

**BOSCO Bengaluru**

**The First Courtroom: Families as the OG Defenders of Children’s Rights**

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**BOSCO Annual Essay Writing Competition 2024-25**

BOSCO National Research and Documentation (BNRD)

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When I was seven, my mom split a chocolate bar between my brother and me with the precision of a high-stakes courtroom judge. “Fairness matters,” she declared with the air of the supreme court judge delivering a landmark verdict. At the time, I thought it was about avoiding a sibling squabble, but now I see it for what it really was: my first real-life crash course in justice, equity, and the bedrock of human rights. Who knew a chocolate bar could double as Exhibit A in the grand courtroom of family life?

Families, as it turns out, are the true justice systems for kids. They’re the places where fairness, dignity, and rights aren’t just theoretical constructs—they’re daily realities (or, in some cases, daily battles). Every home is like a mini-supreme court, where parents act as lawmakers, enforcers, and sometimes executioners of justice. If you think about it, your first introduction to “rights” wasn’t in a civics class—it was when your mom said your brother had to share his fries because that’s how we treat people fairly in this house.

"Justice Begins at Home". Every family is a courtroom in its own right. There’s the Constitution—also known as “Because I said so”—that governs daily life. There’s the legislature (parents), the judiciary (also parents, conveniently), and the litigants (you and your siblings). Everything from screen time to chores is up for debate, and fairness is (hopefully) the goal. This is where kids learn the foundational principles of justice—not from textbooks, but from who gets the bigger piece of cake or the front seat in the car.

But here’s the kicker: families don’t always uphold the law. For every parent who advocates for their kid’s right to dream, there’s one who inadvertently—or intentionally—violates those rights. Let's take a boy I knew in school, who disappeared after eighth grade. His parents’ decided school wasn’t necessary because the family shop needed an extra set of hands. While I was stressing over math exams and crafting ambitious dreams about my future and planning strategies to compete with my future archnemesis (Bill Gates), He was stacking shelves and shelving his own aspirations. It was the first time I realized that families—those supposed havens of love and fairness—could sometimes be the very places where injustice thrives.

When families get it right, though, they’re unstoppable. Imagine a mom in a small Indian village standing up to societal pressures, refusing to let her daughter drop out of school to get married. Or a dad who tells his son it’s okay to pursue art instead of engineering, even if it means breaking generational expectations. These families are the unsung heroes of human rights, quietly dismantling outdated traditions and ensuring that justice starts at home.

But let’s not sugarcoat it—families are messy, chaotic, and occasionally infuriating. Justice in a family isn’t always elegant. It’s in the sibling fights that teach you about conflict resolution, the mom who says, “Life isn’t fair, deal with it,” which is both a life lesson and a cop-out, and the dad who insists on “no Wi-Fi after 10 p.m.” because he thinks it’s good for you. These moments may not look like grand acts of justice, but they’re where kids start learning how to navigate fairness, boundaries, and the art of negotiation.

Of course, not all families are flag-bearers of justice. Some are the very reason children’s rights get trampled. Millions of kids around the world live in homes where their rights to safety, education, and dignity are ignored or outright violated. Abuse, neglect, forced labour—it’s all happening behind closed doors, often at the hands of the very people who are supposed to protect them.

And the consequences are devastating. A child who grows up in a home where their voice isn’t heard, their dreams aren’t valued, or their basic needs aren’t met is left fighting an uphill battle. They enter the world ill-equipped to advocate for themselves because they’ve never experienced advocacy in the one place it should’ve been guaranteed.

"Don't cry over spilt milk." It's true, what we can do is wipe those tears and clean the floor and buy a new packet of milk. We can't undo mistakes. But we can make sure that they aren’t made twice. Just like that, families also hold the power to break cycles of injustice. I once read about a single mother in Kerala who worked two jobs to send her daughters to college. She faced criticism from neighbours, who thought she was wasting her resources, but she stood firm. Her daughters are now engineers, breaking barriers and stereotypes. That mom didn’t just raise kids—she raised trailblazers.

Families like hers are proof that even in the toughest circumstances, justice can prevail. It doesn’t take wealth or power to advocate for a child’s rights. It takes love, commitment, and the willingness to put a child’s needs above societal expectations.

Promoting children’s rights doesn’t always look like grand gestures. Sometimes, it’s as simple as teaching a child to say “no” and knowing you’ll back them up if someone doesn’t respect it. It’s ensuring they feel heard, even when they’re whining about something trivial. It’s standing up for them at those extremely gruelling and toxic PTM meetings, insisting on better resources, or refusing to let them give up on their dreams because someone said they weren’t good enough.

Families are the front-line defenders of children’s rights, and every little action counts. When parents choose to listen instead of dismissing, to support instead of belittling, and to fight instead of resigning, they’re not just raising kids—they’re raising citizens who understand the value of justice and dignity.

Looking back, my mom’s chocolate-splitting moment wasn’t just a snack-time decision; it was a ruling. It was her way of saying, “Fairness starts here, and I’ll make sure you both get your share.” Families are the first courtrooms we encounter in life. They’re where we learn to argue our case, stand up for our rights, and understand the power of advocacy.

But they’re also where we learn that justice isn’t always perfect. Sometimes, you’ll lose your argument or get stuck with the smaller slice. And that’s okay, too, because life isn’t about winning every case—it’s about learning how to keep fighting for what’s right.

At their best, families are the ultimate justice leagues for kids: imperfect, messy, and sometimes downright chaotic, but always fighting to make the world a little fairer. And while they may not always get it right, they have the power to give every child something priceless - a shot at a life where their rights aren’t just theoretical but a vivid, undeniable reality.

Because at the end of the day, every child deserves their slice of chocolate, their fair share of justice, and a family that fights for both.