

# **PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

**Community Safety Consumer Safety Toys that Kill**

## **Citizenship in Action**

### **Toys that Kill, by Edward M Swartz**

After my child was strangled to death on a dangerous toy, I searched the library over to see how this could happen. I found Mr. Swartz book "Toys That Don't Care". That book was really old and I called to see if he had written a newer one. Indeed he had! "Toys that Kill"...I was so shocked to learn about some of the things in this book. If you have children, if you KNOW children, this book is a must have! Several toys that \*I\* played with as a child were mentioned that are VERY dangerous. Toys that I now have in my child's toy box are in there! Please read this book, it could save a life!

Whenever I gazed upon this exquisite literary work of art bordering on an apocalyptic level of Pulitzer Prize winning genius, I broke down and cried. Both of my young children were killed six years ago in a freak little tykes slide accident. The details are too gruesome and painful to recount. I think that this book speaks for itself to a degree that all the toy stores in the country should start selling guns to our children and not these dangerous toys. These tragedies must stop. Why isn't this book on the NY best sellers list or in Oprah's book club? THIS is the book that should be in every end table's top drawer of the cheesy hotels everywhere.

When my child was run over by a popping-ball "lawnmower", and killed... I became suddenly aware of the danger of toys. I have locally formed a group to raise awareness of the liability of the toy industry for allowing such lax standards to pass. In addition to our monthly toy burning, we all agree to read on book together on the evils of the toy industry. This book is so popular, it's been selected over a dozen times for book of the month. Very compelling!

### **Home Safe Home by Debra Lynn Dadd**

Home Safe Home offers more than 400 tips, including do-it-yourself formulas for inexpensive, safe products to replace harmful substances we are exposed to in our own homes. Whether you suffer from unexplained headaches, fatigue, or depression, or if you worry about the link between increased use of toxics and the rising rate of cancer, the many suggestions in this book can make your life virtually toxic-free!

Responding to the increasing interest in the effects of chemicals in the myriad products used every day, nontoxic-living advocate Dadd offers a combined revised and expanded edition of two of her titles, published in the mid-1980s as Nontoxic & Natural (LJ 2/1/85) and The Nontoxic Home (LJ 11/1/86) and updated later as Nontoxic, Natural & Earthwise (Tarcher, 1990) and The Nontoxic Home & Office (Tarcher, 1992), respectively. This listing of toxic materials and how to avoid them uses the manufacturers' warnings and mostly resists sensationalism. Dadd's suggestions are reasonable and not too difficult to accomplish. Like Lynn Marie Bower in The Healthy

Household (LJ 7/95), Dadd includes extensive resource lists, though Bower covers a wider range of products. An excellent choice for libraries not owning the Bower title. Susan B. Hagloch, Tuscarawas Cty. P.L., New Philadelphia, Ohio

### **Safety and You** by Nancy Harvey Steorts

Nancy Harvey Steorts, former chairperson of the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, has combined her professional and personal experiences to create a definitive and comprehensive consumer safety reference guide, which promises to become a standard in the American home.

In this extensive and easily referenced manual, Steorts addresses the safety concerns consumers have (or should have) about their homes, automobiles, food, and other products.

The book includes a glossary of private and government product safety organizations, and additional sources for obtaining further information. Heavily documented with newspaper headlines, test results, and statistics, Steorts draws on her own work as a government administrator and her personal experience as a mother and grandmother. The result is a highly readable, practical, and informative manual.

Steorts (former Chair, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission) offers a general guide to safety, as well as a reference tool for understanding consumer safety concerns.

Included are suggestions for "safety-proofing" one's home, discussions of product safety, and information on general areas of concern such as food safety, fire safety, electrical safety, poisons, outdoor safety, sport safety, holiday safety, and safety for the aged. The book also provides a behind-the-scenes account of how various organizations work to ensure the safety of consumers. Many chapters suggest other sources for more information and provide the phone numbers of product-safety organizations. Annotation c. Book News, Inc., Portland, OR (booknews.com)

### **War on the Middle Class: How the Government, Big Business, and Special Interest Groups are Waging War on the American Dream and How to Fight Back** by Lou Dobbs

Lou Dobbs's bestselling exposé of the silent assault on the living standards of ordinary Americans

Millions of TV viewers have known Lou Dobbs for years as the Walter Cronkite of economics coverage, and now the anchor has become the preeminent champion of the common man and the good of the national interest, who tells uncomfortable truths in a voice that can't be ignored. In this incendiary book, he presents a frontline report on the betrayal of America's middle class by interests that range from rapacious corporations to an out-of-touch political elite. The result is not only lost jobs but also dysfunctional schools and unaffordable health care. But *War on the Middle Class* also outlines a bold program for change. As essential as it is infuriating, this book furnishes the talking points for the national debate on income and class.

