

## Making Divorce Pay

*The Association of Family and Conciliation Courts takes back-scratching to a new level*

By Michael Volpe

**Summary:** You've probably never heard of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, but its 5,000-plus members are lawyers, judges, and family court professionals who have enormous power in family legal disputes. The group claims to be guided by "the best interest of the child," but it is beyond dispute that it serves well the financial interests of its members, who are able to require the use of each other's services and force parents to pay. Members also make use of dubious psychological theories that can do injustice to parents as well as children.



What if George Orwell had written a sequel to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* called *Twenty-Fifteen*? In it, nefarious puppeteers use the family court system to usurp decisions traditionally left to parents. They justify infringing parental rights by using noble-sounding phrases like "in the best interest of the child" to take away more and more decision-making authority from parents. Americans' First, Second, Fourth, Eighth, and Fourteenth Amendment rights seem certain to be trampled routinely, and the reason given will always be because the decision was "in the best interest of the child." This group of manipulators is bold and brazen because it knows the media will have no appetite for any story of this kind, but will deem it a case of "he said/she said" and a pri-

vate matter best left unchronicled. Motivated by profit and sometimes by ideology, these busybodies have figured out that controlling parental decisions is profitable.

Unfortunately, this scenario is not a dystopian society in a science fiction novel; it is the way things really are in the family court system nowadays.

"It's an American holocaust," said Susan Skipp. She should know. Though she was the victim of domestic violence, she hasn't seen either of her two children in nearly three years. The judge and many other players in

Skipp's family court nightmare are all affiliated with the same group: the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC).

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## The History of AFCC

In 1963 in Los Angeles, Meyer Elkin, a social worker who specialized in treating child molesters in prison, along with Los Angeles Judge Roger Alton Pfaff set up what Elkin initially called the California Conciliation Courts (CCC) in a room inside the L.A. family court house. Even as CCC began collecting fees, nearly two decades would pass before the group was formally registered as a nonprofit. Its name would eventually change to the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts.

AFCC has continued to make a habit of running afoul of the Internal Revenue Service: the group was implicated in a money laundering scheme in Los Angeles in 1999; the Connecticut chapter operated without filing papers for 30 years; and the New York Chapter lost its nonprofit status in 2014.

For this reason and others, looking at the group's mandatory IRS filings tells us little about its reach and power. In many cases, group members farm out work to each other,

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**Editor:** Matthew Vadum

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**Address:**  
1513 16th Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036-1480

**Phone:** (202) 483-6900  
**Long-Distance:** (800) 459-3950

**E-mail Address:**  
mvadum@capitalresearch.org

**Web Site:**  
<http://www.capitalresearch.org>

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generating millions of dollars in fees for each other. AFCC members are in positions of influence that allow them to direct the flow of grant dollars that they farm out to other members. Finally, the group works with several individual state governments on family court-related training programs: for example, designing the guardian ad litem program in Connecticut (a guardian ad litem is a court-appointed guardian supposed to represent the interests of a minor), exclusively providing continuing education training for social workers in California, holding a yearly conference for family court judges in Wisconsin, and, under approval from the American Psychological Association, providing continuing education classes for psychiatrists.

Within a decade of its founding, the CCC opened up branches in Arizona, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, and its first international branch in Australia. In 1975, the name changed to Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, and the group registered in California as a brand new out-of-state nonprofit headquartered in Illinois, according to "Court Cancer Metastases," by Marv Bryer. (Bryer's pamphlet is available at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/140187096/AFCC-Court-Cancer-Metastacizes-A-Guide-to-Destroying-Children#scribd>.)

While AFCC has received scant funding from foundations, it boasts of receiving "a major grant from the Hewlett Foundation that enabled AFCC to add additional staff" in 1993. Today there are more than 5,000 members in 24 countries—almost exclusively lawyers, judges, and family court professionals—according to Peter Salem, the group's executive director.

## Richard Gardner and PAS

Among the most controversial concepts in family court is the term Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS), coined by the psychiatrist Richard Gardner. Among other things, this concept holds that one parent

will plant false memories of abuse and molestation in their child as a means of alienating the other parent from the child.

