly constructed and re-constructed childhood in this way. Their entry into adulthood completes the oppositional child/adult construction because they (the individual) no longer occupy an ambiguous middle ground. "Not child", always synonymous with "me", is now also synonymous with "adult". There is another more potent construction of adulthood, which also happens at the individual level.

Stepping into [the role of "the adult"] grants privilege and prestige – but it's dependent on wielding power over one or more actual young people. […] Interacting [with their children on an] equal basis is a threat to parents' sense of their own adulthood. Many parents are deeply invested in being a "good mother" or "good father" – putting that identity in jeopardy strikes at the very heart of who they see themselves as. To be a good parent, to be "the adult" at all, requires that they feel they are actively supervising / guiding / controlling their children's lives. (S Bonnischen)

Third. All of these so-called "adult responsibilities" stem from capitalism. If you actually have a problem with the stress and uncertainty that come with trying to survive in a capitalist society, you should turn your attention toward capitalism. Do NOT weaponize your situation against youth. Being oppressed (or just affected) on the axis of capitalism does NOT negate your social power as an adult. And it's not like capitalism doesn't affect youth. Being born into a poor family? Affects one's quality of life. Significantly. Even without "adult responsibilities." (I am middle-class myself and not speaking from lived experience… but this seems like common sense. Correct me if I'm wrong.) And then schools are becoming increasingly neoliberal… you see third grade test scores being used by private contractors to predict the number of prisons they need to build. (To be clear, I know this doesn't affect me as a white person. The prison industrial complex is anti-Black at its core.)

To summarize. "Adult responsibilities" are real. They do not entitle you to violate our autonomy. Fuck you.

IMPORTANT P.S.: cw: pedophilia. I haven't seen this on tumblr (yet) but inevitably some dickwads will find this post and latch onto to the idea of "full personhood" / "full autonomy" as an excuse for their pedophilia. FUCK THOSE PEOPLE.

Adulthood as Oppressor Identity

Adultism could not exist without the social classes of "child" and "adult." John Holt suggests that to end the dehumanization of children, we abolish "the institution of childhood"–i.e., we focus on ending the situation of children. But this ignores the people who actually put children in that situation. I suggest that we instead abolish adulthood.

Adulthood is a mindset. It is constructed at the individual level. While there are institutional factors that encourage its construction, it is ultimately not an institution in and of itself. Children

Adult Education (TED Transcript)
Adora Svitak

Now, I want to start with a question: When was the last time you were called "childish"? For kids like me, being called childish can be a frequent occurrence. Every time we make irrational demands, exhibit irresponsible behavior, or display any other signs of being normal American citizens, we are called childish. Which really bothers me. After all, take a look at these events: Imperialism and colonization, world wars, George W. Bush. Ask yourself, who's responsible? Adults.

Now, what have kids done? Well, Anne Frank touched millions with her powerful account of the Holocaust. Ruby Bridges helped to end segregation in the United States. And, most recently, Charlie Simpson helped to raise 120,000 pounds for Haiti, on his little bike. So as you can see evidenced by such examples, age has absolutely nothing to do with it. The traits the word "childish" addresses are seen so often in adults, that we should abolish this age-discriminatory word, when it comes to criticizing behavior associated with irresponsibility and irrational thinking.

Then again, who's to say that certain types of irrational thinking aren't exactly what the world needs? Maybe you've had grand plans before, but stopped yourself, thinking, "That's impossible," or "That costs too much," or "That won't benefit me." For better or worse, we kids aren't hampered as much when it comes to thinking about reasons why not to do things. Kids can be full of inspiring aspirations and hopeful thinking, like my wish that no one went hungry, or that everything were free, a kind of utopia. How many of you still dream like that, and believe in the possibilities? Sometimes a knowledge of history and the past failures of Utopian ideals can be a burden, because you know that if everything were free, then the food stocks would become depleted and scarce and lead to chaos. On the other hand, we kids still dream about perfection.

And that's a good thing, because in order to make anything a reality, you have to dream about it first.

In many ways, our audacity to imagine helps push the boundaries of possibility. For instance, the Museum of Glass in Tacoma, Washington, my home state, has a program called Kids Design Glass, and kids draw their own ideas for glass art. The resident artist said they got some of their best ideas from the program, because kids don't think about the limitations of how hard it can be to blow glass into certain shapes, they just think of good ideas. Now, when you think of glass, you might think of colorful Chihuly designs, or maybe Italian vases, but kids challenge glass artists to go beyond that, into the realm of brokenhearted snakes and bacon boys, who you can see has meat vision.