It is undeniable that aside from Dobbs and a few politicians, America's political debate is almost entirely devoid of economic populists. *War on the Middle Class* confronts this

problem head-on — and thanks to Dobbs's passion and charisma, it succeeds in sounding an alarm that cannot be ignored.

Lou Dobbs is the anchor and managing editor of CNN's Lou Dobbs Tonight and the author of a weekly syndicated news column. He has received numerous awards, including the Peabody Award and an Emmy Lifetime Achievement Award.

Wow. The average American has no clue what who Congress and the President are really working for, Big Business and the extremely wealthy. Thank you Lou for the wake up call. Lou highlights the disturbing trends of shipping jobs overseas to produce things to be consumed in America. No one is safe, it even points out that you can ship Accounting jobs to India where they will work for \$500/month?? I personally know of a large corporation (MMC) with a local office doing just that. Wake Up America! Your job could be next! Don't worry though, the government has your back, Or do they?

Also recommended: Lance Armstrong - It's not about the bike,

This is one of the best books I have read lately, it tells it like it is. Everone should read it, it'll open their eyes to what is happening in this country.

### **Philosophy and Public Affairs by John Haldane (Editor)**

This collection of new essays derives from a conference sponsored by the Royal Institute of Philosophy and the Centre of Philosophy and Public Affairs at the University of St Andrews. It brings together a number of prominent academics from the fields of philosophy and political theory along with politicians and social commentators. The subjects covered include liberalism, education, welfare policy, religion, art and culture, and cloning. The mix of contributors and the topicality of the subject matter should further promote a serious engagement between philosophy and public life.

### **Sister Helen**

#### **DVD (Barnes & Noble)**

Most nuns are not like Sister Helen -- she's tough as nails, can curse like a sailor, and woe be unto anyone who gets on her bad side. But most nuns probably haven't had a past like Sister Helen's, either; a longtime alcoholic, Helen gave up drinking only after the death of both of her children (one of whom was murdered) and her husband (whose death was related to his own drinking problem). After getting clean and sober, Helen became a Benedictine Nun, and she now runs a halfway house for recovering drug and alcohol abusers in a rough neighborhood in the South Bronx. Sister Helen is a documentary that looks at her often difficult life and her current crusade to help addicts get clean, as she shares her home with 21 men struggling with sobriety. Taking no guff and offering compassion only to those who deserve it, Sister Helen's attitude redefines the phrase "tough love," and among her charges are men who are grateful for her help, and a few who are resentful of her methods and distrustful of her motivations. Sister Helen received the Director's Award for Best Documentary at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival. Mark Deming, All Movie Guide

## **TRUDELL**

DVD (Barnes & Noble)

**John Trudell** is a poet, musician, actor, and political activist who has been speaking out on behalf of the Native American people with intelligence and passion since the late '60s. Trudell took part in the 1969 occupation of Alcatraz Island by the activist group Indians of All Tribes, who intended to use the former prison as a school for Native American youth. Trudell eventually became one of IOAT's leading spokesmen, and in 1973 became chairman of the American Indian Movement (AIM), which would become the most visible and powerful Native American activist group. In 1979, not long after a protest in which Trudell and other AIM members burned an American flag in front of FBI headquarters, his wife, mother-in-law, and three daughters died in a fire. Some have suggested that the fire was an arson set by FBI operatives (the Bureau has a 17,000 page file on Trudell, in which he is described as "extremely eloquent, therefore extremely dangerous"). Trudell turned to poetry to help him express his grief over the death of his family and his concerns over the state of America; musician **Jackson Browne** admired his writings, and encouraged him to put his words to music, and with the help of collaborators such as Jesse Ed Davis and Mark Shark, Trudell began recording a series of albums which combined lyrics confronting political and personal issues with music that touched on blues, rock, and Native American themes. Well into the new millennium, Trudell remains a powerful voice in both political and creative circles, and Native American filmmaker Heather Rae spent 12 years following Trudell and interviewing him, his friends, and his colleagues to create the documentary *Trudell*. Created with Trudell's participation and approval, the film won the Special Jury Prize as Best Documentary at the 2005 Seattle Film Festival. Mark Deming, All Movie Guide

