

# Letters

Published: February 16, 2003, NYTimes

To the Editor:

Nina Bernstein's review of Randall Kennedy's book "Interracial Intimacies: Sex, Marriage, Identity, and Adoption" (Jan. 26) criticizes the chapters dealing with foster care and adoption, arguing that he relies on my work in advocating policies that are unfair to the politically powerless. Bernstein seriously mischaracterizes my work, quoting from Martin Guggenheim's review of my book "Nobody's Children," in which he claims that I treat the removal of children from their birth parents as "worthy of celebration."

In fact, I of course recognize the tragedy inherent in the family dysfunction that leads to child maltreatment and child removal. I recognize that the parents are all too often victims in their own right not only of social injustice but of maltreatment by their parents. What I argue is that we should not victimize yet another generation of children by insisting that they stay in abusive homes or in foster limbo. I want to give children who have no hope for nurturing in their biological homes the chance to find it in adoption. In a society that places a premium on parental rights and family preservation, I see the children victimized by parental abuse as the politically powerless.

Bernstein comes out with Guggenheim against "government intrusion into the intimacy of the family," and seems to accept the analogy he draws between state intervention for child protection and state imposition of child slavery. Feminists recognized long ago that when women were subject to domestic violence, family privacy doctrine was being used to protect men's power to dominate, and state intervention was needed for women's liberation. State intervention to protect children against parental abuse and neglect would be liberating, not enslaving.

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