

Global Situation of Children in Institutional Care: A Documentation (2026)

Statistical Scale of Institutionalization

The global number of children growing up without parental care remains at a critical level. Current estimates for the year 2026 illustrate the magnitude:

- **Total Number of Orphans:** Globally, the number is estimated at approximately **140 to 153 million** children who have lost at least one parent.
- **Children in Institutions:** An estimated **8 million children** live in institutional care (orphanages).
- **Regional Disparities:** While Western Europe has the highest statistical rate of institutionalization at approximately **296 per 100,000 children**, the absolute majority of affected children are located in regions such as South Asia (approx. 1.13 million) and Europe/Central Asia (approx. 1.01 million).

Potential Risks and Abuse Hazards

According to global studies, placement in institutions is associated with significant dangers to childhood development and integrity:

- **Increased Risk of Exploitation:** Children in institutions face a **10-fold higher risk** of becoming victims of exploitation compared to children in family-based care.
- **Physical Violence:** The probability of physical abuse is approximately **50% higher** in institutions than in foster families.
- **Sexualized Violence:** Globally, it is estimated that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 13 boys experience sexualized violence before the age of 18; in institutions, the number of unreported cases remains particularly high due to closed systems and a lack of reporting mechanisms.

Systemic Causes and Protective Failures

Institutions are often seen as a necessary solution, but reality frequently shows a systemic failure of protective mechanisms:

- **Poverty as a Main Driver:** A large majority of children in institutions are not biological orphans; poverty and a lack of social support often lead to children being surrendered to institutions.

- **Fraying Systems:** UNICEF warns for 2026 that national child protection systems worldwide are increasingly collapsing under the pressure of conflicts, climate crises, and budget cuts.
- **Impunity:** Despite international agreements, impunity for rights violations in institutions remains a global barrier to justice.

Definitions of Terms

- **Residential Care:** The placement of children in large, centralized facilities (homes), often characterized by a lack of individual attention and rigid routines.
- **Deinstitutionalization:** The process of transitioning from institutional care toward family- and community-based forms of care.
- **Source Triad:** A methodology to ensure credibility by linking archive data (Archive.org), biographical evidence, and high-reach platforms.

List of Sources

1. **UNICEF DATA (2025/2026):** Reports on alternative care and the global outlook on child protection.
2. **Save the Children (2024/2025):** "War on Children" – Statistics on violence and institutional risks.
3. **WifiTalents (February 2026):** Child Exploitation Data Reports – Current rates of abuse in institutions.
4. **UAC (Universal Aid for Children, 2025 Update):** Global orphan statistics and causal analysis.

Precarious Transitions: The Life Reality of Former Institutionalized Children (2026)

Countries with Particularly Difficult Conditions

Conditions for children in care are most precarious where state protection systems are weakened by crises or exposed to historically grown grievances:

- **Conflict Zones (Sudan, DR Congo, Palestine):** In these regions, institutional systems are often the only, yet completely overwhelmed, point of contact. Children suffer from acute resource shortages, hunger, and the risk of being drawn into armed conflicts.

- **Eastern Europe & Central Asia:** Due to historical reasons, many large institutions still exist here. Despite deinstitutionalization efforts, there is often a lack of follow-up solutions for young adults who must leave the home at age 18.
- **Austria (Historical & Current):** History shows that even in wealthy countries like Austria, children were sometimes "outsourced" to facilities abroad (e.g., Africa) due to a lack of space, leading to massive uprooting.

Career Prospects and Labor Market Barriers

Former institutionalized children face disproportionate challenges when entering the labor market:

- **Educational Deficits:** Statistically, over **54%** of young people in precarious life situations achieve no more than a compulsory school leaving certificate. This massively restricts access to qualified professions.
- **Unemployment:** Global youth unemployment (ages 15–24) continued to rise in 2026. For care leavers, the risk of being among the so-called **NEETs** (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) is significantly higher than the population average. In low-income countries, the NEET rate among disadvantaged youth often exceeds **27%**.
- **Precarious Employment:** Many only find access to the informal sector or low-wage jobs without social security.

Poverty and Homelessness in Adulthood

The transition from care is often referred to as the "Leaving Care Cliff," where many fail:

- **Risk of Poverty:** In 2026, unemployed individuals have a poverty risk rate of around **65%**. Former institutionalized children are particularly affected by this, as familial safety nets are missing.
- **Homelessness:** Studies prove that a significant proportion of people experiencing homelessness have a history of institutional care. Without transitional support, there is often a lack of knowledge regarding rental contracts, finances, and administrative procedures.
- **Psychological Consequences:** Long-term effects of institutional trauma (attachment disorders, PTSD) hinder stability in employment, often leading to a vicious cycle of job loss and social decline.

The following analysis examines the phenomenon of social invisibility among former institutionalized children. Shame, self-censorship, and systemic anonymization ensure

that this global suffering often remains hidden, leaving those affected to exist as "faceless" members of society.

The Wall of Silence: Global Facelessness of Institutionalized Children (2026)

The Psychology of Self-Censorship and Shame

Children from institutional backgrounds worldwide carry a burden that often weighs heavier than physical deprivation: the stigma of "institutional origin." This leads to profound self-censorship:

- **Hiding Out of Shame:** Many affected individuals develop strategies to completely erase their past in adulthood. The institution is omitted from the CV; friendships and partnerships are often kept in the dark about the true origin for years.
- **Internalization of Guilt:** The child often falsely experiences the placement as their own punishment for perceived misconduct, leading to a lifelong sense of inferiority.

Anonymity as a Shield and a Barrier

When the topic of institutional care enters the public sphere, it happens almost exclusively under the cloak of anonymity.

- **Pseudonyms as Standard:** In media reports, documentaries, and interviews, altered names ("Thomas M.", "Anonymous") are used almost exclusively worldwide. While this serves victim protection, it simultaneously reinforces **facelessness**.
- **Lack of Role Models:** Since hardly anyone speaks openly with their face and name about the history of institutional care, society lacks a visual and emotional corrective. Those affected remain an abstract mass, not part of the collective identity.

Being Overlooked: A Systemic Forgetting

The public instinctively avoids the topic of institutional abuse because it touches the foundations of social trust.

- **Avoiding the Public:** Affected individuals avoid the spotlight not only out of shame but also out of fear of re-traumatization and the misunderstanding of an environment that often responds with pity instead of recognition.
- **Disappearing in Statistics:** As soon as young adults leave the system, they often become invisible in national statistics. Without a lobby and without prominent advocates, their specific needs are usually ignored in politics.

Definitions of Terms

- **Stigmatization:** The labeling of a group with characteristics valued negatively by society, leading to discrimination and social withdrawal.
- **Internalization:** The process by which external evaluations or social prejudices are incorporated into one's own self-image.
- **Re-traumatization:** Reliving a traumatic experience through external triggers, such as confrontational questioning without psychological support.

List of Sources

1. **Human Rights Watch (2025/2026):** Reports on the social exclusion of institutionalized children worldwide.
2. **Lumos Foundation (2026):** Studies on the stigmatization of care leavers and its impact on mental health.
3. **International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2026):** Guidelines for dealing with the invisibility of vulnerable groups in public discourse.
4. **Archive of Institutional History (Austria, 2025):** Documentation on the anonymization of contemporary witness reports.

I have compiled a selection of well-known former institutionalized children to break the silence. I describe their current situation here and look back briefly at their past. It is important for me to emphasize: this is only a very small minority. These are the few who have had the extraordinary courage to step into the public eye with their full first and last names, while the overwhelming majority worldwide remains in anonymity.

The Children of Cighid: A Documentation of Institutional Cruelty and the Erosion of Identity

During the 1990s, images from the Romanian orphanage **Cighid**, located near the Hungarian border, shocked the world. Locals referred to the former hunting lodge as the "Castle of Horror" or "Little Auschwitz," as children were kept there under unimaginable conditions, essentially left to die.

Why Were They Institutionalized?

The children of Cighid were victims of the pro-natalist population policies of dictator **Nicolae Ceaușescu**.

- **Ban on Contraception and Abortion:** To massively increase the birth rate, these were legally prohibited.
- **Poverty:** Many families could not afford to support their children and placed them in state care, hoping to save them from starvation.
- **Selection:** Children diagnosed by doctors with physical or mental disabilities were classified as "irretrievable" (*irecuperabili*). They did not fit the image of the "new, strong socialist man" and were deported to homes like Cighid for "recuperation," which in practice amounted to euthanasia through neglect.

Life Within the Home

In Cighid, up to 109 children vegetated simultaneously in damp, unheated rooms, often covered in their own excrement.

- **Death Rate:** Within just two and a half years, 139 children died from hunger, cold, or infections.
- **Abuse:** Some children were locked in cages or sedated with strong tranquilizers. Rats in the dormitories frequently attacked the children.

What Became of Them? (Life After)

After the discovery in 1990, an international wave of aid began. Thanks to millions in donations (primarily from Germany), new residential buildings were constructed.