Now, our inherent wisdom doesn't have to be insider's knowledge. Kids already do a lot of learning from adults, and we have a lot to share. I think that adults should start learning from kids. Now, I do most of my speaking in front of an education crowd — teachers and students, and I like this analogy: It shouldn't be a teacher at the head of the class, telling students, "Do this, do that." The students should teach their teachers. Learning between grownups and kids should be reciprocal. The reality, unfortunately, is a little different, and it has a lot to do with trust, or a lack of it. Now, if you don't trust someone, you place restrictions on them, right? If I doubt my older sister's ability to pay back the 10 percent interest I established on her last loan, I'm going to withhold her ability to get more money from me, until she pays it back. True story, by the way.

Now, adults seem to have a prevalently restrictive attitude towards kids, from every "Don't do that, don't do this" in the school handbook, to restrictions on school Internet use. As history points out, regimes become oppressive when they're fearful about keeping control. And although adults may not be quite at the level of totalitarian regimes, kids have no or very little say in making the rules, when really, the attitude should be reciprocal, meaning that

love is lacking. Loving parents, be they single or coupled, gay or straight, headed by females or males, are more likely to raise healthy, happy children with sound self-esteem. In future feminist movement we need to work harder to show parents the ways ending sexism positively changes family life. Feminist movement is pro-family. Ending patriarchal domination of children, by men or women, is the only way to make the family a place where children can be safe, where they can be free, where they can know love.

"Child Privilege"
Joy

Note: This is very US-centric. So to be clear, I know that what I write is not universal.

This is a fucked up notion for many reasons. First. Privilege is not about whose life is better. Privilege is SYSTEMIC POWER, which adults DO possess. Parents exercise control over every aspect of their children's lives. Think about it: the entire premise of a punishments/rewards relationship, of a "stern love," of "parenting" in general, is CONTROL. Young people are regularly stripped of our autonomy–to move, communicate, and interact on our own terms–by adults. (Not just parents, but also the state, private institutions, and adult society at large). Adult privilege IS the power to violate our autonomy which every adult posses. Adult privilege is NOT having an easier life.

Second. "Having everything provided for" is NOT a justification for control. It's benevolent abuse. Which is, you know. Not actually benevolent. Adult abusers regularly use the economic dependence of their children as justification for controlling them. I've also heard this gem: "Children are a protected class." Protected from what, exactly? From abuse? By giving adults absolute and exclusive control over kids' lives, you are enabling abuse. End of discussion.

Writing on this subject in Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center I made the point that:

Working within a social context where sexism is still the norm, where there is unnecessary competition promoting envy, distrust, antagonism, and malice between individuals, makes work stressful, frustrating, and often totally unsatisfying … many women who like and enjoy the wage work they do feel that it takes too much of their time, leaving little space for other satisfying pursuits. While work may help women gain a degree of financial independence or even financial self-sufficiency, for most women it has not adequately fulfilled human needs. As a consequence women's search for fulfilling labor done in an environment of care has led to reemphasizing the importance of family and the positive aspects of motherhood.

Ironically just when feminist thinkers had worked to create a more balanced portrait of mothering patriarchal mainstream culture launched a vicious critique of single-parent, female-headed households. That critique was most harsh when it came to the question of welfare. Ignoring all the data which shows how skillfully loving single mothers parent with very little income whether they receive state assistance or work for a wage, patriarchal critiques call attention to dysfunctional female-headed households, act as though these are the norm, then suggest the problem can be solved if men were in the picture as patriarchal providers and heads of households.

No anti-feminist backlash has been as detrimental to the well-being of children as societal disparagement of single mothers. In a culture which holds the two-parent patriarchal family in higher esteem than any other arrangement, all children feel emotionally insecure when their family does not measure up to the standard. A utopian vision of the patriarchal family remains intact despite all the evidence which proves that the well-being of children is no more secure in the dysfunctional male-headed household than in the dysfunctional female-headed household. Children need to be raised in loving environments. Whenever domination is present

the adult population should learn and take into account the wishes of the younger population. Now, what's even worse than restriction, is that adults often underestimate kids' abilities. We love challenges, but when expectations are low, trust me, we will sink to them. My own parents had anything but low expectations for me and my sister. Okay, so they didn't tell us to become doctors or lawyers or anything like that, but my dad did read to us about Aristotle and pioneer germ-fighters, when lots of other kids were hearing "The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round." Well, we heard that one too, but "Pioneer Germ Fighters" totally rules.

