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CRITICAL CHILDHOOD(S)
100 YEARS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

ABSTRACTS

JULY 3, 2024, 13.30-15.00. CONCEPTIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS OF CHILDHOOD IN HISTORY

Noam Peleg (UNSW Sydney) - Revisiting Ellen Key's *The Century of the Child*

Ellen Key, a Swedish feminist and a school teacher, published its seminal work *The Century of the Child* in 1900. The book makes the case that at the turn of the century, as 'civilisation' progresses in science and depart from Christian mythology about life, death, and children, the time has come that society recognizes children as human rights holders. Key suggests that "The first right of the child is to select its own parents" (p46) as a remedy to reality where children's legal status is predominantly based on their parents' status. Key further advocates for the recognition of a range of other rights of children, including rights to education and rights in schools, housing, religion freedom and the elimination of status-based offence, especially those who are related to working children.

This paper will read and re-visit Key's book in light of contemporary critical approaches to children's rights and childhood studies. Using contemporary critical interventions concerning children's agency, children's own views about rights and TWAIL epistemologies of rights, and the limited TWAIL interventions concerning children, this paper will, on the one hand, situate Key's paper in the history of children's rights scholarship and recognise the importance of this work, while, on the other hand, highlight the limited, and Euro-Monistic conceptions of 'the child' it invokes. Last, the paper will argues that the book work *The Century of the Child* advances a "zero-some" game understanding of children's rights, where children are antagonistically positioned against their parents or the state, against other models of society, whether empirical prevailing in non western countries or conceptual, like the ecological model of child development.

Divya Kannan (Shiv Nadar University) – **Debating Compulsion: The State and the Poor in Colonial South India**

By the early 20th century, the princely states of Travancore and Cochin, in present-day state of Kerala, south India, began to establish legislative bodies to deliberate on social and economic issues. Chief among them was the question of introducing compulsory primary education. For long, the region had witnessed competitive politics in the terrain of educational provision, which involved the state, community associations and European Protestant Christian missionaries. However, the proposal to legislate upon compulsory education resulted in heated debates in the legislative council. In particular, the discourse of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor child reared it's head and opponents of the Compulsory Primary Education Bill argued that poor children would fare better with vocational training than literary studies alone. Despite the region's overwhelming concern for child welfare, these debates pried upon the divisive caste identities that determined the uneven development of state welfare. In this talk, I seek to demonstrate that the "poor" child in colonial south India was constructed simultaneously as an object of pity and potentially dangerous as elite reformers reluctantly introduced compulsory education measures during this period.

Bengt Sandin (Linköping University) – Child time, childhood time: A historical perspective on time in the interpretation of social change.

JULY 3, 2024, 15.30-17.30. CONCEPTIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS OF CHILDHOOD: REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Manasa Gade (University of Edinburgh) – **Playing (and Working) in the City**

As there is increasing anxiety about the threats of urban life on children's wellbeing and happiness, what does children's play – an integral part of childhood – look like in the Indian city? Most conceptions of this come from the minority world. What about children and childhoods from the majority world? Based on ethnographic fieldwork with children in Chennai, India, I challenge these normative, universal conceptions of childhood and play. I ask what the barriers and opportunities to play are, and how intersectional inequalities impact on children's experience of play. I focus on the false dichotomy between childhood and work/labour, especially in the majority world, and how this others and discriminates against millions of children across the world. I argue against taking an instrumental or sanitised view of a "happy" or ideal childhood, instead borrowing from the children's own conceptions of it. Important here is the role that

play has in a child's life, as defined by the children themselves – respite from labour, a way for children to negotiate new experiences, resist/transgress normative expectations, build community, and a healthy, happy context for childhood to unfold.

This study contributes to growing scholarship about childhoods in the majority world and by scholars from the majority world, challenging and complementing perspectives from the minority world. It speaks to the idea of multiple, global childhoods, acknowledging that there are as many childhoods as there are children. It recognises children's right to play and children's right to be 'properly researched'. Understanding the importance of spontaneous play in children's lives can help widen our perspective about children's wellbeing and happiness, moving beyond health indicators only. Paying attention to where and how they play in cities, and incorporating their voice in research, can help understand children and childhoods better, understanding them as human beings and not human becomings.