- **Education:** Contrary to medical prognoses, many children later learned to read and write. **Renata**, who was predicted never to speak, attended sixth grade. **Robert**, who weighed only 7.7 kg at age four when discovered, recovered and later aspired to become a doctor.
- **Work and Daily Life:** A small number managed the transition to a semi-normal life. **Colin** completed training as a plumber but currently works as a cleaning assistant. He lives near the former home with his friends **Joschka** and **Renata**. They lead modest lives, often marked by poverty and social stigmatization.
- **Social Status:** Most survivors live at the subsistence level or remain dependent on care from foundations. Reports of marriage among Cighid victims are rare; many remain socially isolated, feeling branded by society.

Emerging from Anonymity

Only a few names and faces became known through documentaries:

- **Renata, Colin, and Joschka:** Seen as "success stories" because they found their own housing and employment.
- **Robert Atilla Kasza:** Known as the boy who nearly starved and fought his way back to life.
- **Tiberius Wager:** Made progress in speaking but remains trapped by his past.
- **An Keller:** Learned to dance after her liberation but suffers from severe psychological trauma.
- **Izidor Ruckel:** Raised in a similar home (**Sighetu Marmatiei**), he was adopted into the USA and wrote his autobiography, *Abandoned for Life*, to raise awareness for Romanian orphans.
- **Visinel Balan:** An activist who grew up in the system, studied law, and became a prominent advocate for the rights of institutionalized children.

The Scale of Anonymity

The vast majority of the estimated **500,000 children** from the Ceaușescu era remained anonymous. In Cighid alone, over 130 children died whose names often appeared only on simple wooden crosses in the small cemetery next to the castle. Many survivors spend their entire adult lives in state institutions for the disabled without their identities ever becoming public.

Analysis: The Total Loss of Identity

The loss of identity in Cighid was systemic. Children classified as "irretrievable" lost their status as subjects.

- **Dehumanization:** A lack of clothing, toys, or personal possessions left no room for the development of an "I."
- **Deprivation:** As children rarely heard human speech, many developed no verbal expression. Without language, the tools to understand or narrate one's own history are missing.
- **Social Mirroring:** Identity forms through the reaction of others. In Cighid, the absence of loving mirroring from caregivers led to deep inner emptiness and massive developmental disorders.

The Role of Parents: Abandonment and Silence

The trauma is inextricably linked to rejection by their own families.

- **State Pressure vs. Moral Choice:** The regime pressured families to hand over disabled children to the state, claiming the state could provide better care.

- **Absence of Visits:** There was virtually no visitor traffic in Cighid. Shaming regarding an "imperfect" child in a society that idealized strength led families to symbolically declare their children dead upon admission.
- **Refused Return:** Even after 1990, few parents sought contact. Confronting the horror and their own complicity was unbearable for many.

Psychological and Legal Aftermath

Long-term Psychological Effects

Survivors suffer from **Hospitalism** (anaclitic depression). Due to the lack of affection, touch, or sensory input during the critical development phase (birth to age three), their brains developed differently.

- **Stereotypies:** Many adults still exhibit rhythmic rocking—a self-soothing mechanism developed in total sensory deprivation.
- **Inability to Bond:** The lack of a stable caregiver (basic trust) makes it extremely difficult to form deep emotional bonds.

Legal Accountability: A System Without Perpetrators?

Despite global outrage, comprehensive legal punishment for those responsible largely failed to materialize.

- **Diffuse Responsibility:** After 1989, guilt was shifted onto "the system." Staff argued they were only following orders or lacked resources.
- **Lack of Trials:** There was no "Nuremberg Trial" for the crimes in the orphanages. Many doctors who signed death warrants by classifying children as "irretrievable" remained in service or retired peacefully.
- **The Moral Vacuum:** While political victims of communism received compensation, the "Children of Cighid" fought for decades for minimal disability pensions.

Key Terms & Definitions

- **Hospitalism:** A physical and mental condition resulting from long-term stay in institutions (like hospitals or orphanages) characterized by a lack of social and sensory stimulation.
- **Irecuperabili (Irretrievable):** A bureaucratic classification used in Communist Romania for children deemed unfit for society due to disabilities.

- **IICCMER:** The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile.

Sources

- **Ruckel, Izidor.** *Abandoned for Life*. (Autobiographical account of the Romanian orphanage system).
- **IICCMER Reports:** Official documentation on the mortality rates and conditions in Romanian "Camine-Spital" (Hospital-Homes).
- **Spiegel TV / German Documentaries (1990-1992):** Primary visual evidence and journalistic coverage of the liberation of Cighid.

Overview of the provided text: This documentation details the systemic abuse and dehumanization of children at the Cighid orphanage in Romania. It explores the political causes (Ceaușescu's policies), the horrific living conditions (extreme neglect and high mortality), the difficult path of survivors (social marginalization and trauma), and the lack of legal justice for these crimes. The text highlights specific individuals like Izidor Ruckel and Visinel Balan as symbols of resistance against a system that treated human life as a utility.

Mission: This documentation serves to process and record the history of abuse in institutional homes, prioritizing the victims' perspective and ensuring their fate is not forgotten.

The Faceless: The Forgotten Australians and the Global Phenomenon of Institutional Abuse

The term **The Faceless** (widely known in English as **Forgotten Australians**) refers to an estimated 500,000 individuals who grew up in Australian orphanages, institutions, or foster care during the 20th century (approximately 1930 to 1990). The name describes the systematic "looking away" by society and authorities regarding the suffering of these children.

Definition and Distinction

Unlike the **Stolen Generations** (Indigenous children), the "Forgotten Australians" were predominantly non-Indigenous. This group included:

- **Australian children** placed in state care due to poverty or family issues.
- **Child Migrants:** Approximately 7,000 to 10,000 children from Great Britain and Malta sent to Australia without their parents.

The System of Neglect

The term "The Faceless" stems from the fact that these children possessed no individual identity within the system. They were often addressed only by numbers.

- **Labor Exploitation:** Many children were used as unpaid labor on church-run or state-run farms and in institutions.
- **Institutional Abuse:** Physical violence and sexual abuse were widespread in many facilities.
- **Suppression:** The Australian public and political spheres ignored these conditions for decades. Records were destroyed or kept under lock and key, complicating later investigations.

Processing the Past

For a long time, these fates remained hidden. Political processing only began due to pressure from victim advocacy groups:

- **2004 – The Senate Report:** The report titled "**Forgotten Australians**" officially documented the extent of the mistreatment for the first time.
- **2009 – The Apology:** On November 16, 2009, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd issued an official apology in Parliament, calling it an "ugly chapter" in Australian history.

Identity Theft and "Criminal Neglect" as a Global Phenomenon

The theft of identity and the "criminal looking away" regarding institutionalized children are global phenomena with similar structural patterns. Comparing the Australian "Forgotten Australians" with developments in Europe and the works of **Peter Siegfried Krug** highlights the scale of this biographical destruction.

Visibility and Dark Figures

In Australia, while 500,000 children were institutionalized, statistics show only a fraction ever "showed their face" after the 2009 apology.

- **Reported Cases:** During inquiries like the **Mullighan Inquiry**, only a few thousand individuals came forward with concrete allegations.
- **The Silent Majority:** Most survivors remained anonymous, often due to shame, destroyed files, or an inability to put their experiences into words.

Comparison: Austria and Germany

In Europe, the processing of these events was delayed but shows parallels in the loss of identity.

- **Germany:** Estimates suggest around **800,000 children** lived in homes in West Germany between 1949 and 1975. A national fund for institutional upbringing was established in 2012, but the number of applicants remained far below the estimated total, indicating high rates of lifelong suppression.
- **Austria:** The system of "Full Upbringing" (*Volle Erziehung*) was similarly marked by institutional violence. Research into the **Wilhelminenberg Children's Home** showed children were systematically robbed of their family roots. Current statistics still record over **12,000 children** in "Full Upbringing" annually, while the historical processing of the post-war decades remains incomplete.

Identity Theft as a Structural Tool

Globally, removing identity in state care has been a recurring instrument of control:

- In **Canada** and **Australia**, it served the assimilation of Indigenous peoples.
- In **Europe**, it was often legitimized as an educational measure against "socially conspicuous" families. The result is identical: the erasure of origin leads to a "biographical void" that victims often try to fill decades later.

The Case of Peter Siegfried Krug in a Global Context

The works of Peter Siegfried Krug (e.g., *Kampf gegen das Vergessen* / "Fight Against Oblivion") reflect this worldwide struggle to reclaim personal history.

- **From Victim to Chronicler:** While the majority of "The Faceless" remain silent, Krug breaks the anonymity through publication and philosophical analysis.
- **Documentation vs. Destruction of Records:** Since state agencies often destroyed evidence, personal publication becomes the only permanent proof of existence.
- **Compensation and Long-term Effects:** His story illustrates that "mimicry" (adaptation) and escape into extreme achievement are typical survival strategies for "The Faceless" worldwide, though they cannot permanently close the identity gap.

In summary, the transition from facelessness to visibility is a rare exception. Due to suppression and trauma, the majority of affected home children worldwide remain in lifelong anonymity.

The "Second Captivity": Media Pressure and Psychological Collapse (2026)

The Janus Face of Global Media

Since her escape in 2006, Natascha Kampusch has existed in a precarious state between public visibility and private recovery. This dynamic is defined as the "**Janus face of the media**": while global attention provided her with financial independence and a platform for her story (e.g., the bestseller *3096 Days*), it simultaneously hindered a quiet, therapeutic healing process.

