

# Holy Hormones Journal

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## Criminalization of Girls is a Reproductive Justice Issue

April 29, 2015 by Leslie Carol Botha 2 Comments

**Holy Hormones Journal:** USA

Today ran a very disturbing article last week – the beginning of a series entitled: *Why is the juvenile justice system failing girls?*

The first sentence made my jaw drop. The FBI reported that in 2013, over 250,000 girls were picked up and jailed. Say what?



(Photo: 2001 USA TODAY photo)

The interviewer goes on to ask: “Why are we locking up girls who have been abused in a detention center that treats them like criminalized males?”

Women's eNews posted this article last week – and I could not help relate the two. Ms Igbowke – brings attention to the issue of a young

girl's body changing at an earlier and earlier age – before she is psychologically prepared or emotionally capable of knowing and understanding those changes. Not only can this lead to risky behavior on her part – but it also leaves her vulnerable and to male advances – which she is not mature enough to handle either. How does a 12 year old begin to say 'no' to a man in his teens, twenties – her father or her uncle? We all know that girls are more likely to be abused by someone they know. Perhaps the intrigue for men is that the younger the girl – the more likely she will be too afraid to say anything.

Not only has her body betrayed her – men she had trusted betrayed her and now the system instead of saving her is locking her up in a facility – that treats her like boys – is also betraying her. 250,000 girls whose lives were ruined last year. Many of course, abused or who came from poverty and who were involved with alcohol or drugs. Many who were running away from their abusers. But then there are the girls from 'nice' homes who went to the male to meet a boy – and disappeared. Perhaps into sex trafficking. I was told that if a girl in LA disappeared that if she was not found in 72 hours she would probably be on a plane to be sold as a sex slave in another country – never to be seen again.

A 14 year old girl in NY made the news last week – she was last seen her family's home at 9:30 pm.

### **An Ipswich teenage girl has been reported missing to police.**

Teegan Kirby, 14, was last seen at her home address in Foxhall Road at around 9.30pm last night and has not been seen since.

Police have issued a photograph of her and have asked for help in finding her.

She is described as white, around 5ft 1ins tall with long curly, brown hair. When she was last seen she was wearing a blue sweatshirt, jeans and trainers.

Anyone who has seen her or has any information about where she might be are asked to call police on 101.

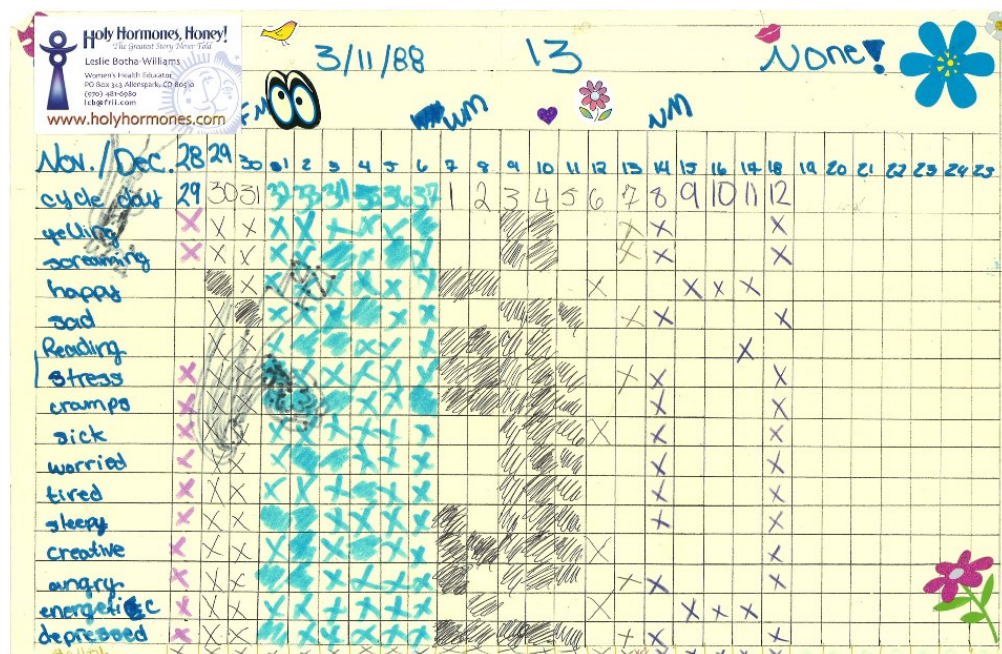
I did a quick search to see if she had been found – and the good news is yes.

But the news is not so good for many other families. I know of a story of young girl who was released early from a program designed for girls with behavioral problems. Her father was not ready to have her

come home yet. But she did – they argued and she bolted to be picked up with in a few blocks buy a pimp and who then spent the next 3 weeks working in a massage parlor during the day and at night held captive in a basement. She had the guts and the where with all to get access to a cell phone and called police. But her life is destroyed. She is in and out of jail and now in another home. And she is not even 18 years old.

The young girl from Ipswich and this young girl who was kidnapped in her home town did not come from impoverished lives. How many other girls get into trouble who come from good homes?

