

TRANSITIONS

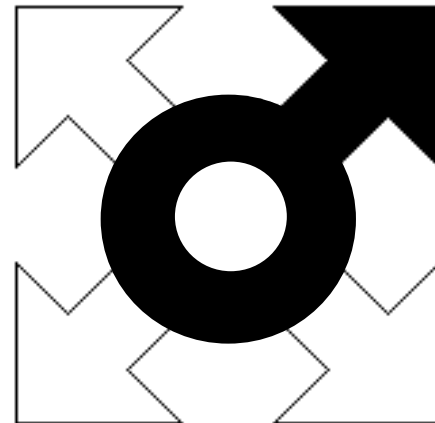
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Establishing a Presumption for Joint Physical Custody

By Maury D. Beaulier

In many states an institutional and statutory bias against joint parenting exists. This often places fathers at a disadvantage in divorce and custody cases since, all too often, judges and custody evaluators often presume that mothers are more appropriate custodial parents. This bias stems from our historical mores wherein mothers often played the role of custodians in intact families. This bias is slowly changing.

Recently, there has been a number of federal lawsuits filed seeking to have state custody statutes struck down as unconstitutional. Unfortunately, those lawsuits were largely poorly crafted and many have already been dismissed. There were some lawsuits that made a number of compelling arguments, however. In Texas, in a lawsuit filed by James Loose in Federal Court, Mr. Loose argued that parenting is a fundamental right under the Federal constitution. To support that contention, Mr. Loose cited a number of federal cases that refer to parenting in their dicta as an important and/or fundamental right. "Dicta", however, is language in a court order that is not specific to the issue being considered by the court.

If Mr. Loose succeeds in convincing the federal courts that parenting is a fundamental right, then under the law, before that right can be abridged by state statutes, state governments are required to: (1) demonstrate a compelling state interest that makes it necessary to pass a law restricting that right; AND (2) to do so in the least restrictive manner. Mr. Loose argues that such an application of the law must result in state custody statutes that start out with a presumption for joint legal and physical custody. That lawsuit is still pending.

These federal lawsuits in total, whether they are successful ultimately or whether they fail, have cast a bright spotlight on state statutory custody laws. Through the efforts of custody reform

groups and father's rights groups, this attention has been leveraged in lobbying efforts. Those efforts have produced numerous bills across the nation to reform

state custody laws and to provide a presumption for joint legal and physical custody.

One shining example is Minnesota. In Minnesota, a number of bills have been proposed in the current legislative session regarding this issue. The bills seek to establish a presumption in favor of joint physical child custody in marriage dissolution proceedings. This could make a presumption for joint physical custody a reality in a very short period of time. A presumption for joint physical custody simply means that both parents would be equally situated as a custodial parents and the court could deviate from an order requiring joint physical custody with the children by making express findings that a deviation is in the children's best interests.

Very few states currently have a presumption for joint physical custody. Wisconsin has a pseudo presumption which states that time should be maximized with each parent. This has been interpreted by many of Wisconsin's Circuit Court Judges as a presumption for joint physical custody. As a result, custody orders, particularly those entered in Wisconsin generally award joint physical placement to parents on a substantially equal schedule where the parents continue to reside in the same county or school district and where the parent's work schedules allow for equal parenting. This has had the corollary effect of reducing litigation on the custody/placement issues in that state. In fact, there have been many studies conducted nationwide that conclude that a presumption for joint physical custody may, in fact, have an impact on divorce proceedings themselves by reducing the divorce rate, presumably by reducing the financial incentive to divorce.

"This research discovers that children — especially daughters — benefit considerably when the parent they are not living with nevertheless does everyday things with the child, from 'shopping, reading, visiting, doing homework, watching TV together,' to 'spending holidays together.' The authors conclude that, for a school-age daughter, this 'doing everyday-type things together' with the parent she is not living with is the only predictor of psychological well-being. (K. Alison Clarke-Stewart and Craig Hayward, "Advantages of Father Custody and Contact for the Psychological Well-Being of School-Age Children," *Journal of*

Inside this Issue:

Editor's Comment	Page 2
Divorce Attorneys	Page 3
Book Reviews	Page 5
NCFM News	Page 8
Letters	Page 10

CUSTODY continues next page

Editor's Comment

Is it my imagination, or have there been a lot of conferences on masculinity recently? Harvard has had a series of them over the past couple months. I was lucky enough to be invited to a panel discussion there on March 21st.

The theme was "Reflections on Masculinity." Since the discussion was co-sponsored by the Black Men's Forum, however, much of the time was spent on race issues. I didn't partake of the race discussion, though. I spent most of my time giving counter-points to the members of the "pro-feminist men's movement" on the panel who were trying to say that there is no difference between men and women except sperm and eggs. My goal was to give a positive, loose definition of

masculinity and use it to show how men and women are different. I managed to make a few points, though I don't know if they sunk into any of the brains present.

I'll write up my material and print it in a future issue.

At any rate, be watchful. Feminist men everywhere are lining up to redefine masculinity to make men more palatable and convenient to women. Oh, goody. I couldn't imagine anything less masculine. Masculinity itself is finally under attack, gents. Look at www.nomas.org/conferencemm31.html for example. The feminist men's group NOMAS is putting on a conference on Men and Masculinity this August. Sponsors include such authorities as the Ramapo College Women's Center.

Please keep an eye out for these conferences and try to attend. Let our perspective be heard.

I apologize for the number of letters in this issue, but I couldn't help it. They were just too good not to print. Be sure to peruse them in the last section.

Ever Yours in the Cause,

Jason Leatherman

Custody

Continued from Page 1

Applied Developmental Psychology, Vol. 17, No. 2, April-June 1996, p. 239.)

"States with high levels of joint physical custody awards (over 30%) in 1989 and 1990 have shown significantly greater declines in divorce rates in following years through 1995, compared with other states. Divorce rates declined nearly four times faster in high joint custody states, compared with states where joint physical custody is rare. As a result, the states with high levels of joint custody now have significantly lower divorce rates on average than other states. States that favored sole custody also had more divorces involving children. These findings indicate that public policies promoting sole custody may be contributing to the high divorce rate." (John Guibaldi, D.Ed., "Child Custody Policies and Divorce Rates in the US", *11th Annual Conference of the Children's Rights Council*, Oct 23-26, 1997, Washington, D.C.)

In Minnesota, bill SF 1408 was introduced by Sen. Sheila M. Kiscaden, Sen. Thomas M. Neville and Sen. Dan Sparks on March 3, 2005, and seeks to establish a presumption in favor of joint physical custody in child custody cases. Parents would be required to enter a custody agreement within 90 days of the start of

custody proceedings (HF779 Companion Bill). The bill was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 3, 2005.

On Feb. 22, another comprehensive family law bill, HF1191, was introduced by Rep. Eastlund and others. Unlike Sen. Neville's bill, this bill also addresses joint physical custody. The bill proposes "best interests of the child clarified relating to family law, joint legal and physical custody rebuttable presumption established, and child support guidelines provided."

Bill HF0779, which would also provide a presumption of joint physical custody (but does not include comprehensive family law provisions), was introduced Feb. 3 by Rep. Mahoney. Under current law, courts use a rebuttable presumption that joint legal custody is in the best interests of the child. This bill adds language that "joint legal and physical custody is in the best interests of the child." The bill also adds that "...if the parents fail [to agree on custody or on a parenting plan] the court must use a rebuttable presumption, except as otherwise provided by this subdivision, that upon request of either party joint physical custody involving an equal division of time between the parties is in the best interests of the child."

If you support bills that would establish a presumption for equal parenting, write to your state senators and state representatives today.

Maury D. Beaulier is a lawyer practicing in Minnesota and Wisconsin. He has 14 years of experience in family law and specifically, father's rights issues. In the past, he has been a featured speaker on programs including the "Rutherford Show" in Calgary, Canada, and on CBS "Eye on America" with Dan Rather. See his website at www.minnesotalawyers.com

Choosing a Divorce Attorney

By J.C. McCall

It's hardly front page news that a significant percentage of marriages end in divorce. When that unfortunate time arrives, I have seen a trend that men, perhaps more than women, seem to have difficulty selecting the proper attorney to represent them. This brief article is meant to be an introduction of some things to consider when attempting to locate the attorney to best handle your divorce.

First and foremost, I think you should ask yourself if there is any chance (even a 0.01% chance) that you and your spouse can repair your relationship and avoid this situation all together. If there is such a chance, no matter how small, my advice is to stop reading any further and make your best and earnest attempt to work through the issues that brought you and your spouse to this point. This is a journey that you have to be one hundred percent sure of before embarking as it could very well be the most difficult and painful event you will experience, save getting hit my a cross-town bus.

The first thing you should do is get into the mindset that this is homework — homework that you must complete on time and which you must get a passing grade. The more time and effort you spend at this early stage, the less likely you will encounter problems further down the road. Get a notebook, use a word processing program, or whatever system works for you, but write down and/or print out everything that you come across about this issue from this point forward. Keep this information in a secure place that is easily accessible to you.

Odds are you don't have a list of attorneys in your back pocket who can help you, so the first thing you should do is make one. One of the first pitfalls men seem to get themselves into is not shopping around long enough for the proper attorney. There is no magic number of how many attorneys you should check out, but if your list doesn't hit double digits, I think you should continue looking. Also, don't stop your search after you've found the first attorney

whom you feel is a good match for you and your case. Find several with which you are comfortable as attorney schedules can change suddenly and you want to avoid locking onto one particular attorney who caseload is too large to take on your case. The attorneys you contact should understand that this is a process and any counsel that pressures you into a representation agreement should be avoided.

Okay, you're thinking, "Sounds good, but where do I start my search?" The answer is that there is no "best way" to go about this, but I would suggest that you focus on attorneys who focus their practice on family and domestic relations areas of law. The best admiralty lawyer in the state may be able to determine fishing rights between state and federal waters, but he's probably not the attorney you want handling your divorce. Martindale-Hubbell is probably the most known directory of attorneys and a good place to start. Your local library or local law school should have

ATTORNEY continues next page

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Attorney

Continued from Page 3

a recent edition. You can also check them out online at www.martindale.com. The American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (www.aaml.org) is an organization whose members focus on and are experienced in the family and domestic relations areas of law. Each state's bar association has referral services that can provide you with the names of attorneys in your area who have experience in divorce law. Some states (California, Texas, and Florida are three that come to mind) certify attorneys as specialized in domestic relations law, so you may want to check into whether your particular state has such a process.

If you're fortunate to live near a law school, you may want to attempt to schedule an appointment with a faculty member who teaches in the area of family law. Such a faculty member may be willing to provide you with a list of resources to consider. If money is an issue, many state and local bar associations, law schools, and community groups organize legal clinics which may be able to provide assistance with the more simple types of divorce cases. Of course you can just go out and ask people for references, but remember that often times these inquiries do not remain confidential. Finally, there are numerous attorneys who advertise on television or in your local phone directory. These attorneys are also worth considering, but your search should not begin or end with the phonebook or thirty second TV spot.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, so I recommend that you head to your local library and check out a few books on the topic to find some additional means to locate the attorney who's right for you. Just about every public library will have at least one book on how to file your own divorce, or maybe a book containing legal forms to file with the court. A word of caution: while reading these books may provide you some useful information, but in deference to the authors of these books, ask yourself this question, "Is my divorce proceeding worth more to me than the \$29.95 it costs to purchase this book?" Also keep in mind that your spouse will likely have an attorney and although not a certainty, if your divorce does not go smoothly and you end up in

court, walking into the proceedings representing yourself (pro se) can have the effect of having "no say" when you're going up against an seasoned divorce attorney and an unsympathetic judge or magistrate.

There are three types of lawyers – able, unable, and lamentable. – Robert Smith Surtees, 19th Century English Novelist

Now that you have your list of possible attorney candidates, it's time to start narrowing the field. Again, the best means to do this is by meeting with the attorney and discussing your case. Any respectable attorney should be able to meet with you to discuss the services they can provide without charging a fee. One of the issues that arise at this point is that making and attending these appointments can take up a serious amount of time. While this is true, here are a number of methods to help you pare down your list. First, check with your state and local board of bar overseers or bar counsel to determine if the attorney is a member in good standing, if they've had a complaint made against them, or if they have been disciplined for any misconduct. Keep in mind that if an attorney has faced discipline from this entity, it isn't necessarily a reason to cross him off your list, but it is something you should consider. Being reprimanded for a slightly overzealous cross-examination is not the same as being reprimanded for failing on several occasions to make it to court at the appointed time and date. Having a bad day in court is far different than a pattern of unacceptable behavior displayed by the attorney. In the rare cases, you may discover that the attorney's license to practice has been temporarily suspended, or in far rarer instances, they have been disbarred by the state bar association!

Another method is to go to the courthouse and review the cases filed by the attorneys on your list. The question arises at this point of what court you should go to do your research. The answer to this is simple, your divorce action will likely be filed in the local or state court that either you or your spouse are a resident. If you are going to do some court research, and I

suggest that you do, keep in mind the following advice above all else.... BE EXTREMELY NICE AND COURTEOUS TO THE CLERKS YOU ENCOUNTER AT THE COURTHOUSE! When I say be nice, I mean that if you see that the clerk in charge of the divorce case files has a Girl Scout Cookie order form on their desk, after introducing yourself, you should ask whether they have a daughter in the Girl Scouts, and mention that you love Girl Scout Cookies, but have not seen anyone selling them, and you'd like to buy a few boxes of Thin Mints™ to "hold you over" while you do your research. Be that nice and be in a good mood as clerks see people all day, every day, who are less than cordial! Not only can they be instrumental in cutting down your research time, but they may give you their insights on the attorneys within the field, and ... they will also likely be handling your case file!

Once you've narrowed your list of possible attorneys to handle your case, it's time to begin interviewing the ones that made your list. Usually this process begins with a telephone conversation and if you feel this attorney may be a good match, you should schedule an in-person meeting. Keep in mind that this is the most difficult part of the process, but you are the one who is in control, not the attorney. Again, if you feel pressured, walk. You should not feel pressured into making an instant decision. The attorney you hire should not only give you the feeling that they are competent to handle your case, but they should be able to handle your case using the means and a demeanor in which you are comfortable. The lawyer should tell you what philosophies of lawyering they follow, the strategies they will utilize, and their overall plan for litigating your case. If you are uncomfortable with any of these, you may want to rethink if they are the right lawyer for you.

Although you may harbor some ill feeling towards your ex-spouse, sometimes the "attack dog" approach is not the best means to handle your case. I bring this to your attention as both genders can find this a very attractive style of lawyering when you first start this process, especially if their nerves are still raw from the breakup. I've heard of about an equal number of good

and bad outcomes from this style of litigating a divorce case. For as much as I personally don't care for the "pitbull on a legal leash" style, be also on guard for the attorney who always seems dispassionate about their cases, claims to be your champion, or always seems to be reacting to the actions taken by the other spouse's attorney and not taking the lead when appropriate. (Looking at the documents and the sequence in which they were filed are a good indicator of this type of lawyer.) Trust

your instincts, if something seems a bit "off" it probably is and you should continue your search.

Okay, now that you've narrowed your options to a few attorneys, its time to pick one to represent you. Unfortunately for you, you are not finished with your homework. Before you sign any representation agreement, read, reread, and re-reread the agreement and all its parts. If you have any questions about any clause, sentence, phase, or word contained within

it, ask the attorney questions until you are satisfied you understand what is written on the page. But before you get to the point of signing the agreement, there are a number of questions you should ask you your attorney. I will take a look at those questions in a future article.

J.C. McCall is a current member of the Bar of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Book Reviews

By J. Steven Svoboda

Don't Tell: The Sexual Abuse of Boys

By Michel Dorais

Translated from the French by Isabel Denholm Meyer

Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002. www.mqup.ca. 210 pp.

No price stated on book. Reviewer's materials give price as Canadian \$24.95.

In the wake of 2001's excellent *Spreading Misandry* by Paul Nathanson and Katherine Young, McGill-Queen's University Press last year published another top-notch book on men's issues, Michel Dorais' *Don't Tell: The Sexual Abuse of Boys*. Although this book originally appeared in French a full five years previously, in 1997, neither the passage of time nor the language barrier tarnish it at all, thanks in part to Isabel Denhom Meyer's evidently superlative translation.

Dorais, a Quebec City social work professor, has spent many years working with male victims of sexual abuse and knows his subject extensively. His book examines only male perpetrators, though Dorais acknowledges the existence of female abusers. The author rightly laments the scarcity of research on abused boys, and indeed previous works are few and far between and notoriously difficult to track down.

Once deceived, a boy may come to believe that all adults are potential abusers. To me, the greatest tragedy of all is that victims may stop believing in the possibility of relationships that are transparent, sincere, and empathetic.

The most eloquent, heartbreaking portion of the book are the testimonials Dorais wisely includes from a number of his clients, which serve to personalize with devastating directness what might otherwise seem to be abstract, generalized issues. We may well wonder what can we say to Eric, who tells Dorais, "I'll be dead by the time the book is done... If I can pass on AIDS to other men, there will be fewer to exploit children."

To a man, the witnesses in Dorais' book are never the same after their abuse. Sexual victimization flies in the face of the core of male self-identity, often leading victims to feel lifelong compulsions to prove to the world and to themselves that they are neither 1) a child, 2) a woman, nor 3) homosexual. Children who endured abuse by older or adult males usually have strong conflicts regarding their sexual orientation, often viciously rejecting homosexuality while at the same time preferentially if not exclusively pursuing male sex partners. One particularly sad tale involves a witness who manages to consider himself heterosexual by virtue of his selection as sex partners other "heterosexual" males with whom he joins in beating up gays. Many victims feel convinced that they are defective or abnormal in terms of their sexual identity and that any shrewd person will discover this and victimize them again. Many spend the rest of their lives recreating their abuse, by seeking out partners of a similar age, by becoming abusers themselves, by seeking out a "Batman and Robin" type of relationship, or even in a redemptive manner

by attempting to protect other children from abuse.

If you have been abused and are male, you are likely to suffer from sleep problems, hypervigilance, psychosomatic discomforts, and/or abuse of drugs and/or alcohol. Abuse may serve as a training ground for prostitution for you. You may experience a dichotomy between your self and your body. You may have the impression that you do not belong to the male community. In short, you don't have too many great options.

Often the only one "punished" is the victim. Families tend to side with the abuser and to disbelieve the victimized boy. When they do react, sometimes it is the "gay" behavior that concerns them more than the abuse. Even when a case does manage to wend its way into court, judges typically let perpetrators off very lightly. Moreover, a misplaced sense of male solidarity as well as understandable fear often prevent a boy from pursuing his abuser. Dorais examines the four quadrants of male-male sexual victimization, involving familial and extra-familial cases, and the same or different generations for victim and perpetrator. Some of the effects and details differ between these four cases, but all have devastating, lifelong consequences for the victim.

A boy's difficult relationship with his father predisposes him to seek any available form of tenderness, wherever it might be available. In the case of father-son incest, the son often perceives it on

REVIEWS continues next page

Reviews

Continued from Page 5

some level as the only available path to intimacy with Dad. Of course, the resulting lack of trust can only further alienate the boy, who is likely to wonder how he can trust *any* adult now.

Perpetrators are often boys only a few years older than the victim. Child molesters may begin their careers very early and are frequently themselves survivors, who replay the same traumatic scenario with roles reversed as soon as they feel that they can be the stronger one. Abused men may find themselves unable to express themselves emotionally in terms of love or sex. Love is associated with future deception or suffering. Sexuality becomes only a matter of a power relationship, a “dog-eat-dog” view in which victims strive to become dominators.

Apart from a few typographical errors, including one unfortunate one that gives two different ages a decade apart for a witness, I only have two criticisms of this excellent book: At one point, Dorais entirely squanders a golden opportunity to clarify the issue of false memories of abuse. Secondly, twice in the early chapters, the author devotes some space to discussing other cultures in which man-boy sexual relationships are accepted. Since the rest of the work is devoted to Canadian cases, this issue comes across as a distraction, a potential apologia for abuse, and a total red herring despite Dorais’ futile attempts to connect the dots by contrasting abuse in our society.

Somewhat miraculously, in part due to the human interest of the individual stories, and in part due to his and his translator’s skills, *Don’t Tell* never becomes as hard to read as you might expect. Ultimately Dorais’ message is one of hope, though not of reasonless optimism. In fact, the author notes that despite growing awareness of the problem of female victimization by sexual abuse, male victimization remains relatively unacknowledged and unexamined. Nevertheless, Dorais presents to us individual witnesses who are devoting their lives to helping other children (either potential victims of sexual abuse or in other contexts) and to thereby conquering the demons they first met at all too young an age.

And we learn concrete ways to help. Dorais believes that we must demand that prevention campaigns target both victims and aggressors. Since abusers rely on the ignorance, vulnerability, and even guilt of their child victims, frank and age-appropriate sex education will help prevent abuse. Health professionals, social workers, and therapist must be better prepared to recognize and help victims. Michel Dorais managed to negotiate a delicate dance that acknowledges that most perpetrators were victims while failing to absolve them of responsibility and rejecting the view of abusers as merely suffering from an illness that excuses their acts. Handsomely produced as it is, this book is likely to remain for years to come the most accessible and definitive work on a critically important topic.

Divorce Poison: Protecting the Parent-Child Bond from a Vindictive Ex.

By Richard A. Warshak
New York, NY: ReganBooks, 2001.
www.reganbooks.com. US \$26.00. Canadian \$39.50.

A decade after writing the much praised *The Custody Revolution*, Richard Warshak has returned with a book that, as far as I can see, is virtually perfect. Warshak thoroughly, thoughtfully, and perhaps most remarkably, both passionately and compassionately analyzes the heretofore relatively neglected topic of Parental Alienation Syndrome or PAS. To the author’s credit, he is not attached to the label of PAS and in fact adopts the alternative formulation of “divorce poison” as an easily comprehensible shorthand. As its name suggests, PAS results when one parent intentionally inserts a wedge between a child and the other parent. The methods of doing this (manipulation, lies, forbidding contact, failing to bring the child to scheduled exchanges, etc.) are many but the catastrophic results in the child’s life are the same.

Right on page one in the book’s introduction, it becomes clear that the author will not shrink from challenging widespread “wisdom,” as when he contests the suggestion that a “united front” is paramount in divorce and that it is never right to criticize the other parent. On the

contrary, according to Warshak, parents who poison their children’s relationships with loved ones deserve to be confronted and compelled to right these wrongs. The author succinctly lays out the elements of PAS, which essentially amounts to brainwashing a child into shunning a parent.

Warshak also includes a wealth of practical checklists and summaries of key points, many of which are set off from the main text in an attractive, easily readable fashion. For example, he provides five questions a parent can use to do a self-test regarding one’s motives for revealing negative information about the other parent. We learn that even after a marriage has ended, a parent should discuss the other parent’s faults in ways that minimize the damage to the child’s general respect and regard for that parent, just as that parent presumably would have done while still married to their ex-spouse.

Even more importantly, the author regularly provides specific ways for implementing the book’s ideas in one’s life, with one’s own children: he offers an example of what a wife could say to his children regarding a habitually late father, and a few pages later gives some suggestions of what to say to one’s kids in response to badmouthing of you by your ex. Warshak adroitly notes that three hidden requests are encapsulated when we try to blame our spouse for a divorce (don’t be mad at me; pity me; join me in being angry at your other parent), and none of these serves our children. Moreover, because kids identify with both their parents, badmouthing their other parent amounts to badmouthing your own children.

Warshak details the four main factors affecting a child’s ability to resist divorce poison: 1) environment and manner in which badmouthing and brainwashing occurs; 2) your prior relationship with your child; 3) your child’s specific characteristics; 4) your response to divorce poison. He helpfully follows this with four actions you can take against divorce poison: 1) exercise self-restraint; 2) maintain contact — ceasing contact won’t help no matter how tempting it might be; 3) develop a thick skin; 4) avoid being drawn into a debate with the other parent, which is a no-win situation.

One chilling fact that comes through crystal clear in this book is the

speed and frequent irreversibility of PAS. Following well-intentioned advice to wait and be patient and hope things will work out will often simply result in the loss of a relationship with one's children. Swift, specific, targeted action is often much better, and Warshak outlines the way to do this in a variety of situations.

Often an author writing about a particular phenomenon may, through no fault of their own, end up supporting the expansion of whatever category they are discussing. Warshak avoids this danger, grounding the discussion by providing a very useful section with examples of whole categories of child behavior that do NOT constitute divorce poison or PAS. One frequent situation is a child in an explosive family who, simply to avoid a war zone and to protect himself or herself from tension, fear and embarrassment, sometimes tells one parent he/she no longer want to see the other parent. If the origin of the rejection of the parent comes from the child and not from the other parent or an ally of the other parent, this does NOT constitute PAS.

False accusations of child abuse are frequently associated with divorce poison. Recent studies prove that children are remarkably suggestible and easily manipulable into convincing themselves that something entirely fictitious actually happened. Suggestions that children don't lie about such things are quite mistaken. Even experts are utterly unable to tell which children are telling the truth and which are lying about such things. Another temptation Warshak avoids is fostering an implicit and ultimately unhelpful alliance with the reader, by among other things providing a checklist to enable the reader to evaluate his or her own contribution to any alienation that may have occurred.

Chapter 4 catalogs the many reasons why a parent might foster divorce poison — narcissism, guilt, insecurity, etc. Again, specific examples flesh out these potentially hazy terms we have all heard before. Warshak has, to paraphrase Mark Twain, an all-too-uncommon common sense, and sprinkles his book with a good number of real life cases from his own years of work in the field as a psychologist specializing in these issues.

Chapter 5 intriguingly fleshes out the perhaps unsurprising but still fascinating fact that the same conditions that increase the risk of alienation from a parent are the conditions that foster

indoctrination into cults, such as isolation, psychological dependence, and fear.

Chapter 6 sets forth the most common ploys used to coerce kids into rejecting their parents and often grandparents as well — pejorative labeling, use of first names to describe the adults ("Bill" instead of "Dad," for example), even creating a new name for the child. Alienating parents are not above exploiting an eminently understandable, momentary explosion of anger from the alienated parent, or even provoking such a conflict with the stage set and witnesses in place. Sometimes parents will go to the Stalinist extreme of cutting alienated parents out of family photos and persuading a child that certain events involving that parent never occurred. In order to avoid the intense discomfort they would otherwise feel, children may even convince themselves that a parent must deserve mistreatment. Innuendo can be a very effective alienation technique, though Warshak provides some excellent suggestions on action steps to take to confront this ruse.

Chapter 7 contains invaluable poison control pointers, such as guidelines for increasing a child's receptivity to your communication (e.g., communicate genuine empathy, speak to someone else within the child's earshot about things you want the child to hear!) Advice on selecting and working with a therapist or therapists is very well thought out. Chapter 9, the most difficult one for the author to write, advises a parent on letting go when all else has failed.

A parent who engineers divorce poison breaks normal family boundaries and

commits a sort of incest, transforming a child into an accomplice and often saddling the child with worries and fears that ought not be visited on children. Warshak does not dwell more than necessary on the tragic results of PAS, but it is clear that its victims suffer a lifetime of shortcomings and problems in virtually all phases of their lives as a result of being a pawn in a game of divorce poison. As with incest and child abuse, a tragically high percentage of those parents who foster alienation themselves had poor or absent relationships with at least one of their own parents and thus are reenacting their own childhoods.

Richard A. Warshak obviously cares deeply about parental alienation. One can scarcely help but be moved by his plea to leave divorce poison in its bottle. Despite their dark and eminently understandable feelings, parents must hold themselves to a higher standard for the good of the little ones who are the truly blameless victims here. The problem is clear, and the way forward is also clear. Every case the author knows of in which the court reduced an alienated child's time with the programming parent reduced or eliminated the alienation. When the time with the programming parent was not reduced, nine out of ten kids remained alienated. This magnificent book, sad though it is that it ever had to be written, is bound to alleviate heartache for countless children and parents.

Volunteer Needed for Men's Hotline

NCFM is in need of someone to operate our "hotline". What this means is that you would get about one call every week or two from someone needing assistance. You should be familiar with the court system as well as men's resources and be able to offer some support to callers. All calls are returned COLLECT, so you won't incur any costs. If this sounds like something you'd like to try, please contact Naomi at 516-482-6378 or susansusansusan@hotmail.com.

What's Happening??

National Coalition of Free Men News

OHIO RALLY FOR EQUAL PARENTING

Every group has its guided path to travel in an effort to accomplish what is needed and what is best for our children. What could happen if we all gathered together collectively for just one event like the people below? Think of the message we could be sending to the MN community regarding the needs of kids. And the message that needs to be sent to the "Divorce Industry" because of the chaos they are imposing on society today! I would like to encourage everyone involved to come together and send the united message that children need "Equal Access to Both Parents".

Let's talk about a plan to rally around Father's Day! This is the year we can cause a change for the needs of children and families!!!!

Ohio Rally

Rally for Equal Parenting
Saturday, June 10, 2006 @ 11:00 a.m.

Ohio Statehouse Steps
Columbus, Ohio

www.equalparent.info

Join us as the best know names in Ohio Parental Rights come together as a single group in supporting changes to the laws. Help us protect the right of every fit parent to have EQUAL legal and physical custody.

This is the first time these leading groups have joined forces to create what should prove to be the states largest EQUAL parenting rally - EVER!

Together, DADS of America, Parents And Children for Equality, Fathers for Justice, Caring & Sharing Grandparents, Ohio Chapter and the National Organization for Parental Equality have formed coalition to better serve the people and show we have a commitment to EQUAL parenting.

WEBSITE SHEDS LIGHT ON PATERNITY TESTING SYSTEM FLAWS

There is a new web site available that sells information on DNA testing and how it can false indications that men are fathers of a child when in fact they are not. See www.PaternityTestFlaw.com.

They state, "This site is for those interested in learning what the flaw is that is used in DNA tests daily across the United States and around the world. It is important to understand how this flaw can make a man the father in a paternity action even if he never had relations with the mother. If you think you are not the father, want to understand the flaw to help possibly defend yourself in a paternity action, or if you want to make sure you aren't being misled in a paternity judgment, it's important that you understand where the potential flaw is in the determination of paternity process. The results are often absolutely misleading! There can be a paternity finding in the 99% range when in fact you are not the father! The guide will explain the flaw in simple terms. I have spent a vast amount of time gathering this information from researching, contacting experts in genetics, and statistical mathematics across the country. I will explain to you what many lawyers and judges don't know about the statistical flaw that the accredited DNA testing companies use to their advantage without fully disclosing its potential for error."

They sell an E-guide for \$40, and an "Understanding the Variables" spreadsheet for \$30.

EQUAL PARENTING LAWS AN INEVITABILITY, SAYS AUSTRALIAN PARENTING GROUP

Australian equal parenting group, Fathers4Equality (www.fathers4equality-australia.org), has stated that equal parenting time after separation is an inevitable development, simply awaiting a government with enough resolve to put the rights of children ahead of the vested interests of single mother's groups.

Currently, the government is in the process of debating the recently introduced Family Law Amendment Bill, a commendable bill that is intended to usher in a new era of equal parenting arrangements. As part of this process, Fathers4Equality has recently presented its well researched submission on the benefits of equal parenting to children of separated families, entitled "Parents are Forever...even if marriages are not" to the Senate Hearing on the provisions of the Family Law Amendment.

"The benefits of equal parenting are well accepted and have been repeatedly demonstrated in very credible research" says Ash Patil, President of Fathers4Equality. "These benefits are accepted by the majority in Parliament, however the only significant obstacles right now to a presumption of equal parenting time are the self-serving interests of single mother's groups, who tend to have a disproportional influence on the government."

Despite the overwhelming benefits of equal parenting time, and the well documented child abuse risks associated with single-mother households, the government has unfortunately balked at recommending a rebuttable presumption of equal parenting time in its Family Law

Amendment Bill, and has instead opted for asking the Family Court to "consider" equal parenting time only.

Without a rebuttable presumption of equal parenting time, many fathers are concerned that the Howard government is making the same mistake as the Keating government in 1995, with its own family law amendments that were also intended to create equal parenting as a norm. Not only did the 1995 amendments fail absolutely, but equal parenting orders as a result fell by more than half.

For the current Family Law Amendment Bill to achieve the full benefits of equal parenting for as many Australian children of separated families as possible, a legal presumption of equal parenting time is required, as a starting point in child custody considerations. This presumption should be rebuttable, meaning that it will not apply where there is convincing evidence that it is harmful to the child, or where the parents mutually decide on different arrangements.

JOURNAL OF PARENTAL ALIENATION NOW AVAILABLE

The March/April edition of the *Journal of Parental Alienation* is now available as a free download. This issue contains several important announcements including a new research study and information on Parental Alienation Awareness Day. Visit www.HelpStopPAS.org and click on "Newsletter" to download the latest edition.

MEN'S ADVISORY NETWORK (MAN) CONFERENCE ANNOUNCED

The Men's Advisory Network (MAN) is conducting a conference of national significance on the theme "From Babies to Blokes: The Making of Men" to be held at the Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle, Western Australia, from 29 October to 1 November 2006.

You are urged to register your interest in

attending with the conference organisers, Promaco Conventions. This will ensure that you receive the conference program and registration details when they become available. Register on-line at: www.promaco.com.au/conference/2006/man

The conference will have six streams:

- Conditioning of infant boys
- Development of boys
- Transition from boyhood to manhood
- Men and work
- Men and relationships
- Men and aging

Speakers so far confirmed include:

- Bettina Arndt
- Professor Konrad Jamrozik
- Ian Lillico
- Greg Mitchell
- Dr Michael Nagel
- Kieren Perkins
- Dr Shaun Ridley
- Dr Norman Swan.

Any assistance that you may be able to give in assisting to promote the conference would be greatly appreciated.

NCFM-LA'S CHAPTER ACTIVITIES FEBRUARY - MARCH 2006

(by Marc Angelucci)

On February 4, 2006, NCFM-LA members set up an informational table at the UCLA School of Law Public Interest Career Day. We distributed our flyers and other information and had great conversations with numerous people. The responses were overwhelmingly positive. This was our first time at this event and we intend to do it again.

On February 17, 2006, NBC Channel 4 (Los Angeles) aired a good story and interviewed NCFM-LA president on "Today in L.A." re the Maegan Black v. California lawsuit to end anti-male discrimination by the State of California, its agencies and state-funded programs. It also aired on the evening news.

On February 23, 2006, the *Los Angeles* and *San Francisco Daily Journals* printed a lengthy front page article about the state legislature's new bill to gender-neutralize the funding statutes for domestic violence victims, which we believe is a result of the pending case of Maegan Black v. CA. The reporter contacted NCFM-LA for input and as a result the article cited the overwhelming 50/50 data and other useful facts, and also mentioned NCFM-LA's request that the bill include all men and stop covering up female-on-male violence. See www.ncfmla.org/daily-journal-022606.html.

On February 24, 2006, the librarian of John Marshall Law School in Chicago contacted NCFM-LA for information about the paternity fraud case of Taron James, which NCFM-LA took on successfully. The information was for a law professor who is doing a story on paternity issues. NCFM gladly provided the information.

NCFM-LA continues to provide referrals, moral support, limited advocacy and also transportation through the "underground railroad" for battered men. In March 2006, in response to a call for help from an organization we cannot disclose, NCFM-LA helped several battered men flee their abusive wives in the east coast, by helping pay their airfare to L.A. to get to Valley Oasis shelter in Lancaster, the only shelter we know that takes battered men. Their bus to Valley Oasis got snowed in, so an NCFM-LA member took the men into his home for the night, fed them, and transported them the next day to Valley Oasis. The men were very grateful, and they distributed our flyers to other men in the shelter. As a result, a number of them have contacted us for information about joining, etc.

Letters to the Editor

Editorial Policy: *NCFM and the Transitions staff welcome letters from readers and will print them as space allows. We reserve the right to edit letters for editorial style and space restrictions but will continue to publish letters in their entirety when possible. Send article responses, corrections, or other comments about the newsletter itself to the Editor: Jason Leatherman at jwleath@yahoo.com. Letters sent directly to the Editor will be addressed "Dear Editor". Send opinions, stories, requests for advice, or other letters to the Webmaster: ncfm@ncfm.org. Letters sent to the Webmaster will be addressed "Dear NCFM".*

DEARNCFM:

I see our old "friends", the ACLU in Michigan are in the news filing a lawsuit against the government in reference to wiretapping potential terrorists and infringing their "rights" in America.

These are the same feminazis who refused to help Wil when he appealed to them for assistance. He sent them a whole stack of papers concerning his case. They did nothing and he asked me to contact them and ask them if they intended to do anything or not and if not to return his papers to them.

So I first looked at their website which has a whole page devoted to Women's Rights (big surprise there eh?) and I advised Wil he would be wasting his time with them - that in fact they would be more likely to assist his ex-wife against him. He told me to request that they return his paperwork to him.

I sent them an email and advised them of ALL conversations between myself and Wil regarding this (including my advice that they wouldn't assist him anyway because he's a man). They answered immediately that they had so many cases and wouldn't be able to assist him and would return his papers to him. Which they eventually did.

So much for the ACLU being the champion of civil rights.

BTW, have you heard from Mario Sanchez? He was having some problems in Miami and I offered to help him but he never replied again and I haven't heard from him since.

Barry Jernigan
Murfreesboro, TN

WEBMASTER:

Yes, I agree with you on the ACLU. We probably need to form a legal organization that defends men, but then again there aren't enough donations to really support it. Maybe when one of us gets rich we'll do that???

Haven't heard from Mario Sanchez in a long time. Last I heard, he was removing himself from helping Will Hetherington. Haven't heard anything since.

DEARNCFM:

Subject: U.S. Male Privacy and Rights

Ref: INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE BROKER LAW, H.R. 3402, P.L. No. 109-162, TITLE VIII, SUBTITLE D, WHICH VIOLATES MY FREE SPEECH AND FREE ASSOCIATION, PRIVACY RIGHTS, RIGHT TO COURT AND MARRY, AND LIMITS MY ROMANCE CHOICES ABROAD AND IS ANTI-MALE AND ANTI-COUPLE.

I am very concerned about the practical consequences of this law, which was passed with only a voice vote without any hearings or testimony or statistical evidence to support it, at the last minute just before the Holiday recess, after being tacked onto the back of other important legislation, namely, The Violence Against Women and Justice Dept. Reauthorization Act.

I resent Bush signing this into law just for the political expediency of getting a domestic violence law passed with his name on it (regardless of the pork attached), and I have a gut-wrenching urge to vomit every time I hear of N.O.W., or the liberal Democrats like Maria Cantwell, or any other special interest group who wants to reign in my freedom and make me conform to their politically-correct view of the world.

This is aimed at men's rights to privacy, pure and simple. If it was to protect immigrant women from abuse, please explain

the exceptions to the law that allows larger organizations like Yahoo, Match.com, MSN, and so on to continue operating their international dating service and affiliates without having to comply to the law. These larger organizations who are varied in their interest may not have international dating as their primary focus, but even if only 10% of their business is international dating, that 10% is a larger membership base than all of the smaller online dating sites together whose primary focus is international dating. This simply proves that there was backdoor politicking and their primary concern of protecting women was a side issue to their goal of limiting male rights and privacy. It will put the smaller online dating sites out of business because they (women groups and the lobbyist for larger sites like Yahoo) have made it economically and manpower wise a task that can not be accomplished by smaller organizations. I question the law's fairness and intent.

What the folks at N.O.W. fail to understand is that their feminist beliefs have rendered the American woman undesirable to many traditional men who are NOT control freaks or abusive -- they are just traditional. Immigrant women have (for the most part) resisted the feminist trends, and remain highly sought after for that reason. The feminists would like to neuter men and place women in charge, but as for me -- if I can't find freedom in the USA then I will move to the Philippines where traditional values are still honored, and take my money with me. Yes, there will always be a few bad-apple men around, but to say they represent all of us is an insult! Yet Bush has signed a law that has branded us men as wife beaters and criminals before we even say Hi to a lady from another country.

We are small group of online dating sites at the moment and do not have the same political power or strength as such organizations as N.O.W. but we ask for your help and support in getting the word out. We have started a small website to address some of these issues. On that website are two petitions to sign for those who believe our rights have been violated. Please help us men gain back our right to choose, help

protect our privacy and stop the larger organizations from using the law to crush the small international online dating sites.

Here are some links that may interest you.

1. Petition One: www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/174725004
2. Petition Two: new.petitiononline.com/imbra05/petition.html
3. Link to Forum: filipinalady.org/international-marriage-broker-regulation

Dan

WEBMASTER:

Thanks for the info. I will forward your email to our online discussion list, and hopefully you'll get some replies from our members. I suspect many of them will say that you're being TOO DIPLOMATIC in

your petitions. Anyway, let's see what happens.....

DEARNCFM:

My friend has been falsely accused of rape and is falsely imprisoned and has been horribly abused by women on all levels of Government. He had a woman prosecutor, and a woman lawyer (that he had to fire in the middle of trial, for letting people lie, and took over trial for himself.) They gave him a jury of ten women and two men, and has been wrongly convicted, and illegally imprisoned for twelve years now. While all the courts do is LIE and IGNORE HIS INNOCENCE, lie to cover things up and abuse him to no end, mainly by female clerks. He can get no truth or justice there at all. He has PROOF of their corruption, lies, fraud, and cover-up, and he urgently needs help

to get justice and out of there; he has no funds to hire a lawyer but there must be someone who can help him pro-bono; the official misconduct in this case is UNPRECEDENTED and unbelievable. He was deliberately set up and then falsely accused. Can you please, help him somehow? He sent you CERTIFIED LETTER to Box 129, Manhasset and it came back undeliverable. Is that still your address? The prison he is in they steal his mail a lot to stop him from getting help and exposing this stuff, and have abused him to no end. He is now horribly sick and they refuse to diagnose or cure it, and are trying to kill him, we believe, to stop him from exposing all the corruption has been through in this matter.

Can you please contact him IMMEDIATELY and email me, in response so that I can let him know what to expect from you, and we can follow up and see if he gets it or not. Please ask him any questions you may have and he will give you all facts and details then. His name is Derrick Coombs #CT-1800, P.O. Box 200, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0200. Can you get someone from your group to GO SEE HIM: IN PERSON? Please let me know right away what you can do and have done concerning this matter. Thank you.

Carrene Littlefield

WEBMASTER:

Your friend's case sounds similar to another case that we've been championing for many years now.... William Hetherington. See www.ncfm.org/william-hetherington.php for more info about that case.

Frankly, it is difficult to find pro-bono legal help, and it is usually just temporary. William has been through many, many attorneys over the years. They come and go. And he is still in prison, frankly with not much hope of any significant change. I sympathize with your friend's situation, and if we could do something, we certainly would. But I'm not sure if there's much we can do.

At any rate, our current mailing address is: P.O. Box 582023, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 55458-2023. We gave up the NY address a couple years ago.

LETTERS continues next page

Special Thanks Due

Special thanks are in order to the following recent financial contributors. Your donations make a great deal of difference.

Jay Bowden, CA
Carlton M. Franklin, FL
Stanley B. Gaver, VA
Paul Givens, ON
Vernal P. Hegenbart, WI
Charles Jones, AZ
Mark Lesmeister, TX
Chip Major, MO
Carl Minie, UT
Lea J. Perritt, KY
Derrick Vido, IL
Michael Von Burg, AZ

Letters

Continued from Page 11

I will post your request on our national email list. Perhaps there is someone in Pennsylvania who can go see him. I can't promise that there is, but I will check.

DEARNCFM:

Could you please forward this email to someone who can help me in Michigan. I just found your website via Google.

Michigan House Bill 5267 is equal or shared parenting custody legislation that was just introduced for debate. Is there anything that the NCFM can do to help us in Michigan to move this bill forward? Would the president of NCFM be willing to write a supporting letter to the members in the Family and Children Committee that are now debating this? Or even perhaps be willing to speak to the Committee? This bill will help stop making men second-rate parents in the eyes of the courts and it also will protect the right of a child to have equal access to both fit parents. I am a volunteer for Dads of Michigan (ACFC). Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Robert Pedersen
rpedersen@comcast.net

WEBMASTER:

Yes, I would be willing to write a letter in support of this bill if you'll send me the name and address that I should send it too. I can also check if we have any members in Michigan who would be willing to do more. Let me know.

DEARNCFM:

A Judge in California Court in Lancaster, is allowing my ex-spouse to move away to England to her boyfriend (not even married yet) with my two children, 11 and 8 years old. This will effectively cut off my 30 % visitation time with them now. He has given her an option to move if she chooses to move away. That will leave me only with summers and winters and nothing more. My ex-wife in the last two years has been frustrating me constantly with visitation and many times I went to the court to get the

visitation and holidays schedules made into orders.

The funny thing of this all is there was no move away motion to begin with on the table and no due process to say the least. This judge has been just transferred from the Criminal Court house to Family court house and was new to the case. The real family judge who was there for the last two years and ruled on the case many times moved away to a different location.

I need all help in the world now. This judge has completely reversed all previous rulings in my case and based on only one thing that is the evaluation. My ex-wife has given misleading facts to the Evaluator and I never had a chance for rebuttal. Even the evaluation did not recommend the move away to England other than recommending me 30% visitation during the year and 4 week-ends a month and lots of holidays. The evaluation left the matter to court to decide if such move away to England would be ok or not. The judge simply said yes! His name is Judge Randolph Rogers (new in family courts). He was a criminal judge for many years and now he does this great injustice to me and my two children. My boy wants to live with me and my daughter does not want to go to England as it is far away until she finishes high school, which is also mentioned in the evaluation.

Please help me and bring this to light to the public and the people who believe this is unfair.

Naresh K Lagadapati

WEBMASTER:

Thanks for contacting NCFM. Good luck with your case. NCFM has a chapter in LA, which I believe is close to you. I suggest contacting them and getting involved (818-907-9383 or info@ncfmla.org). Perhaps they can recommend a good attorney to help you. A good attorney is exactly what you're going to need in this case.

I believe the move-away issue has already been decided by the California Supreme Court, and the decision is not very friendly to fathers. But since I'm not a

lawyer, you'll probably need to investigate further.

Your story is quite typical of many that we hear from fathers around the country. Unfortunately, the system is very unfair to non-custodial fathers, as you are now experiencing. Perhaps you can get full custody of your kids, but it will be a difficult fight.

DEARNCFM:

I need an attorney who is either willing to represent me in Family Court or assist and provide guidance with California Procedure to move my legal argument forward.

In November 2005, I filed a Declaratory Judgment motion and Memorandum of Law to Support the motion for Declaratory Judgment in the Superior Court of California, County of Sacramento, Family Law Relations Courthouse. In Proper, I am challenging the constitutionality of the alimony and property distribution statutes as being violative of Article I Section Right of Privacy, and Article III Section 3, Separation of Powers.

I have had two hearings on my declaratory judgment motion. At the first hearing, the judge denied my motion without prejudice and with leave to amend to cite authority giving Family Law court right to grant declaratory relief. In the judge's minute order, I was required to file supplemental points and authorities citing that authority. Despite having filed a "good faith" memo of law, citing Federal and State case law, statutes, and California Rules of Court, the judge at the continuation hearing denied my motion.

I was subsequently served an OSC, with a hearing date set for March 8 2006. I filed my Responsive Declaration to Order to Show Cause or Notice of Motion on Feb 24, 2006.

I am prepared to file an appeal. I'm prepared to go as far as the California Supreme Court if necessary. I am prepared to assist with legal research, filings, etc. I'm willing to work with an experienced and knowledgeable paralegal if necessary.

At the moment, I am seriously considering Removal to the Federal Forum.

I'm willing to do whatever is necessary to move this action through the court system. I would appreciate any suggestions and or help.

Dwain S. Barefield
dbarefie@dhs.ca.gov

WEBMASTER:

I would recommend contacting Steven Svoboda. He is an attorney who lives in Berkeley, and he is also NCFM's public relations director. His email is arc@post.harvard.edu and his phone number is 510-827-5771. I doubt he'll take the case himself, but I'm sure he can recommend a good lawyer for you.

DEARNCFM:

I read your articles on the web about false rape charges. I write from Italy, my friend Carlo Parlanti is being kept in Ventura County Jail, CA for a rape he never committed. He refused to plead guilty because he trusted your justice. No evidence, lies over lies, changed versions every time, physically impossible statements, but the jury still found him guilty. Carlo is seriously ill, his family and his friends are economically ruined, we can't afford the legal costs of your country, we can't even visit him on a decent basis. Please spend a second of your time to read his story on fairtrialsabroad.org. Please if you have suggestions, if you can write/talk about his ordeal, if you can help him in any way, God bless you. It is an innocent human life; we don't know what to do. I can't understand how human life can be wasted that easily, please help us if you can. Thank you.

Pietro Beretta

WEBMASTER:

Sorry to hear about your friend's predicament. Unfortunately, your friend isn't the only one suffering from this injustice. We're also working to defend William Hetherington, who is in the Michigan prison system also for a false rape charge. We are unfortunately too familiar with these types of cases.

The best advice I can give is to get your friend a very good defense attorney. It will be expensive, but there's no way

around it. A good attorney for an appeal is the only way to go.

We wish your friend all the best in his ordeal. Perhaps when he gets out of county jail, he'll be able to return to Italy. I don't know enough about his situation to be able to know. At any rate, good luck to you and Carlo.

DEARNCFM:

I visited your site for the first time today, thanks for the information. I am writing to ask if the NCFM has every looked into gender-based product promotions, specifically those that exclude men from participating. A few weeks ago I received an email from Diet Rite soda, promoting their "Zero Boundaries Woman" contest, with a top prize of \$25,000. You may find the following eligibility requirements interesting: 1. **ELIGIBILITY:** Nominators and Nominees must be legal U.S. residents of the 50 United States or the District of Columbia. Nominators must be 13 years of age or older as of January 1, 2006. Nominees must be female, at least 18 years old as of January 1, 2006, and meet all other eligibility and other requirements herein. ... I have contacted (via email) DietRite two times regarding this promotion and have received no replies. You can see this information for yourself at www.dietrite.com. Thanks for your feedback on this issue.

"Officer Meffta"

WEBMASTER:

Thanks for your message. You are the first to point out this issue — Thank you! Do you know of any other gender-exclusive promotions that we can target, or is this the only one you're aware of? We do have a letter-writing committee that can target companies that do this kind of thing. I will pass your suggestion on to our letter-writing committee for a possible near-future campaign. If you learn of anything else, please keep us informed.

DEARNCFM:

I have been paying child support for my son of almost four years, that's not my concern. I recently read an article about your coalition on how men are denied rights to terminate any parent's rights. This is

where my story gets confusing. I met a girl a little over a year and a half ago and she got pregnant. I asked her to place the child up for adoption because I had no interest in raising a child. I was going back to school to better my son's life. She refused and told me she wanted nothing to do with me and I will never see that child.

I figured nothing would come up because she changed her number and so forth. Now she is taking me to court for child support. I have moved on, moved to be closer to my son. I see him at least 5 days a week and have him the entire weekend. I have no finances to help pay for this other child, my student loans are unbearable, I have been covering my son's health care which is high, and this child support demands over 30 percent of what I make. If this judgment goes through with this other kid, I will have no finances to pay for my rent, loans, or other basic needs. I told the Olmsted County social services I would rather see this child be placed for adoption because of many reasons including the fact the mother is getting medical assistance and lives in a bad setting. This was denied — the county thinks I have to pay an additional 25 percent of my wages to this other kid. I thought that not more than 30 percent of your wages could go to child care no matter what. I do need advice on how to handle this matter. I will request a county appointed attorney to help because I am going paycheck to paycheck now paying back my college expenses. If there is a website to go to or an advice line that I could contact that would help me clear this matter. The county stated it would refuse parental visits to me, but still wants my money. I know this is probably my last line of defense. I hope you can help me clear this.

Eric Davis
North Mankato, MN

WEBMASTER:

My advice to you would be as follows:

1. Get a DNA test to confirm that you're actually the father of this child. There is some chance you're not, which would help your case tremendously.

LETTERS continues next page

Letters

Continued from Page 13

2. If you ARE the father, your options are to 1) pay child support to the mother according to court order, 2) pursue full custody of the child (this is very difficult for a father), or 3) violate the court order and risk arrest. I realize that none of these options is very good, but fathers really don't have many rights in our system.

3. You may want to hire a really good attorney to represent you in this case, especially if DNA shows you're not the father.

I realize none of these options is cheap. They will all cost a lot of money. The cost of parenthood is high, even if you didn't choose it.

I would also suggest that you contact our Twin Cities chapter in Minneapolis. They can probably offer more advice based on local Minnesota law, which I'm not familiar with. They can be reached at (888) 223-1280 or ncfm-tc-info@onelist.com.

In any case, good luck with your case, and with the ordeal you're about to go through.

DEARNCFM:

I hope you can give me a lead. I was married 12 years and separated for 2 of them. I have two wonderful children. I have 50/50 custody. I pay \$450.00 a month alimony and \$465.00 a month child support. I make around \$50K a year. My ex is a loan officer at a mortgage company and reports \$13K. She tells me she makes more than I do but I can't prove it. She gets paid under the table. I live in Wisconsin. Do you know of any one that could help me?

Wesley Clendenning

WEBMASTER:

The best advice I can give you is to hire a really good attorney to represent you and fight for you. Be sure to ask the attorney many questions up front to find out if he will fight for your rights. Many attorneys don't, they just let the system work and go along with the outcome. I know attorneys cost money, but once you have kids, you need to fight for them.

Unfortunately, we can't recommend an attorney in Wisconsin, as we don't have a local presence in that state. I would suggest looking up Wisconsin fathers' rights groups and contacting them. Usually the local groups are better at making local recommendations.

Most likely, the courts will let your wife get away with her income misreporting, while you will be held to extremely high standards of accountability in your reporting. We see this kind of thing all the time. The system is just simply unfair to men in many ways.

At any rate, I want to wish you good luck in your adventures with our legal system.

DEAREEDITOR:

I've been involved with in-depth men's work for decades now, but there's one topic that nobody seems to be willing to talk about truthfully. Maybe they don't even notice it, but I don't see how they couldn't notice it — it's all around us. No doubt what I am about to say is going to be construed as anti-woman, and no doubt some people will get worked-up about it. Nonetheless, the position I'm going to take is not anti-woman, it is motivated by the survival of the human race and the survival of the ecosystem.

The taboo that nobody seems to talk about is the way that so many men simply go along with their women's desire to have children, even if the men don't really want to have children. Personally, I don't know one man who is really intent on having children. The men I know who do have children do it because their women want to do it. I'm not sure exactly why the women do it; maybe it's biological, instinctual, or perhaps a mistake with birth control. I believe it also often has to do with "fulfillment as a woman," that is living up to what a woman is supposed to do in this culture.

In case you haven't noticed, dear reader, there is no lack of people in this world. We are destroying the planet because there are so many of us. Look all around, we are cutting down all the forests, we are filling the landscape with plastic garbage, we are

polluting everything with toxic chemicals, we are fishing all the fish out of the sea, etc. These and many other environmental insults would be greatly diminished if there were considerably fewer people in this world. We are on a collision course with ecological disaster, where we are destroying everything that's needed to sustain us in the long run. For example, if we farm every square corner of the globe and in the process wash away most of the topsoil, then future generations won't be able to use that land to grow their own food.

I'm suggesting that men need to tell their women that they can't have children, or that they can only have one child — are they willing to do this? Why can't men tell women that having children is bad for the earth, is bad for other species, and is ultimately bad for the human race? Since when can't men tell women that having children is a selfish, unnecessary, counterproductive, and old-fashioned thing to do? Since when can't men stand up and say "no, I'm not going to give you what you want?" I know, the idea, for many men, sounds like a fantasy. Many of us think that, but of course, we've got to have a family, and but of course if my woman wants children, I will go along with that.

I'm suggesting a new morality is in order, a morality that involves a broader perspective than simply doing whatever the woman wants. This new morality needs to not only embrace the desires of men, most importantly it needs to embrace the longer term perspective that humans desperately need to severely limit their numbers, or ecological catastrophe will do it for them.

Transitions Needs Your Talent

Transitions is always looking for your contributions in writing on issues affecting men. If you have an article or essay, please submit it for publication. Send all work to: **Jason Leatherman, Editor-in-Chief**, at jwleath@yahoo.com. Please put "Transitions" in the Subject line. Also, see <http://www.ncfm.org/write1.htm>.

But are men really willing to even have this conversation with their women? Are they now so weakened by the women's movement that they are afraid even to broach the topic?

And while we're at it, since when don't men stand up to women's desire to live lavish consumer lifestyles, telling women, "No, you can't have a BMW"? Many of the men I know work themselves to an early grave, acting like slaves to their demanding jobs, so that they can make the money that their wives go on to spend. The statistics bear this out — most of the money in America is spent by women, not men, but most of the money is earned by men.

Are we as men so hypnotized by the consumer culture that we automatically think that, but of course, the most outrageous consumer-oriented request of our wives/girlfriends (a vacation in the Caribbean for example) is legitimate, and that we need to do our best to meet their requests? It is runaway consumerism that is destroying the earth, of course in addition to overpopulation. Are men willing to confront, willing to provide a good reason to deny, and willing say no to their wives'/girlfriends' consumer-oriented requests? By not broaching the topic, are they just selling out to the "happiness of the moment" or the "path of least resistance"? Or are they willing to stick up for the planet, stick up for themselves, and stick up for the truth?

Name withheld by request

DEARNCFM:

CNNMoney.com did an excellent review on March 2, 2006, of *Why Men Earn More*.

My favorite part is "I don't usually use this column to recommend books, but *Why Men Earn More*" will provide much food for thought, no matter where you stand in the pay-gap debate... This book — complete with far more textured, subtle arguments than a column can ever convey — will make you think twice."

Here is the link: money.cnn.com/2006/02/28/commentary/everyday/sahadi/index.htm

Should you wish to gift this book as a birthday — or Mother's or Father's Day — present, it's cheapest on Amazon.

Warren Farrell

DEARNCFM:

The Men's Leadership Alliance is a nonprofit seeking to inspire authentic manhood. After reading your website briefly, I sense that we are working in the same area. Our focus is on the inner being of men, helping them find empowerment and wholeness, freedom that which has held them back as men, not in opposition to women, but in equal partnership.

Please visit our website (www.mensleadershipalliance.org).

And do consider us a resource for the men with whom you work.

Todd

Men's Leadership Alliance

<< Letter deleted >>

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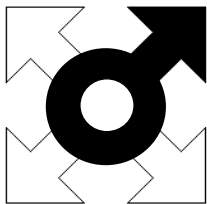
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