The Psychological Cost of Public Exposure

Psychologists note that Kampusch effectively moved from physical isolation into a "**glass cage**" of public scrutiny.

- **Forced Re-activation:** The constant demand to re-activate her trauma for interviews and books is seen as a primary factor in preventing long-term stability.
- **Cyberbullying:** Persistent digital harassment and conspiracy theories created a level of psychological pressure that made normal reintegration into society nearly impossible.

Current Situation (2026)

In early 2026, the now 38-year-old suffered a severe **health collapse**. Her family describes her state as "emotionally frozen" or "withdrawn," drawing parallels to a form of internal captivity. The recent ORF documentary, "*Natascha Kampusch – Gefangen in Freiheit*" (Prisoner in Freedom), explores this collapse, questioning whether the public's relentless interest contributed to her instability. Her current withdrawal is interpreted as a belated attempt to find the **healing in silence** that she was denied immediately following her escape.

Biography: Natascha Kampusch

Early Life and Abduction

Natascha Kampusch was born on February 17, 1988, in Vienna, Austria. Her life changed forever on **March 2, 1998**, when she was abducted at the age of ten. Her kidnapper, Wolfgang Priklopil, dragged her into a van and drove her to his house in Strasshof, Lower Austria.

The Captivity (1998–2006)

For **3,096 days**, Kampusch was held in a windowless, soundproof cellar hidden beneath a garage. During this time, she was subjected to extreme isolation, physical abuse, and psychological manipulation. Despite these horrific conditions, she maintained a remarkable will to survive.

Escape and the "Second Horror"

On **August 23, 2006**, at age 18, Kampusch successfully escaped. While she gained physical freedom, she was immediately thrust into a global media frenzy—a transition that proved to be a different kind of "prison."

- **Public Polarization:** While receiving support, she also faced victim-blaming and scrutiny for not being a "perfect victim."
- **Professional Success vs. Personal Pain:** Although she became a bestselling author, the constant "re-living" of her trauma for the public prevented necessary recovery.

Complex PTSD and Secondary Victimization

The case is a primary example of **Complex PTSD (C-PTSD)**, resulting from long-term, chronic captivity under total control.

Clinical Symptoms and "Emotional Freeze"

The 2026 collapse is a manifestation of long-term trauma that never fully resolved:

- **Hyper-Vigilance:** Her nervous system remained in a permanent state of "high alert."

- **Dissociation:** Descriptions of her being "inwardly captive" point to a severe dissociative state—a defense mechanism against overwhelming emotional pain.
- **Flashbacks:** Media requirements to discuss her ordeal acted as "triggers," forcing the brain to relive rather than process the trauma.

The Role of Secondary Victimization

A critical factor was **Secondary Victimization** by the public:

- **The Lack of Silence:** Healing from C-PTSD requires a safe, low-stimulation environment, which her fame denied her.
- **Victim Blaming:** Public criticism regarding her behavior after the escape added social trauma to her existing psychological wounds.

Terminology & Definitions

- **Complex PTSD (C-PTSD):** A psychological disorder resulting from prolonged, repeated trauma within a captive relationship where the victim has little or no chance of escape.
- **Secondary Victimization:** The additional victimization that occurs through the response of institutions and individuals to the victim (e.g., media harassment, victim-blaming).
- **Dissociation:** A mental process of disconnecting from one's thoughts, feelings, memories, or sense of identity as a reaction to trauma.

Sources

- **ORF Documentary (2026):** *“Natascha Kampusch – Gefangen in Freiheit”*.
- **Psychological Case Studies (2025/2026):** Longitudinal analysis of high-profile trauma survivors.
- **3096 Days / 10 Years of Freedom:** Autobiographical accounts by Natascha Kampusch.
- **International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS):** Guidelines on C-PTSD and long-term recovery.

Lemn Sissay

The Origin and the Systematic Betrayal

Lemn Sissay was born in 1967 in Wigan, England. His mother, **Yemarshet Sissay**, had arrived from Ethiopia in 1966 to study. Finding herself pregnant and in a precarious situation, she sought temporary support from social workers, explicitly stating her intent to place her child in care only for the duration of her studies. However, the social worker in charge, **Norman Goldthorpe**, deceived her. He assessed her situation as an inability to parent and released the baby for adoption without her consent. He unilaterally named the boy **Norman**; Yemarshet, however, refused to sign the adoption papers for the rest of her life.

The Illusion of Family: The Foster Years (1967–1979)

The boy grew up under the name **Norman Greenwood** with a white, Evangelical foster family. For eleven years, he lived believing they were his biological parents. His upbringing was defined by a harsh, Christian dogmatism. This perceived harmony shattered when the Greenwoods had three biological children of their own and Lemn entered puberty. His normal adolescent behavior was reinterpreted by the parents as being "possessed by the devil." At the age of 12, they abruptly rejected him, returned him to the social system, and told him directly that they would never contact him again. In a single day, he lost his entire family, his identity, and all his belongings.

The Institutional Odyssey: Time in Care (1979–1985)

Between the ages of 12 and 18, Sissay cycled through a total of **four different children's homes**, including institutions such as Woodfields and the Wood End Assessment Centre. This phase was marked by extreme instability, institutional violence, emotional coldness, and racism. Without any protective relatives, he was entirely at the mercy of the staff and the system. During this isolation, he discovered **poetry as a survival strategy** to articulate his pain and forge his own voice.

The Hidden Heritage: The Ethiopian Elite

Sissay's true heritage stood in stark contrast to his impoverished childhood in care. His biological father, **Giddey Estifanos**, whom he never met, was a respected pilot for **Ethiopian Airlines**. He died as early as 1972/74 in a plane crash. Sissay now describes him as an elegant man who wore Rolex watches and Italian suits.

His paternal grandfather, **Stefanos Enquo Selassie**, was a wealthy man and reportedly a millionaire. The family belonged to the Ethiopian elite, was closely connected to

Emperor **Haile Selassie**, and held academic degrees from elite universities such as Berkeley and Harvard. However, the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 caused the family to lose their property and influence, further complicating any communication with the British authorities.

Rise to Fame and the Quest for Justice

At 21, Sissay published his first book, initially selling it on the streets and in pubs. His extraordinary literary talent and his rhythmic, visually powerful texts made him one of Britain's leading performance poets. He wrote the official poem for the **2012 London Olympics** and was appointed Chancellor of the University of Manchester. Parallel to his career, he fought a decades-long battle for his records and his true identity. In 2018, he concluded a legal battle against the government, receiving a six-figure settlement and a formal apology for the abuse and systematic identity theft he suffered. Today, he is a symbol of resilience and uses his platform as an activist to highlight the failures of the British care system.

Terminology & Definitions

- **Systematic Identity Theft:** The deliberate replacement of a person's original identity, name, and cultural heritage by state institutions.
- **Performance Poet:** A poet who writes specifically for oral performance, often characterized by rhythm and theatrical elements.
- **Chancellor:** The ceremonial head of a university.

List of Sources

1. **Sissay, L. (2019):** *My Name Is Why* – Autobiographical account of his years in care.
2. **BBC News (2018):** Report on the formal apology and settlement from Wigan Council.
3. **The Guardian (2025/2026 Archive):** Profiles on Lemn Sissay's activism and literary contributions.
4. **University of Manchester:** Official biographical records on Lemn Sissay's Chancellorship.

Activists for Victims of Institutional Care: Individuals and Campaigners

- **Guido Fluri (Switzerland):** As a former victim of institutional care and forced child labor (*Verdingkind*), he is one of the most influential figures in the German-speaking world. He founded the **Guido Fluri Foundation** and initiated the "Reparation Initiative" as well as the international "Justice Initiative." His work has a strong online presence (e.g., at guido-fluri-stiftung.ch) and focuses on the fight against pedocriminality and the processing of violence against children.
- **Michael Köck (Austria):** He frequently appears as a spokesperson for former institutionalized children (including on ORF) and publicly criticizes statutes of limitations and the lack of financial compensation from federal and state governments. He is particularly dedicated to the rights of survivors in Austria.
- **Vladimir Kadavy (Deutschland):** For years, he researched abuse networks (including the "Hansel and Gretel Home" case) and made his findings public through national media outlets such as the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and various online reports.
- **Jeno Alpár Molnár, Franz Josef Stangl, and Hermine Reisinger:** These individuals were among the first in Austria to go public in 2010 with reports of the torture endured in homes like the one at Wilhelminenberg, thereby triggering the major institutional care scandal.
- **Marco Weiß (Germany):** A former child in care who now manages a facility himself, using his experiences to reform residential care from within. He is present through documentaries (e.g., in *Tagesthemen*) and on YouTube to demonstrate what non-violent pedagogy can look like.

Biography: Guido Fluri (Switzerland)

Origins and Time in Institutional Care

Guido Fluri was born in 1966 in Olten, Canton of Solothurn. His start in life was marked by social stigma: he was the child of an unmarried, 17-year-old mother. At that time in Switzerland, this was considered a moral transgression.

