



PACE

Parents And Children for Equality

Newsletter



Columbus, Ohio Chapter

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Volume 21, No. 6

The "Best Parent" is *Both* Parents

June 2002

Found at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sharedparenting/>

OTTAWA CITIZEN, By Dave Brown, Saturday, June 08, 2002

Senator Speaks For Fathers

Senator Anne Cools is becoming something of a star in the United States with her pro-father politics.

The International Fatherhood Conference in Washington, D.C., on May 27 -- at which Ms. Cools was a keynote speaker -- drew 2,000 delegates. When she was introduced, according to Howard University political science professor Stephen Baskerville, who attended the event, she drew a standing ovation. When she finished, he said, the crowd was again on its feet roaring approval.

Asked about the different attitudes between the countries, Ms. Cools said Thursday: "In Canada we (pro-family and pro-divorce reform) have the support of the public, but the government won't act. It's the reverse in the U.S."

Some excerpts from her speech:

"Misguided social policies of the last many decades have been reckless with children's lives. Misguided policies have created fatherlessness. Misguided policies in social welfare law, in family law, in divorce law, in child welfare law ... Fathers face courts, laws, and systems that will not hear their voices ...

"The economic consequences of a father's absence are often accompanied by psychological consequences, which include higher-than-average levels of youth suicide, low intellectual and educational performance and higher than average rates of mental illness ... "

(continued on page 4)

JUNE MEETING

This month's meeting will be a panel whose members engage in a round robin Q & A session for meeting attendees

Panelist (so far):

Chuck Preston, Doug Dougherty, Craig Treneff, (see page 3 for more info)

Location and Time:

June 17, 2002, 7:00 p.m.

Worthington Presbyterian Church

(Northwest corner of High St. and SR 161)

Judge Kim A. Browne Speaks to PACE

Director's Corner

Judge Kim A. Browne Speaks to PACE

Newly appointed Franklin County Domestic Relations Judge Kim A. Browne was the featured speaker at the PACE-Columbus May meeting. She listened as well as spoke and, I believe, she heard our concerns.

Judge Browne related the story of her brother's valiant attempts to stay in his children's lives after he and his wife divorced. He had joint custody of his children in Texas. The mother moved the children away from their father no fewer than three times. Judge Browne's brother followed his children two times but finally ran out of money fighting legal battles in the various states to stay in his children's lives.

We appreciate Judge Browne taking time from her very busy schedule to get to know us and let us get to know her. We look forward to working with her to promote the well-being of children of divorced and never-married parents in Franklin County.

Work Progresses on Legislative Front

PACE-Cleveland member Marcia Winfield is working with my wife, Julie,

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PACE is Proud to be Affiliated with:

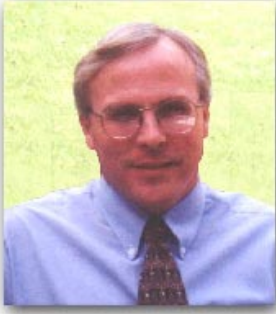


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Director's Corner continued

and me to present recommended legislative reforms to Representative Ron Young (R, Painesville), who has expressed interest in sponsoring legislation that would reform Ohio's divorce and custody system. We currently have a rough draft of a 60-page document with information on legislation in other states, recommended legislation in Ohio, and social science research about the importance of keeping both parents involved in the lives of their children.

Thanks (Again) to Volunteers

Rowland Smith has entered into our database hundreds-many hundreds-of names, addresses and other information on new child support obligors. These are being used to send postcards to these people, inviting them to PACE meetings. We saw several new faces at the May meeting as a result of this effort.

And Rowland isn't the only PACE member we need to thank for this effort. Ray Davidson printed out, stamped and mailed over 1,000 postcards just prior to the May meeting. (I guess this makes Ray PACE's "Thousand Points of Light" all by himself.) As it turns out, Ray didn't do it alone. His father got up in the middle of the night and finished putting the stamps on the postcards.

I thank all those who have given generously of their time for PACE's efforts. Now, I especially want to thank

Rowland, Ray and Ray's father. (Which makes very nice transition to my closing thought.)

Closing Thought

It's almost Fathers' Day. It is appropriate, as we continue to struggle to change a system that all too easily tears fathers from their children, that we reflect on ourselves as fathers and on our own fathers.

There are many ways to be a good father-many kinds of good fathers. My own father, like many of yours, was a terrific role-model. But some men did not have the benefit of such a role-model. Perhaps their father was cut out of their lives by custody laws that reduced him to a mere visitor; perhaps he was so burdened by the expectation to be the sole financial provider for his family that he wasn't able to involve himself emotionally with his children; perhaps he simply accepted the view that the family was the mother's domain and accepted a merely supporting role as a parent.