Parental Alienation Syndrome is not listed in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems produced by the World Health Organization, nor does it appear in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. The District Attorneys Association of the State of New York instructs that "Prosecutors should diligently question any case law or article that is cited as supporting PAS theory."

About the only place where PAS is accepted is in some family court rooms.

Dr. Joyanna Silberg is president of the Baltimore-based Leadership Council on Child Abuse & Interpersonal Violence, and she has consulted on thousands of cases in which a parent is accused of PAS. She told me that she considers Gardner, who committed suicide in 2003, to be a pedophilia sympathizer. Her organization has listed Gardner's most extreme statements on the subject. For example, "The determinant as to whether the experience will be traumatic is the social attitude toward these encounters," Gardner wrote in his book, *True and False Accusations of Abuse*; "there is a certain amount of pedophilia in all of us," and "pedophilia has been considered the norm by the vast majority of individuals in the history of the world."

Gardner was one of the chief defenders of Woody Allen, the film director who controversially married an adopted daughter he helped to raise with Mia Farrow. Gardner commented to *Newsweek* about Mia Farrow: "Screaming sex abuse is a very effective way to wreak vengeance on a hated spouse."

The proliferation of PAS is not without consequence. The Leadership Council in 2008 conducted a survey and estimated that 58,000 children are placed with abusers yearly, and

Dr. Silberg told me in an interview that these placements are almost entirely due to PAS.

In 2011, Peter Jamison wrote an article entitled, “California Family Courts Helping Pedophiles, Batterers Get Child Custody,” for the *San Francisco Weekly* examining this phenomenon. One story covered in Jamison’s expose was that of a protective mother, Joyce Murphy, who suspected in 2003 that her ex-husband, Henry “Bud” Parsons, was molesting their daughter. For the next five years, the court treated Murphy like the perpetrator, referring to her as “crazy” and suggesting she was putting these thoughts in her daughter’s head as part of a campaign of parental alienation.

When the court refused to keep her daughter away from her ex-husband, Murphy fled the state, only to be arrested for kidnapping her daughter, which resulted in her ex-husband gaining sole custody of the child. Finally, in 2008, Parsons was arrested for charges including child molestation, sex with a child, and creating child pornography. One of the judges in the case was DeAnn Salcido, who had ruled against Murphy. In time after leaving the bench Judge Salcido saw the error of her ways. A report on Salcido’s *mea culpa* described what happened:

“From the moment she arrived in family court as a new judge, she says, she was advised by veterans of the system to disbelieve accusations of child or spousal abuse arising in divorces. ‘I was basically told to be suspect of anyone claiming abuse,’ she says. ‘I had senior judges telling me, ‘Be suspect. The dad probably has a new girlfriend, and the mom’s upset.’” The concept of parental alienation, she says, arose in private discussions ‘all the time’ among court officials who espoused it.”

By the time the AFCC had begun promoting PAS, the group had dropped the descriptor “syndrome” and merely referred to the problem as parental alienation—a group of behaviors by one parent designed to alienate

the child from the other parent—which is far less controversial. Gardner had originally based his research on prior research done by longtime AFCC member Joan Kelly and psychologist Judith Wallerstein, and in 2001, Kelly published, along with AFCC member Janet Johnston, “The alienated child: A reformulation of parental alienation syndrome” in the *Family Court Review*, the AFCC’s newsletter.

A 2012 conference for New York AFCC on parental alienation described a number of behaviors that the alienating parent exhibits, including, “unfounded abuse allegation.” Actor Alec Baldwin claims to be a victim. In his book, *A Promise to Ourselves: A Journey through Fatherhood and Divorce*, Baldwin describes the exact same behaviors in discussing PAS. Baldwin argues in the book that he was alienated from his daughter by his ex-wife Kim Basinger.

“The fact that some abusive parents successfully dodge the consequences of their actions by using PAS as a defense does not and cannot negate the existence of parental alienation in custody disputes,” Baldwin wrote.

