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Juvenile delinquency with emphasis on youth in gangs

Fueled by media reports of spectacular cases, the subject of juvenile delinquency has recently gained a high status in the public discussion. Gangs or individual offenders who become violent at school, homeless people, foreigners or other minorities regularly make headlines in the press. But the fate of the victims, whose care has become a major challenge for society as a whole, also causes a sensation.

"We have learned to fly like birds, to swim like fish, but we have not yet learned the simple art of living in peace, without violence, with respect and in harmony with others"- Martin Luther King, pacifist and North American pastor. (Ling, 2015).

Delinquency for some time now, our country has been, literally invaded by gangs of young criminals between 11 and 17 years old who are engaged with a degree of unusual and frightening violence, steal vehicles, assault houses, practice "suitcases" to tourists, sell and consume drugs and a long list of misdeeds. The above, the view and patience of a population helpless and defenseless against so much crime. In June 2016, the Judicial Branch revealed that the courts registered around 20,000 cases of "un-imputable children" under 14 years of age who were detained for various offenses and crimes committed from 2014 onwards. Given their age, these minors could not be attributed any criminal responsibility, as for the minors from 14 to 17 years old, who can face justice, only during 2015 the prosecution formalized 44,619 juvenile delinquents. According to the statistical projections, in 2017 the number of formalized young people approached 50,000 and the numbers do not stop increasing. The Government of President Bachelet speaks of "extremely alarming and alarming figures" and that we are "facing a dramatic and complex problem", however, after so much public talk and alarm, no responsible authority has taken any specific measures that allow to end the problem. (Waylen, 2016).

Some of the causes that give rise to the tragic and popularly known gangs or youth gangs are, among others: the disintegration of the family nucleus, the absence of values ​​from home, the social environment that surrounds minors and the need for children to belong to a group that welcomes them, even if it is of a criminal nature. On the other hand, from the archives and statistics of the FBI about the infantile crimes that shake to the United States can be extracted creepy data: in New York more than two thousand children between seven and twelve years of age were arrested during the year 2016 by violation, house robberies, armed robberies, vehicle theft, etc. (Bachman, 2016). While the number of young offenders between 13 and 18 years of age brought to justice in New York alone surpassed 60,000 young people, and the figures increase at a rate of 20% each year. The gangs of juvenile delinquents have, so to speak, "child divisions" for children between 9 and 13 years old, many of them grinding heroin for criminal organizations that employ them in the drug business, because they know that they have the protection of the law if they are caught committing crimes, since, In the case of the United States, these children cannot be imprisoned if they are under 12 years old. The serious problem lies in the fact that those who later become adolescent murderers almost always have a criminal record long before, sometimes from the age of nine.

These criminal children begin to commit crimes from a very young age, because they know that nothing will happen to them. The second serious dilemma is that gradually, the seriousness of their crimes increases tribes, robberies with violence, assaults with a knife or with pistols, etc. which means that when they reach adolescents between 15 and 17 years old they will be criminal’s facts and rights. Therefore, it is necessary for our country to pay close attention to this situation before it overflows completely and becomes an impossible subject to control, as it is a matter of observing and studying what has happened in other countries: the problem of child delinquency has become a real nightmare not only in the United States, but also in Spain, England, Mexico, Brazil, Peru, El Salvador, etc. Thus, for example, one fifth of the serious crimes committed in the city of London were the work of school children: boys and girls between 10 and 12 years old who attacked the elderly, robbed and assaulted people with great violence. One of the reasons for this behavior although in no case constitutes a justification and that these delinquent children act impulsively.

The tonic that is noticed after these delinquent children are arrested and taken to the courts or family courts, is that they show little remorse for their crimes and misdeeds. On the contrary: some of them make ostentation and presume openly in social networks and among their peer groups about the crimes committed. The various international investigations clearly indicate that youth gangs have become a social phenomenon typical of large cities and, in some countries, this phenomenon is being considered as one of the main problems of "national security". The aforementioned, as a result of the repercussions on the population, the unrestrained proliferation of the number of criminal children and juvenile gangs committed to commit crimes and misdemeanors, protected by the unimpeachable laws themselves. In this context, let's say that a gang is a group of minors who share the same interests and that over time becomes synonymous with violence, theft, excesses, destruction of public and private property, citizen insecurity, etc.

Juvenile delinquency and the appearance of gangs are becoming a social problem, then their treatment requires a social response, which implies, taking both political measures, as well as using multi-sectorial strategies with participation not only of the State, but of the parents of these minors and of the community, in general, where the focus is not reduced exclusively to taking repressive and punishable measures, but, mainly, preventive measures.

It is highly probable that this requires certain changes and adjustments of the laws currently in force. As much as we want to put a bandage and close our eyes to the reality that surrounds us, from a certain age, children know and discriminate, clearly the difference between "good" and "evil", as well as know perfectly, that if they are under 12 years old and commit crimes, nobody can touch them. In view of the facts and data that have been reported above, if very soon the case is not dealt with in a serious, responsible and effective manner, our country, within a reasonable period of time, could be completely overwhelmed by young delinquents, such as it has happened in the United States, England, Spain, Brazil, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Peru and many other countries. Let us not fall into the error of paying homage to the saying that says: "Evil of many, consolation of fools".

The passage from childhood to adulthood, in no culture and at any historical moment, is an easy task. It is, definitely, a hard passage that needs some effort. But in itself, that moment we call adolescence is not necessarily linked to violence. Violence is a possibility of the human species, in any culture, in any social position, at any age. It is not, at all, the heritage of young people.

Violence is not new in the history of human beings, nor is it the difficulty of going through the period of adolescence. In any case, what stands out as highly worrisome is the equation that is being established increasingly with increasing force between youth and violence. Contempt for life grows, and new generations absorb more and more violence. Why? And even more: what to do? The problem is especially complex, being impossible to understand it and even less to offer alternative solutions - based on a criminalizing prejudice where young people are the culprits. In any case, we must start from the premise that violence grows, and young people express it in a more tragic way, more explosive than other sectors. The weapons they use or the drugs they consume are produced by adults, not forgotten.

Modern capitalist society today expanded globally, has represented enormous advances in human history. The technical advances of these last centuries are phenomenal and we now have a potential to solve problems that had not occurred in millions of years of evolution. Social progress also grows; nowadays there are rational laws that favor human relationships as never before. We no longer depend on the whims of the emperor, there are systems of forecasting and insurance, we have made progress in the field of human rights, we legislate more and more about life and death. But the discomfort and violence continue.

While there are more and more material comforts, we are also witnessing a growing lack of values of solidarity, of contempt for life (otherwise, violent acts as mentioned above would not be the cause of death, to which we should add the growth unstoppable use of drugs and weapons). In the very complex urban societies of today, shaped more and more by the mass media, which have already advanced on the scale and are no longer the "fourth power", constituting today the heart of what has been called "war of fourth generation ", increasing numbers of young people face a diffuse malaise, absence of perspectives. Without falling into apocalyptic visions or into vulgar moralism without generalizing.

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