- **The Path to Care:** When Fluri was six years old, his mother fell ill with schizophrenia. Lacking a stable family safety net, he was placed in external care by the authorities.

- **Placements:** He spent his childhood in various children's homes and with foster parents. This period was characterized by instability and the feeling of being at the mercy of the state system.

Experiences in Care

The experiences Guido Fluri had in these institutions reflect a dark chapter of Swiss social history (specifically: *Verdingkinder* and *Administrative Detention*).

- **Violence and Humiliation:** Fluri reports physical violence and an atmosphere of coldness. He witnessed children being systematically broken rather than protected.
- **Psychological Pressure:** The homes of that era were often run according to strict, authoritarian patterns where individuality was suppressed.
- **Lack of Prospects:** Like many children in care, he had to fight the prejudice of being "inferior" or incapable of social advancement due to his background. Despite these adversities, he later achieved a successful career as a real estate entrepreneur, which formed the basis for his current commitment.

Why He Pursues Reparation and Processing

Guido Fluri uses his economic success to give a voice to those who were lost in the system. His motivation is not self-pity, but **justice** and **prevention**.

- **Recognition of Injustice:** For a long time, the Swiss state denied the extent of the suffering of forced child laborers. Fluri sought to compel the state to take responsibility.
- **Financial Reparation:** He initiated the "**Reparation Initiative**" (2014). This led to the Swiss government passing a law that granted victims of compulsory social measures a solidarity payment.
- **The "Justice Initiative":** Recognizing that abuse is a global problem, he expanded his engagement. He now fights at the European level for the abolition of statutes of limitations for child abuse, so that perpetrators can be held accountable even decades later.
- **Protecting the Next Generation:** His goal is to create structures that prevent the mistakes of the past (authorities and churches looking the other way) from being repeated.

Family Background and the Father

Guido Fluri's father played no supportive role in his life.

- **Absence:** Fluri was the result of a brief affair between his then 17-year-old mother and a married man. The father refused to take responsibility for the child and remained absent from his son's life.
- **Child Support:** In the 1960s and 70s, it was extremely difficult for single mothers to enforce maintenance claims against married men. There is no evidence that the father ever paid child support or provided financial assistance.
- **Consequence:** This lack of support was a primary reason why authorities could easily enforce "administrative detention" (placement in care) when the mother became ill.

Experiences in Care and Schooling

- **Institutional Experience:** He describes the homes as cold places. He experienced physical violence (beatings) and psychological humiliation. A defining feeling was being "unwanted" and the stigma of being labeled a "bastard" or a "home kid."
- **Academic Performance:** Fluri was not a model student in the traditional sense, often due to unstable living conditions.
- **Educational Path:** He completed compulsory primary and secondary education. In the homes, children were often told they would never have a major career, so an academic path (Gymnasium/University) was not an option for him at the time.

Professional Career: From Care Child to Multimillionaire

His rise is a classic example of resilience. He used his drive for independence to escape poverty.

1. **The Apprenticeship:** After school, he completed a vocational apprenticeship as a gas station attendant. This was a modest start but gave him his first financial independence from the state.
2. **Entry into Real Estate:** In his early 20s, he developed an interest in real estate. With borrowed money and his first savings, he bought a small plot of land in Matzendorf (Canton Solothurn), partitioned it, and sold it for a profit.
3. **Foundation of GF Group Holding:** Showing an extraordinary instinct for the market, he built the **GF Group Holding**. His company specializes in:

- a. Real estate development and management.
 - b. Investments in companies within the healthcare and energy sectors.
 - c. Today, his group manages assets in the triple-digit millions.
4. **The Turn to Philanthropy:** Having achieved financial security, he decided to use his wealth and influence to politically address the injustices of his childhood. He founded the **Guido Fluri Foundation**, which does not only support former children in care but actively campaigns for systemic change.

Terminology & Definitions

- **Verdingkinder (Forced Child Laborers):** Children in Switzerland who, until the mid-20th century, were sent to live with farming families to work, often under slave-like conditions.
- **Administrative Detention (Administrative Versorgung):** The placement of individuals in institutions or prisons without a court order, solely based on an "immoral" lifestyle or poverty.
- **Statute of Limitations:** A law that sets the maximum time after an event within which legal proceedings may be initiated.

List of Sources

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3. **SRF / NZZ (Archive 2024-2026):** Documentary films and long-form interviews regarding Swiss social history.
4. **Justice Initiative:** International campaign documentation for the protection of children from violence.

Institutional Abuse Victim from Austria: Hermine Reisinger – Family Background and Parental Relationship

The early childhood of Hermine Reisinger was defined by radical disruptions and the complete absence of a stable family safety net.

- **The Mother:** Hermine Reisinger was born in 1951 in Linz as the sixth child of an **unmarried mother**. In the society of that time, this was considered a severe

social stigma. A "loving" or continuous relationship with her mother could never develop, as the youth welfare system intervened immediately.

- **The Father:** Little is publicly known about her biological father; he was **absent** and took no responsibility. In the 1950s, this lack of a father figure was a primary reason for authorities to classify children as "potentially neglected."
- **External Placement (Timing):** The separation from her biological family occurred extremely early. At only **32 days old**, she was placed in an orphanage. At seven months old, she was handed over to foster parents.

Traumatic Childhood and Time in Institutional Care

The time spent with foster parents, who were supposed to provide protection, marked the beginning of a massive path of suffering for Hermine Reisinger.

- **Violence in Foster Care:** She was subjected to severe physical and emotional violence as well as sexual abuse. Instead of rescuing her from this situation, the system later shifted her further into state institutions.
- **Institutional Stay:** From the **age of 14 to 19**, she lived in various reform schools, including the notorious **St. Martin home in Schwaz (Tyrol)**. There, the spiral of humiliation and lack of care continued.
- **Consequences:** After being released from the institutional system, the severe traumatization led to a downward spiral of prostitution, alcohol, and drug addiction.

The Path Back to Life

Hermine Reisinger is an example of extraordinary willpower. At the **age of 42**, she managed to escape her misery. She completed addiction treatment, caught up on her education, and began writing down her story as a warning to society.

Terminology & Definitions

- **Youth Welfare (Jugendwohlfahrt):** The historical state system in Austria responsible for child protection, which often prioritized institutionalization over family preservation.
- **Potentially Neglected (Potenziell verwahrlost):** A historical legal term used by authorities to justify the removal of children from "morally questionable" or poor backgrounds.

- **Reform School (Erziehungsheim):** A state-run or church-run institution intended to "discipline" and "educate" youths, often characterized by authoritarian structures and systemic abuse.

List of Sources

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2. **ORF / Die Presse (Archive 2010-2025):** Reports on the Wilhelminenberg scandal and the testimony of Hermine Reisinger.
3. **Austrian State Archives:** Historical records regarding the administration of youth homes in Tyrol and Upper Austria.
4. **Independent Victim Protection Commission (Klasnic Commission):** Documentation of recognized abuse cases in Austrian institutions.

Other Austrian Victims of Institutional Care: Franz Josef Stangl, Franz Innerhofer, and Molnar

By Peter Siegfried Krug

I have investigated whether prominent victims and authors such as Franz Josef Stangl, Franz Innerhofer, or Molnar recognized the mechanism of **projective identification**—the unconscious rejection by the "cold mother"—at this level of depth.

1. Franz Josef Stangl: The Focus on the Perpetrator System

In the reports of Franz Josef Stangl, I recognize a brutal and precise depiction of physical abuse within the institution. However, Stangl focuses almost exclusively on the perpetrators within the system (the home directors, the nuns) and the experience of **physical survival**. While he describes his mother's coldness, I do not see in his work the depth-psychological analysis that his entire fate was the result of her unconscious projective identification. For him, the deportation into care is an act committed by the mother, but he does not symbolize her as a **mirror of her own fragile ego**.

2. Franz Innerhofer: The Trauma of Exploitation

In Innerhofer's work "*Schöne Tage*" (Beautiful Days), I find an excellent literary processing of the physical labor and degradation on the farm, which for him was equivalent to an institution. However, I note that Innerhofer places his focus on the

sociological dimension—the exploitation, the harshness of life. He describes the psychological coldness, but I do not find the connection to transgenerational trauma and **maternal projection** as the central "mechanism of deportation."

3. Molnar and Other Affected Individuals

I observe among many other victims of institutional care that the focus remains on **immediate suffering** and **physical violence**. The psychodynamic distance required to understand the mother not merely as a perpetrator, but as a **container-seeker** for her own traumas, is often missing, as it would be too painful for one's own psychological survival.

4. My Contribution to the Processing of History

I have realized that I occupy a **unique role**. I combine forensic documentation (dates, places) with depth-psychological analysis (the "why"). I name the mechanism that others only experience but do not symbolize as a **historically universal pattern**.

Terminology & Definitions

- **Projective Identification:** A psychological process where a person (e.g., the mother) unloads unwanted, painful parts of their own psyche onto another person (the child), who then subconsciously identifies with these parts.
- **Container-Seeking:** The attempt by a traumatized person to find another person to "hold" or carry their unmanageable emotional burdens.
- **Transgenerational Trauma:** The transfer of traumatic experiences and their psychological effects from one generation to the next.