Examples of parental alienation behavior include not making a child available to speak, bad-mouthing the other parent, and saying you won’t love them if they see the other parent, but taken too far, psychiatrists interpret all negative responses by children to their parents as parental alienation.

In 2007, Angelo Gizzi of Connecticut, was charged with 13 domestic abuse-related crimes, including assault, sexual assault, kidnapping, and child endangerment after years of beating up his wife, Angela Gizzi, who now goes by her maiden name Hickman. He avoided jail time when Angela wouldn’t testify because she has abuse-related PTSD; instead, he pled guilty to a series of lesser charges. Initially, Angelo Gizzi was given only supervised visitation with his children, while Angela received main custody.

As the divorce proceeding went on, however, the focus became less on his physical abuse and more on Angela Hickman’s purported parental alienation. Dr. Stephanie Stein Leite, an AFCC member, said during a hearing, “This case sticks out in my mind, in the last 10 years, as the clearest case of alienation that I have seen.” Dr. Leite didn’t respond to a phone call seeking comment for this article.

Parental Alienation is also big business for the AFCC. “Overcoming Barriers” is a five-day boot camp for families deemed to have parental alienation. The entire family, including the two divorcing parents, is sent into a camp ground with no cell phones or other electronics to reconnect. Often this boot camp is compulsory, so if a judge orders it and you want to ever see your kids again, participation is mandatory. The cost of this boot camp is \$10,000. The boot camp was founded by AFCC member Matthew Sullivan, and its board members include AFCC members Robin Deutsch, Peggie Ward, Marjorie Slabach, Jeffrey Solison, and Barbara Jo Fidler.

The camp was featured in the January 2010 issue of the AFCC newsletter written by Sullivan, Ward and Deutsch.

“As for alienation, again, AFCC does not take a position,” executive director Salem told me, “but if you examine the July 2001 or January 2010 issues of *Family Court Review* you will learn that many of our members have generally rejected Gardner’s conceptualization of PAS, which is where the controversy began.”

Richard Ducote, a Pittsburgh attorney who cross-examined Gardner shortly before his death, said that by 2002 PAS supporters were arguing that PAS had moved beyond Gardner, thereby making a rejection of him irrelevant to the concept.

# Organization Trends

Meanwhile, parental alienation has been the topic of numerous AFCC conferences: the 2010 National AFCC conference in New York and a 2011 Massachusetts AFCC conference. A 2011 Conference in Philadelphia held in conjunction with the American Association of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML) was entitled, "Understanding and Responding to Parental Alienation." When asked, 98 percent of the 300 respondents at the 2010 national conference replied yes to the question, "Do you think that some children are manipulated by one parent to irrationally and unjustifiably reject the other parent?"

Dr. Silberg, who has attended numerous AFCC conferences, said it's a matter of priorities: "What I see is that AFCC training is more heavy on alienation and less heavy on spotting abuse."

## Sunny Kelley

No one understands how corrosive this is better than Sunny Kelley. Her son came home from a visit with his dad and was displaying signs of sexual abuse, she told me. When she took her son to his pediatrician, he described the abuse in detail. Her son was hitting himself, cutting himself, and asking how he would die. Kelley also took her son to Dr. Eli Newberger, the founder of the Child Protection Team and the Family Development Program at Children's Hospital in Boston, who concluded Kelley's ex-husband was sexually molesting his son.

As soon as Kelley's son told her of the molestation, she immediately reported it to the Connecticut Department of Children and Family (DCF). Within days, the allegation became a topic in a court-ordered mediation, and the court appointed more than 10 professionals, all AFCC members, to look into it. Kelley and her family spent about \$1.2 million paying for all these court-mandated professionals, and no one throughout the process ever disclosed that all of them, along with all her judges, were members of the AFCC.

"There were, to my knowledge, 11 professionals involved in my case who are AFCC-affiliated, either directly as founders and members, or through publicly funded, AFCC-run [guardian ad litem] trainings," Kelley said to the Connecticut legislature in January 2014.