## Why does a girl run?



In my work with at-risk adolescent girls, I have found that the lack of relevant education about body literacy and hormone effects on behaviors is the bottom line issue. Not only are girls not mature enough to deal with their body changes – they are not taught that their hormones take a nose dive right before their periods – making them more prone to hormone rage – which may lead to running away from home. They are not told that drugs and alcohol will affect them differently during the paramenstrum – that the combined drop of hormone and immunity – can make them more vulnerable to the effects of these substances and make them even more vulnerable – and act out even more outrageously.

When I worked with these girls and had them chart their behaviors with the hormone changes in their menstrual cycle – they became empowered! They could see how they fell down the rabbit hole once a month and how that affected their lives. In fact, over 90% of the girls

I have worked with (ages 13 to 17) ended up in jail and had their periods. They acted out while they were premenstrual.

When they were educated and understood about their hormones and their behaviors, when they realized that falling down the rabbit hole was a phase and not a death sentence; when they were taught that they had more value than what lies between their legs, the girls became empowered. And in control. Even more importantly, they learned they could trust themselves.

250,000 girls? Are you serious?

Is anyone else as outraged as I am?

Sigh – I thought I was finished with this post – and then I saw an article about a young girl who took her life due to her mental illness. Such a sad story. The title caught my eye “**The ‘Demons’ Got My Daughter**”

Bet my bottom dollar that this young woman was premenstrual when she ended her life as well.

We need to demand reproductive justice for these innocent girls before we lose them to demons, or they become criminalized.

## Early Period is Red Flag for Teen Girls' Health

By Sharon Igbokwe

Teen Voices for Women's eNews

Thursday, April 23, 2015

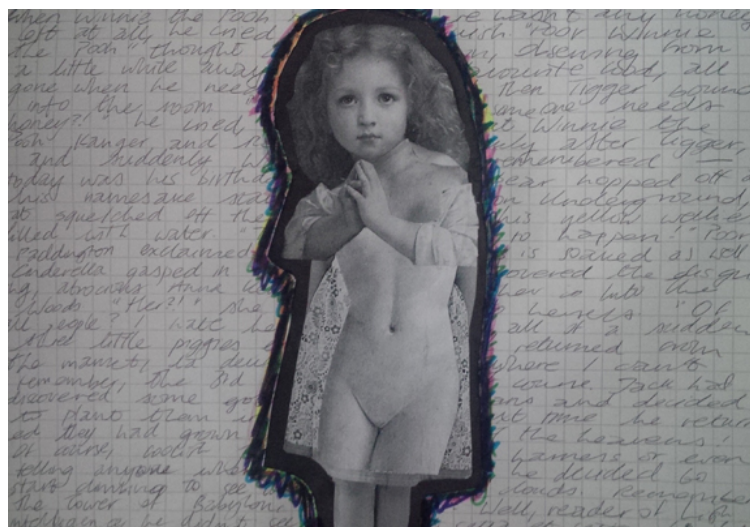
*The average age of puberty in the U.K., and other parts of the world, is younger than it was 60 years ago. This can be a problem for girls when precocious puberty leads to emotional and behavioral difficulties.*

BERKSHIRE, England (WOMENSENEWS)—Janice Friar's teacher didn't believe her when Friar told her she'd just got her period.

“She looked at me doubtfully, probably thinking I was mistaking vaginal discharge for period blood and was just desperate to prove I



was a grown-up, the way typical kids do,” Friar said thoughtfully in a phone interview. “I can’t say I blame her. I bet she was wondering how you can start your period before you even leave primary school.”



Friar was 9 years old the day she “saw blood in my pants and just freaked out” at her school in Bristol, England. Now 16, Friar embodies a trend in Britain and many parts of the world of earlier onset of puberty. Today, the average age of puberty in the United Kingdom is 10.5 years old, down from 13.1 in 1950, according to **Plymouth University**. Puberty onset ages are similar in the U.S. for white girls but among black teens the average age for breast budding is more than a year and half earlier, according to a 2010 study published by the **American Academy of Pediatrics**.

The red flags—growths spurts, pubic hair and acne before a girl has entered secondary school — can cause social difficulties and estrangement from peers. When a girl looks like she is growing up she often loses friends and drops activities appropriate to her real age and gains admission to an older social sphere.

“I grew up faster both physically and mentally,” said Friar. “I didn’t want to be stuck playing hopscotch and hide-and-seek with girls my age. So I introduced myself to new things, things I considered more interesting,” she said, lighting a cigarette as she stood by the school bike sheds. “Whilst all the kids were looking for signs they were grown-ups, I had what I considered real evidence.”

## Behavioral Difficulties

Louise Greenspan and Julianna Deardorff are authors of “**The New Puberty: How to Handle Early Development in Today’s Girls**.” In the book they write that emotional and behavioral difficulties often come with precocious puberty. “Girls with early puberty experience higher rates of depression and anxiety,” they write. “They also exhibit increased rates of smoking and delinquent behavior, as well as earlier sexual experiences.”