## **Why We Hate Us: American Discontent in the New Millenium** by Dick Meyer

Americans are as safe, well fed, securely sheltered, long-lived, free, and healthy as any human beings who have ever lived on the planet. But we are down on America. So why do we hate us? According to Dick Meyer, the following items on this (much abbreviated) list are some of the contributors to our deep disenchantment with our own culture:

- Cell-phone talkers broadcasting the intimate details of their lives in public spaces
- Worship of self-awareness, self-realization, and self-fulfillment
- T-shirts that read, "Eat Me"
- Facebook, MySpace, and kids being taught to market themselves
- High-level cheating in business and sports
- Reality television and the cosmetic surgery boom
- Multinational corporations that claim, "We care about you."
- The decline of organic communities
- A line of cosmetics called "S.L.U.T."
- The phony red state-blue state divide
- The penetration of OmniMarketing into OmniMedia and the insinuation of both into every facet of our lives

You undoubtedly could add to the list with hardly a moment's thought. In *Why We Hate Us*, Meyer absolutely nails America's early-twenty-first-century mood disorder. He

points out the most widespread carriers of the why-we-hate-us germs, including the belligerence of partisan politics that perverts our democracy, the decline of once common manners, the vulgarity of Hollywood entertainment, the superficiality and untrustworthiness of the news media, the cult of celebrity, and the disappearance of authentic neighborhoods and voluntary organizations (the kind that have actual meetings where one can hobnob instead of just clicking in an online contribution).

Meyer argues—with biting wit and observations that make you want to shout, “Yes! I hate that too!”—that when the social, spiritual, and political turmoil that followed the sixties collided with the technological and media revolution at the turn of the century, something inside us hit overload. American culture no longer reflects our own values. As a result, we are now morally and existentially tired, disoriented, anchorless, and defensive. We hate us and we wonder why.

*Why We Hate Us* reveals why we do and also offers a thoughtful and uplifting prescription for breaking out of our current morass and learning how to hate us less. It is a penetrating but always accessible Culture of Narcissism for a new generation, and it carries forward ideas that resounded with readers in bestsellers such as *On Bullshit* and *Bowling Alone*.

In this study of American "social self-loathing" Meyer addresses why Americans have come to hate themselves (and each other) at a time of national prosperity and "relative peace." In compelling, wonderfully cranky and comic prose, the author contends that the radical social changes of the 1960s and the recent technological revolution have drastically altered the pace of life, leaving Americans "morally and existentially tired, disoriented, anchorless, and defensive." In arguments familiar to any sociology student, Meyer describes how the rise of freedom of choice in nearly every aspect of American life has been accompanied by the enervation of traditional social institutions ("Our communities have been neutered, and our traditional, inherited moral, religious, and aesthetic sensibilities have been discredited"). Pointed critiques of political theater, celebrity culture, the rise of marketing and media conglomerates and the decline of manners elaborate on the growing trends of "bullshit, belligerence, and boorishness." Meyer is gleefully critical and very sincere in his concern for the state of American life; his practical suggestions urging readers to turn the tide of self-hate and phoniness are a must-read for anyone fed up with modern life.

### **The Death of Common Sense: How Law is Suffocating America** by Philip Howard

America is drowning: in law, legality, bureaucratic process. Abandoning our common sense and individual sense of responsibility, we live in terror of the law, in awe of procedure, at war with one another. Philip K. Howard has written the explosive manifesto for liberation—one of the most talked about sociopolitical treatises of our time. Citing dozens of examples of bureaucratic overkill—everything from the labeling of window cleaner as a toxic substance to the U.S. Department of Defense spending \$2 billion on travel and \$2.2 billion processing the paperwork for that travel—*The Death of Common Sense* shows how far we have wandered, how we got into this mess, and how we can—and must—get out.

Distressing, disturbing, devastatingly detailed--this stunning examination of how modern laws are diminishing America exposes the drawbacks of rule-bound government, tells why nothing gets done, reveals the phony pretensions of law, and shows why well-intentioned laws have actually devalued rights. In short, *The Death of Common Sense* demonstrates how the buck never stops and how ell-meaning laws are creating a nation of enemies.