

The Decline of Neighborliness

It seems no amount of time passes without a headline about some couple (usually believers in the free-range-parenting movement) getting arrested and having their children taken away for perceived neglect.

The case of Danielle and Alexander Meitiv of Maryland received [national media attention](#) for an incident in December of 2014 in which they allowed their children to walk home from a park alone. They found themselves under fire again in April of this year when police responded to a call reporting unsupervised children at a park not far from the Meitiv's home.

The experiences of [Nicole Gainey](#) of Florida and [Debra Harrell](#) of South Carolina were similar.

Then there is [the case of the Florida parents](#) who were arrested and had both sons (aged 11 and 4) removed from their custody after a neighbor called the cops after observing the elder son playing basketball inside the safety of his own yard but with no parent home and no key to get inside.

Even more recently [a mother was arrested](#) for allowing her young son to be escorted (sans parental supervision) by his older cousin to a McDonald's less than a quarter of a mile away.

Each of these cases calls for close scrutiny of the intrusive role the state is taking in the management of family affairs and differing perspectives on parenting. Here I point the finger at someone other than the police or Child Protective Services.

I point the finger at the decline of neighborliness.

Most of us grew up hearing some version of the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Or

similarly, "love your neighbor as yourself." Mr. Rogers perhaps epitomizes the call to neighborliness even more universally as he invited us all to be his neighbor.

So, I ask what does it mean to be neighborly?

Neighborliness certainly encompasses a concern for your neighbor's welfare and civil relations. It involves knowing and being known. Certainly, if you see a robber enter a neighbor's house you should call the police. However, if you see a child in need why not approach the child and inquire about the situation? Being neighborly certainly does not require us to call the police on each other every time we see something we don't agree with, understand, or as a resolution to every problem. In a civil society so much more can be accomplished when we choose to communicate with one another directly leaving out the compulsory and often discompassionate force of the state.

The neighborly response to under-supervised children is not to call the police. The neighborly thing to do may involve watching quietly from a distance to ensure nothing sinister happens but could also involve an invitation to the child into your own home or carrying over a glass of lemonade and a cookie. Of course, you can only have these responses if you are already involved in the lives of those around you (this is no time for an introduction) and are willing to accept personal responsibility for the welfare of those around you rather than relying on the notification of third party authorities.

The problems of cultural reliance on the state extend far beyond the reliance on government assistance, welfare programs and the like. We have pushed our own duty to intervene personally, with all of the care and respect of neighborliness, onto the state which intervenes with the full brutality of its often blind force. As we trust the state more and more to act as "neighbor" on our behalf, we are losing the

faith and trust in each other that is needed for a civil society to thrive.

—

Note: the views expressed by the author are not necessarily endorsed by this organization and are simply provided as food for thought from Intellectual Takeout.

Dear Readers,

Big Tech is suppressing our reach, refusing to let us advertise and squelching our ability to serve up a steady diet of truth and ideas. Help us fight back by [becoming a member](#) for just \$5 a month and then join the discussion on Parler [@CharlemagneInstitute](#) and Gab [@CharlemagneInstitute](#)!