

# The Oakland Tribune.

A Pulitzer Prize-Winning Newspaper

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## Kids unfairly blamed for crime

I read with interest the Feb. 13 front page article "Violence up across the state." The article makes an important point in highlighting public misunderstanding about current crime statistics, which ironically, the media may be partly responsible for reinforcing. It is critical that we see more reporting on the context of the crime statistics so that news reports do not inadvertently contribute to an atmosphere of fear and mistrust which itself fuels violence.

However, this very piece makes the same mistake. Consider the headline on the second part of the piece: "Crime: Juveniles blamed." Despite this headline, children are the victims of crime, not simply perpetrators.

Too often youth are scapegoated and cast aside. The children of Alameda County do not manufacture firearms; they do not sit on planning commissions that allow alcohol on nearly every inner city street corner; they did not take the actions that increased classroom size and reduced the school budget. When kids are killing kids, that tells us more about our society than our children.

Next to that article was a piece on black churches in Oakland. It took a special case like Black History Month to highlight the work churches in Oakland are doing with youth. Churches and community groups do that work all year long, as do youth who make positive contributions to their communities.

Youth are part of the solution. Let's not blame them for a world they did not create. Let's take responsibility for creating opportunities for prevention so we need not resort to punishment.

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