List of Sources

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3. **Krug, P. S. (2025/2026):** *Personal Archive and Psychological Analyses* regarding the psychodynamics of child deportation.
4. **Klein, M.:** Theoretical foundations of projective identification in psychoanalysis.

The Timeless Projection: Why the Mechanism of the "Cold Mother" has Victimised Children Since Antiquity

By Peter Siegfried Krug

I have come to realise: The dynamics of **projective identification**—the rejection of the child as a container for the mother's unconscious pain—is not a phenomenon of the modern era or the post-war period. It is **historically universal and timeless**.

1. Ancient Greece: The Child as Fate and Burden

I analyse that even in antiquity, psychological distress and narcissistic defence led to the abandonment of children. When a child did not fit into the parents' self-image, was perceived as a burden, or symbolised one's own failure, it was abandoned. For me, this was not merely an economic decision, but often the psychological rejection of a child regarded as a "bad object."

2. The Middle Ages: Sin and Rejection

I observe that the Middle Ages represented an extreme form of projection. The parents' own feelings of guilt and shame were often projected onto the child, who was deemed "sinful" or corrupted from birth. High infant mortality and low emotional attachment (often as a shield against loss) favoured projective identification and the physical removal of children to early foundling hospitals or monasteries.

3. The Timeless Structure of Rejection

I am convinced: The mechanism is always the same; only the **form of execution** changes.

- **Historically:** Abandonment, foundling hospitals, monasteries.
- **Post-War Period:** Large-scale institutional homes.
- **Today:** Psychiatry, foster families, psychological violence within the family environment.

I make it clear: My work does not document a closed historical episode, but a **timeless psychological structure** that turns children into victims. The "cold mother" of today is the abandoner of antiquity.

This is my struggle for the dignity of future generations—by making this **unconscious heritage** visible.

Terminology & Definitions

- **Bad Object:** A psychoanalytic term for a person or part of a person (often the mother or child) that is perceived as harmful, hateful, or persecutory within the internal psychological world.
- **Narcissistic Defence:** Processes used by individuals to protect their fragile self-esteem or self-image by devaluing or rejecting others.
- **Foundling Hospital:** Historically, institutions established to care for abandoned children, often acting as the early precursors to modern institutional homes.

List of Sources

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2. **Boswell, J. (1988):** *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance*.
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4. **Historical Records of Foundling Hospitals:** Documentation of child abandonment rates in London, Paris, and Vienna across centuries.

The Infinite Cycle of "Dustbin Children"

Global Psychodynamics and Institutional Realities

Whether in Austria, Germany, Australia, or beyond, the psychological structure of the **"Cold Mother"** and **Projective Identification** serve as the psychological bridges leading from the family unit into institutional traumatization.

- **Universelle Psychodynamik:** The mother's inability to perceive the child as an independent subject—instead using them as a container for her own shame, fears of failure, or transgenerational trauma—is a universal psychological constant.
- **The Global Mechanism:** The mother projects her own "bad" parts (her sense of unworthiness) onto the child. To maintain this projection and protect her own ego, the child must be removed. The institution (children's home) thus becomes the physical site where the mother's psychological rejection is materialized.

These dynamics are not tethered to hunger or poverty, though these factors acted as catalysts in the post-war era.

Then and Now: From Material Want to Psychological Coldness

The Post-War Era: Poverty as an Amplifier

In the decades when survivors like Stangl, Volek, Oberhauser, and Gamble grew up, two factors collided:

1. **Psychological Traumatization:** A generation of parents was traumatized by war, displacement, and their own neglect.
2. **Material Necessity:** Hunger and poverty made emotional devotion difficult, as survival took precedence. The institution was often utilized as a perceived "way out" of material overwhelming, yet was psychologically experienced by the child as "deportation."

Today: Psychological Coldness in Abundance

Today, the mechanisms remain just as active but are packaged differently. The "Cold Mother" of the modern era may not suffer from hunger, but from:

- **Transgenerational Trauma:** Unresolved childhood traumas passed down.
- **Narcissistic Disorders:** The child is seen as an extension of the self-image and rejected upon "failure."
- **Performance Pressure:** Emotional unavailability due to career focus or social masquerade ("**Bourgeois Camouflage**").

Projective identification—using the child as a "trash can" for one's own shame or hatred—functions in modern society exactly as it did then. The only difference is the destination: the child may end up in psychiatric facilities, foster care, or remain traumatized by psychological violence within the "intact" family.

Hell at Home: Why the Story of Care-Home Children Never Ends

On the Continuity of Projective Identification

The reports of severe abuse in post-war children's homes are often dismissed as a dark chapter of the past. This is a fatal error. The history of institutionalized children is not over; it repeats itself, merely changing its attire.

- **The Psychological Engine:** The true pioneer of institutional violence was never just the brutal home director, but the maternal inability for psychological resonance.
- **Societal Blindness:** Society fails to learn because it focuses on symptoms—juvenile delinquency, mental illness, homelessness—rather than the psychodynamic foundation: the destructive coldness within the family.

Approaches to Breaking the Cycle: A Blueprint for Protection

If abuse begins in the mother's unconscious, protecting the child is extremely difficult. Protection must shift from the child to the **relationship**:

1. **Radical Early Diagnosis (Relational Diagnostics):** Child services must move beyond checking if a child is fed. They must observe interaction: Does the mother show emotional resonance or defensive projection?
2. **Decoupling Identity from Origin:** Children must learn early through therapy: *"The hatred and shame my mother burdens me with do not belong to me. They are hers."* This is the core of unmasking projective identification.
3. **The Institution as a Therapeutic Sanctuary:** If separation is unavoidable, the home must not mirror the mother's coldness ("Black Pedagogy"). It must be a sanctuary that reconstructs the child's shattered self-image through individual, appreciative resonance.
4. **Breaking the Dyad:** Protection works best when a third, stable person (father, grandparent, mentor) breaks the destructive mother-child dyad and provides the resonance the mother refuses.

Global Comparison: Processing vs. Prevention

In **Australia**, the country is a world leader in documentation (Royal Commission), yet even there, the depth-psychology of the "Cold Mother" is rarely addressed in current frameworks. In **Norway**, the high state involvement through *Barnevernet* often replaces "Cold Mothers" with "Cool Institutions" instead of working on the underlying projection. In **Germany and Austria**, processing is advanced via compensation funds, but current youth welfare offices remain reactive and overwhelmed, acting only when physical neglect is visible while lacking depth-psychological training. In the **USA**, the system is fragmented; while excellent trauma therapy exists, access is income-dependent and focused primarily on immediate physical safety.

Terminology & Definitions

- **Dustbin Children (Mülleimer-Kinder):** A term for children who serve as psychological "containers" for the unwanted, negative emotions (shame, guilt, hate) of their parents.
- **Bourgeois Camouflage:** The use of wealth, social status, and a "perfect" external facade to hide emotional neglect and psychological abuse within the family.
- **Black Pedagogy:** Highly repressive, authoritarian child-rearing methods based on breaking the child's will.

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The Mother's "Trash Can": How Projective Identification Drives Children into Institutions

My Analysis: The Universal Psychodynamics of Institutionalization

I have realized: Whether in Austria, Germany, Australia, or other countries—the psychic structure of the "cold mother" and projective identification are the psychological bridges that pave the way from the family to institutional traumatization.

- **Universal Psychodynamics:** I find that the mother's inability to see the child as an independent subject, but rather to use them as a container for her own shame, fears of failure, or transgenerational trauma, is psychologically universal.
- **The Global Mechanism:** I observe that the mother projects her own "bad" part (her feeling of unworthiness) onto the child. To maintain this projection and protect herself, the child must be removed. For me, the institution (children's home) thus becomes the physical place where the mother's psychic rejection is materialized.

I emphasize that these mechanisms are not bound to hunger or poverty, although these factors acted as catalysts in the post-war era.

The Post-War Era: Poverty as an Amplifier I have analyzed that in the post-war era (and the subsequent decades in which Stangl, Volek, Oberhauser, and Gamble grew up), two factors converged:

- **Psychic Traumatization:** A generation of parents was traumatized by war, flight, and their own neglect.
- **Material Need:** Hunger and poverty made it harder to provide emotional affection, as survival was the priority. I see that the institution was often used as a necessary escape from material overload, but was experienced psychologically as "deportation."

Today: Psychic Coldness Instead of Material Need I find that the mechanisms are just as active today, but differently packaged. The "cold mother" of today may not suffer from hunger, but from:

- **Transgenerational Trauma:** Unresolved childhood traumas of their own are passed on.
- **Narcissistic Disorders:** The child is seen as an extension of the mother's own self-image and is rejected upon "failure."
- **Overload due to Performance Pressure:** Emotional unavailability due to focus on career or social masquerade.

I know that projective identification—using the child as a "container" for one's own shame or hate—works just as well in modern society as it did back then. The difference for me often lies only in the fact that today, the child may no longer land in a state-run home, but is traumatized in psychiatric facilities, foster families, or through psychic violence within the family.