Afua Twum-Danso Imoh (Bristol University) – Destabilising Images of the Competent Adult vs. the Impotent Child Through the Lens of West African Notions of Personhood and Social Relations

The idea that the status of childhood is vastly different from that of adulthood is now firmly embedded within societies in both the Global North and the Global South. This distinction between the two status groups has not only come to be marked by chronological age (specifically the age of 18), but also by key characteristics that are recognised as being attributable to each status group. In particular, the state of adulthood is positioned as possessing all the qualities that those within the childhood phase of life lack – autonomy, maturity, competence, and knowledge of the world. This ultimately creates a situation whereby childhood is seen in deficit terms and as inferior to adulthood. However, not all societies make the same dramatic distinction between adults and children and therefore, they do not necessarily view childhood as a phase of life centred around incompetence, incapability, and immaturity. This results in a significant tension between principles underlying dominant children's rights discourses, and any attendant initiatives seeking to realise them, and communities in both the Global North and the Global South which understand the distinction between childhood and adulthood in substantially different ways. This, therefore, requires a new approach to thinking about childhood and adulthood and the assumptions made about the competence levels that are typically associated with both phases of life. Drawing on West African notions of personhood and social relations this presentation will explore different understandings of childhood competence and capability and examine their utility for an alternative children's rights discourse which does not take childhood incompetence as its departure point.

Chang Liu (UCL) and Yuwei Xu (Nottingham University) - When the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child meets Confucianism: Chinese parents' understanding of children's right to play.

This study employs a poststructuralist theoretical framework to explore parents' attitudes towards children's right to play in Shanghai, China. It disrupts the assumptive understandings of children's rights and aims to reimage the hegemonic discourse of children's rights in the UNCRC through the lens of Laclau and Mouffe (1985). In the light of poststructuralism and Laclau and Mouffe's theory on antagonism, this paper questions the legitimacy of a claimed universal discourse of children's right to play (the UNCRC) and sheds light on a pluralistic interpretation from the perspectives of Chinese parents in Shanghai. It adopted mixed methods of online questionnaires (N=880) and semi-structured interviews (N=11). The findings suggest that participants struggle with embracing and practising children's right to play as defined by the UNCRC, reflecting culturally-sensitive and -contextualised concerns around their children's future success. Those concerns are connected with the hegemony of Confucianism in shaping educational values in Chinese education. Participants' understanding of children's right to play is situated in the dual contexts of the UNCRC and Confucius discourses, with the two constantly competing with and complementing each other. In the context of globalisation, this paper points to the empowerment of parents in practising children's rights to play in China.

Nguyen Phuong Uyen (Vietnam National University/ University College Cork) - Is Eastern Childhood Different? Perspective on Childhood and Children's Rights in Vietnam.

Culture, customs, and traditional attitudes are often used as obstacles to the implementation of children's right to participation (children's rights in general) by non-Western countries in periodic State reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. On the other hand, these are rarely mentioned as obstacles for Western countries. This paper will use the concept of legal culture to explore the intersection between cultural traditions in Vietnam – a country deeply influenced by Confucianism – and the implementation of children's right to participation. Confucianism emphasizes filial piety in the family, which can cause conflicts and challenges in recognizing and practicing these participation rights. This paper will contribute a new perspective on the complexity between cultural values and the global discourse on children's rights. It provides insights for reconciling traditional values and national identity while encouraging an environment that nurtures the active participation of children.

JULY 4, 2024, 9.30-11.00. CONCEPTIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS OF CHILDHOOD IN THE ARTS

Ugomma Divine (UNN Nsukka) – TBA

Childhood is a phase of life that adult readers may regard as something they have outgrown, a seemingly less advanced stage of development. Consequently, children's characters are often perceived through the lens of simplicity and limited worldly knowledge. In present-day portrayals, there exists a sparse recognition and acceptance of children's individuality. When an author substitutes an adult's voice for that of a child, whether consciously or unconsciously, they essentially endorse the idea that a child's perspective lacks the authority to be relied upon. This mirrors colonial assumptions as children are seen as incapable of narrating their own stories or accurately interpreting events without the guidance of an authoritative adult figure. The concept of childhood within this discourse anchors on the subaltern studies with a particular focus on Gayatri Spivak's perspective. From Enlightenment thinking to the contemporary portrayals of children in adult literature, children were either overlooked entirely or viewed as scaled-down replicas of adult, there persists a focus on the idea of childhood innocence. The innocence attributed to early twentieth-century depictions of children carried with it a justification for the perpetuation and dominance of colonialism. The current research will explore, childhood as a positioned where an older form of culture is conserved. However, this, in turn, results in the infantilization of the same culture. Consequently, the depiction of children characters in African fiction is intrinsically connected to colonialism, where the new world was equated with the childish state of humanity. The study thrusts children often assume a distinct role, particularly in postcolonial narratives. Authors employing childhood are effectively harnessing the child's agency to conduct an impartial and unbiased examination of contemporary issues. In this context, child characters serve as a tool for authors to ostensibly scrutinize societal constructs, including national identity, without overt prejudice, potentially reinforcing their underlying message.

