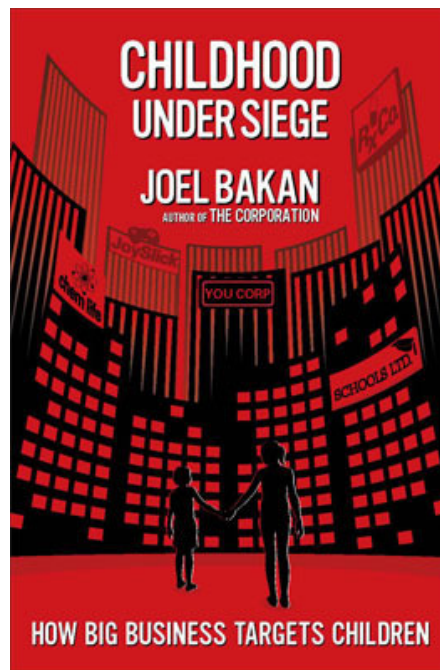




Childhood Under Siege: The Corporate Assault on Children and What We Can Do to Stop It

Joel Bakan

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Corporations have found a new resource to be mined for profit: our children. In this shocking and indelible behind-the-scenes journey, Joel Bakan, acclaimed author and award-winning maker of the renowned film and international bestselling book "The Corporation," uncovers the astonishing degree to which companies exploit the special vulnerabilities of children, manipulate parents' fears, and operate with callous disregard for children's health and well-being. The number of children taking dangerous psychotropic drugs has skyrocketed as pharmaceutical companies employ insidious, often illegal tactics to inflate diagnoses of disorders and convince parents their children require medication. A highly sophisticated marketing industry deploys increasingly subtle and powerful tactics to play on children's intense emotions and desires and to lure them into obsessive consumerism. Computer game designers craft techniques to titillate children with sex and violence, while social media developers infiltrate and shape children's social and emotional worlds to compel them to spend more and more monetizable time online. America's schools are being transformed into profit centers while children are subjected to increasingly regimented teaching that thwarts curiosity and creativity, numbing the joy of learning. And children's chronic health problems, from asthma to cancer, autism, and birth defects, steadily escalate as thousands of new industrial chemicals are dumped into their environments.

Nelson Mandela once sagely remarked that "there can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way it treats its children." The problem today, as Joel Bakan reveals, is that business interests have made protecting children extremely difficult. Corporations pump billions into rendering parents and governments powerless to shield children from an unrelenting commercial assault, with the result that after a century of progress, during which protective laws and regulations were widely promulgated, children are once again exposed to substantial harms at the hands of economic actors.

"Childhood Under Siege" leaves no room for doubt that this assault on childhood is a major crisis of our time. A powerful manifesto for urgent change, it empowers us to shield our own children while offering concrete and realistic proposals for legal reforms that would protect all children from these predatory practices.

Childhood Under Siege: The Corporate Assault on Children and What We Can Do to Stop It Details

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From Reader Review Childhood Under Siege: The Corporate Assault on Children and What We Can Do to Stop It for online ebook

Jessica says

This book is the perfect answer to Free-Range Kids: Giving Our Children the Freedom We Had Without Going Nuts with Worry. Like me, author Joel Bakan agrees with Lenore Skenazy's basic premise that we should not be raising our kids in the specter of imagined fears. And he's no helicopter parent. But he wisely points out that "both overprotection and underprotection can result from corporations' and industries' strategic channelling of information to boost products and protect interests." We fear mental disorders and germs that do not exist or do not pose the risks that we suppose, and as a result, we've polluted our kids or their environments with unnecessary drugs and products. Or, we're dissuaded from raising concerns about the narrowing of American education because our fears about our children (and "America") falling behind have been stoked.