We can always, though, learn from our fathers-from their mistakes as well as from their successes. And, most importantly, we can pass on to our sons an even stronger legacy of loving, involved fatherhood.

And we should never think that we are unimportant in our children's lives. No matter how little we get to be with them, we are important to them. A 17th Century English proverb recognizes one of the many roles we play for our children when it says:

"One father is more than a hundred school masters."

—Don Hubin

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See page footer for PACE Columbus address, phone and Web page

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(Sign up at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/paceohio>)

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(Sign up at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pace-forum>)

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Children's Defense Fund-Ohio, May 28, 2002

The 2002 Kids Count data book is now available on the Web

We are pleased to announce the release of the 2002 KIDS COUNT Data Book, which documents the status of America's and Ohio's children. KIDS COUNT offers a look at our most vulnerable children and their families over the last ten years when much of the time, there was a robust state economy.

Now, we are struggling with a tighter state budget. It is essential that we all have good information about what is happening to our most fragile families as we make decisions about who will shoulder the burdens added by the recession.

Generally, Ohio's children have done better over the last ten years:

- Slightly fewer children now live in poverty than 10 years ago, but more than 1 in 6 continue to be poor
- More children, including those in low-income working families, have health insurance than their counterparts throughout the nation
- We need to make sure those gains are not lost in these difficult economic times. At the same time, Ohio's policymakers and advocates for children must address those areas where our children are losing ground:
- The number of teens graduating from high school has decreased by 14% over the last ten years.
- Ohio lags behind the national average in providing food assistance to children in low-income working families

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has posted the data book online. The site features state and national profiles, as well as graphs, maps and rankings which can be customized according to your needs.

You can access the 2002 KIDS COUNT Data Book online by visiting the following web link:

<http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/kc2002/>.

You've probably seen something about this in the mail. Don't expect this to *fix* child support in Ohio, but...

Public Feedback Sought Comment Period: July1 - August 1, 2002

The Child Support Reform Shareholders' Group has developed **draft recommendations** to improve the Child Support System in Ohio. To comment upon them, please visit the Internet Web site: <http://www.state.oh.us/ODJFS/shareholders/index.stm>

PACE Columbus is indebted to:
Kathy and Jack Eshelman, of
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contribution of time and materials to
reproduce the *PACE Newsletter*.



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Have you found effective ways to deal with Single Parenthood?

CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SINGLE PARENT'S SOUL is now being compiled. The editors are now looking for some great stories between 300 and 1,200 words. Author will retain rights to the work and paid \$300 upon acceptance. The deadline for submissions is August 1, 2002. For submission guidelines, go to <http://www.singleparentsoul.com/big/guide.html>

June Meeting Panel:

Chuck Preston Doug Dougherty Craig Treneff

June's monthly Columbus PACE meeting will provide a panel of three lawyers (and maybe more), at least two of whom are OSBA Certified Specialists in Family Relations Law. All three have participated before at PACE meetings. Our panel will entertain a round robin Q & A session for meeting attendees.

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(continued from cover story, page 1)

Quoting a 1996 Gallup poll, she said 79.1 per cent of Americans agreed that the most significant social problem facing the U.S. was, and is, fatherlessness.



Canadian Senator Anne Cools

Ms. Cools used three Canadian cases to highlight her call for changes, as Americans and Canadians face courts with similar attitudes. First was an Ontario case (Oldfield v. Oldfield, 1991) in which a former wife appealed for court approval to move with her children to France to marry her boyfriend. The judge ruled there was a loving and caring relationship between the children and their father, but he was in a tight corner. In the end,

the judge said he was forced to make a ruling that defeated the best interests of the children by removing one parent and giving custody to "a mother who loves them dearly but who is shackled by her discontent."

The romance failed, the marriage didn't happen and the judge later increased the father's already substantial support payments to cover the cost of flying the children back and forth for visits.

The second case (heard in the B.C. Supreme Court in January 2000) involved the removal of a child from loving adoptive parents after the birth father challenged the adoption. He showed he had offered to raise the child, but the unmarried mother had refused. The mother later told the court she was coached by a social worker from an adoption agency. The court ruled the natural parent's right to parent had to be honoured.

The third story involves Darrin Bruce White, 34, a B.C. railroad engineer who committed suicide in March 2000, after being ordered by a court to pay support twice as much as his income.

"The number of suicides of fathers like this is high and

climbing. This was a case of yet another father crushed by this grinding system of family law, family support payment regime ... as money they do not have is extracted and gouged out of them."

The conclusion Ms. Cools makes in her speech echoed a 1965 report by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then U.S. assistant secretary of labour. The report has been revisited through the 1990s and is still quoted as a definitive work.

We must seek peaceful means of restoring justice and respect for men and families if our society is to survive, because we cannot long continue down the present path of legislated gender bigotry and rights exclusion.