Andrea Griffante (Lithuanian Institute of History) - Drawing the Declaration: the UISE world contest (1927-1928) and the interpretation of children's rights

Even if the endorsement of the Declaration of the Children's rights by the League of Nations General Assembly on 26 November 1924 represented an indubitable success for both Eglantyne Jebb and the UISE, a long path still had to be gone in order to make the Declaration's rights part of institutional and individual consciousness worldwide.

In 1926, the UISE Executive Committee launched an international drawing contest. Children were asked to participate illustrating one or more articles of the Declaration. The contest took place in 1927-1928 with the national collector committees taking responsibility for the collection of drawings and the selection of those that would be sent over to Geneva. Committees form 10 European countries, Ecuador, Mexico and Turkey selected 1,540 drawings out of tens of

thousands received. A UISE commission, in turn, awarded about 200 drawing and organized an exposition in Geneva in 1929.

Drawings reflected both actual children's rights situation in different countries and sometimes even antithetic reception of the Declaration's principles as they had been imagined by their authors. In particular, drawings mirrored distinctly dissymmetries of cultural models and conceptions of gender rules, and diversity of political and social backgrounds.

Johanna Sjoberg (Linköping University) - Children and cultural heritage; Participatory rights and a collective child voice

Through UNCRC children have a right to culture. In this presentation this right is argued to include not only children expressing themselves culturally or taking part in culture made by adults. Children should also participate in, create and shape the cultural heritage. This puts pressure on cultural heritage institutions to involve children to a greater extent in their work. Here, a new method to include children's voices in the categorizing work made by cultural heritage institutions is discussed. The presentation builds on the research project "Children's Cultural Heritage - the visual voices of the archive" conducted in cooperation with The Swedish Archive of Children's Art.

JULY 4, 2024, 11.30-13.30. CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: THEORIES AND APPROACHES

Sarada Balagopalan (Rutgers University) – The Temporality of Children's Rights

Building on my earlier research on the need to historicize rights subjectivities, this paper focuses on temporal assumptions that underpin children's rights. It does this through tracing the complex history of compulsory schooling efforts in colonial and postcolonial India. Some of the broader questions that this paper attempts to address include: How might drawing attention to temporal logics that frame normative children's rights discourse strengthen our present efforts to critically reframe these? In what ways does a focus on temporality allow us to bring into sharper focus practices that normalize the continued devaluation of particular populations of children within national contexts? Overall, the paper argues that the contemporary working out of children's rights not only aids in obscuring past histories of struggles but also skillfully masks contemporary practices of temporal 'othering'.

Didier Reynaert (HO Ghent) – The origins and developments of the children's rights movement in Flanders: A critical account

In this presentation, I discuss the origins and developments of the children's rights movement in Flanders (Belgium). I develop a critique that consists of 3 components. First, children's rights can not be understood based on (often legal) objectivism. Children's rights is a social phenomenon and therefore should be understood from everyday experience of people, including children, constructing children's rights. However, how children's right are constructed still too much remains a black box. Second, social constructions of children's rights should be understood in the complex interplay of social, political, cultural and historical traits of a context. Particularly from the perspective of social work, social constructions of children's rights are embedded in the welfare regime of a country. However, how different welfare regimes influence both historically and contemporary the construction of children's rights remains a blind spot in children's rights scholarship. Third, because of the constructive character, children's rights are by definition discursive: their meaning is ambiguous and varies according to place, time, person and context. However, there is a persistent myth in children's rights scholarship that children's rights based practices de facto result in fairer or more just life situations for children, ignoring the discursive character of children's rights. I will elaborate on these 3 related components of my critique on children's rights.

