

## What Happened to the Golden Door?

by Henry M. Adam MD, Associate Editor, Pediatrics in Review

Emma Lazarus called the Statue of Liberty "Mother of Exiles," who cries out:

    "...Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
    The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
    I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Trite? Over-quoted into banality? Apparently so, as we have watched that golden door slammed shut.

In the October issue of *Pediatrics in Review*, an *In Brief* describes the effects of homelessness on children; and no more than we've provided for the thousands of children born here in "the land of the free, and the home of the brave" who lie homeless on our streets or in miserable shelters every year are we any longer living up to our greatest tradition of opening our door to the homeless refugees fleeing rape and murder in Central America, the Middle East and Africa. For them, that lifted lamp has gone dark. Shame on us.

Is it not by any meaningful measure of the word abusive to pull children, many just babies or toddlers too young to understand but not to feel terror, from their parents' arms? The grotesque image of young children, even infants, appearing alone before judges in court rooms to plead their cases for asylum belongs in a novel by Kafka - surely not in a country that calls itself exceptional and holds itself up as a model for the world. Yes, there has been outraged reaction and slowly, too slowly, the children are being returned to their mothers and fathers, but only to be locked away indefinitely without the resources every child needs to develop and thrive in the best of possible health. Shame on us.

Read that *In Brief* to remind yourself of how seriously children can be damaged for the long term by the traumas they endure without the safety and security of a real home. All of us, if we take to heart the mission of the AAP to care as best we can for the physical, mental and social health of every infant, child and adolescent, must respond to the neglected needs of these children. If we do not, shame on us.

*Statements and opinions expressed herein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the American Academy of Pediatrics or its Committees.*

- [What Happened to the Golden Door?](#)
- [Homeless Children](#)
- [Facebook](#)