

## Who Benefits From Our Fears?

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“Think of the children!”

I have daughters. And neighbors, nephews, nieces, cousins, friends with children. And friends who used to be children. But when the command to “think of the children” is screamed out by freaked-out paranoiacs demanding more laws, more punishments, more prison time, more surveillance — and consequently less freedom — I try to think responsibly.

As did one Corey Widen, when she “let her 8-year-old do the most normal, cheerful thing in the world — walk the dog around the block.” Lenore Skenazy tells the tale in *Reason*. “After the girl returned home, the doorbell rang. It was the police.”

Skenazy notes that this attitude is commonly justified by crimes against kids. And yet, Ms. Skenazy notes, crime in Wilmette has gone down dramatically over the years. As it has most elsewhere.

Someone in Widen’s Wilmette, Illinois, community had seen the child and dog walking around “unsupervised” and called 911.

The thing, there was no lack of supervision, here. The child was supervising the dog.



What could be more natural?

The neighbor *could* have walked outside and smiled at the kid and talked about the dog and, in general, been a good neighbor.

Think of it as a peaceful order of supervision.

Instead: in came the police.

Then, after the police let it go, the Department of Children and Family Services stepped in to “investigate.”

Because nothing says DANGER more than a kid walking a dog.

Skenazy notes that this attitude is commonly justified by crimes against kids. And yet, Ms. Skenazy notes, crime in Wilmette has gone down dramatically over the years. As it has most elsewhere.

The culture has become more paranoid.

Who is served by this?

Authoritarians. Haters of freedom. Demagogues.

Certainly not kids, for kids cloistered from simple responsibilities cannot grow up to take on real responsibilities.

Think of the . . . future adults.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.