

A Close-up of Children Around the World

A Cycle of Violence

— By Heather Faucette

On February 14, 2018, Nikolas Cruz, age 19, walked into his former school, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL., with a concealed AR-15 semi-automatic. As he roamed the halls of the school from which he had been expelled the year before, he unleashed rounds of ammo that ultimately took the lives of 17 people, including students and faculty. He initially left the school unnoticed by blending in with other students fleeing from campus, subsequently going to Walmart and a McDonalds before being taken into custody by police. Left in the wake of this needless massacre is another grieving, confused, angry, broken community, without any real answers as to how or why something like this can happen in this America, much less their small, peaceful town. One question on everyone's mind is at what point did Nikolas Cruz fall through the cracks. What happened to this young man to turn him from boy child to killer? How did he travel down the cycle of violence, what interventions could have occurred along the way, and could these interventions have prevented this tragedy?

Following is a timeline of what we know about Nikolas Cruz:

- Nikolas was born September 24, 1998.
- He was adopted at birth by an older woman, Lynda Cruz, and her husband Roger.
- Nikolas' adopted father died in 2004 at the age of 67. Nikolas was five at the time.
- Following his father's death, Nikolas exhibited ongoing and progressing episodes of emotional and violent outbursts and instability.
- Nikolas has a history of ADHD as well as learning and developmental differences.
- There are more than 30 police reports of violent outbursts by Nikolas at home from 2011 to 2017.

...continued on page 2

what's inside.....

<i>The State of Venezuelan's Children Today</i>	4
<i>Southeast Asia</i>	5
<i>Out of the Mouths of Babes</i>	6
<i>Caregivers Time Out</i>	7
<i>How the Lord Led Denise McCarthy</i>	8

IN FOCUS



— By Amy Wilson, Editor

Isaiah 58:10-11: "... if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail."

...continued on page 2



A Cycle of Violence

...continued from page 1

- In 2016, his adoptive mother reported to police that Nikolas was engaging in self-harm by cutting his arms.
- Nikolas was expelled from school in 2017 due to undisclosed reasons.
- In early 2017, Cruz bought an AR-15-style rifle from a small nearby gun store.
- Nikolas exhibited disturbing posts online. There are online posts in which he writes:
“I wanna shoot people with my AR-15” and “I’m going to be a professional school shooter.” The second post was reported to the FBI, however FBI officials said they were unable to determine who was responsible.
- His adoptive mother became very ill with pneumonia and died November 2017. Nikolas is now orphaned for a second time in his life at the age of 18.
- Immediately after the death of his mother, Cruz lived with a family friend for a few weeks and then was taken in by a foster family.
- February 14, 2018, Nikolas gets an Uber driver to drop him off at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL. Using the AR-15, Nikolas opened fire, killing 17 students and faculty.
- Nikolas has since confessed to the killings and has been placed on suicide watch.
- The assistant public defender said Cruz has suffered from mental illness throughout his life and that it is possible he is autistic. “He is a broken human being. He is a broken child,” she said.

There are so many different points of trauma or indications of trauma in Nikolas’ short life, and we don’t really know the whole story of what he experienced in his private life at home that may have impacted his behaviors. Based on what we do know, interventions at critical junctures could have changed the outcome.

Nikolas seems to have struggled ever since the death of his adoptive father at the age of five. ***Intervention at this point could have consisted of grief counseling to ensure that he dealt with the grief, anger, sadness, and even possible guilt that this void left in his life.***

Nikolas began to show more signs of mental and emotional instability and aggression. Now that he was school aged, it could also have stemmed from anxiety, anger, and frustration related to his learning differences and ADHD. For a child with all of these issues, ***intervention in the form of individual counseling, family counseling, seminars, psychoeducational evaluations, psychiatric visits (for medications), meetings and advocating for accommodations/ IEPs with educators, and one-on-one time/support at home to work on the academic, social, emotional and***

IN FOCUS

...continued from page 1

Human trafficking, refugees, poverty, children of war, orphans, victims of physical and sexual abuse, children of divorce, disabilities, victims of school violence... And so much more. There are so many issues affecting today’s children. Some of the issues are ones that have been affecting children for hundreds of years, some are new to this era due to technology. This issue highlights today’s children in three specific areas of our world and the traumas they are facing. Whatever the tragic issue, it is obvious that there is an increase of attack from the enemy on our children. The enemy does not want our next generation to know our Savior’s love, compassion, mercy or gift of eternal life.

Because of these increase in attacks, the need is more pressing for Christians to unite and reach children with His love. There are numerous ways for us to help and we at CCTI pray that you will implore of our Lord how He wants you to be involved. Is it supporting one who is working on behalf of the children, serving in some of these areas of suffering? Is it volunteering to be a Big Brother/Sister in your community? Is it being a Special Buddy to a Special Needs child at your church? Is it through bringing awareness to others? Is it through daily lifting these precious gifts up to our Lord in prayer? Is it personally going to rescue, bring restoration, and tell of God’s love?