"Children without fathers will flounder and fail," Ms. Cools quoted from the study. "We should dust off this report and re-examine it."

In closing, she called for more support for men from women. "I urge all women here to take the lead in America in politics and in public affairs to uphold a new definition of womanhood, which includes the love of men and children. I urge you all to support fathering as a pressing public and social policy issue, a major political initiative, and to vindicate the entitlement of children to the love and support of both parents."

Ms. Cools says she came away from the conference with a new idea. "I met people from Atlanta who last year rescued 4,000 men. They were men about to be jailed for three months for contempt of court (for non-payment). They said, 'Don't send them to jail, give them to us and let us work with them and show them how to be proud to be fathers and meet their obligations.' "

Ms. Cools is now trying to determine if a similar program should be in place in Canada. First, she has to find out how many are being jailed.

Dave Brown is the Citizen's senior editor. Send e-mail to dbrown@t... Read previous columns by Dave Brown at <http://www.ottawacitizen.com>

According to Mr. Baskerville, the purpose of the three-day conference was not to protest, but to encourage men to accept with pride their roles as fathers, and if necessary fight for them.

Douglas B. Dougherty

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Family Relations Law Specialist*

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Practice limited to family law

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Found this here: <http://www.angelfire.com/ky2/multicare/lss.html>. The editor of this newsletter (lovingparent@hotmail.com or see addy at bottom of page 2) would appreciate any feedback about this article/issue.

SYMPTOMS EVEN MORE INTENSE WHEN PERSON NAMED IS INNOCENT...

It's the falsely accused people who get most angry and frustrated and fight hardest for justice or their kids. Real deadbeats don't fight for their kids, they leave town. Why would a judge take kids from a parent willing to go broke fighting just to spend time with them?

LITIGATION STRESS SYNDROME

This is a relatively newly recognized condition. Due to the increasing number of legal actions, especially in the United States, this problem unfortunately will be encountered with increasing frequency. It occurs when a person is named in a lawsuit.

- A The symptoms can be even more intense when the named person is actually innocent. Other factors which can influence the intensity in these cases are whether this is the first time in this person's life they are involved in a legal action, or if they are out of a generational/cultural background making any legal action a matter of personal fear or shame (e.g. only 'bad people' get sued). The effects may permeate body, mind and spirit!
- B A patient may typically report initial shock, dismay, and anger. This is often followed by depressive feelings, especially a feeling of paralysis and lack of power or control over her/his life. Hyperactivity, hyperacute senses and insomnia are common. There is often a feeling of abandonment and aloneness. Despondency can occur, often to the point of self-destructive behavior or even suicide. There are regular exacerbations of paranoia and persecution.
- C There can be irrational fleeting thoughts that permeate EVERY activity with or without triggers. Patients say they feel as if there is no escape 24 hours a day! They speak of being the hunted/ the prey. They say they cannot look forward because they have to look behind themselves or over their shoulders at all times. There is a constant 'replaying' of the scenarios that have been claimed to have contributed to situation. They feel haunted day and night by disturbing thoughts. Patients can suffer withdrawal to the point of apathy often described as 'numbness' often resulting in spousal alienation. There is little sharing of feelings for fear of reprisals, doubts and loss of respect from others or further legal repercussions.
- D The legal system and the situation itself can promote feelings of paranoia. This may become even more common in the future due to advertised prepaid legal services.
- E There is also the moral side. Fighting and winning but perhaps undergoing financial ruin in the process vs. settling and paying what is considered legal extortion. Some patients will say with futility, the only winners are the lawyers in a system where the loser doesn't pay, and people can get away with frivolous lawsuits. The outcome is always an unknown filled with variables and a delay, perpetuation/ protraction of the suffering with no certain timeline (often years in duration), which only intensifies the stress. It is not well placated with 'go on with life', 'we're just pushing papers', or 'it's just an intimidation game'.
- F Treatment: As a matter of practicality, doctors and therapists can be helpful by first contacting the patient's attorney to learn about documentation issues. From the outset, make sure the patient knows your legal boundaries of disclosure (or lack thereof).
- G The patient needs reassurance that these feelings are to be expected. The therapist must validate and acknowledge this suffering. There is a tremendous need for communication, emotional support and reassurance. The need for a support group of family and friends is great. There is a need for regular intellectual escape. This can take the form of filling time with mundane TV programs, viewing comedies or movies with clear heroes, doing simple crossword puzzles or engaging in very light reading.

Therapy and goals:

- 1- Creation of a therapeutic relationship filled with trust and empathy.
- 2- Treatment and instruction in self-treatment for stress.
- 3- Treatment and recovery from stress and its effects.
- 4- Helping to reframe the problem in the here and now.
- 5- Integration of this event into the spiritual/philosophical framework of the individual.
 - 1- The patient should be motivated to do physical exercise.
 - 2- Be aware of the need in some cases to have psychological counseling as soon as is practical.