Anna Sparrman (Linköping University) – Unlearning the Child

This presentation focuses on how we as researchers in a constantly changing world can challenge ourselves by 'unlearning' what we know, and perhaps take for granted, about children. What happens, for example, to the notion of the child in a world of transformation? Unlearning, as described by Marie Luise Knott (2015), who draws on Hannah Arendt's work, is an act whereby the known is turned into the unknown. In this case it is about confronting the notion of the child that is inscribed and recycled in our theoretical and methodological apparatuses, so that as yet unarticulated ideas about children can emerge. Unlearning encourages confusion, uncertainty, courage, and changes of mind as a way of learning anew. It also creates opportunities to account for temporal, societal and cultural changes in our own time. Inspired by Arendt's idea that humanities and the arts can help us challenge and unlearn what we know (Knott 2015), visual empirical examples will be used to unpack central concepts in child studies today. The exploration will also show the importance of letting children – just as we let visual art and literature – interfere with, shake up, and confuse concepts, realities, theories, and methodologies.

John Wall (Rutgers University) - Children's Rights in Childist Perspective: Theorizing Normative Empowerment

Children's rights have long occupied a marginal position in modern rights practices, discourses, and theories. Not only are children's rights often inadequate to children's actual lives, but they also fail to address diverse historical assumptions about children's second-class citizenship. The argument made in this presentation is that a critical perspective on children's rights demands a childist approach aimed at children's normative empowerment. The author's involvement in the global movement for children's universal voting rights is used to draw three lessons in this regard: first, that critical children's rights need to account for not only inequality but also structural adultism; second, that they confront questions of not just agency but also power; and third, that they can fully empower children only by transforming larger human rights norms.

JULY 4, 2024, 14.30-16.00. CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: TENSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

Ylva Ågren (Gothenburg University) - Branding childhood –between commodification, rights and values

As the digital society intensifies and shifts, the definition of what it means to be a child also shifts. Social media has fundamentally changed the ways in which children are targeted by, and engage with, commercial messages through influencer markets and online consumer practices. Activities that were previously considered private or unlabored work have become part of a flourishing digital economy that has enabled the emergence of entrepreneurship within neoliberal culture, leading to changing ties between childhood, labour, rights, and values. This presentation delves in the tension between the commodification of children and childhood in digital media, discussing both how children are used as digital capital in contexts initiated and controlled by adults, and how children themselves use and engage with brands and commodities in their everyday practices. The presentation builds on the research project "Children as professional Influencers and Internet Celebrities".

Anandini Dar (BML Munjal) - Children's suffrage rights: Imagining political and social justice for children

Children's rights have been guaranteed via the universal framework of the United Nations child rights convention (UNCRC) for over 30 years now. Yet, children's conditions related to their protection, and their participation in matters affecting them remains substandard, particularly in the context of India. The UNCRC also carries forward a Euro-American legacy, enabling various forms of neo-colonialisms. More significantly, it fails to recognise any form of

children's political rights or political agency. In this paper, I argue that the UNCRC is a limited framework for the political and social justice of children, and that it is essential to go beyond the UNCRC to imagine children's rights. I opine that for children's political and social equality, albeit greater protection and participation in a democracy, suffrage rights ought to be granted to them. It is through this right that children's other rights can also be better understood and realised, and their participation as voting citizens can enable an overall transformation of democracy. I make these arguments by first drawing on existing literature that critiques the UNCRC and supports the idea of children's suffrage. And next, I present some contemporary moves made by the child rights organisations and political parties in India around children's participatory rights. By demonstrating the limitations of these models, and also through an engagement with Ambedkar's ideas on suffrage rights, I develop a conceptual argument for the protection and participation of children in democracies through their right to vote; offering an imagination for the political justice for children.

Oluwadamilola 'Dami' Osekita (Queen's University Belfast) - NGOs vs. INGOs: A Qualitative Analysis of Cooperation, Competition and Contestation Over Civic Space in Children's Rights Advocacy and Implementation.

This qualitative study explores the dynamic landscape in which child rights-based civil society organisations act as implementing partners of children's rights with their States Parties within the framework of international conventions, national laws, and policies with focus on the practicalities that exist in the roles they play. Drawing on case studies from Nigeria and Sweden, this paper delves into the challenges among civil society organisations such as the power play between local NGOs and INGOs, the inter and intra-organisational conflicts due to similarities in mandate, competition for limited funding, clash of interests and lobbying for audience with government and other transnational organisations like the United Nations. It also examines the strategies that these civil society organisations have employed and are employing to address these challenges to enable them to perform in their role(s) in the children's rights space effectively.

