

# Letters on “Criminalizing the victim—New York City: Children die in house fire, mother charged for being at work”

31 October 2003

*Below we post a selection of letters about Jamie Chapman’s October 28 article, “Criminalizing the victim—New York City: Children die in house fire, mother charged for being at work”*

Jamie,

This truly breaks my heart. Single parents, especially, have it very hard trying to make ends meet, find and pay for decent child care and try to keep a job. Moms are tortured between staying home and working and simply having to work to buy food, pay rent and clothe their kids. It’s so sad that Kim has to not only go through losing her children, but to be seen as a criminal in our society as if she set the fire herself. Moms don’t go to work at McDonald’s because they are cold-hearted, powerhouse professionals. She was doing her best and this unfortunate thing just happened.

You did a good job with this article and I sure feel for Kim, her children and others like them. I was a single mom until I recently re-married. My boys are now 18 and 21. We suffered our own traumas but survived. We still have a long road ahead of us dealing with the pain of those tough years. I can really relate to this mama and support her. It’s just so sad.

Sincerely,

CM

Minburn, Iowa

28 October 2003

There is a mentality that says, “Two children are dead, we have to charge someone,” as if that makes things better.

The ones that should be charged are the owner/owners of the building that illegally subdivided it and failed to conform to fire regulations in doing so and the city inspectors who failed to find or ignored the violations.

I grew up during the Depression. Parents had no choice but to leave their children alone if they could find work. It’s the same today. When something went wrong no one was put in jail for neglect nor were they punished by having high bail imposed knowing that it could not be paid.

This unfortunate woman has not only lost her children and most probably her job, but is in danger of losing her freedom. All because a district attorney wants to grab some headlines and show how tough he is with the poor, but not with the real estate interests and city inspectors who are primarily to blame for this tragedy.

RR

Orange Park, Florida

28 October 2003

Dear Jamie Chapman:

I just wanted to congratulate you regarding your excellent article on such an appalling topic.

DG

Tucson, Arizona

28 October 2003

Dear Editor,

If the deaths of these two children could somehow, somewhere affect the bottom line on corporate profits then I think that something might be done in the future to prevent it from happening again. Until then, we are disposable chattel.

PK

28 October 2003

The article on the Brooklyn woman who lost her children moved me incredibly. I cannot help but try to put myself in her shoes and feel the pain she will always feel from the moment she returned home to find her children dead. The system really pisses me off in

instances like this. The reason I am writing is that I would like to try and help in some way to get her out on bail. Do you know of any organizations that may be helping her raise the money she needs?

Sincerely,

AC

28 October 2003

*Reply from Jamie Chapman*

Dear AC,

Thank you for writing in with your reaction to my article on Kim Brathwaite. With the help of friends and family, she has gotten out on bail. As for helping out, I do not know of any funds that have been advertised publicly, but you can try to contact her lawyer, Douglas G. Rankin in Brooklyn.

Sincerely,

Jamie Chapman



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**