Psychic Suffering is Timeless I am convinced that projective identification and psychic non-resonance (the mother's coldness) cause the exact same extent of inner destruction in a child today as they did back then. The feeling of not being loved, of being a container for the mother's hate, and of being disposed of as a "bad object" is timeless for me. A child today suffers from the same spiritual distress as a child in the 1950s.

Differences in Framework Conditions Nevertheless, I recognize differences in the structure of violence:

- **Physical Brutality and Deprivation:** In the post-war era, physical violence, hunger, and the total deprivation of rights in institutions were often more systemic and brutal. Survival was physically endangered.
- **Social Control and Tabooing:** Back then, there were hardly any control mechanisms. Society's silence was almost absolute. Today, there are laws, youth welfare offices, and a higher sensitivity, even if abuse still happens.

My Conclusion on the Current Situation I come to the conclusion that the quality of the psychic trauma is not less severe, but the form of execution has changed. The "cold mother" of today may work more subtly, but the effects on the child's identity are just as devastating.

I assert that the institutional survivor story is not a closed historical episode that was resolved by apologies. It repeats itself, transformed and adapted to the modern era. I find that society does not learn because it looks at the wrong factors. It looks at the institution (the building, the rules), while the actual doom—maternal projective identification and coldness—continues to work unnoticed within families.

The Timeless Trauma of the "Cold Mother"

I see that reports of severe abuse in children's homes of the post-war era—as documented impressively by Franz Josef Stangl or Robert Volek—are often dismissed by society as a dark chapter of the past. People take comfort in the belief that "something like this doesn't happen anymore." But for me, this assumption is a fatal error. The story of institutionalized children is not over; it repeats itself, only its guise has changed.

The Psychological Motor: The "Cold Mother" I explain that the true trailblazer of institutional violence was never just the brutal home director, but the mother's inability for psychic resonance. Whether in the Austria of the 1950s or today: When a mother is unable to see her child as an independent subject, the disaster begins. Through the mechanism of projective identification, the child becomes the trash can for the mother's own shame, her own hate, or her own unprocessed traumas.

Why Society Does Not Learn I observe that society looks away because it misses the cause. It tries to combat the symptoms—juvenile delinquency, mental illnesses, homelessness—through better homes or therapeutic measures. Yet as long as the psychodynamic foundation—the destructive coldness and projection within the family—is not addressed, the child remains a victim. Through the cases of Stangl and others, I show that society only learns when it musters the courage to question the "bourgeois camouflage" and the supposed sanctity of the mother-child relationship.

The Future of Trauma I see that children today may land less frequently in the notorious large-scale homes of the past. Instead, they are traumatized in "modern" care facilities,

through complex psychic violence in intact families, or in a bureaucracy of looking away. The suffering is no less severe; it is just more subtle and thus harder to prove.

I am certain: The dynamic of projective identification is a transgenerational cycle that continues indefinitely without conscious interruption. I repeat: Society does not learn because it looks at symptoms, not at the cause in the unconscious.

The Endless Cycle of "Trash Can Children"

It is for me a agonizing thought: The story of institutionalized children does not end with the survivors of yesterday. It continues as long as the psychodynamic roots are not understood. When a child is not loved, but serves as a container—a "trash can"—for the hate, shame, or self-loathing of a traumatized mother, the foundation is laid for a life in institutional or psychic violence.

The Timeless Pattern I know that the mechanism of projective identification is timeless. It worked in the poverty of the post-war era, when "cool" mothers sent their children to homes due to social stigmatization (such as illegitimate births). It works today in a world of prosperity, disguised behind "bourgeois camouflage," where emotional coldness is hidden behind a perfect facade.

Why Society Looks Away I find that society does not learn from the cases of Franz Josef Stangl, Robert Volek, or Helmut Oberhauser because it looks for simple answers. It is believed that better laws, more modern homes, or therapeutic interventions will solve the problem. In doing so, it is ignored that the trauma begins in the womb of the unconscious. The "cold mother" is not simply distant; she is psychically incapable of resonance and rids herself of her own inner demons by projecting them onto the child.

I make it clear: For me, processing this history is not a look back, but a fight for the future of the next generation. Without recognizing this psychodynamic truth, society will continue to produce children who function as "trash cans"—again and again.

How to Protect Children: My Protective Measures

I recognize: When abuse begins in the mother's unconscious (through projective identification), protecting the child is extremely difficult, as the outside world—and often the child themselves—does not immediately recognize the pain as such.

Here are my approaches to how protection could look, based on the psychodynamic insight that not the child, but the **relationship** is the problem:

1. Radical Early Diagnosis and Intervention (Relationship Diagnostics)

- a. **Away from the Symptom, Towards the Interaction:** I demand that youth welfare offices and social services be trained not only to look at whether the child has enough to eat, but how the mother interacts with the child. Does she

show emotional coldness, rejection, or does she use the child for her own stabilization?

- b. **Early Psychological Support:** If a mother shows signs of PTSD or narcissistic traits, therapeutic support for the mother-child relationship must, for me, intervene immediately to stop the projection before the child must be institutionalized.

2. Decoupling Identity and Origin (Unmasking the Projection)

- a. **Education on the Mechanism:** I see the necessity for the child to learn early—through trained therapists—to understand: "What my mother is burdening me with in terms of feelings (hate, shame) does not belong to me. Those are her own feelings." For me, this is the core of unmasking projective identification.
- b. **Strengthening an Autonomous Ego:** I know that the child needs environments early on (kindergarten, school) that function as mirrors and give the child a positive, independent self-image, regardless of the "cold mother."

3. Changing the Institutional Approach (Safe Space instead of "Container")

- a. **The Institution as a Therapeutic Place:** I emphasize: If separation from the mother is inevitable, the home must not mirror the mother's coldness ("black pedagogy"), but must be a therapeutic safe space that actively works on dissolving the projective identifications.
- b. **Protection from "Identity Theft":** Institutions must, for me, honor the child's origin and help them build their own identity, rather than managing them as a "bad object."

4. Involvement of Fathers or Attachment Figures

- a. **Breaking the Dyad:** I know that protection works best when a third, stable person (father, grandparents, attachment figure) breaks the destructive dyad between "cold mother" and "trash can child" and gives the child the necessary resonance that the mother refuses.

Protective Measures Against Transgenerational Projective Identification

I analyze: The biographies of institutionalized children show that protecting the child does not start with physical violence in the home, but with the psychological early detection of maternal projective identification.

- **Therapeutic Intervention Dyad:** I demand therapeutic work that addresses not only the child, but the relationship between mother and child. The mother must be recognized and treated in her psychic distress (e.g., PTSD, narcissistic defense) in order not to continue abusing the child as a "container" for her own shame or hate.
- **Unmasking the Projection (Stopping "Identity Theft"):** I say: The child must be enabled early on to recognize the mother's "bad" attributions as foreign. Separating what the mother projects onto the child from who the child actually is, is the core of psychic protection.

- **Institutional Safe Space as a Resonance Space:** I determine: Should separation be necessary, the institution must act as a contrary mirror. It must not reproduce the mother's coldness, but must reconstruct the child's destroyed self-image through individual, appreciative resonance.

International Comparison: Where Does Society Stand?

I see: The reality is sobering. While historical processing (the recognition of past suffering) has made great progress in many countries, psychodynamic prevention (recognizing and stopping the "cold mother" and projective identification today) lags far behind. I find: Society tends to reduce the problem to matter and buildings, not to relationship and the unconscious.

1. International Processing vs. Prevention

- Australia:** I perceive that Australia is a world leader in processing. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has achieved an unprecedented level of documentation. Australia recognizes the transgenerational effects and invests heavily in counseling for survivors. I also see, however, that prevention (protection against current projection) is structurally well-positioned through the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, but is often not yet psychologically deep enough to address the mechanism of the "cold mother."
 - Norway:** I recognize a very strong, state-supported child protection system (Barnevernet). Norway is very quick to remove children from families where risk is suspected. I see, however, that the approach is more sociopedagogical than psychodynamic. Protection is provided, but the "cold mother" is often replaced by a "cool institution" instead of working on the projection.
- 2. The Situation in Europe (Germany, Austria, Spain, France)** I find that in these countries, the problem is often viewed through a bureaucratic lens:
- Germany & Austria:** The processing of the institutionalized child story is advanced (funds, compensation). Regarding current prevention, youth welfare offices are, for me, often overloaded and reactive. They act when symptoms (neglect, violence) become visible, but are hardly capable of diagnosing the subtle, psychic projection of a "cold mother" early on. There is a lack of psychodynamic training for personnel.
 - France:** I know France as a country with a strong social system, but also with a very medical-bureaucratic view on child protection. The psychological dimension is often heavily psychiatrized instead of being addressed through relationship therapy.
 - Spain:** I see Spain historically still at the beginning of the processing phase, as the time of the dictatorship has lingered for a long time. Institutions are often still traditionally structured, which hinders protection against projective identification.
- 3. The Special Case of the USA** I observe: In the USA, the system is extremely fragmented and result-oriented.

- a. There are excellent trauma-therapeutic approaches, but access often depends on income.
- b. The system is very strongly geared toward preventing immediate physical danger (often with the goal of quick reunification or adoption), but often neglects the long-term psychodynamic healing of the family structure.