JULY 5, 2024, 9.30-11.00. CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: METHODOLOGIES OF INCLUSION

Amy Hannah (Galway University) - The Role of Silence in Theorising Children's Participation Rights Under the UNCRC

This article presents a conceptualisation of children's participation rights based on Miranda Fricker's epistemic injustice. Drawing on research conducted in a secondary school in the UK, the article applies Fricker's framework, in particular her concepts of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, to explain some of the reasons for adults' disquiet

around children's participation rights. Fricker's concept of testimonial injustice explains how prejudice about a social group results in deflated attributions of credibility to their views and opinions. Hermeneutical injustice occurs when a social group struggles to make sense of their social experiences because of insufficient interpretive resources in the collective social imagination. By applying these concepts to children, I highlight the role of silence in conceptualising children's right to be heard and to freedom of expression. I present a conceptual framework of participation, informed by epistemic injustice and based on empirical research, in order to bolster children's participation rights.

Anna Jackson (Liverpool Hope University) - Exploring a new concept of voice in the collaborative, decision-making interactions between 0-3 year olds, their parents and their environment

Western concepts of individualism and the desire for precocious independence have framed 'voice' to exclude very young children for whom interdependence with a willing adult is necessary for expression and implementation. By expanding the concept of the fourth trimester from the first three months of a child's life to the first three years, I intend to explore a collective version of voice produced by the parent-child dyad, challenging the notion of voice as sitting within a hierarchical power structure between adult and child and decolonising the over-valuing of adult understandings of communication.

Building on these works, my novel approach models preverbal children's agentic voice as the product of conflict, compromise and collaboration between baby and parent. If, within decision-making interactions, we see parents as acting in the best interests of the child, and very young children as expressing themselves in matters that affect their lives, then we might see this conflict and compromise as acting both between parent and child, and between articles 3 and 12 of the UNCRC. My research sets out to explore these conflicts as positioned within, and interacting with, their environmental context.

Cara Shaw (University of Liverpool) - Inclusive Design as an Agent of Children's Disability Rights

This research explores the intersection of children's rights, disability, and design, focusing on the context of inclusive paediatric mobility (IPM) design to offer tangible examples and explore a range of case studies in the field. There is an urgent need for improved IPM interventions around the world, from wheelchairs and walking aids to exoskeletons and rehabilitation devices. Drawing upon the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD), this research positions design as a powerful agent to bridge the existing gap in implementing the rights of disabled children through transitioning five interrelated 'designerly ways', including:

investigations, collaborations, processes, contributions, and contexts. The manifestation of children's rights narratives in design briefs is explored through a range of case studies which also illustrates the need for a paradigm shift in IPM design towards child-centred problem framing and solving processes. Foundational knowledge and tools are presented to support those advocating for the rights of children with disabilities to enter into discussion with the field of Design, recognising its role as an active agent of children's rights with the ability to acknowledge, integrate and facilitate the rights and wishes of children with disabilities.

JULY 5, 2024, 11.30-13.30. CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: LIMINAL CHILDHOODS

Levindo Diniz Carvalho (UFMG) and Juliana Prates Santana (UFBA) - The Right to the City and Children in Street Situation in Brazil

This work analyses the relationships between street children, their childhoods, and the city in Brazil. Supported by Childhood Studies and studies on children's rights, this proposal uses the right to the city as its analytical axis. The debate on the right to the city as urban injustice (Lefebvre, 1968) takes on unique contours in Latin American metropolises, which are fragmented, unequal, and diverse, increasing vulnerability for poor children.

In street children's case, their experience of the city as a place for leisure, housing, and survival shows the paradox of understanding urban spaces solely as spaces for exercising rights. The street situation is established when the street becomes a space of rights violation. Thus, involving children in developing policies and intervention strategies would be essential to overcome this condition. The street is simultaneously a space of risk, protection, and development.

Analyses of realities in which social markers (class, ethnicity, gender) intersect with age impose an understanding of rights based on the concreteness of children's lives (Liebel, 2012), deconstructing conceptions about childhood and children's rights that assume a hegemonic model of childhood. Discussing children's territorial exclusion and their participation in social movements implies recognizing the children's political agency and assuming a historicized view of children's rights.