Bakan takes a methodical, nuanced approach to examining several ways in which corporate interests are shaping the American childhood in five areas: media, medicine, pollution, labor, and education. He respects parents and children, but demonstrates that even the most conscientious parents can't protect their children from all the threats that our veneration for corporations (and their attendant legal "rights" under American law) have wrought. This book is well supported by facts. I found myself reading them aloud to whomever was around. By the end of the book I was convinced of his premise, which he summarizes in this way: "Today . . . kid marketers are free to manipulate children's emotions, credulity, and inexperience, and to pitch them unhealthy ideas and products; pharmaceutical companies are free to pressure and co-opt scientists and physicians in order to boost pediatric sales of their psychotropic drugs; chemical manufacturers, users, and emitters are free to turn children's environments -- indeed their very bodies -- into toxic stews of synthetic chemicals; agricultural concerns are free to exploit the labor of impoverished and migrant children; and education companies are free to profit from school systems increasingly geared toward the narrow needs and visions of big business."

So if parents can't protect their children, what are we to do? Bakan proposes concrete policy reforms that would protect children and allow them to flourish. While many may argue that his reforms don't go far enough, I appreciated that Bakan was mindful of the present state of constitutional law and proposed reforms that would work within that framework. (While a major overhaul may be desirable, it now seems highly unlikely.)

Denise says

Our children are bombarded daily with TV commercials, junk food in the grocery aisles, chemicals both inside and outside the home, along with new mind-altering drugs pushed by pharmaceutical companies. But just how bad is it? This book exposes the seamy underbelly of big business and its drive for the almighty dollar. It explains the types of high-violence video games that push brutality, gore and sex for that "ultimate" thrill. It lists the major drug companies who've gotten minor slaps on the wrist from government prosecutions and lawsuit judgements. And who then push the next untested "wonder drug" onto unsuspecting patients in order to rake in billions.

And with the recent push by conservative politicians to gut the FDA, the EPA and all other governmental

regulatory agencies this book will terrify you to the possibility of having NO ONE to stop companies from inflicting harm on us and our children!

Jessica Scott says

A disconcerting look at corporations control of damn near every aspect of our lives. By refusing to regulate industry under the guise of parental choice, government gives industry free reign to warp children into being consumers for life, empty and incapable of thought outside of corporate messages. The very statement that parents have a choice in how their children are raised is negated by the world around them. I can forbid Bratz dolls in my home but I cannot stop their influence on my daughters if other parents do not.

A thought provoking book on the corporate search for profit.

Karin says

Baken's basic premise is that corporations have been enriching themselves by ignoring or blatantly stepping on children's needs and rights.

Governments in America and even in Canada have allowed corporations to do self relulating assuming that they will do the moral or right thing. Instead, with the 80's and deregulation of government controls, corporations have been ignoring and actively defending their rights to fill the environment with toxic chemicals, violent video games, obesity-causing foods all because there is no 100% absolute PROOF that chemical substances in children's bodies, bad food choices and violence and lack of compassion in children's games are caused by the companies. They defend their right to free-market distribution and absolve themselves from any responsibilities.

I like how he used Canadian examples as well as American ones. I wish he'd thrown in more Canadian content. I don't think Canadian schools have quite the same problem American schools do with corporations taking them over. Not that i think all Canadian schools and teachers are wonderful. I do think we've kept out the advertising and media usage they seem to have in American schools. Maybe that's why he didn't add in as much Canadian content.

I was shocked when he said that BC lowered their child labour laws. With many adults trying to find work, let's not make it easier for them to find cheaper workers. Children are NOT supposed to be the breadwinners for the family (except under very sad and abusive situations where they are forced into this role).

I thot it interesting how at the beginning he has this big disclaimer about how he's not condemning anyone in particular, that corporations almost 'have' to act in this manner because their mandate is to make the most money they can. I'm not too sure whether to agree or disagree with him that the actual people can be nice, even while they are distroying kid's (and the rest of us, too)'s environments, values, educational rights, etc.

Maybe we all need to watch Robots a few more times,lol. In that movie they didn't spend too much time empathizing with the corporate bigwigs destroying robots to make money, just figured out how to bring them

down.

Bakan does believe that with proper government regulations and watchdogs, we- or especially the youth- can bring in change for the better...for all of us.

An eye-opening read especially in the areas of pharmaceuticals and education. The companies' self-absolvments of environmental damages, moral or physical damages done by their corporations were already quite well-known to me.