When there is no evidence of validity of psychiatric evaluation regarding a particular legal question, it should not be assumed that the evaluations can be made accurately. Rather, when evidence is lacking, the assumption should be that psychiatrists cannot make such evaluations accurately, especially in view of the general findings that validity of diagnosis is usually very low wherever it has been tested.

Jay Ziskin, *Coping with Psychiatric and Psychological Testimony*, 1995

From <http://www.GlennSacks.com>

How to Bring Back Our Fathers

By Glenn J. Sacks, (Chicago Tribune, Salt Lake City Tribune, Los Angeles Daily News, 6/17/01)

The largest factor in predicting whether a child will graduate high school, attend college, become involved in crime or drugs, or get pregnant before age 18 is the presence (or absence) of a father in the child's life. Studies show that this remains true even after adjustments for household income. Yet at the same time, we allow hundreds of thousands of fathers to be locked out of their children's lives by ex-spouses who ignore their kids' need for a dad, and by a family court system that is biased against fathers.

The divorced dad has endured more unwarranted criticism than perhaps any other group in our time. Isn't the divorced dad, we are told, a man who abandoned his family? A dead-beat dad? A child abuser?

Occasionally, yes. Usually, no.

Close to 70% of all divorces involving couples with children are initiated by the mother, not the father. Studies show that couples agree that the reasons for these divorces are usually not infidelity or abuse but instead a lack of "closeness" or of not feeling "loved and appreciated."

Most "deadbeat dads" are either poor, unemployed, or are denied access to their children. Among men who have had no employment problems in the past year, and have had access to their children, studies show that more than 80% pay their child support in full. Less than 5% don't pay at all, and fathers actually have a much better record of paying court-ordered child support than mothers do.

There are fathers who abuse their kids. However, two-thirds of confirmed cases of child abuse and of parental murders of children are committed by mothers, not fathers, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. Children are 88% more likely to be seriously injured from abuse or neglect by their mothers than by their fathers.

How can we get fathers back into their children's lives? There are five needed, long overdue reforms:

1) Enforce fathers' visitation rights. Three-quarters of divorced fathers surveyed maintain that their ex-spouses have substantially interfered with their visitation rights. A recent nationwide study of children of divorce found that 42% of children who lived solely with their mother reported that their mother tried to prevent them from seeing their fathers after the divorce. However, only 16% of children who lived solely with their father reported similar obstruction. The women in the survey generally admitted that

their actions were punitive in nature and not due to safety considerations. Yet the government spends \$340 on enforcing child support for every \$1 it spends on enforcing visitation rights. Prosecutions of fathers who violate child support mandates are common, whereas prosecutions of mothers who violate visitation orders are rare.

- 2) Make joint custody a reality instead of a meaningless scrap of paper. Most states have mandatory joint legal custody, but in practice it often means that the mother is automatically issued physical custody and the father can only see his children a few days a month. Studies reveal that divorced mothers are five times as likely to be satisfied with custody arrangements as divorced fathers. It is imperative that joint custody means 50% physical time with each parent, or a time-sharing agreement negotiated between parents whom the court treats as equals.
- 3) Don't hold the father's breadwinner role against him. Men are generally expected to sacrifice time with their kids in order to be their family's main breadwinner. When divorcing couples go to family court the judge gives the children primarily to the mother because the father "hasn't nurtured them as much." Why not? Because he was earning the household income that made it possible for the mother to spend more time nurturing the children.
- 4) Crack down on "Move Away Parents" - custodial parents who violate court orders by moving their children away from their ex-spouses.
- 5) Penalize ex-spouses who make false accusations of child abuse, molestation, etc., during custody disputes. Many warring ex-spouses use false accusations as their "ace in the hole" in a custody battle. Studies have shown that in this context, 75% of child sexual abuse accusations are unfounded or unsubstantiated.

The man who abandons his children is a pariah in our society, as he should be. But if it's despicable for a father to abandon his children, is it not equally despicable for a mother to drive a father out of his children's lives?

Glenn's columns have appeared in many of America's largest newspapers, including the Chicago Tribune, the Los Angeles Times, Newsday, the Houston Chronicle, the San Francisco Chronicle, the Philadelphia Inquirer,

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(continued from previous page with addendum by Don Hubin)

the San Diego Union-Tribune, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the Los Angeles Daily News, the Washington Times, and dozens of others. He invites readers to visit his website at <http://www.GlennSacks.com>

PACE Parents And Children for Equality "Through the Eyes of a Child": PACE and CAPRA* Statement on Children's Rights

How would the divorce system in Ohio have to change if we viewed it through the eyes of a child? In order to protect the rights of children of divorced and never-married parents, the state of Ohio must enact legislation making the following changes to Ohio law:

1. A strong, though rebuttable, legal presumption that children will continue to enjoy equal access to both parents and the parents will equally share parental rights and responsibilities. This change is absolutely crucial to the well-being of children of Ohio's divorced and never-married parents. The Task Force on Family Law and Children recommends moving away from the language of "custody" and "residential parent". This is a very good recommendation, provided any such legislative changes emphasize that both parents are presumed to have the same rights and responsibilities with respect to the children except where a parenting plan indicates otherwise.
2. A strong, though rebuttable, legal presumption that it is in the best interest of the children not to be relocated away from either of their parents. Equal parenting of children becomes impossible if one parent moves the children far away from the other parent. Because children need the day-to-day care and companionship of both parents, there should be a presumption against either parent moving the children away from the other parent. There can be legitimate reasons for relocating children but, because it involves a degradation of the relationship with the other parent, the parent seeking to relocate the children away from the other parent should shoulder the burden of overcoming a presumption against doing so.
3. Serious enforcement of parenting time. Because children have a right to the care and companionship of both parents, interference with the parenting time of either parent should be treated as abuse to the children. There should be required make up time, the party guilty of interfering should pay all court costs and attend a mandatory parenting class to educate him or her about the harm this causes children. Furthermore, the law should make it explicit that repeated incidents are an adequate basis for a

change of custody or significant shift in parenting time toward the parent who is facilitating the children's relationships with both parents.

4. Equal treatment of each parent's child support obligation in shared parenting cases in which both parents are custodial and residential parents. A child has a right to be supported financially by both parents in proportion to their ability to do so. Ohio must enact explicit language that states that a court may not treat parents differently for calculating presumptive child support if both parents are legal custodians and residential parents of the children. The guidelines already take into account differences in income. Time with the children, extraordinary expenses or divisions of expenses that are not equal, should be handled by deviating from a presumption that parents in such a situation are providing equally for the children unless an explicit "parenting time adjustment" is enacted. The presumption in shared parenting where both parents are custodial and residential should be that both parents are equally parenting their children.
5. A parenting time adjustment in child support in cases of sole custody so that total child support funds are divided between the households based on reasonable expectations of expenses on the child in both houses. Enact a sensible "parenting time adjustment" to handle cases of sole custody that, nevertheless, involve significant direct expenses on the children by the noncustodial parent. In an ideal world, sole custody arrangements would be rare. However, when they exist, significant expenses by the noncustodial parent must be recognized so as to make possible and to promote involvement by this parent in his or her child's life. Child support is for the child; child support should follow the child.
6. Serious, and seriously enforced, sanctions for knowingly or recklessly making a false allegation of abuse. Because children have a right to the care and custody of both parents, provided they are fit, loving parents and because false allegations of child abuse or domestic violence result in legal actions that interfere with the child's ability to have a normal relationship with the parent falsely accused, false allegations of child abuse ARE child abuse. They should be treated as such.

Donald C. Hubin, Ph.D. PACE Director of Research and Analysis

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(continued from page 12, "Father's Rights and Political Action")

carry on to their own families. But a perhaps worse effect is to destroy parental authority. No parent who has put himself or herself before their child in such a basic way has any moral authority to instruct, correct, or discipline a child. How can parents instill lessons of selflessness in children when their own actions demonstrate precisely the opposite?

More specifically, it destroys notions of trust, obligation, and fidelity in the child, qualities basic to any family. In effect it says that it is okay to break promises and obligations such as marriage vows when they no longer suit our convenience, it is okay to make up the rules as we go along and, in effect, live by no principles except those that suit our momentary convenience. Again, how can parents instill an ethic of fidelity, obligation, and trust when their own actions manifest the contrary?

Even more fundamentally, it destroys the integrity of the family itself. The act of separation and divorce says that a family is not something from which the child can derive a sense of unconditional love and security. On the contrary, a family can be disbanded at any time at the whim of one member. Even more, it says that a family member can be disgraced and expelled. Especially when it is unilateral (as it increasingly is) and when one parent is marginalized from the children's lives, the effect is the expulsion of a family member. This is the destruction of the child's entire world and the source of unimaginable terror to a child. If Daddy can be pushed out of the family, after all, what about me? What security is there in my family if members can be expelled because they do something Mommy or someone else doesn't like? What if I do something Mommy doesn't like? What is the meaning of Mommy's or Daddy's love if it can be terminated when it is no longer convenient?

Finally, litigation against family members exacerbates and in effect politicizes these messages. It says that the state is a legitimate instrument to punish the child's loved one who has fallen out of favor. It says that rather than solving problems as a family, we declare a member to be a public enemy and bring the power of the state to bear on him. In an almost literal sense, we declare civil war on our loved ones. Again, if the police can be used to keep Daddy away or throw him in jail because Mommy no longer likes him, what will they do to me?