As you pray over how God wants you to be involved, please remember the following verse as you pray: “And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” (Genesis 22:18). ■



**Biography for
Heather Faucette**

Heather works as a CPA and Financial Advisor in Raleigh, NC, where she lives with her husband of 20 years and their three children. She enjoys being part of the leadership team with RiverCross, a ministry providing gospel central trauma healing for vulnerable children around the world.

I performed all of my research for the article online, using various news articles. Please note that as I was writing this without publishing in mind, sources and quotes are not cited in the paper. However, my primary sources were articles posted by the NY Times, Time and the Evening Standard, among others.

A Cycle of Violence

...continued from page 2

psychological ramifications might have been effective.

By the time Nikolas reached his middle school years, he exhibited trauma with outward behavior through self-destruction and violence towards others.

In 2017, Nikolas was expelled from his high school. He lost a critical structure in his life, as well as connection to other peers, adults and community. His violence continued to escalate in disturbing behaviors. At that point, he self-identified as a “school-shooter” and had a warped view of who he is and his value as a person. ***Intervention at this point would have been difficult but still possible.***

The final straw for Nikolas seemed to come when his mother died of pneumonia in the fall of 2017. He was once again orphaned. But this time there is no restoration—he not only lost his mother, but he lost his home and any remaining connection to his past and who he is. He is passed between two homes within a two-month period, without any security of what his future will hold. The foster family did attempt to intervene by giving him food, clothing, and shelter, as well as helping him get a job. However, the scars ran too deep and replacing physical needs cannot heal the internal wounds that Nikolas carries. On February 14, 2018 Nikolas used his AR-15 to massacre 17 people at his former high school. He admits to his actions and now sits in jail on suicide watch. Unfortunately, he has completed the cycle of violence by becoming violent.

This is likely the tip of the iceberg in discussing when helpful interventions could have occurred in the life of Nikolas Cruz. What is clear is that the longer trauma goes unaddressed without intervention, the destructive effect continues to build until violence results and the cycle continues to repeat itself and escalate. ■





The State Of Venezuelan's Children Today

— By Francisca Viloría

Venezuelan children are facing severe acute malnutrition that started being visible in 2014, and it hasn't stopped as of today.

According to UNICEF, malnutrition is the most extreme and visible form of undernutrition. In such a condition, a child shows a frail and skeletal face and requires urgent treatment to survive. These children have very low weight for their height and severe muscle wasting. In some cases, the youngster may also have nutritional edema, characterized by swollen feet, face, and limbs. It is a major cause of death in children under 5, and its prevention and treatment are critical to child survival and development. Children in such a condition are nine times more likely to die than well-nourished children, whether as a direct result of malnutrition itself or the indirect result of childhood illnesses like diarrhea and pneumonia that malnourished children are too weak to resist.

A portrait 10 years ago of Venezuelan children could be, more or less, similar in standard quality of life as in other developing countries around Latin American where there are very poor children. This includes approximately two-thirds of the Venezuelan population and includes street children, aboriginal street families, abandoned children, etc., with the typical signs of unhealthy life (as anemia, scoliosis), and having no home, education, or sports. It was very exceptional to see severe malnutrition cases in that time. Now it is a common occurrence in this country to see many children in hospitals passing away as a result of severe malnutrition consequences. How this can happen to a rich country that has the largest proven oil reserves in the world?


Historically the Venezuelan economy was mainly based in the export of raw materials such as petrol and miners (since 1930). In 1999 the Bolivarian revolution began, which set out to get the control of any economic activity in the country. It has been progressively dismantled or confiscated. The expropriation of numerous farmlands and various industries has made the internal food production decrease dramatically. The economy damage was not very perceptible while international oil prices were high, but when these began a steep fall, scarcities became common in this country and food prices skyrocketed.

Many disputable policies put the whole society in an extremely vulnerable condition with respects to the petrol oil fluctuations price market.

Suspiciously the Health Statistics from Venezuela has been veiled. Not a single epidemiological bulletin tracking statistics like infant mortality has been published. One event publicized in 2016 showed that 11,446 children under the age of one had died in 2015 (30% increase in one year); and the maternal mortality had increased nearly fivefold in the same period.

Venezuelan authorities have been arguing that this is happening because it has had an "economic war" against the Bolivarian Revolution, western world parties, and internal opposition. Assuming that this argument would be the real cause for this drama into the most vulnerable population; what are the effective minimum acts these authorities are doing to provide children the most basic things to survive?

Venezuela subscribed the UNICEF Convention (Children Rights Convention) in 1990. This established that governments have the responsibility to take all available measures to make sure children's rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled. What is the Venezuelan Government doing in this respect?

