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The other day I heard that some parents were complaining about Betty Chinn because, they said, she was bringing students to Winship Jr. High who were disrupting classes ~~that their children are attending~~. While it is understandable to want to have order in the classroom, I wonder what they think we *should do* about the kids who are on the streets ^{and possibly} dropping out of school—should they be taken to juvenile hall, thrown into the bay—or what?

I later checked with Betty and she assured me that she has *never* taken a child to Winship. True, she's taken countless kids to school, but not Winship because that's outside the district where most of her kids come from.

Now, my own children went to Winship, about two decades ago, and to be honest, they did not like 7th and 8th grade very much. Not that Winship was terrible, but it was after all a *middle school*. I think middle school is a horrible idea. ^{yes, it's horrible} In my view, kids should go to school K-8th and then go to High School. But it occurs to me that, perhaps a parent who had their kids on the Ivy League track would have complained had Betty transported *my* kids to Winship. They were, after all, disgruntled and at times mischievous.

^{serious, namely,} But the point I want to make here is that the complaints betray a growing "great divide" within our country. We are increasingly becoming a nation of winners and losers. The winners go to good pre-schools, competitive prep schools and elite universities, get the high paying jobs and tend to think they should run everything—including the country. The losers routinely have one or no parents, don't go to college, often indulge in chemical abuse, and spend a lot of time in and out of jail.

What has happened to our vast middle class who used to include skilled workers, teachers and small but modestly successful business owners, etc? They're disappearing for a number of reasons: partly due to the exporting of jobs to Pacific Rim countries, and in part because of the breakdown of the nuclear family. What are we to do?

I won't pretend to have easy answers to Our Great divide because I believe winning and losing have been going on in our world for centuries, probably for millennia. But here is what I find astonishing about the current Great Divide: there are many people who call themselves Christian who seem to be indifferent to the plight of the homeless, jobless and hopeless people, who are a mushrooming group within our nation and especially in California.

I'm just a simple country pastor, but when I ^{read} the Bible it seems to say ~~to me~~ to be a Christian is to care. And we are called to care, not just about our own kids, but about *all* kids. To care about Jesus is to care about the least of these in our midst. Not only that, there's nothing more American than what Betty Chinn is doing: giving losers a chance to become winners!

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment