

Assignment on the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child
Mary Niall Mitchell
Department of History
University of New Orleans

In this class we have discussed Carolyn Steedman's theoretical distinction between "the child" (the object of adult projection about the political future) and "children" (individuals who experience childhood). With this framework in mind, read the text of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child and a 1999 special report from the National Center for Home Education opposing U.S. ratification of the Convention: "The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: The Most Dangerous Attack on Parents' Rights In the History of the United States," by Christopher J. Klicka and William A. Estrada. (<http://www.hslda.org/docs/nche/000000/00000020.asp>). Try to go beyond issues of partisanship to consider the arguments for and against the U.N. Convention. With what meanings does "the child" seem to be invested in each document? What role might the child play as a figure in global, international, and national politics in the late twentieth century? And how do we, as scholars, reconcile that role with the experiences of children themselves? Please use specific examples from the texts to support your answers to these questions.