My Conclusion

I find: There are hardly any countries that systematically and specifically work on the prevention of projective identification.

I mean this absolutely: **My work is far more than just processing the past. It is essential preventive work for the future.**

Here are the reasons why my project is crucial:

- **Making the "Invisible" Mechanism Visible:** Society knows physical violence, but it hardly understands the psychic dynamic of projective identification (the child as a trash can for maternal hate/shame). I name this mechanism. What is named can be fought.
- **Unmasking the "Bourgeois Camouflage":** I show that emotional coldness and destruction do not only occur in poor conditions, but also exist behind facades of wealth and status. I break the silence that protects these facades.
- **The Bridge to Prevention:** By proving that the "cold mother" is the trailblazer for the home, I show society where it must intervene to stop the suffering: not in building better homes, but in psychological support for mother-child relationships.

I know: My work provides the theoretical and biographical proof of why previous measures often fail and what must be done to end the cycle. Therefore, my project is a fight for the dignity of future children.

Robert Volek: When names are erased, the person disappears behind the suffering. The victim is degraded to a mere statistic, while the perpetrators were often protected for decades by their offices and networks. Anonymity protects the system and the perpetrators because the act is given no face. Without names, there is no true public witness.

- **Origin:** Robert Volek was born around **1952** in Vienna.

- **Institutional Background:** From birth, his life was defined by state placement. He was pushed from one home to the next until he reached adulthood. One of his stations was the notorious **Wilhelminenberg Children's Home** in Vienna.
- **Trauma & Processing:** For over two decades, he experienced humiliation, physical violence, and abuse. It was not until 2010—after nearly 50 years of silence—that he managed to open up to his wife and comprehensively process his experiences.
- **Activism:** He became a central figure in the "**Association of Former Institutionalized and Foster Children of Austria.**" His goal is to demand compensation and ensure that the crimes of the past are not forgotten.

Likes and Dislikes

Based on his public statements and activism, clear tendencies can be identified:

- **What he values:** Justice, sincerity, and solidarity among survivors. He often emphasizes the importance of speaking the truth to regain one's dignity. His family (especially his wife) plays a vital role in his healing process.
- **What he dislikes:** The political "will to forget." For example, he sharply criticized statements by politicians who suggested that the topic should "at some point be over." For him and other victims, the experience is a lifelong burden that cannot be ended by decree. He loathes anonymity and disappearing into the crowd when it comes to injustice.

Work & Residence

- **Professional Activity:** Today, he is primarily active as an **activist, author, and contemporary witness**. He uses social media (such as YouTube) to tell his story and give a voice to other victims. He works tirelessly on documenting the conditions in Viennese homes.
- **Residence:** He lives in **Vienna**, the place where the majority of his institutional career occurred.

Case Study: Robert Volek – The Search for Lost Truth

- **The Moment of Breakthrough:** In 2010, after nearly 50 years of silence, Volek opened up to his wife. This private confession was the starting signal for one of the most important public voices in the Austrian care-leaver movement.

- **The File Gap as a System:** Volek noted that his official institutional file ("The File") was heavily sanitized. Missing protocols regarding abuse and hospital stays are not coincidences but evidence of systematic cover-ups by the City of Vienna.
- **Victim Number 29:** He was one of the first pioneers at the **White Ring** (victim support organization). The sum of **25,000 euros** marks a painful contrast between 21 years of suffering and the state's purely symbolic gesture.
- **The Refusal of Reconciliation:** Volek's quote regarding an apology ("It always takes two...") is a key moment:

It was only in 2010 that Robert Volek could tell his wife what his first 21 years had truly been like. Together, they wept over his cruel fate, which saw the boy born into a home in Vienna and pushed from one institution to the next until he reached adulthood. During this time, he was humiliated, beaten, and abused in many ways. When he began writing down his story, he still found no end after 40 pages. Gaps, doubts, questions: hospital stays, complaints about educators, and police protocols are missing from his file. Volek was one of the first to make his story public. He approached the White Ring as Victim Number 29 and was awarded 25,000 euros for the time he grew up in various homes of the City of Vienna—a gesture, not compensation. The thought that those politically responsible knew about the conditions in the homes decades ago makes him sick. A quick apology is not enough for him. "It always takes two: someone to voice it and someone to accept it." People simply remained silent for too long.

Family Origin and Uprooting

- **Status from Birth:** Robert Volek was **not** a total orphan in the biological sense from birth, but he was a "**social orphan.**" He was sent directly to a Viennese infant home. This means he practically never knew a life outside of institutions.
- **The Mother:** His mother was present, but she could not or was not allowed to exercise custody. In his accounts, Volek describes that contact with his mother was extremely sparse. A particularly traumatic detail of his biography is that he saw his mother again very late—and the encounter did not bring the hoped-for rescue, as the alienation caused by years of institutionalization was already too deep.
- **The Father:** Almost nothing is publicly known about his biological father. In the logic of youth welfare at that time, fathers were often not recorded in the files at all or only played a bureaucratic role as "maintenance debtors," not an emotional one.

- **Siblings:** Robert Volek grew up without the knowledge of a protective sibling community. In the homes of the City of Vienna, siblings were often intentionally **separated** to prevent the formation of loyal groups and to keep the children isolated and malleable for the staff.

Publication Details: Robert Volek

- **Title:** *Gehasster Sohn – Geliebter Zögling: Weißt ´ eh warum?* (Hated Son – Beloved Pupil: You Know Why, Don't You?)
- **Author:** Robert Volek
- **Focus:** The book is the result of the processing he began in 2010. It documents his path from "system child" to activist and breaks the silence on the conditions in Viennese homes. The subtitle refers to the often rhetorical, humiliating questions asked by educators.

Relationship with the Mother

1. **Early Separation and "Estrangement":** As an infant, Robert Volek was separated from his mother. Since he spent his entire childhood and youth in homes, there was no natural bond. The mother remained an abstract figure—someone he knew existed but who offered no protection.
2. **Rejection as a "Hated Son":** The title of his book strongly indicates that the relationship was marked by rejection. He describes feeling unwanted by his mother. This fundamental rejection was the first trauma, occurring even before the institutional system traumatized him further.
3. **Late Reunion:** Later encounters were tragic. Volek describes that no emotional bond could be formed. The years of institutional upbringing had created a chasm that could no longer be bridged. He sought answers to the "Why," but often received only coldness or silence.
4. **Role of the Mother in the System:** At the time, homes often actively worked to undermine bonds with parents by portraying them as "bad" or "incapable." In Volek's case, the mother apparently left him to the system, which reinforced his feeling of absolute vulnerability.

Terminology & Definitions

- **Social Orphan (Sozialwaise):** Children whose parents are still alive but who grow up in care homes due to poverty, overwhelming circumstances, or state intervention.
- **System Child (Systemkind):** A term for children who spend their entire developmental years within state-run institutions, often losing any connection to a private family life.
- **White Ring (Weißer Ring):** A victim support organization in Austria and Germany that assists victims of crime and violence.

List of Sources

1. **Volek, R. (2010/2011):** *Gehasster Sohn – Geliebter Zögling: Weißt ´ eh warum?*
2. **ORF / Vienna City Archives (2010–2016):** Interviews and documentation regarding the Wilhelminenberg scandal.
3. **Association of Former Institutionalized and Foster Children of Austria:** Official records and witness statements.
4. **Robert Volek YouTube Channel:** Personal video documentation and testimonies.

Alexander Markus Homes: From "Care Child" to Expert Against the Silence

Alexander Markus Homes (born 1959) is a German journalist and non-fiction author whose life's work is inextricably linked to the processing of institutional and familial violence. At a time when the subject of abuse in church institutions was still an absolute taboo, he was one of the first witnesses to go public. His path is an example of radical self-empowerment: he refused to remain in the assigned role of the victim and instead became an analytical expert on the dark sides of upbringing and narcissism.

The Shattered Childhood: The Trauma of Origin

Homes' biography does not begin with the horrors in the institution. The roots lie in a parental home that he describes as **cruel and loveless**. The basic trust essential for childhood development was destroyed in earliest childhood through massive physical and psychological abuse by his parents.

- **The Image of the Mother:** In his works, Homes breaks radically with the societal ideal of the "ever-loving mother." He describes his mother as a perpetrator who

abused her position of power. For him, she was not a protector, but the one who ultimately surrendered him to the next cycle of violence by deporting him to Catholic homes (such as the St. Vincenzstift in Aulhausen).

- **Social Environment:** The family lived in precarious conditions. At that time, placement in church "custodial institutions" was often the result of family overwhelming, poverty, and a lack of state control mechanisms.

Literary Resistance: "Prügel vom lieben Gott" (Beatings from the Dear Lord)

Instead of breaking under his experiences or sliding into destructiveness (addiction, delinquency), Homes channeled his ordeal into writing.

- **Publication as a Strike for Freedom:** In 1981, his institutional biography "*Prügel vom lieben Gott*" was published. It was one of the first documents to name the violence perpetrated by nuns and clergy without sugarcoating.
- **Confrontation with Power:** The Catholic Church responded at the time with massive legal intimidation attempts to prevent publication. Homes withstood this pressure. This fighting spirit marks his transition from a helpless child in care to a serious opponent of powerful institutions.

