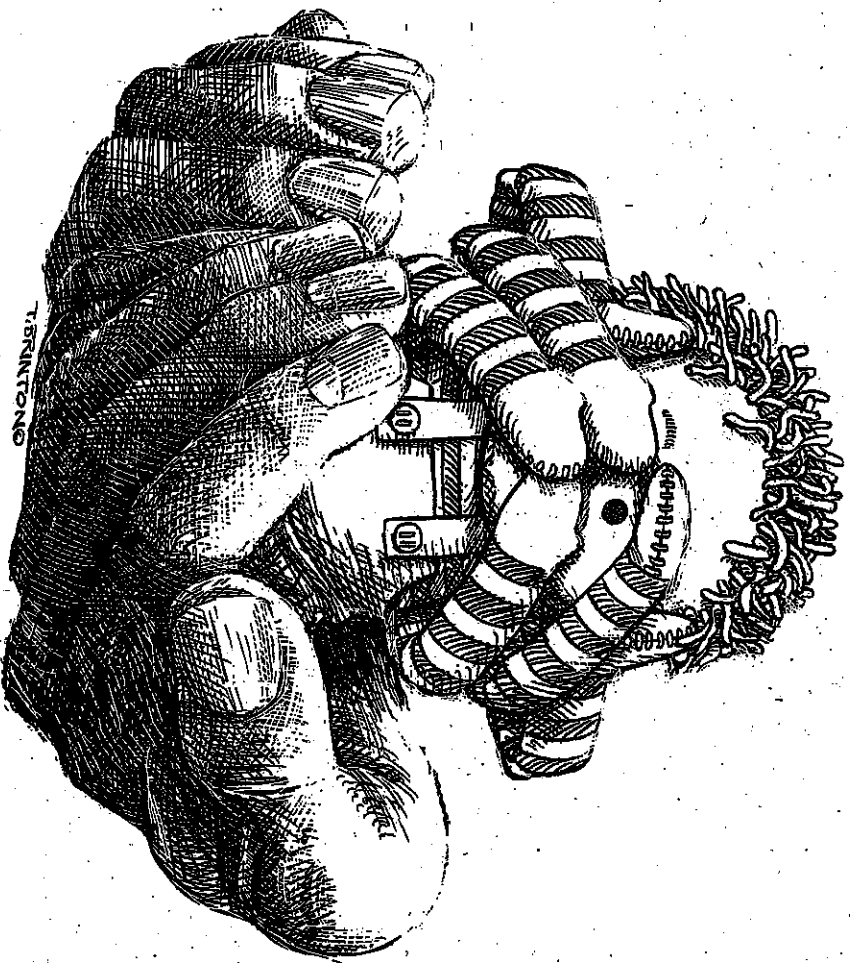


OPINION

# PROTECT KIDS BY HAVING THE COURAGE TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE



**TONVA TOROSIAN**

There is no worse crime than someone hurting a child. In the same vein, knowing a child is being hurt and sitting silent out of fear, apathy or lack of knowing what to do is equally damaging to the child. Each year, there are more than 70,000 calls made to the San Diego County Child Abuse Hotline. Although this number is shocking, there are many more cases of abuse in our community than what is reported.

A study commissioned in 2008 by Safe Horizon, the nation's leading victims assistance organization, found one in four Americans have been in

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situations where they suspected child abuse but didn't know what to do. Additionally, 48 percent of Americans stated they would not go to authorities, contact police or child protection services; and 83 percent said they were reluctant to report abuse because they didn't want to get involved. In that same survey, 72 percent of respondents believed that child abuse was difficult to identify. At Promises4Kids, we work with the community to raise awareness of child abuse and ways to identify and report suspected abuse. We also provide programs and

services to support the children who have been victims of abuse, to help them heal and ultimately break the cycle of abuse. One of these programs is our Investigative Training Program which gives community partners and law enforcement tips to identify warning signs of child abuse. We emphasize the key to reporting child abuse and neglect is being able to identify common indicators such as:

- The child has disclosed that abuse has occurred.
- Disturbed sleep patterns such as recurrent nightmares.
- The child is excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing

something wrong.

- The child is doesn't seem to be attached to the parent or caregiver.
- The child acts either inappropriately adult (taking care of other children) or inappropriately infantile (rocking, thumb sucking, throwing tantrums, bed-wetting, fear of the dark).
- The child displays knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to his or her age, or even seductive behavior.
- The child avoids undressing or wears extra layers of clothes.
- There is a sudden decline in school performance or truancy occurs.