Perhaps from the political standpoint, the most significant lesson for the child is the firsthand experience of tyranny and oppression, both in society and within his own family. The custodial parent becomes a kind of satrap of the court, and the dictatorship of the court over the family is extended and writ small within the family. The custodial parent

tyrannizes over the non-custodial parent, undermining his authority, dictating the terms of his access to the children, talking to him contemptuously and condescendingly as if he were himself a naughty child, perhaps engaging in a full scale campaign of vilification (which similarly mirrors the larger campaign against fathers waged by the state and media). After witnessing this against the non-custodial parent, the children then experience it themselves. With no checks on the power of the custodial parent, the tyranny is naturally exercised over them as well. In extreme (but not uncommon) cases of course this leads to child abuse.

All these messages concern authority - parental authority, paternal authority, political authority -- and therefore they are of primary interest to fathers.

When a father participates in separation and divorce, when he engages in litigation, when he even acquiesces in them, he too is sending these messages to his children. When a father takes part in these actions he is participating in the destruction of his own authority. He is taking part in the destruction of his own fatherhood.

Certainly there are times when we must resort to the courts just to be permitted to see our children. But in the long run when we rely on these means, when we allow them to dictate the terms and place of the struggle, we lose and so do our children. Even when these actions are undertaken by our spouses unilaterally, the child is receiving the same message. Then it is up to us alone to provide a positive counter-message.

The literature on "good divorce" offers no rebuttals to these messages. There is a more effective and more constructive alternative.

The Political Alternative

The alternative is to become active politically for the defense of our children and families.

I know this idea immediately raises red flags among many. Images come to mind of strident "activists" (like the dreaded feminists perhaps) screeching about their "rights." Many men are uncomfortable in this role, in which they have never before seen themselves. Our political world has become such a plethora of competing interest groups all trying to grab their share of the pie that we have forgotten what political action has done to relieve the truly oppressed.

More serious is the common assumption among men that working politically for the rights of fathers and children will divert time and energy from their own individual legal cases and reduce time with their own children while resulting in few tangible benefits in terms of winning custody or increasing visitation. This is a natural assumption, but it is not true.

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In fact the opposite is true. Political involvement may be the best thing you can do for your own case and for your own children. Moreover it will be beneficial to you and your children immediately, even if you never achieve the stated goals. It is more effective than all the touchy-feely advice you will get from therapists. And it is more constructive than all the legal help from the scavengers of the divorce industry. This is less because of what it gives than what it demands: It requires qualities that are directly necessary to fathers who have been through desertion, separation, divorce, false accusations, and the rest. Most importantly, it carries messages that can help heal the traumas of children who are suffering from separation and divorce.

Here are some of the direct and immediate benefits of political action:

Political action establishes authority. If you have gone through a desertion, separation, or divorce -- especially if your child was abducted from your home or you have been accused of some kind of abuse - your authority as a father has been largely destroyed. Even fathers in intact families have felt their authority take quite a drubbing these days, largely owing to the anti-male climate. If your wife has placed her desires before her children's welfare by destroying their home, she too no longer has any moral authority to correct a child. Political action gives you the authority of one who has taken the moral high ground and acts out of principle along with others through constructive means for the welfare and establishment of his family and his society.

Political action confers dignity. When you lost your children you lost your dignity and received the stigma of the "evil male." You unexpectedly joined the ranks of "abusers," "batterers," and "deadbeat dads." Suddenly all those things you assumed about others are being assumed about you. You "must have" done something to deserve losing your children. This is a very difficult stigma to remove, and you won't eliminate it by cowering behind a lawyer. Men do not hire someone else to fight their battles. Standing up for your rights and those of your children is a way of proclaiming to the world that you have nothing to be ashamed of and that you have done nothing wrong.

Properly understood, political action is not shrill or strident. It is the dignified but uncompromising demand for civil rights: the right to be fathers to your children. No political movement ever has lasting success without dignity, and fathers will get nowhere unless they show dignity both in their families and before the world. No doubt you have already discovered that in the home it is up to you to act maturely and not to quarrel with your spouse, because of the bias in the courts and because your spouse probably

has no incentive to be restrained. Why not take this one step further into the public realm and forego the quarrel of a court battle? The same principle applies. We don't have to hide our actions from our children or anyone else because they are ugly, undignified, shameful, or vicious - as, for example, is beating up on our spouse in a courtroom with a hired goon. We are acting openly in the public realm. We are asking for justice in the court of public opinion. Nothing could be more dignified.

