

## 287 Granny, Baby, J&J, and Purdue Pharma

Baby's birth mother cannot care for Baby. Both are victims of the national opioid and prescription drug epidemic. Granny, too, is a victim. She holds her grandbaby protectively and perseveres out of necessity. She is exhausted.

These older female caregivers, in a pattern repeated since the dawn of working women, have taken on the responsibility of raising the next generation(s). In the past century, however, this special category of caretaker has faced new cultural challenges of multigenerational trauma and addiction. Now, the pandemic and its related health disparities have brought a new layer of stress to both Granny and Baby, thus far surviving by holding tight to one another.

The Grannies of America, safety nets for children left behind as casualties of parental addiction, are stretched thin. Granny may be working full-time or living off inadequate Social Security. She may have health problems of her own, and yet she answers the call of caretaking. She trudges along and does the best she can.

Our systems, including the FDA and corporations like Johnson & Johnson and Purdue Pharma, have failed these fragile families.

Together, four U.S. companies, AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health, McKesson, and Johnson & Johnson, will pay \$26 billion to settle claims made by communities ill-equipped to support victims of the epidemic. In addition, Purdue Pharma and the Sacklers have settled to the tune of \$6 billion, but this figure may reach \$10 billion in the next few years. These billions represent only a fraction of what their greed continues to cost American families. The settlements are already too late for Granny, for Baby, and for the missing generation between them.

*"The moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped."*

From a speech by former Vice President Hubert Humphrey, Nov.1, 1977