

Danville News Column  
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“Orphans in the Storm”  
Word Count: 750

The movie, *Slum Dog Millionaire*, uncomfortably captures their situation. So too *Orphans of the Storm*, a classic silent film by D.W. Griffith. Two sisters, abandoned and orphaned, are abused, vulnerable to the schemes of wealthy men.

We assume slavery an evil of the past. Sadly, no. Given forced labor, slavery by descent, slave trafficking, bonded labor, forced marriage, child labor, and child domestic servitude, there numerically are more slaves today than ever before in the history of the world. Experts suggest the percentage hasn't changed much either. Ah, progress! Civilization, ho!

For millions of orphans, slavery is a very real option.

What about orphanages? Thank God for some of them; but for too many, well now, what happens when the little ones grow into adolescents and it is time to leave the orphanage? Goodbye. The door shuts. What's next? For boys, they have some options: begging, crime, sex trade, cannon fodder for the army. If girls, well, pretty much only one: sex slavery.

These are some of the kids our own local minstrel-missionary, Woody Wolfe ([www.hearttohandministries.com](http://www.hearttohandministries.com)), works with in the Ukraine.

We've seen a glimpse of this when we've traveled to Managua, Nicaragua. Seeing the poverty and desperation disorients you. Children passed out on the curb from glue-sniffing, addicted by their own mothers. Better to anesthetize them than listen helplessly to starvation's incessant cries. The humble realize that most of the world resembles Managua. We here are the exception.

I weary of humanity.

Drop a penny into a jar every fourteen seconds. Each penny represents a new orphan in the world. Every day 6,000 children become orphans. That's a Danville of Orphans every day. Every days times 365 days. Look at your watch's second hand. Every 2 seconds an orphan dies of malnutrition. 30 every minute.

I remember a Rod Serling's Night Gallery episode called, "The Escape Route," aired on November 8, 1969. The plot turned on a Nazi concentration camp commander escaped to Argentina. Haunted by his choices and deeds, he finds escape in an Art Museum. He visits each day and sits in front of a painting of a man in a rowboat fishing in the Alps. In Twilight Zone fashion, he enters the picture. He becomes the man in the painting. Then comes the Rod Serling twist. His criminal past is discovered and he runs. He decides to

escape into the pleasant painting. He does, but failed to notice the museum switched paintings during the night. The painting he enters and becomes is that of Jesus crucified.

For too many children there is no escape, only agony.

Unless we step up. There is a solution to this tragedy. The solution is simple. The solution is us. I am so proud and so grateful for the many parents who have practiced this spirit of adoption.

A challenging theologian wrote a fine book about how slavery and suffering inspired America's spirituals and blues. He wrote: *"Thus it is the loss of community that constitutes the major burden. Suffering is not too much to bear, if there are brother and sisters to go down into the valley to pray with you."* The theologian's name? James Cone. I took a class from him at Seminary.

Are you looking for a real Christmas present? Give more than toys. Pledge to care for orphans. Merry Christmas. In an age addicted to negativity, do positives. You may not reduce the national debt. You may not achieve universal peace. You can love and support one child. Children deserve food, clothing, medical care, shelter. They deserve an education. They deserve responsible parents. We claim the same for the children and youth in our community who need attention, nurture discipline. Family is salvation, whether by spirit or blood.

Read or tutor at our Elementary Schools. Help our single parents raise their children. Become foster parents or a Big Brother/Big Sister. I still haven't forgotten my dream of building our own orphanage here in town. It's far more effective to help children receive what all children deserve before they turn into angry and resentful teenagers.

If I were again young with the correct kind of skills, like medicine, you could forget me worrying about which hospital would want me after my residency or how to pay off my loans. You couldn't stop me from joining up with 'Doctor without Borders' or contacting some church headquarters as to where could they use me to help these children.

I might yet. I'm not that old. Maybe Woody needs some help