

CRIME AND POVERTY

During the 1980s, in Washington, D.C., I was three times the victim of violent crime. I moved to the suburbs. So have millions of others across America. Victimized by crime or the fear of it, we have fled our cities and taken with us much of the tax base and employment opportunities, leaving the *violent* to prey upon the *poor*.

Many of our cities now seem caught in a downward spiral of ever-worsening crime and poverty to stop the decline we must understand it. Some of our sociologists and politicians have told us that poverty causes crime.

Recently, in a speech before the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Jess Jackson attacked this idea when he said, "We must be honest enough to dismiss those who would justify more failure with economic failure. We are enduring both and must work to cure both, but it is a mistake to say one causes the other."

Jackson's right, of course. But the point isn't just that being poor is no excuse for committing a crime. We won't fix crime by fixing poverty, but only by fixing people.

And that means curing the moral failure where it *begins*—with children. Let's save our children, not just from economic poverty, but first from moral poverty. Find out what your city's schools are doing this to help build the character of our children. And ask how you can help.

For Ethics At Work, this is Gray Edwards.