Political action will make you a better father. The qualities necessary for being an effective political activist are the same as those necessary for a good father: sobriety, commitment, fidelity, sacrifice. Demanding your just rights is not a license for belligerence; quite the opposite. All great revolutionary leaders were moral puritans who saw the need for self-discipline. Lenin used to inveigh against libertine communists who would substitute talk for action and initiate a dozen tasks and never complete any. If you don't like this comparison, consider Oliver Cromwell, who "conquered himself" before he conquered his enemies. Frederick Douglass gave up drinking because he saw it was the most effective method of slaveholders to keep his people in bondage. Martin Luther King used to speak of the need for "self-purification" prior to action. The principle is simple: self-government requires self-control. Alcohol, gambling, womanizing, frivolous pastimes are incompatible with republican virtue. If you can't give up your sports page or your evenings in front of the TV, your girlie magazines or your nights out with the lads, you're no use as a fathers' rights activist. You're also probably not the world's greatest father.

Political action is an effective alternative to violence. Without lending credence to the hysteria over "male violence," let us grant for the sake of argument that fathers may be tempted to become violent when their children are taken away (who wouldn't?). If you find disturbing thoughts suddenly appearing in your head when they take your children, channel it into peaceful and constructive but determined activity for your children. Martin Luther King used to observe that violence in the black ghettos decreased significantly following political demonstrations. Involvement in fathers' rights is an effective way of channeling rage that might otherwise fuel domestic violence.

Political action shows your child you care. You may be caught in the vicious circle of being ordered to stay away from your children by a judge and as a result having them think you don't love them because you're not there. This is their natural conclusion and could be exacerbated by Mom's poison. You can't tell them it's because of Mommy or the Evil Judge that you aren't there, and you shouldn't;

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even if you could it wouldn't matter. Children judge by actions, not words. On the other hand, once your children witness you exercising your civic duty and your constitutional rights on their behalf and on behalf of other fathers and children, they will eventually understand why. They will realize that political action requires sacrifice, and they will admire you all the more and profit from your example. You are also telling the world that your children are so special that their father is willing to sacrifice everything for them.

Political action is an excellent education for your children. Some fathers feel they must not involve their children in their quarrel and fear they may be punished for it. But this is true only because the conflict is personal and litigious; in other words, because it is shameful. Children should always be spared the trauma of quarreling parents and animosity between spouses, whether at home or in court. But exercising your civic rights - indeed, fulfilling your duty as a citizen -- is a different matter entirely. This is something your children should see. We make enormous efforts in schools, churches, and civic organizations, teaching children about civic involvement, about constitutional rights and the importance of cultivating a public spirit and of sacrificing private desires for the larger public good. We introduce them to the teachings of Socrates, Thoreau, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King. Yet when it comes to putting their ideas into practice by following their example, we are told this is somehow "inappropriate." In contrast to litigation, when we undertake political action we are not fighting our children's mothers; we are fighting injustice. What could be more inspiring than to emulate these men on behalf of your children? Children know that actions speak louder than words. The lesson that civic action requires sacrifice, and must be undertaken with dignity, is both edifying for them and something that will make them proud of their father.

Finally, political action will provide your children with the spiritual tools they need to cope with family breakdown. This may not be obvious, yet it is true. But only if it is based on dignity, sacrifice, and love. A politics of hate, vengeance,

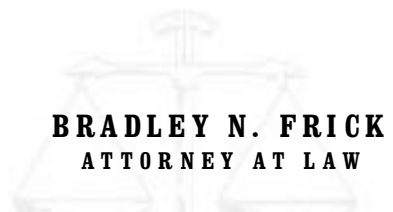
and demonization is not a fit lesson for children. But a politics of love and non-violence has its origins in the same spiritual values we try to instill in our children in school and in church. No child is too young to learn this lesson. If you take your children to Sunday school (and many people feel this is an important duty of a father, even if he himself has previously not been religious), you will be exposing them to the courageous acts of the Hebrew women, of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, of Jesus himself. These figures demonstrated precisely the qualities children of divorce more than others need to see. Teach them about sacrifice for others, about commitment to a cause, about obligation as citizens, about the power of moral authority, about love to those who hate us, about fidelity to principles larger than themselves.

Martin Luther King, the leading American practitioner of non-violence, used to talk about the latent violence in the system of state-enforced segregation and of the need for a "creative tension" to bring this violence out into the open. We have a similar task. A latent violence already pervades our families which are in effect occupied by the instruments of the state forcibly separating us from our children. We must extract the violence from the system, and we must be prepared to suffer violence ourselves, but we must use none. At some point we may have to adopt Ghandi's principle: "Fill up the jails."

