

**To: Mississippi lawmakers, education and health officials**  
**From : Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education (PTAVE)**

May 7, 2002

Dear Mississippian:

According to Mississippi Department of Human Services, there were 900 substantiated physical abuse cases reported in Mississippi in the year 2000. That statistic leaves out the nearly 50,000 paddlings of Mississippi schoolchildren by their teachers. Of the 23 states that allow this practice, Mississippi ranks highest in the percentage of students hit. Apparently, being beaten in the pelvic area with a flat wooden board, sometimes resulting in the kind of injuries illustrated on Page 2, doesn't constitute child abuse according to MDHS. The official statisticians, it seems, were only interested in counting deaths and major physical injuries caused by parents and other non-professional caretakers.

However, by looking at the problem with one eye shut, they missed something very important. Parents who beat a child to the point of injury or death can rationalize, as many do, that they were merely following the good example of schoolteachers. They can claim they were only disciplining their naughty child in the usual way and got carried away. Too much of a good thing, one might say.

Those who deliver "human services" in Mississippi should be aware that advanced civilized societies worldwide have prohibited pupil beating and they have nowhere near the child abuse problem Mississippi has. The correlation can be explained this way: Informed governments have set high standards for educators, and the educators, in turn, have set a good example for parents. All parties reap the benefits. They have come to recognize that the use of corporal punishment—a fancy term for violence—is the mark of incompetence. Mississippi lawmakers recklessly have set far too low a standard for educators, with inevitable and obvious consequences.

As long as trained, credentialled schoolteachers can legally physically beat children, it is unrealistic to expect others to refrain. Furthermore, an education system that condones such violence offers unique opportunities and gratifications for certain people who derive perverse pleasure from inflicting pain on others. Every person in a position of influence or authority who declines to act on these facts is an accomplice and an enabler in every incident of physical child abuse.

Sincerely,



Jordan Riak, Executive Director

*See: photographs of injured schoolchildren on Page 2.*

*See: "Child Abuse is Serious Problem in Mississippi, An epidemic is robbing this nation and the state of Mississippi of its most valuable resource... our children," from WLBT.com, April 26, 2002 at [www.nospank.net/n-i96.htm](http://www.nospank.net/n-i96.htm)*

## VIOLATED SCHOOLCHILDREN



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