- There are frequent injuries or unexplained bruises, welts or cuts.
- Injuries appear to have a pattern such as marks from a hand or belt.
- The child is always watchful and "on alert," as if waiting for something bad to happen.
- The child shies away from touch, flinches at sudden movements or seems afraid to go home.
- The child makes strong efforts to avoid a specific person, without an obvious reason.
- Of course, just because you see a warning sign doesn't automatically mean a child is being abused. It's important to dig deeper, looking for a

pattern of abusive behavior and warning signs if you notice something is off. These warning signs should raise an eyebrow and indicate that a child's safety may be at risk. At the very least the situation should be assessed by a professional who can determine the causes of these symptoms and make certain the child is out of harm's way. Promises4Kids is encouraging everyone in our community to consider ways in which to help make a difference in the life of a child who is hurting. The reasons are gripping:

- Children are more

likely to be victimized in their own homes, than on the street.

- More than 86 percent of child abusers are individuals known to the family.
- One out of four girls and one out of six boys will be sexually abused before they reach the age of 18. Unfortunately, only one in 10 will ever tell.
- In 2008, in the United States, an estimated 1,740 children died from abuse and neglect. Approximately 80 percent of these deaths occurred among children younger than age four.

A child's safety is the responsibility of adults. If you think that child abuse is not happening in your community, think again. Child abuse is not selective - it chooses all races, regions, ethnicities and economic statuses. Please consider what you can do to help a hurting child. We can no longer look away. If you suspect child abuse, please call the 24-hour San Diego County Child Abuse Hotline at (800) 344-6000.

Let's remember that each one of us can play a role in preventing child abuse. Our children represent who we are, where we have been and where we are going. Be courageous, and take a stand against child abuse.

Torosian is the CEO of Promises4Kids ([www.promises4kids.org](http://www.promises4kids.org)). Abuse Prevention Foundation and a national model nonprofit leading the fight against child abuse and neglect in San Diego County.

# EUGENE ROBINSON The Washington Post RHETORIC OBSCURES REALITY ABOUT CHINA

BEIJING  
Even the briefest acquaintance with this smoggy, sprawling capital is basis enough to conclude that much of the campaign rhetoric we're hearing about China is unrealistic, dishonest or just dumb. This is my first visit to China, and I plan to spend the next few columns reporting what I see and learn. I spent enough years as a foreign correspondent to know how tricky first impressions can be. The subtleties and complexities of any society are - unsurprisingly - subtle and complex.

But not all first impressions are unrelatable. Some are such no-brainers that they can only deepen with experience. One thing I already know is that the way many U.S. politicians talk about China is surely wrong.

With the exception of Jon Huntsman, who served as U.S. ambassador here, all the Republican candidates seem to want to be "tough on China." Mitt Romney apparently has decided to be the toughest, at least on the economic matters most often cited as a reason to display toughness.

It goes almost without mentioning that the United States imported about \$865 billion of Chinese goods last year. China also has a compelling interest in making sure the United States retains the capacity to serve as the biggest single buyer of the food of products that Chinese factories produce.

"We can't just sit back and let China run all over us," he said in one of the debates. "People say, well, you'll start a trade war. There's one going on right now, folks?"

Someone should explain this to Rick Perry - though on second thought, it might not make any difference. His most quotable bit of China-bashing came in the

Really? From here, it looks more like an embrace than a war. My hotel is in the chic, yuppiefied Chaoyang District, just up the street from an Apple store, a Starbucks, a Calvin Klein boutique and just about every luxury retailer you could possibly name. An hour's drive away, at the visitors center for the Ministry section of the Great Wall, the first restaurant you see is a Suiway. High-status automobile brands in China include not just Porsche, Audi and Mercedes, but also Buick.

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None of this remedies China's unfair policy of manipulating exchange rates or its lackluster protecting intellectual property rights. But when you walk the streets of Beijing, you see an already huge, rapidly growing consumer society that in many ways looks much like our own. I know this is an oversimplification. I know that boomtowns such as Beijing, Shanghai and others near the coast do not reflect conditions in the less-developed hinterlands.

But I also know that the U.S. and Chinese economies will be the two largest in the world through much of this century - and that they are also so codependent that talk of one country running all over the other is nonsensical. There's a saying that if you're in debt to the bank by \$1,000, the bank owns you. But if you're in debt

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political realm. "I happen to think that the communist Chinese government will end up on the ash heap of history," he said.

But this ignores the big picture. Yes, China is governed - in an authoritarian, repressive, at times shockingly brutal manner - by a regime that calls itself communist. But communism self-immolated two decades ago. Walk down any commercial street in Beijing and you see storefronts, vendors and hawkers selling anything under the sun.

Communism is no longer a system in China. It's just a brand name that officials haven't figured out how to ditch.

I'm aware, of course, of the shameful human rights violations that the Chinese government commits every day - and of the government's selfish, corrupt insistence on maintaining a monopoly of power. These atrocities can never be forgotten.

But I'm betting that the burgeoning middle class will find a way to cast off these shackles. The correct response would be to cheer them on.

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