Lora says

An excellent book for parents, educators, and everyone who cares about the well-being of children! Bakan does a good job of helping parents to "fear accurately." There are some things that corporations do not want us to fear (e.g. the effects of violent video games, toxic chemicals, and psychotropic drugs on our children). Bakan does an excellent job of outlining these. He isn't quite as clear on the other side, outlining things corporations want us to fear, that we perhaps need not fear, or not as much. He mentions a couple - random kidnappings, mental illness in children - but doesn't emphasize this side of the equation. Still, I highly recommend this book.

Enik? says

Cet ouvrage est très informatif mais de ce fait et aussi très fâcheux. Bien sur, je soupçonnais déjà une grande partie de ce qui y était écrit, mais de voir ces faits sur papier, avec les références incluses à la fin du livre, cela m'a vraiment outrée contre les grandes compagnies.

L'auteur nous parle des méthodes employés pour rendre les enfants accros des jeux de console et de sites web. Une partie de leur formule est de susciter des émotions vives chez les enfants, mais une autre partie consiste à les éloigner de leurs parents!

Ensuite, on apprend pas mal de choses sur les compagnies de pharmaceutiques, qui recommandent ouvertement aux pédiatres de prescrire leurs médicaments- pardon! *produits!* - aux enfants de façons qui ne sont pas recommandées ni permis par la FDA. Pire encore, les compagnies de pharmaceutiques ont leur mot à dire dans la rédaction de livres référentiels consultés par les médecins concernant leurs patients, livres qui contiennent des "nouvelles" maladies mentales qui nécessiteraient que les enfants soient médeccamentées. Il en a résulté des décès, suite auxquels les compagnies ont payé des amendes minimales qui ne représentaient qu'une petite goutte de leurs profits. De plus, les compagnies parraines des centaines de sites web, où le nom de la compagnie n'apparaît nul part, qui déclarent les bienfaits et minimisent les effets secondaires possibles des médicaments destinés aux enfants. En plus des compagnies de pharmaceutiques, Bakan expose celles qui produisent des produits chimiques qui rendent l'environnement très dangereux, surtout pour les enfants. Par exemple, dans les tapis et les tuiles style PVC où les bébés rampent. Le truc des faux sites webs s'applique aussi à ces compagnies.

En troisième lieu, Bakan déplore la pratique de faire travailler les enfants. Et il ne parle pas des pays du tiers-monde! Il rapporte des cas d'enfants aussi jeunes que cinq ans qui travaillent aux États-Unis, comme par exemple dans le domaine de l'agriculture. Il a raconté un exemple où un garçon de dix ans conduisait un camion dans une orangerie. Il y eut un accident dans lequel il a écrasé et tué son frère, encore plus jeune, qui travaillait là aussi. L'auteur démontre ainsi l'hypocrisie des États-Unis, qui versent de "grandes" sommes

pour combattre le travail infantile au tiers-monde, tout en négligeant de protéger les enfants à l'intérieur de leurs propres frontières. Mais ce qui suit est encore pire pour moi, étant canadienne. Saviez-vous que dans la Colombie Britannique les enfants peuvent travailler dès l'âge de 12 ans? Je trouve cela incroyable! Pire encore, la loi précise qu'il ne faut pas faire travailler les enfants durant les heures de classe, mais plusieurs d'entre eux subissent des pressions de le faire quand même. De plus, les enfants sont mal payés, n'ont aucun avantage et ne connaissent pas leurs droits, par exemple le droit de recevoir un taux horaire plus élevé pour les heures supplémentaires. Bakan déplore qu'on "offre aux enfants de contribuer au revenu de leur famille" au lieu de leur offrir de pouvoir s'éduquer sans devoir travailler, car ceux qui travaillent décrochent souvent pour travailler à temps plein dans des emplois peu rémunérés.