Karl Hanson (University of Geneva) - Comparing children's rights critiques. A case study of the travels of juvenile justice and child protection regulations between Belgium and the Congo (1908 – 2009)

Critique of the global children's rights regime, which was established at the time of the adoption of the 1924 Declaration of Geneva, that anchored the image of children as innocent victims in international regulations, was directed towards child protection legislation, policies and discourses in the industrialised countries of the North. Present-day criticism against similar patterns of paternalism concern child protection legislation, policies and discourse in the developing countries in the South. Notwithstanding the endurance of emancipatory critiques on the monopolizing of the children's rights discourse from paternalist or welfarist perspectives, both strands of critique have seldom been analysed together. Through a comparison between the different trajectories of child protection instruments, one being the product of legal transplantation in colonial times whereas the other came into being as a result of the transnational circulation of ideas, we want to investigate commonalities and differences between these strands of critique. How can we understand these opposite logics over a long time? And what can we learn about the emancipatory promises at the time of the establishment and development of the global children's rights regime by comparing the critiques?

Joyce Serwaa Oppong (University of Edinburgh) - An Afrocentric perspective on children's work

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) C138 emphasizes age-appropriate work for children, while Article 32 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) calls for their protection from economic exploitation, hazardous work, work that interferes in their education, or work that is harmful to their health or development. While the concerns may be valid in some cases, the seeming dominance and universal enforceability of international provisions are considered by scholars as Eurocentric, as they overlook the differences in ideas, conceptualisations of childhood and contextual perspectives when addressing child labour. Through my ethnographic research in Ghana, I examined the different views about childhood and children's work, drawing on the Afrocentric perspectives to explain that children's work in the African context can be beneficial. The findings of the research revealed that the constructions of childhood and work in this setting did not restrict children's work to age-appropriate roles. Instead, work was assigned to children based on social roles and competence. This enabled children to work and pay for their fees and educational materials. Additionally, children entered into apprenticeships to acquire skills. Protecting children by removing them from work without proper contextual research could exacerbate the situation of children living in poverty, especially when state and parental support are limited. In conclusion, the social construction of childhood differs in many contexts and impacts the application of UNCRC and ILO provisions.

Hedi Viterbo (Queen's Mary London) - How Child Rights Harm Refugees

This paper, based on an upcoming, co-authored article, argues that child rights – in their dominant legal and political forms – often work to the detriment of refugees of all ages. First, child rights reinforce an age hierarchy, according to which 'adult' refugees are innately less vulnerable, less dependent, and hence less deserving of protection, aid, and compassion than their younger counterparts. Not only is this hierarchy ageist and exclusionary, but it also ignores the contextual and relational nature of both vulnerability and dependence.

Second, the dominant framework of child rights often infantilises, silences, and disempowers its ostensible beneficiaries: 'child' refugees. Once they are marked as vulnerable and dependent, their wishes are easily dismissed or misrepresented, their capacity is overlooked, and they are driven to exhibit supposedly childlike passivity and victimhood. Moreover, the age-specific (and hence temporary) nature of child rights is a constant reminder that they are drawing steadily closer to losing their special protections and potentially facing deportation. This leads some 'child' refugees to pre-emptively disengage from welfare services, despite the destitution, exploitation, and poor health they are likely to face.

Third, child rights are characterised by a duality about child-parent relations. On the one hand, 'children' and their parents generally have a right to be with each other. On the other hand, the dominant framework of child rights authorises the punishment of supposedly unfit parents and the removal of their children. Aided by this duality, various states have weaponised the language of child rights against refugees, by vilifying and even prosecuting refugee parents for the hardships endured by their children. Other states have claimed that it is in the best interests of unaccompanied 'child' refugees to be repatriated – in order to be reunited with their parents – despite the wishes of these young people, the dangers awaiting them in their countries of origin, and the difficulty of tracing their families there.

The refugee context is not a case of child rights going awry. Rather, it exemplifies profound flaws in the dominant framework of child rights, as evidenced across other contexts, especially those involving disadvantaged, marginalised, and persecuted communities. What is needed, therefore, is a fundamental reimagining of child rights, vulnerability, dependence, and deservingness.