Ken Robson, an AFCC member who was appointed to evaluate her son by Judge Lynda Munro, who is also a member of AFCC, said Kelly "was gratified by [her son's] sexualized behavior like a French whore" and that she "saw him as another rapist in her bed." Robson, when asked to name psychiatrists who influenced his protocol in Kelley's case, named Gardner along with several other proponents of PAS.

Kelley remembers AFCC member Maureen Murphy acting extremely inappropriately during Dr. Newberger's deposition. As Newberger described intimate details about her son, Murphy, sitting with her wife, made sounds which Kelley described as reminiscent of the famous scene from the movie *When Harry Met Sally* in which Meg Ryan simulates an orgasm.

As the dozen court professionals involved themselves in Kelley's divorce, her son was never removed from her ex-husband's care, a blatant violation of protocol when child abuse is alleged. Dr. Newberger was deemed a hired gun by the court and his testimony was dismissed by the judge, Lynda Munro, in favor of testimony from members of the AFCC who deemed Kelley the problem.

Kelley was forced in November 2010 to pay \$10,000 monthly for the services of Nick Sarno, another AFCC member, to monitor each of her visits. She has not seen her son since March 2012, when she ran out of money.

In 2013, the Connecticut Commission on Judicial Ethics ruled that judges couldn't serve on the boards of nonprofits that provide services to court involved clients. Judge Mu-

nro was on the board of AFCC Connecticut while hearing Kelley's case.

Kelley was featured in a 50,000-word exposé by Keith Harmon Snow that detailed over 70 cases in the New England area like Kelley's. Murphy, Munro, Robson, and two other participants in the Kelley case (Dr. Howard Krieger and Sydney Horovitz), all AFCC members, were mentioned repeatedly in Snow's research.

Besides Snow's exposé, Kelley's case was featured on Al Jazeera America in 2014, and the case also became the subject of an explosive confirmation hearing when Maureen Murphy was first nominated to be a family court judge in 2014. Her nomination was held up but eventually approved after Kelley's case was effectively litigated again in front of the Connecticut legislature.

## AV Grants

While still in prison on a burglary charge in 2005, Joshua Komisarjevsky began filing appeals to try to increase access to his young daughter, whom he had out of wedlock with then-16-year-old Jennifer Norton. Komisarjevsky used grant funds available for prisoners and parolees. By 2007, he was granted sole custody. Months later, he and John Hayes broke into the home of the Petit family and killed four people.

Months before John Allen Muhammad went on a murder spree that caused him to be labeled "the beltway sniper," he used a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) grant from a program called Devoted Dads to try to restore visitation with his children after his estranged wife went into hiding at a domestic violence shelter. Huffington Post contributor Anne Stevenson revealed that this grant was part of a Washington-based demonstration project overseen by Jessica Pearson of the Colorado AFCC.

Pearson is also president of Center for Policy Research, a primary consultant to

Office of Child Support Enforcement in HHS, which puts her in a position to steer hundreds of millions of dollars in fatherhood grants, including \$10 million in yearly federal Access and Visitation (AV) grants.

Fatherhood grants and Access Visitation grants are creations borne out of the landmark welfare reform bill of 1996. Jennifer Olson is executive director of the Protective Parents Coalition, a Texas-based family court reform group, and she says all AV Grants in her state are run through the office of Anita Stuckey, an AFCC member who is also the state's AV Grant Contract Manager and State Access Program Coordinator for the Texas Attorney General's Office.

Olson found that in her home Tarrant County alone, state AV grant funds dwarf federal funds with three grantees (New Day Services, Legal Aid Northwest and Tarrant County Domestic Relations Office). Stuckey has been known to offer contracts exclusively to AFCC members. "I want to ensure wide distribution of this opportunity for Access and Visitation services," Stuckey wrote to an internal AFCC email list in 2006.

Olson said her research has been thwarted by the State of Texas, which claims some individual case files and numbers are private while saying it doesn't collect data on individual providers and their case load. For instance, anecdotally Olson found that AFCC Texas member James Jensen received a lot of cases involved in AV Grants, but neither he nor Tarrant County could provide an exact number. Jensen didn't respond to my email for comment.