Joel Bakan n'a pas fini! Il expose aussi le système d'éducation qui ferme les écoles qui ne performant pas bien et congédie les professeurs dont les élèves ne réussissent pas bien, tout en gérant les écoles comme des entreprises. (D'ailleurs, ce sont les entreprises qui en sont responsables, pas le secteur publique.) Sans mentionner que les nouvelles écoles créées ne performant guère mieux que celles qui ont été fermées, à part le fait qu'elles rapportent plus. En plus, la fermeture des écoles déplace les élèves dans d'autres écoles, dans d'autres quartiers que les siens, qui a résulté en la formation de bandes de jeunes qui se battent contre les nouvelles qui "envahissent" leurs écoles. La ville de Chicago en est une belle exemple.

En conclusion, Bakan avertit qu'il faut à tout prix se méfier et s'informer. Les gouvernements ne sont pas capables de (ou prêts à!) protéger les enfants et surveiller les grandes compagnies. Ils disent que c'est la responsabilité des parents de surveiller et limiter les dangers qui guettent leurs enfants, mais ils ne fournissent pas les ressources nécessaires pour prendre des décisions informées.

Kalen says

I bought this book for my sister Christmas 2011. I was just as interested in reading it as she was. Once she had finished it I was surprised with the rating she gave (she also gave 2 stars). I wanted to read this and form an opinion for myself.

Just like my sister I did not enjoy this book as much as I would have thought. I think the main reason is that the book put a lot of despair into me. I felt after reading some parts that the world was such an awful place with its ruling corporations and there is little I as an individual can do to protect myself or future generations.

I always have high expectation from Canadian authors to throw in Canadian content, especially in non-fiction, so I can learn about the industries that affect me and my life. Although the author tries to include Canadian content I feel the inclusions are more anecdotes to support the American research.

I recommend this book to parents that need more reasons to fear for their child's safety, health and well-being. If you as a parent are already a basket case about these things then don't read this book it won't help your nerves.

Roberto says

La nostra civiltà si misura da come trattiamo i bambini

Lo diceva Nelson Mandela che "Non ci può essere rivelazione più vera dell'anima di una società del modo in cui tratta i suoi figli". E come ci stiamo comportando con loro? Facciamo ciò che dobbiamo per proteggerli,

favorirne lo sviluppo intellettuale e la salute, dare loro la possibilità di crescere e migliorare questo mondo? Joel dice di no.

Una risposta che, lunga e articolata, affronta con una enorme quantità di dati ed informazioni, analisi ed approfondimenti le problematiche che giorno dopo giorno hanno peggiorato le condizioni di vita dell'infanzia sul nostro pianeta, e non solo nei paesi in via di sviluppo, ma, anche e con sorpresa, in quelli più avanzati come gli USA o il Canada.

Dopo che il '900 ne aveva migliorato le condizioni sino ad essere 'il secolo dell'infanzia', dagli anni '80 una perlopiù in malafede idea di libertà ha quasi eliminato quel controllo istituzionale che aveva sino ad allora limitato e regolato, ad esempio, gli effetti nocivi delle corporation, vincolate in realtà per statuto ai propri soli interessi.

Interessi che mai hanno esitato davanti ai soggetti più deboli e indifesi. Un marketing manipolativo mirato, dottori che si vendono prescrivendo farmaci inutili e pericolosi, prodotti tossici immessi senza controllo, un mercato del lavoro tipo in agricoltura che ne permette lo sfruttamento, la finalizzazione del mondo scolastico alla produzione acritica.

Sono solo alcuni dei campi analizzati da Joel di cui documenta in modo preoccupante la deriva malsana. In questo sistema che si vanta di basarsi sulle libertà di genitori informati e sulla responsabilità civica delle corporation, i primi non hanno gli strumenti per essere sufficientemente informati e le seconde non possono avere responsabilità civica.

Sta a noi ridefinire le regole, riappropriarci di ciò che è necessario per rappresentare di fronte a tutti i diritti di chi non può difendersi. Il diritto ad una vita sana, al pensiero creativo, ad un mondo più giusto in cui realizzare le proprie aspirazioni. Questo non è quello che stiamo facendo, e ciò è profondamente sbagliato. Non per noi, per i bambini.

