

Kotlowitz, Alex (1991) *There are no children here*. Doubleday: New York.

In this book Kotlowitz tells the story of brothers Lafayette and Pharaoh Rivers, children in the Chicago ghetto. The title of the book comes from a comment by their mother, when asked about a book about children in the troubled environment. She liked the idea, although she hesitated, and then said, "But you know, there are no children here. They've seen too much to be children." The book discusses the extremely difficult environment that the children grow up in and the challenges they face.

In the Chicago ghetto, where the children grew up, violence was so bad that they learned to literally dodge bullets while in their house - learning which areas of the house are most dangerous and susceptible to stray bullets flying in the windows and doors.

The book also discusses the schooling of the children and how 90 percent of children drop out of school. One thing I thought was interesting was how one of the children in fourth grade had a reading level equivalent to third grade but was still at the top of his fourth grade class. The dire situation therefore continues to repeat itself. This is seen in Lafayette's saying, "If I grow up, I'd like to be a bus driver."

In addition, the book also talks about the high teen pregnancy rate saying that many have already have had children by age 14 and is evidenced by women becoming grandmothers at 35 and great-grandmothers by 45.

Kotlowitz leaves us wondering whether these boys will make it or if they will succumb to poverty and the difficulties they are born into. This book is a glimpse into the lives of children that are similar to many children around the world living in the same kind of conditions. It brings to light the problems and difficulties these children have to go through just to hope for a normal life.