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## TEXAS COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER STANDARDS AND EDUCATION

COMMENT ON OUR PROFESSION

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### Out of the Mouth of a Child

How do we come to believe what we believe? Why do I follow the religion I do? Why am I a Republican or a Democrat? Why do I believe in hard work and a full day's work for a full day's pay?

When I ponder these things, I realize that what we believe is simply a result of a multitude of influencers in our lives. Our nurturing comes from our families, our schools, our religion, our friends, the media, and many other sources. We're a product of all these things, and we have been influenced by these forces in society.

Some time ago, I heard a dialogue between a gentle man and a young child. I say a "gentle man" because he had a soft and gentle voice. The dialogue went something like this.

**Gentle man:** You know a whole lot of words. You talk real well for a little girl.

**Child:** Yes, I like to talk to people and I read lots of books.

**Gentle man:** Will you talk with me? I have some questions I'd like to ask you.

**Child:** You can ask me anything.

**Gentle man:** Have you ever heard of the word "hatred?" Do you know what hate is?

**Child:** No... I don't think so.

**Gentle man:** Do you know the word "bigotry?" Do you know anybody who is a bigot?

**Child:** No. But I'm getting bigger every day.

**Gentle man:** Have you heard the word "prejudice"?

**Child:** Yes.

**Gentle man:** Do you know what prejudice is?

**Child:** Yes, I drink prejudice out of a box. It is red. I use a straw that I put in the top of the box.

**Gentle man:** Do you know how to discriminate?

**Child:** What is that? Dis-Crim-nate?

**Gentle man:** It is a hard word, I know. Have you heard about the different races of people?

**Child:** What do you mean races?

**Gentle man:** People have different colored skin and they come from different parts of the world.

**Child:** I know about different colors of people skin. In Sunday school, I sing a song about that. Would you like to hear it?

**Gentle man:** I'd like that very much.

**Child:** "Jesus loves the little children – all the children of the world. Red, and yellow, black, and white, they are precious in his sight. Jesus loves the little children of the worlds. Is that races?"

**Gentle man:** Yes that is races. Jesus loves all the children.

**Child:** Do you have more words?

**Gentle man:** Maybe we can talk more again some time.

**Child:** I'd like that – maybe someday I can learn all those word and things.

**Gentle man:** I hope that you learn them, but without the pain that sometimes come with them.

**Child:** I hope so too! Bye.

The dialogue went on and I only wish I had a tape of it. When I heard it, I couldn't stop thinking about it – like a song one can't get out of one's mind.

Today I think about how innocent little children fall victim to child abuse – 85% committed by relatives or acquaintances. I think about how young people start taking drugs – almost 100% offered by friends, and unfortunately, even relatives. I think about how children learn anger management skills and how to deal with failure and disappointment in socially acceptable manners. And lastly, I think about how people who batter significant others learn this in the cycle of violence.

Sometimes I wonder how our children learn. And most of all, I wonder about how they are robbed of their innocence.