Whatever it is, years of mismanagement or the "economic war," it is setting the stage for the collapse of the Venezuelan. Hunger has gripped the nation for years, causing massive numbers of the poorest and the innocents to die. 



About the Author Francisca Viloría

Francisca Viloría holds a Doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Reading, UK., and a Masters on Rural Development from the Universidad Central de Venezuela. Since September, 2014, she began working with WEC-CCTI. She began by working in Venezuelan orphanages (children, youth, and young adults), gave training on effective restoration strategies for traumatized people (Nicaragua, El Salvador, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela), and founded and coordinated rescue work teams for children from the orphanages, on the streets, and others.



Southeast Asia

— Anonymous

Our family has lived in South East Asia for over three years. We partner with locals and work with vulnerable children and orphans. We also serve students and mentor young people to get involved. We have a passion to engage locals in these ministries and to show how vast and immeasurable is the Love of the Lord.

Southeast Asia is a diverse and complex area of the world. In many ways it is a collision of third-world struggles and Western modernization. People here are in a hurry to catch up to the West. Children, who come from families that can afford private schools, have the privilege of learning English. The poor sector lives with the realization that they are going to be left behind as the culture modernizes. We live in one of the largest cities on one of the most populated islands in the world. There are several causes of children in crisis here. It is not limited to the poor; the attack on the children of this nation spans the eloquent homes of the wealthy to those collecting garbage and living in slums. Helping these children requires a willingness to love anyone God puts in front of you and dream big for creative ideas and opportunities to bridge gaps of social economic class, ethnicity, and religion.

One area of our focus is orphan care. We work with a safe house for unwed mothers who would otherwise be forced or pressured by their families to have an abortion. It brings a lot of shame on a family when a baby is born outside of marriage. There are so many orphanages, and adoption is not common in this culture. We are working to get local volunteers trained and passionate about spending time with the babies and children at the orphanage. We spend time teaching the staff about the developmental needs of infants and are seeing many positive changes.

Many families flock to the city in search of work and end up collecting garbage and living in slums. There are many slum areas, and these children often cannot afford to attend school and are left vulnerable in the streets. One beautiful response we are seeing to this need is "free schools." The orphanage where we serve has a free school in a slum area and targets these children. The school does not only educate the children, it works with the whole family to build healthy communities.

The pressure for the privileged children here to succeed and excel in school can create stress levels that young people struggle to cope with. Young people often have thoughts of suicide and struggle with anxiety and depression. They often feel hopeless and overwhelmed.

We spend most of our time with children and young people. We are surrounded by crisis in many forms: physical, emotional, and spiritual. God is using the many struggles and hardships of children in this nation to create opportunities for the church to answer their needs. The circumstances that have caused crisis are also the roads into the lives and hearts of the community. When someone is willing to come alongside a community and help them with their children, it opens doors and builds lasting relationships. We are seeing many amazing things as the Lord works and moves through the lives of those willing to love and support these young people. ■

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES



Dedicated to children who hear their Father's voice



Rachel is a senior in the School of Communication and Digital Content at Liberty University, where she is studying journalism and photography. She plans to work in the travel/outdoor magazine industry after finishing her coursework this December.

Rachel also holds an Associates of Arts and Sciences in Human Services; after high school, she thought counseling was the career path she was meant to take and planned to work with a refugee resettlement agency, but God had other plans.

Rachel is passionate about traveling and storytelling. She is ecstatic to see what God has for her through her internship with CCTI this summer.

Student Quotes from Recent School Shootings

— Collected by Rachel Estes

“You think something like this is never going to happen to you and then it does,” Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School senior Rebecca Bogart told *The New York Times*.

“I feel like my security has been taken away from me,” 17-year-old Aztec High School student Sarah Gifford told the NPR after witnessing a gunman open fire in the hallway of her school last December. “I don’t even go to the mall or Walmart the same way because I’m scared someone’s just gonna come in.”

When the Parkland, Florida, shooting occurred two months later on Feb. 14, many students and faculty at Aztec High experienced flashbacks to the incident at their own school. According to the NPR, some students dropped out; others started homeschooling.

Ryan Dietsch told reporter Rubio that he’d been practicing active shooter drills since he was in elementary school. “Now seven years later, I am in a closet with 19 other kids waiting, fearing for my own life,” he said, according to CNN. “They’re watching the news (and)...they’re kind of reliving it,” Aztec High School history teacher Fritz Polk said. In response to the May 18 shooting at Santa Fe High School in Santa Fe, Texas, survivors of the Parkland shooting shared their shock and grief over having this experience in common with other students.

“I started replaying what happened to us in my head, over and over (after learning of the Santa Fe shooting on Twitter),” Marjory Stoneman Douglas student Kaitlyn Jesionowski told *The New York Times*. “This has been so hard because all of the emotions come back.”