No doubt you will be accused of dragging your children into the quarrel. But non-violent political action shifts the quarrel away from the person to the injustice. Our children are already at the center of the quarrel. They have already been dragged in as the chief victims by the belligerent parent and by the state that has invaded their family and set up a kind of domestic apartheid between the custodial parent and the child, on the one hand, and the non-custodial parent. Martin Luther King writes boldly and eloquently of how, despite the false pathos of those who "deplored our 'using' our children in this fashion...the introduction of Birmingham's children into the [non-violent civil rights] campaign was one of the wisest moves we made."

It is an illusion to pretend that we can shelter our children from a quarrel of which they are at the center and which by its very nature is constantly damaging them. What is important is not that they be sheltered from it but that they be provided with the tools to deal with it and with any crisis constructively. On their own what they will adopt are the tools of withdrawal, guilt, aggression, alienation, or any number of other symptoms of divorce that have become all too familiar. No matter how careful you are they will also absorb your hostility as well as that of your spouse.

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A non-profit, tax-exempt educational organization supporting parents and children of divorce and separation

Parents And Children for Equality, Columbus Chapter, P.O. Box 16066, Columbus, OH 43216

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www.PACEgroup.org

PACE Mission Statement

The mission of Parents And Children for Equality is to provide education, advocacy and support to parents and children experiencing loss of traditional parent-child relationship due to separation or divorce and to promote for children equitable access to both parents, and for parents reasonable sharing of rights and responsibilities.

PACE Columbus Meetings

Normally Meetings: **3rd MONDAY of the month, 7:00 p.m.**
at the Worthington Presbyterian Church, 773 N High St.
(NW Corner of State Route 161 and N. High Street)
Phone: (614) 885-5355

Our meetings typically consist of:

- Tips for newcomers
- Legislative updates
- Guest speaker such as attorney, legislator or psychologist
- Attorney to answer legal questions at **no charge.**

Membership in P.A.C.E.-Columbus is open to men and women: single, married or divorced.

Dues are **\$20 per year**, the cost of a 5-min phone call to an attorney.

PACE-PAC: PACE's Political Action Committee

Help PACE influence the political process to promote our children's interests. We know that children need two parents. So do some judicial and legislative candidates. Help us help them get elected. In politics, money talks. Let's continue to make sure our politicians hear us.

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Parents And Children for Equality - PAC
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The touchy-feely proponents of "good divorce" are right as far as they go when they tell us to how to mitigate these and suggest we "talk" to our children to mitigate these emotions. They suggest you tell your children, "No matter what we do to one another, your Mommy and I still love you." But consciously or not, the child knows, "but not enough to keep my home together." You are supposed to tell your child, "What's happening between Mommy and me is not your fault." But the child knows that she is the center and "cause" of the quarrel. Talk is cheap, and children know it. No amount of talk, contact group jargon, or therapy sessions is going to save children from the traumas of what their parents do. What we can do is give them the tools to overcome them and to act. These are partly spiritual, but they are also political.

The Bible teaches that we are all guilty of sin. Creative non-violence teaches that we are all responsible for society's injustices. Choose the value system you prefer. The point is that these religious and political values teach us how we and our children can channel our inadequacies, real and imagined, into constructive action.

We should tell our children that we all do bad things. We are all sinners, or we are all responsible for society's injustices, or however you prefer to phrase it. We cannot avoid guilt. What we can do is be sorry for the bad things we do and ask forgiveness. What we can do is forgive those who do bad things to us. What we can do is to love the person while hating the evil they do - the message of Christianity, Islam, civil disobedience, creative non-violence, and every other humane doctrine. We can teach them what the Bible, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King all taught: that "unmerited suffering is redemptive." We can teach them the one central principle of both religion and political action: that salvation requires sacrifice. If we strive toward this, we will not only have happy, well-adjusted children in spite of the belligerence they witness in others; we may just be permitted to be fathers to them again. Or perhaps I should say that from that moment we again will be fathers.

Dr. Baskerville teaches political science at Howard University in Washington, D.C. He earned his Ph.D. in political science from the London School of Economics.

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Father's Rights And Political Action

by **Stephen Baskerville, Ph.D.** (baskers@msn.com), May 18, 2002

Separation and divorce destroy children's lives. It helps to remember this because of the vast industry now devoted to what has been called "good divorce." This is the trend that seems intent on making divorce palatable and letting parents feel good about destroying their children's home. At best this is damage control. It is impossible to insulate children from the damage caused by the destruction of their families. Those who pretend we can are lying to themselves and to us. Moreover, the traumas of divorce are almost all exacerbated by litigation. Worse, they are all exacerbated when one parent - usually the father - is marginalized from the children, as is now almost invariably the case.

The reasons why separation and divorce damage children are too numerous to mention. But from the standpoint of fatherhood politics, the most important reasons involve authority.

The very act of separation and divorce, aside from any accompanying behavior or words, itself sends a myriad of terrible messages to children. It says that parents can put their own wishes above the welfare of their children. This is obviously a bad example, which the children can then

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