I loved to write from the age of four, and when I was six, my mom bought me my own laptop equipped with Microsoft Word. Thank you, Bill Gates, and thank you, Ma. I wrote over 300 short stories on that little laptop, and I wanted to get published. Instead of just scoffing at this heresy that a kid wanted to get published, or saying wait until you're older, my parents were really supportive. Many publishers were not quite so encouraging. One large children's publisher ironically said that they didn't work with children. Children's publisher not working with children? I don't know, you're kind of alienating a large client there. One publisher, Action Publishing, was willing to take that leap and trust me, and to listen to what I had to say. They published my first book, "Flying Fingers," you see it here. And from there on, it's gone to speaking at hundreds of schools, keynoting to thousands of educators, and finally, today, speaking to you.

I appreciate your attention today, because to show that you truly care, you listen. But there's a problem with this rosy picture of kids being so much better than adults. Kids grow up and become adults just like you. Or just like you? Really? The goal is not to turn kids into your kind of adult, but rather, better adults than you have been, which may be a little challenging, considering your guys' credentials. But the way progress happens, is because new generations and new eras grow and develop and become better than the previous ones. It's the reason we're not in the Dark Ages anymore. No

matter your position or place in life, it is imperative to create opportunities for children, so that we can grow up to blow you away.

Adults and fellow TEDsters, you need to listen and learn from kids, and trust us and expect more from us. You must lend an ear today, because we are the leaders of tomorrow, which means we're going to take care of you when you're old and senile. No, just kidding. No, really, we are going to be the next generation, the ones who will bring this world forward. And in case you don't think that this really has meaning for you, remember that cloning is possible, and that involves going through childhood again, in which case you'll want to be heard, just like my generation. Now, the world needs opportunities for new leaders and new ideas. Kids need opportunities to lead and succeed. Are you ready to make the match? Because the world's problems shouldn't be the human family's heirloom.

Thank you.

A Class Dismissed (Excerpt: Sex, Race and Class)

Selma James

If the relation of caste to class where women are concerned presents itself in a hidden, mystified form, this mystification is not unique to women. The least powerful in the society are our children, also unwaged in a wage labour society. They were once accepted as an integral part of the productive activity of the community. The work they did was part of the total social labour and was acknowledged as such. Where capital is extending or has extended its rule, children are taken away from others in the community and forced to go to schools, against which the number of rebels is growing daily. Is their powerlessness a class question? Is their struggle against school the class struggle? We believe it is. Schools are in-

must critique women who abuse as harshly as we critique male abuse. Beyond the realm of sexual abuse, violence against children takes many forms; the most commonplace forms are acts of verbal and psychological abuse.

Abusive shaming lays the foundation for other forms of abuse. Male children are often subjected to abuse when their behavior does not conform to sexist notions of masculinity. They are often shamed by sexist adults (particularly mothers) and other children. When male parental caregivers embody anti-sexist thought and behavior boys and girls have the opportunity to see feminism in action. When feminist thinkers and activists provide children with educational arenas where anti-sexist biases are not the standards used to judge behavior, boys and girls are able to develop healthy self-esteem. One of the most positive interventions feminist movement made on behalf of children was to create greater cultural awareness of the need for men to participate equally in parenting not just to create gender equity but to build better relationships with children. Future feminist studies will document all the ways anti-sexist male parenting enhances the lives of children. Concurrently, we need to know more about feminist parenting in general, about the practical ways one can raise a child in an anti-sexist environment, and most importantly we need to know more about what type of people the children who are raised in these homes become.

Visionary feminist activists have never denied the importance and value of male parental caregivers even as we continually work to create greater cultural appreciation of motherhood and the work done by women who mother. A disservice is done to all females when praise for male participation in parenting leads to disparagement and devaluation of the positive job of mothering women do. At the beginning of feminist movement feminists were harsh critics of mothering, pitting that task against careers which were deemed more liberating, more self-affirming. However, as early as the mid-'80s some feminist thinkers were challenging feminist devaluation of motherhood and the overvaluation of work outside the home.

tion of females is condoned, but so is adult domination of children. And no one really wants to call attention to mothers who abuse.

Often I tell the story of being at a fancy dinner party where a woman is describing the way she disciplines her young son by pinching him hard, clamping down on his little flesh for as long as it takes to control him. And how everyone applauded her willingness to be a disciplinarian. I shared the awareness that her behavior was abusive, that she was potentially planting the seeds for this male child to grow up and be abusive to women. Significantly, I told the audience of listeners that if we had heard a man telling us how he just clamps down on a woman's flesh, pinching her hard to control her behavior it would have been immediately acknowledged as abusive. Yet when a child is being hurt this form of negative domination is condoned. This is not an isolated incident – much more severe violence against children is enacted daily by mothers and fathers.