### **"High Conflict" Divorces**

AFCC didn't create the term "high conflict" divorces, but the group has done a lot to turn it into a household word. "The challenges posed by high-conflict families were front-and-center issues for most courts, and AFCC members led the way in developing new processes and techniques

for working with these challenging family members," according to AFCC's website.

"For the last 30 years, mediation and, to a lesser extent custody evaluations have dominated the family dispute resolution landscape," an AFCC white paper from 2004 stated. "Only recently have a very few court service agencies begun to explore a triage process to select from a menu of services."

AFCC literature recommends the use of a plethora of court professionals—custody evaluators, guardians ad litem, parenting coordinators, mediators, therapists, etc.—to defuse "high conflict" divorces.

"Parenting coordination is appropriate for high conflict cases dealing with child-related issues," according to an AFCC manual. What none of the AFCC literature promoting court professional services mentions is that these services are often compulsory and that litigants are charged \$250 an hour and more to pay for the services.

"People don't turn high conflict arguing over silver," Kelley said. "Divorces turn high-conflict when there is abuse, molestation, and psychopathy (sometimes all three)." Richard Ducote said that AFCC believes the job of court professionals is to defuse explosive situations by getting all parties to cooperate, but that can divert attention from the question of whether abuse is occurring.

"I have a right not to sit in a room with my abuser," Kelley said, but mediation and other court services that AFCC recommends for diffusing high-conflict divorces would require her to do just that. When abuse victims can't or refuse to do so, they are deemed uncooperative and a long-running divorce process is created.

When Angela Hickman refused to partici-

pate in therapy with her convicted domestic abuser, her children were taken away from her. Deborah Datz and Linda Smith, co-reunification therapists and AFCC members, along with William Brown, the guardian ad litem (and another AFCC member), all recommended that Hickman participate in reunification therapy with her ex-husband, putting her in the same room with her abuser, which caused a flare up of the PTSD she has suffered since her abuse. When Hickman refused, judge Maureen Murphy issued a ruling that gave sole custody to her ex-husband.

"She has not succeeded in dealing with the anxiety of being in Mr. Gizzi's presence. She has refused to be in the same room with him or to engage in any co-parenting counseling," Judge Murphy stated. When Hickman's cardiologist argued that forced therapy was dangerous to her heart, one of the would-be therapists made it clear that reunification therapy was necessary if Hickman ever wanted to see her kids again:

"I also noted [your cardiologist's] suggestion that you have no interaction or exposure to the children's father indefinitely.... Ms. Hickman, please be aware that when you are provided with the opportunity to have the initial renewed contact with your children, their father will be present."

The divorce has unfolded slowly, costing Hickman six figures as the focus shifted from her ex-husband's abuse to parental alienation to family reunification.

In a Connecticut case, Susan Skipp gained custody of her children in 2011, after enduring years of domestic violence. She went back to court when her ex-husband fell behind on child support and didn't show up to take the children for his visitation.

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Rather than dealing with these issues, the court litigated her divorce again. The guardian ad litem, Mary Brigham, entered her own appearance, inviting herself back to the case and filing more than 30 motions.

Soon after Skipp went back to court, five professionals—the guardian ad litem, parenting coordinator, three therapists, and a visitation center—each of whom charged an average of \$250 an hour were assigned to defuse this high-conflict but already settled divorce.

Four AFCC members—Dr. Howard Krieger, Dr. Sidney Horowitz, Judge Lynda Munro, and Dr. Linda Smith—were also on Sunny Kelley’s case. Seven AFCC members were on Skipp’s case. She and her children were each forced to undergo separate evaluations, and her children were forced into therapy conducted by Dr. Smith.

“My children also begged Dr. Krieger and others for protection from their violent father. My pleas were interpreted by Dr. Krieger as signs of serious emotional instability; my children’s pleas were regarded as symptoms of ‘Parental Alienation Syndrome,’” Skipp said in a complaint to the American Psychological Association (APA) about Krieger.