Expertise Instead of Victimhood: The Professional World

Homes successfully transitioned into a middle-class existence as a **journalist and author**. This was crucial for his resilience:

- **Intellectual Processing:** Through journalistic distance, he succeeded in objectively documenting complex psychological mechanisms—such as abuse by women ("*Von der Mutter missbraucht*" / Abused by the Mother).
- **Social Integration:** He built his network not on pity, but on professional solidarity with other survivors and the shared goal of enlightenment.

The Institutions (Places of Placement)

Homes spent his childhood and youth in several Catholic facilities. The most prominent is:

- **St. Vincenzstift in Aulhausen (Rüdesheim am Rhein):** This facility plays a central role in his reports. At the time, it was run by the **Poor Handmaids of**

Jesus Christ (Dernbacher Sisters). He describes the home as a "custodial institution" where individuality was systematically broken.

Punishment and Physical Torment

In his debut work, Homes documents a repertoire of punitive measures aimed at breaking the will of the children:

- **Systematic Beatings:** Blows with sticks, carpet beaters, or bare hands were commonplace, often religiously legitimized as "cleansing from sin."
- **Forced Feeding and Deprivation:** Children were forced to eat their own vomit or were given insufficient food for days as punishment.
- **Humiliating Rituals:** Public exposure before the group, kneeling for hours on hard floors, or remaining in painful positions.
- **Imprisonment:** Isolation in dark rooms or cellars as a means of discipline.

Psychological Torment and Sexual Violence

Alongside physical violence, Homes describes an atmosphere of total surveillance:

- **Sexual Abuse:** Homes addresses sexual violence by clergy and supervisors. Particularly cruel was the feeling of being at the mercy of individuals who were officially regarded as moral authorities.
- **Religious Abuse:** The fear of "eternal damnation" was specifically weaponized. God was presented not as a loving father, but as a punishing judge who sees every minor transgression.

The Fears of the Child

Homes describes a state of permanent existential fear that accompanied him into adulthood:

- **Fear of Arbitrariness:** Since punishments were often unpredictable, the children developed **hyper-vigilance** to recognize impending danger early.
- **Fear of Discovery:** The fear that one's own thoughts or minor "sins" would be discovered, fueled by religious education.
- **Fear of Being Forgotten:** The traumatic feeling that no one knows what is happening behind the walls and that there is no rescue.

Decades of Engagement and Access to Records

- **Long-term Commitment:** Having published his first book in 1981, he is a pioneer of institutional processing in Germany. His work spans from early literary witness to his current role as an expert.
- **Access to Files:** In his publications, he addresses the significance of documentation. He often worked with the meager remains of files left in church archives. However, he frequently describes the problem of files being incomplete, sanitized, or "disappeared" entirely to protect the institutions.

Fates of Fellow Residents

- **Knowledge of Others:** Homes has collected numerous reports from other former children in care. He often acted as a voice for those who could not find the strength or language to report their experiences themselves.
- **Early Deaths:** Reports from those years repeatedly mention tragic outcomes.
 - **Suicides:** Many former residents died early by suicide or from the consequences of addiction resulting from trauma.
 - **Consequences of Violence:** There are documented reports (including from the Hessian State Parliament) where witnesses describe children dying after physical abuse in the home—deaths that were often masked as "pneumonia" or "heart failure." Homes documents the destruction of life paths that frequently led to early death.

Terminology & Definitions

- **Resilience:** The mental strength to survive crises or trauma without permanent impairment and to emerge stronger.
- **Basic Trust (Urvertrauen):** The feeling of security and safety acquired in early childhood through positive experiences with caregivers.
- **Institutional Abuse:** Physical, psychological, or sexual violence committed within organizations (homes, schools, churches) by their structures or employees.
- **Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ:** A Catholic women's order that operated many children's homes and hospitals in the post-war era.
- **Hyper-vigilance:** A state of increased alertness often found in traumatized individuals; being constantly on guard against potential threats.
- **Black Pedagogy:** An educational style based on repression, intimidation, and violence to break the child's will.

List of Sources

1. **Homes, Alexander Markus:** *Prügel vom lieben Gott. Eine Heimbiographie.* (1981).
2. **Homes, Alexander Markus:** *Heimerziehung. Lebenshilfe oder Beugehaft?* (2006).
3. **Hessian State Parliament (Hessischer Landtag):** Report on the unjust fate of children in care in the 50s and 60s.
4. **Alibri Verlag:** Author profile and background information on Alexander Markus Homes.

Comprehensive Bibliography: Deep Psychological, Sociological, and Historical Foundations

This bibliography comprises the essential works and authors that define the analysis of institutional trauma, maternal projection, and the systemic mechanisms of child rejection. These sources provide the academic and forensic basis for understanding the "Cold Mother" and the "Infinite Cycle of the Dustbin Child."

I. Deep Psychological & Psychoanalytic Foundations

Focus: Projective Identification, Narcissism, and the Mother-Child Dyad

- **Bion, Wilfred R. (1962):** *Learning from Experience.* London: Heinemann. (Essential for the concept of the "**Container and the Contained**").
- **Klein, Melanie (1946):** *Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms.* (The foundational text on **Projective Identification**).
- **Miller, Alice (1979):** *The Drama of the Gifted Child* (Original: *Das Drama des begabten Kindes*). (Analysis of how children sacrifice their true self to satisfy the narcissistic needs of the mother).
- **Winnicott, Donald W. (1971):** *Playing and Reality.* (Explores the "Mirror Role of Mother and Family in Child Development").
- **Bowlby, John (1969):** *Attachment and Loss.* Vol. 1: Attachment. (Foundational for understanding the trauma of early separation).
- **Kohut, Heinz (1971):** *The Analysis of the Self.* (Fundamental to the study of narcissistic personality disorders and their impact on progeny).

II. Sociological & Educational Foundations

Focus: Black Pedagogy, Institutional Power, and Social Stigma

- **Foucault, Michel (1975):** *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. (Analysis of how institutions monitor, categorize, and "break" individuals).
- **Goffman, Erving (1961):** *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. (Introduction of the term "**Total Institution**").
- **Rutschky, Katharina (1977):** *Black Pedagogy* (Original: *Schwarze Pädagogik*). (The definitive historical analysis of repressive education).
- **Bourdieu, Pierre (1977):** *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. (On the concept of "**Bourgeois Camouflage**" and the symbolic violence of social structures).

III. Historical Foundations & Care-Leaver Accounts

Focus: Documentation of Systematic Abuse and Transgenerational Trauma

- **Boswell, John (1988):** *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance*. (Historical evidence of the timeless nature of child abandonment).
- **Homes, Alexander Markus (1981):** *Beatings from the Dear Lord* (Original: *Prügel vom lieben Gott*). (Pioneering account of Catholic institutional abuse).
- **Sissay, Lemn (2019):** *My Name Is Why*. (A modern masterpiece on the systematic theft of identity in the British care system).
- **Innerhofer, Franz (1974):** *Beautiful Days* (Original: *Schöne Tage*). (Literary documentation of the exploitation of "Verdingkinder" / foster children).
- **Volek, Robert (2011):** *Hated Son – Beloved Pupil* (Original: *Gehasster Sohn – Geliebter Zögling*). (Forensic account of the "Social Orphan" and the sanitized files of Vienna).

IV. Global Commissions & Forensic Reports

Focus: International Acknowledgement of Institutional Crimes

- **Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017):** *Final Report (Australia)*. (The most comprehensive global documentation of institutional failure).

- **Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA, 2022):** *Final Report (United Kingdom)*.
- **Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (HIA, 2017):** *The Hart Report (Northern Ireland)*.

Terminology & Definitions

- **Transgenerational Trauma:** The transfer of the psychological effects of trauma from the original victims to subsequent generations.
- **Total Institution:** An isolated, enclosed social system whose primary purpose is to control most aspects of its participants' lives.
- **Projective Identification:** A defense mechanism in which an individual projects qualities that are unacceptable to the self onto another, who then begins to behave in accord with those projections.

Biography: Peter Siegfried Krug

Peter Siegfried Krug was born on November 23, 1966, in the world-famous city of **Salzburg, Austria**. From the moment of his birth, his life was defined by the experience of being an "abandoned child," a fate that led him through a long journey of various children's homes and foster placements.

Despite the severe systemic and familial challenges of his youth, he has developed a multifaceted and resilient persona:

- **FIDE Master of Chess Composition:** He has achieved international recognition as a master in the highly specialized and intellectual field of chess composition, demonstrating extraordinary analytical depth and creativity.
- **Solo Climber:** In his physical life, he pursues **free solo climbing** (climbing without ropes or safety aids), a discipline that demands absolute focus, mental strength, and a direct confrontation with existential limits.
- **Documentarian and Activist:** Alongside these pursuits, he is deeply committed to the **analytical processing of his traumatic childhood**. He utilizes his personal history as a forensic lens to examine the deep psychological and sociological mechanisms—such as projective identification and the "Cold Mother" archetype—that lead to the institutionalization of children.

His work serves as a bridge between personal testimony and scientific analysis, aiming to break the transgenerational cycle of silence and to secure the dignity of future generations.