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child porno

*Many in cyber-porn ring are those supposed to guide and protect.*

# Breaking trust of children

By Claude Lewis

The list is utterly astonishing, not only for its length but also for the wide variety of professional leadership among those who became a part of it.

Indeed, the nationwide Internet child-pornography ring under investigation by the FBI and other authorities is fascinating in its depravity because few if any of the victims are old enough to smoke, drive, drink or vote.

"It is clear that a new marketplace for child pornography has emerged from the dark corners of cyberspace," said U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft at a press conference announcing the arrests of more than 90 people associated with the ring.

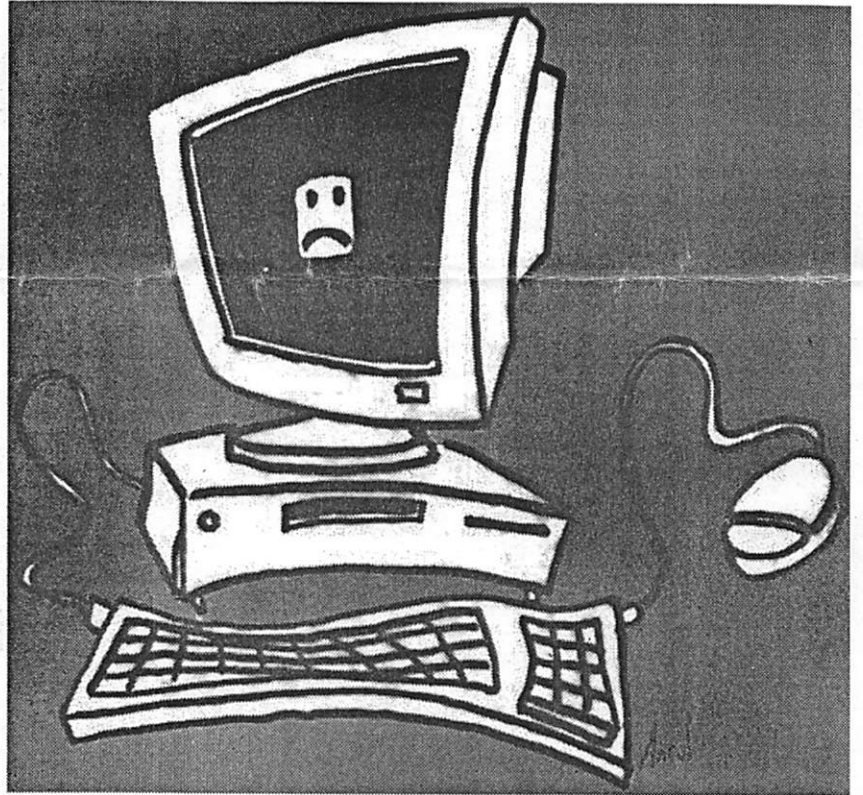
For my money, intervening in, smashing, and preventing such porno rings is one of the most urgent and legitimate things our government can do.

Why? Because among the participants in the ring are adults in the very walks of life often entrusted with the guidance and protection of children: two Roman Catholic priests (at least six other religious leaders are suspected, according to a spokesman for the FBI); at least one police officer; other law enforcement professionals; a school teacher and a teacher's assistant; a school bus driver, an athletic coach, a nurse, baby-sitters and others. At least one woman was arrested, despite the popular notion that women are seldom involved in sexual abuse of children.

A child photographer and three other Philadelphians have been accused. The FBI has not released the names of any of the suspects, but said that other arrests will be made. A respiration therapist in Little Rock, Ark., committed suicide after investigators identified him.

Some of those charged in the porno ring are parents. The FBI said 27 of those arrested admitted involvement in molesting at least 40 children.

FBI director Robert S. Mueller 3d said all 56 FBI field offices and numerous local law enforcement units were taking part in "Operation Candyman," which began with arrests in Houston in January 2001. More than 10,000 computer addresses have been associated with the Candyman



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operation, including 2,400 outside the United States.

What is so frightening about child-porno rings is that children sometimes become victims at what is perhaps the most fragile time in their lives, the precise juncture at which they are learning to trust. Some experts suggest that the effects on children can last a lifetime.

## *Priests, teachers, police and athletic coaches should be children's role models.*

Elizabeth Berger is a highly respected Elkins Park psychiatrist for children and adolescents. Her book *Raising Children with Character* discusses trust, the role of parents, and the development of personal integrity.

When I asked about the possible consequences of childhood sexual abuse, she said the effects can be devastating: "I hate to be pessimistic in print, but full recovery from childhood sexual exploitation is the exception. Short-term

symptoms of aggression and self-destructiveness are very common, but even more dramatic are the characteristic long-term effects upon the developing personality — a damaged capacity for intimacy and for achieving one's full potential as a person.

"Sexual abuse," Berger said, "destroys a child's self-regard by reducing him or her to an inanimate object. The abuse is toxic to the child's identity and good faith in other people, especially if the abuser is known to the child and someone upon whom the child is dependent."

It's been said that children are 50 percent of America's population and 100 percent of its future. The federal government can accomplish no greater good than the protection of children from strangers with dark impulses. Sadly, in so doing we may be protecting the innocent from some of the very people they trust most.

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