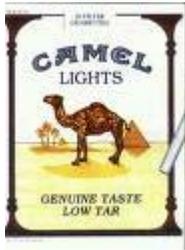


St. Louis Background Information for Pulitzer Global Gateway
“Women & Children in Crisis”

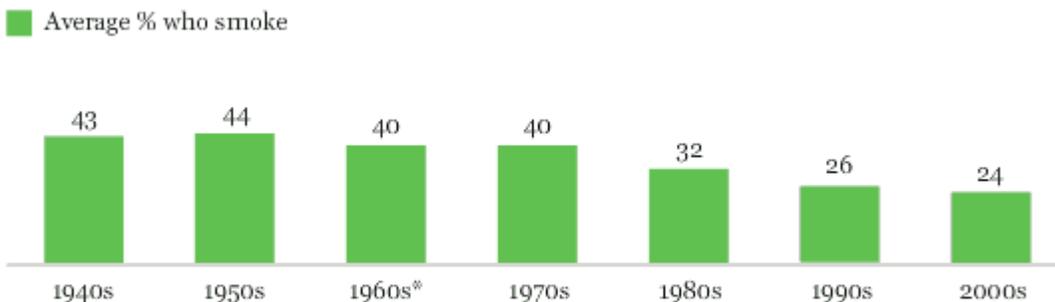


Why would we begin an introduction on the oppression of women and children in developing countries with a pack of cigarettes? Because it illustrates that change in human behavior can actually happen. It also reflects how this change often happens more readily in developed countries than in those that are most economically disadvantaged. It also shows how public policy can change the life-style habits of a population. Check out some of the information below.



The Los Angeles Dodgers were the Brooklyn Dodgers from 1890-1957. Like many teams, the Dodgers generated revenue by selling billboard advertising on outfield walls at Ebbets Field. When the Surgeon General of the U.S. issues a report in 1964 declaring cigarettes smoking to be hazardous to one’s health, laws began to change. By the 1970s most print and electronic cigarette advertising was banned in the U.S. Look below at how smoking trends declined.

Cigarette Smoking, by Decade



* 1960s includes only one measurement

GALLUP POLL

U.S. smoking rate is under 20 percent for first time

Thu Nov 13, 2008 1:17pm EST
 By Will Dunham

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The number of U.S. adults who smoke has dropped below 20 percent for the first time on record but cigarettes still kill almost half a million people a year, health officials said on Thursday.

About 19.8 percent of U.S. adults -- 43.4 million people -- were smokers in 2007. That was a percentage point below the 2006 figure and followed three years of little progress, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a report.

Clearly, smoking has decreased dramatically in the United States since the 1964 warning by the Surgeon General. But what about our topic for this Global Gateway project: Abuse against women and children?

* * *

Most authorities on abuse against women and children in the United States agree on two things: (1) it is still occurring in frightening numbers, and (2) it is difficult to get accurate statistical information. In many ways, it is a more difficult issue to address than cigarette smoking. Consider these differences from cigarette smoking.

1. Cigarette smoking is legal for all but minors.
2. Cigarette smoking can take place in the open.
3. There have been times, particularly in the 1920s, when cigarette smoking was considered to be fashionable.
4. For some, cigarette smoking is considered an addiction; it is unclear whether abuse fits the category of an addiction.

In the United States, abuse against women and children has been more characterized as a “dirty little secret.” Besides the inclination of many men to inflict violence on women and children, some women and children believe that they “deserve it” and either accept it or don’t report it to authorities. Anger and fear are prevalent emotions when and where abuse occurs.



Abuse can happen to anyone anywhere. Pictured above is Aimee Mokwa, daughter of former St. Louis Police Chief Joe Mokwa. **She was not beaten by her father**, but she was in an abusive relationship.

Further complicating the issue is the widespread historical acceptance of violence against women and children. Whereas white women and children have never quite been regarded as property to the same extent that African-American slaves were, the mindset that “this is a man’s world” has been widely accepted in many communities. And while slavery has essentially been eliminated in the United States (there are still a few isolated cases), it is widespread in many parts of the world and women and children are generally the primary victims. When you begin blogging with the journalists who have reported from **Nepal**, the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, and **Iraq**, you may want to see if the term “slavery” applies to anything that they saw.

<p>What is abuse? Is it one of those phenomena that can best be described as “I know it when I see it?” Is it something that we can scientifically understand?</p>	
<p>To the right is an illustration of one perception of abuse. You can see that the core is “Power and Control.”</p>	
<p>Does the illustration make sense to you? What, if anything, can we learn from it about abuse?</p>	

Another key word in the equation is **taboo**. Cigarette smoking used to be cool; now it is somewhat of a taboo; illegal in many locales and shunned in many more. Abuse against women and children is becoming more and more of a taboo in the United States; we will learn whether or not that is true in other countries.

As a first step, either as a class, in small groups, or as individuals, fill in information in the chart on the next page about how abuse is depicted in the United States. Here’s what you do with each column:

1. **Name** Column: Put in the name of a book, TV show, movie, whatever.
2. **Genre** Column: Indicate if it is a book, magazine, movie, TV show, video game, or other
3. **Degree of Violence / Abuse** Column: Describe how much violence or abuse is in it.

We have put in the names of two TV shows, one book set, and one movie to help you get started; you brainstorm more. Feel free to copy this sheet and add more.

Name	Genre	Degree of Violence / Abuse
24	<input type="checkbox"/> Book <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine <input type="checkbox"/> Movie <input type="checkbox"/> Television <input type="checkbox"/> Video Game <input type="checkbox"/> Other:_____	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Book <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine <input type="checkbox"/> Movie <input type="checkbox"/> Television <input type="checkbox"/> Video Game <input type="checkbox"/> Other:_____	
Everybody Loves Raymond	<input type="checkbox"/> Book <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine <input type="checkbox"/> Movie <input type="checkbox"/> Television <input type="checkbox"/> Video Game <input type="checkbox"/> Other:_____	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Book <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine <input type="checkbox"/> Movie <input type="checkbox"/> Television <input type="checkbox"/> Video Game <input type="checkbox"/> Other:_____	
Harry Potter	<input type="checkbox"/> Book <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine <input type="checkbox"/> Movie <input type="checkbox"/> Television <input type="checkbox"/> Video Game <input type="checkbox"/> Other:_____	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Book <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine <input type="checkbox"/> Movie <input type="checkbox"/> Television <input type="checkbox"/> Video Game <input type="checkbox"/> Other:_____	
The Watchmen	<input type="checkbox"/> Book <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine <input type="checkbox"/> Movie <input type="checkbox"/> Television <input type="checkbox"/> Video Game <input type="checkbox"/> Other:_____	

We are going to ask you to research abuse in our local community. Among the areas of interest are:

1. What does the law say about abuse towards women and children?
2. How do police respond to incidences of abuse?
3. How do prosecutors respond to cases involving reported abuse?
4. What support services are available to women and children who are victims of abuse?
5. How does the media treat abuse; is it glorified; abhorred; tolerated; what?
6. How have laws changed with respect to abuse?

If you are entering the essay contest (and we hope that you are), you will want to address at least one of these questions for the local component of abuse. The essay question is: **“Choosing from one of the projects, describe any connections you see between the issues presented and the status of women and children in your own community.”** We will give you more information about the essay on a separate sheet. In addition, we will give you the names of local agencies and organization that hopefully can provide you with additional resources. Please use the Global Gateway web site to initially access your international information; in time you will have the benefit of blogs and then the visits of the journalists.

If you have any questions, contact us at info@civitas-stl.com or at (314) 367-6480.