Skipp suffers from a form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder known as Legal Abuse Syndrome. When Brigham demanded a \$20,000 payment, Skipp was ordered to cash out her retirement or go to jail. Brigham billed Skipp a total of \$133,000.

Judge Munro declined to accept a psychiatrist’s diagnosis that Skipp had PTSD and instead diagnosed Skipp herself: “The defendant testified that she looked forward to this counseling. If the court takes her at her word then she cannot help herself in her conduct and this is an unaddressed mental health concern.”

Skipp was then told that in order to see her own children she would have to go to counseling with a psychologist

of Judge Munro’s choosing, and when she refused, Munro gave Skipp’s ex-husband sole custody and she hasn’t seen her two children in nearly three years.

All AFCC members on Skipp’s and Kelley’s case failed to respond to my phone calls and emails requesting comment.

“If you put an abuser and his victim in an adversarial situation, the abuser will always win,” Skipp said.

Abuse is only one way of creating “high conflict” divorces that provide lucrative employment for AFCC members on both sides of the dispute; dubious allegations of abuse can also create never-ending divorces labeled “high conflict.” For example, on May 11, 2013, Elisabeth Desmond’s current husband was accused by his ex-wife of domestic violence toward two of her children. Six days later, a judge granted the ex-wife a protective order, but the evidence of abuse must have been quite scarce, because the police closed the case without filing charges in June 2013 and Child Protective Services did the same in July 2013.

In her police report, Simon’s ex-wife made comments that raise the question of whether the abuse allegation was part of a legal strategy: “Rachel advised she recently has started the process with her attorney for a modification of the [divorce] court order.”

If that was her plan, it worked, because the judge’s protective order was enough not only to restart custody hearings in her own divorce but also to re-open the custody arrangements in the divorce case of her ex-husband’s new wife, Elisabeth Desmond, as well. Within a month, 12 court professionals—six from Texas AFCC—were assigned to both cases simultaneously. At court hearings, as many as 15 people were in the courtroom arguing both custody arrangements simultaneously.

Two years later, Desmond and her husband have seen visitation with their children cut back significantly, spent well over six figures in litigation, endured numerous evaluations, and there is no end in sight. Even as court professionals have taken testimony, run tests, and performed evaluations, they have also filed numerous motions to exclude testimony from the police and Child Protective Services, who obviously weren’t persuaded that abuse had occurred.

Using false or dubious allegations to gain a protective order for leverage in divorce is so common it’s been branded with the monikers “the silver bullet technique” and “the nuclear option.”

## Equal Parenting

The leading group promoting the theory of equal parenting is the Children’s Rights Council (CRC), which was co-founded in the 1980s by Meyer Elkin. Five high-ranking members of CRC, including Elkin, have also been high ranking members of the AFCC: Joan Kelly, Elizabeth Hickey, Jim Cook, David Dinn, and Phil Stahl. Dinn was quoted in a 1997 CRC newsletter saying, “AFCC is the closest practitioner of CRC issues in the country.”

A 2002 Texas AFCC Conference held jointly with the Children’s Rights Council during the latter’s Equal Parents’ Week is one of several examples of AFCC promoting the idea of equal or 50/50 custody in divorce.

While executive director Salem denies that AFCC takes a position on equal parenting and says their research found custody should be tailored to the situation, Bill Eddy, who attended a 2012 AFCC conference had a different take: “Research was presented that showed that one or more overnights a week away from the primary attachment parent is distressing to the child during the first two years. What seems to

be agreed upon is that the gender of the 'primary attachment' is not the biggest factor, and that shared parenting up to 50-50 after about age 4-5 generally can work."

All proponents of equal parenting always make a caveat for cases of abuse, but the climate created by other AFCC-supported theories makes proving abuse nearly impossible.