Shana says

I received this book for free as a Goodreads Giveaway. I was very impressed with this book. Each chapter goes into great detail about different ways that Corporate America is going after children.....whether it's through commercials/ marketing, pharmaceutical companies, education ideas, labor laws, etc. It was eye opening and informative. I really enjoyed it and am passing it along to others. I would recommend this book if you have children in your life, or will at some time in the future.

Paul Froehlich says

“A society that refuses to protect its children from harm and exploitation, even when it can, has truly lost its way,” writes Joel Bakan, a Canadian law professor who holds law degrees from Oxford and Harvard.

Should young children be the target of unfettered and sophisticated marketing by industries selling junk food and other products? Or should society give the kids some protection? Bakan makes a persuasive case for protection, instead of the let-the-parents-beware system we have today.

Owen says

This one is grim. I'm usually into books like this and I can't fault the intent of the author. I agree that corporations have too much influence and are constantly acting against the public interest in order to make more money. It would just help to have some concrete solutions included so that there is some direction to the reader.

Sure, we're told that the remedies are in government regulation and more public awareness of these issues but it's really nothing new and not enough to take away from reading this book. Some of the issues mentioned are proven to be widespread and others are more anecdotally presented so their prevalence is unknown. Also, as a Canadian I found more than half the book was specific to the U.S. and couldn't really be universalized.

There are better books out there on similar stuff (including some by the same author)so it's hard to recommend this one.

David Niose says

I consider Joel Bakan a hero. His book "The Corporation" is on my short list of "must reads," as it explains the fundamental problem of corporate power better than any other short, readable book. "Childhood Under Siege" was very good, but not an instant classic like "The Corporation." It takes a close look at how corporations disregard the interests of children in order to market and sell their products, with the only real goal being profit. For the most part Bakan does a good job making his thesis, but Bakan's presentation seems a bit random and unorganized. He makes a mistake, I believe, by starting the book with a focus on video games. While most adults would agree that video games present a parenting challenge - with their addictive nature and violent content - Bakan's criticism (especially starting out the book) left him seeming like Tipper Gore or some other would-be censor. I understand his point, and think it has some validity, but strategically it was a poor way to begin his argument and present the underlying issue of the book. Still, all in all there was lots of rich content in this book, and it's definitely worth reading. His indictment of the pharmaceutical industry was excellent, and were other areas.

Valerie says

Utterly depressing and with broad sweeping calls for a legal, policy and paradigm shifting revolution but no concrete or useful recommendations on what we can realistically do to protect our children now. This generation is growing up with pervasive and interactive violence and its associated hypersexualization and the objectification of girls and women so media companies can sell more games, movies, and toys. They are nulled and overmedicated for overblown diagnoses of questionable newly invented pediatric syndromes so pharmaceutical companies can sell more prescriptions. They are being poisoned by unregulated chemicals that chemical companies want to sell, and unprecedented levels of environmental toxification, and starved of real nutrition so food companies can sell cheaper food at higher profits. But no worries, they might die young in the mines or orange groves anyway before any of this catches up to them thanks to the US and Canada rolling back child labor laws. Their ticket out of this scary world, education, is deteriorating, starved of funding and gradually being corporatized to create a generation of workers, not thinkers. Sorry kids, you're screwed, and we're screwed right along with you.

Rebecca McNutt says

At first I thought, "alright, this is going to be some alarmist conspiracy theory book or something", however *Childhood Under Siege* is frighteningly true. We do live in a world where children as young as two years old are being prescribed antidepressants. We live in a world where children are so wrapped up in video games like Minecraft and Webkinz that they feel they *have* to have the latest expensive merchandise that comes with the fad as well. This book will really make you take a moment to ponder over how much consumerism is affecting today's younger generations, whether you have kids of your own or not.

Scottsdale Public Library says

This well-researched book examines the predatory stance corporations have taken toward children during the past thirty years. Beyond the typical violence in video games argument, the author addresses areas such as: environmental health, public education, child psychiatry and pharmacology. Despite the heavy subject matter, this book does not overwhelm the reader in statistics or politics, but presents the information in a digestible manner. This book is not only for parents, but any person working with children who take their protection to heart. –Mariana V.-