“It’s surreal for me,” 17-year-old Marjory Stoneman Douglas student Samantha Grady added. “I can only imagine what they are feeling (and) the fear they experienced having gone through the same thing. Honestly, I am flabbergasted.”

Many students involved in school shootings experience an impending state of hyper-vigilance, tending to perceive danger when, in reality, there is none— “much like combat veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder,” noted Steven Berkowitz, director of the Penn Center for Youth and Family Trauma Response and Recovery. ■



Coping with Stress, Averting “Burnout”

— Dick Stellway

Community Vision Intl., Inc.

I was involved in a work that I cared about deeply, but I became lethargic. I lost interest in everything. I would come to work but my heart was no longer in it. I was very sad but I didn’t know why. I thought I might feel better if I got some sleep but I couldn’t sleep. I wondered at the time, “What is happening to me?” If I hadn’t gotten help I could have left—or lost— my ministry.

These are the words a colleague used to describe what he came to recognize as “burnout”. When I shared his story with four of my colleagues, two of them immediately recalled going through a similar experience. It was a very painful experience for each of them and, through an extended recovery process, both learned how to take better care of themselves.

I observed some important practices in self care while visiting Mother Teresa’s Missionaries of Charity compound in Calcutta some years back. The sisters would arise early in the morning for prayer and prepare the compound for the people waiting

outside the gate. When they opened the gate, they spoke with each visitor to determine their needs. A few sisters attended to those with one need, another group to those with another need.

Through this brief experience I gained a fresh appreciation for two principles of self-care: prayer and partnership. The list below seeks to put these principles into action.

Principle One—Prayer. I must:

- Begin the day by opening an avenue of communication with our Lord through Bible reading or reflecting on devotional materials and praying for wisdom and direction for the day.
- End the day in reflective prayer and remember those with whom I have ministered.
- Occasionally do a spiritual “reset” by withdrawing for a few minutes at a time and saying a prayer.

Principle Two—Partnership. I must:

- Regularly confer with workmates on mutual responsibilities and meet (daily or at least weekly) to discuss specific problems and solutions.
- Discuss my emotions with others who can advise me and inform my sometimes-limited perspective.
- Identify external resources to assist us and our “clients.”
- Determine how to best advocate on behalf of those we are assisting to expand limited resources.
- Periodically assess the effectiveness of what we are doing.
- Learn to celebrate achievements, no matter how small.
- Take time out to pursue opportunities to advance our learning and our performance.

• Find times—either with my workmates or with others—to play and to laugh. T

• This is crucial for emotional “survival.” ■



Dick grew up in Pasadena, California where, because his parents lived on “the black side of town,” went to school with a number of racial minorities. This experience encouraged his study of sociology and psychology. He obtained a M.A. degree in sociology (University of Hawaii) and later a M.S. in psychology (Illinois State University) and a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Illinois. For a number of years he taught sociology, conducting social research and administered sociology departments, first at Wheaton College in Illinois and then at Northwest Nazarene University in Idaho. While teaching at Daystar University in Kenya one of his students asked him to help set up a program to assist children impacted by HIV & AIDS. Dick was later introduced to Viva where he served as the ‘Children and AIDS Forum Facilitator’. Presently he serves as Co-Director Designate with Community Vision International.

Dick’s wife, Janet, comes from a rural village in Kenya. They and their two teenage sons presently reside in the U.S. State of Idaho.

Making it easier to bring healing and hope to children in crisis

Healing and Hope for Children in Crisis



From a CCTI training session to Africa and now a trainer with CCTI: How the Lord led Denise McCarthy

Several years ago, the Lord called us to Senegal, West Africa, to serve at Dakar Academy, a Christian K-12 school for mostly missionary kids. While there He introduced me to the sad lives of talibé boys (disciples of Allah). I was immediately drawn to help them. Eventually He gave me a vision for a drop-in day center called Xaley Boroom Bii, (Children of the Lord), which provides a home environment for these sweet and abandoned street boys and a place to show them the love of Jesus.

As I prepared for the talibé ministry, the Lord introduced me to Phyllis Kilbourn and Rosemary Sabatino. We instantly bonded. I attended the Street Children Module one of CCTI's training options, and the curriculum was beneficial in helping me set up and run our center.

We were called back home a year ago to be closer to medical care for my husband. In God's amazing provision, the International Baptist Church of Dakar adopted the center, and it is still thriving today. It will celebrate 10 years in October!

Leaving our talibés and national worker friends was very difficult for both of us. However, in the Lord's wonderful ways He reconnected me to CCTI and showed me that His will for me was to serve as a trainer with CCTI. It was an unexpected surprise, but I am honored to now be a part of the CCTI team.



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For Information On:

- CCTI Curriculum— Offering Healing and Hope for Children in Crisis Other Resources

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