Indeed the crisis the children of this nation face is that patriarchal thinking clashing with feminist changes is making the family even more of a war zone than it was when male domination was the norm in every household. Feminist movement served as the catalyst, uncovering and revealing the grave extent to which male sexual abuse of children has been and is taking place in the patriarchal family. It started with grown women in feminist movement receiving therapeutic care acknowledging that they were abuse survivors and bringing this acknowledgment out of the private realm of therapy into public discourse. These revelations created the positive ethical and moral context for children to confront abuse taking place in the present. However, simply calling attention to male sexual abuse of children has not created the climate where masses of people understand that this abuse is linked to male domination, that it will end only when patriarchy is eliminated. Male sexual abuse of children happens more often and is reported more often than female abuse, but female sexual coercion of children must be seen as just as horrendous as male abuse. And feminist movement

stitutions organized by capital to achieve its purpose through and against the child.

Capital sent them to school not only because they are in the way of others' more "productive" labour or only to indoctrinate them. The rule of capital through the wage compels every ablebodied person to function, under the law of division of labour, and to function in ways that are if not immediately, then ultimately profitable to the expansion and extension of the rule of capital. That, fundamentally, is the meaning of school. Where children are concerned, their labour appears to be learning for their own benefit.

So here are two sections of the working class whose activities, one in the home, the other in the school, appear to be outside of the capitalist wage labour relation because the workers themselves are wageless. In reality, their activities are facets of capitalist production and its division of labour. One, housewives, are involved in the production and reproduction of workers, what Marx calls labour power. They service those who are daily destroyed by working for wages and who need to be daily renewed; and they care for and discipline those who are being prepared to work when they grow up. The other, children, are those who from birth are the objects of this care and discipline, who are trained in homes, in schools and in front of the telly to be future workers.

But this has two aspects. In the first place, for labour power to be reproduced in the form of children, these children must be coerced into accepting discipline and especially the discipline of working, of being exploited in order to be able to eat. In addition, however, they must be disciplined and trained to perform a certain kind of work. The labour that capital wants done is divided and each category parceled out internationally as the life work, the destiny, the identity of specific sets of workers.

Power, Patriarchy and Parenting
bell hooks

Feminist focus on children was a central component of contemporary radical feminist movement. By raising children without sexism women hoped to create a future world where there would be no need for an anti-sexist movement. Initially the focus on children primarily highlighted sexist sex roles and the way in which they were imposed on children from birth on. Feminist attention to children almost always focused on girl children, on attacking sexist biases and promoting alternative images. Now and then feminists would call attention to the need to raise boys in an anti-sexist manner but for the most part the critique of male patriarchy, the insistence that all men had it better than all women, trickled down. The assumption that boys always had more privilege and power than girls fueled feminists prioritizing a focus on girls.

One of the primary difficulties feminist thinkers faced when confronting sexism within families was that more often than not female parents were the transmitters of sexist thinking. Even in households where no adult male parental caregiver was present, women taught and teach children sexist thinking. Ironically, many people assume that any female-headed household is automatically matriarchal. In actuality women who head households in patriarchal society often feel guilty about the absence of a male figure and are hypervigilant about imparting sexist values to children, especially males. In recent times mainstream conservative pundits have responded to a wellspring of violent acts by young males of all classes and races by suggesting that single women cannot possible raise a healthy male child. This is just simply not true. The facts show that some of the most loving and powerful men in our society were raised by single mothers. Again it must be reiterated that most people assume that a woman raising children alone, especially sons, will fail to teach a male child how to become a patriarchal male. This is simply not the case.

Within white supremacist capitalist patriarchal cultures of domination, children do not have rights. Feminist movement was the first movement for social justice in this society to call attention to the fact that ours is a culture that does not love children, that continues to see children as the property of parents to do with as they will. Adult violence against children is a norm in our society. Problematically, for the most part feminist thinkers have never wanted to call attention to the reality that women are often the primary culprits in everyday violence against children simply because they are the primary parental caregivers. While it was crucial and revolutionary that feminist movement called attention to the fact that male domination in the home often creates an autocracy where men sexually abuse children, the fact is that masses of children are daily abused verbally and physically by women and men. Maternal sadism often leads women to emotionally abuse children, and feminist theory has not yet offered both feminist critique and feminist intervention when the issue is adult female violence against children.

In a culture of domination where children have no civil rights, those who are powerful, adult males and females, can exert autocratic rule of children. All the medical facts show that children are violently abused daily in this society. Much of that abuse is life threatening. Many children die. Women perpetuate this violence as much as men if not more. A serious gap in feminist thinking and practice has been the refusal of the movement to confront head-on adult female violence against children. Emphasizing male domination makes it easy for women, including feminist thinkers, to ignore the ways women abuse children because we have all been socialized to embrace patriarchal thinking, to embrace an ethics of domination which says the powerful have the right to rule over the powerless and can use any means to subordinate them. In the hierarchies of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, male domina-