Take Charles Paclik's divorce, which started in Illinois in 2006. After his ex-wife moved to California, the jurisdiction for the divorce moved with her. He didn't see his two children for more than three years from 2007-2010 at the behest of the court, and four AFCC-trained social workers: Lucinda Beall, Laura Wittenberg, Stuart Lord, and Mary Jo Dierickx. Then his 14-year-old son from a previous marriage testified in court that his stepmother was physically abusing him and his two half-brothers. After that testimony, the court ruled Paclik and his ex-wife should have shared parenting. He lost primary contact with his children again after his wife's move to an adjacent county in 2013 triggered another custody fight. Paclik's custody continues to be litigated nine years after it began.

None of the four social workers responded to my email for comment.

Similarly, Sunny Kelley said her ex-husband first began to make their divorce controversial when she refused to go along with his plan for 50/50 custody.

Ken Altschuler, an AFCC member from Maine, told me: "I know of no case in which I have been involved that an individual known or proven to have sexually abused a child got custody of that child."

But his former client, Lori Handrahan, said that's exactly what happened to her. After her daughter made statements implicating Handrahan's ex-husband in molestation,

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the allegations were confirmed by Dr. Larry Ricci and his team of sexual assault forensic examiners at Spurwink, a large mental health service provider which conducted an investigation on behalf of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Though the Maine DHHS initially said the agency would defer to the conclusion of Spurwink, the agency ultimately didn't move forward. Maine DHHS didn't respond to my phone call for comment.

Dr. Newberger, Dr. Silberg, and Stephen Pickering, an investigator who spent 20 years as a police officer in sex crimes, also found evidence of molestation. Pickering said he met with the DHHS investigator and determined that the social worker was unfit to conduct the sexual abuse investigation.

Handrahan's ex-husband never lost custody, and when he openly refused to allow Handrahan the visitations the court had ordered, his lawyer mocked her saying, "I'll never let that woman see her daughter."

Handrahan's case included 10 court-ordered professionals, and it's now been more than four years since she's seen her daughter. Only Handrahan was sanctioned—when the judge threatened to take away her custody if she didn't take down a website she'd created to document her family court nightmare.

Similarly, Sunny Kelley told me multiple lawyers told her not to report abuse, because abusers always receive custody in those cases. Lori Handrahan said she was told the same thing by Altschuler, a charge he denies.

### Conclusion

Imagine again Orwell's novel set in 2015. Pseudo-science from an obscure psychiatrist is promoted by a group until it is accepted by family courts. The bad science allows any abuser to explain away their abusive actions and use it to advantage in divorce

proceedings. This same group then calls all abusive situations "conflicts," thereby putting the blame on all parties including the abuse victim and bringing in numerous bureaucrats to resolve the "conflict."

They then promote a theory which asks both parties to work together in all situations except proven abuse, knowing full well that bureaucrats will never accept proof. Put another way, if the police and Child Protective Services had simply vigorously investigated the evidence in Sunny Kelley's case, a molester would almost certainly be in jail, a child would almost certainly be with a fit parent, and Sunny Kelley and her family would not have spent more than \$1 million to lose that child.

*Chicago-based writer Michael Volpe spent more than a decade in finance before becoming a freelance journalist. His work has appeared in such national publications as the Daily Caller, FrontPage Magazine, CounterPunch, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Newsletter. His second book, The Definitive Dossier of PTSD in Whistleblowers, was published in 2013.*

**OT**

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**Terrence Scanlon, President**

# Briefly Noted

**ACORN**'s successor group in Missouri has been paying protesters \$5,000 a month to generate civil unrest in Ferguson, the troubled St. Louis suburb where black youth **Michael Brown** was killed by a white police officer last August. We know this because some of the protesters haven't been paid, and now they are demanding their promised reward. They held a sit-in at the offices of **Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment** (MORE) and posted a demand letter online. MORE and other groups supporting the **Black Lives Matter** movement have received at least \$33 million from radical America-hating financier **George Soros**, the *Washington Times* calculates. MORE is the rebranded Missouri branch of the former ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), which filed for bankruptcy in late 2010.

Former President **Bill Clinton**, who is known for his slippery use of language, says he will no longer give paid speeches if his wife is elected U.S. president. But he vowed to "continue to give speeches without compensation if **Hillary Clinton**, the front-runner for the 2016 Democratic presidential nomination, enters the White House." Commentator **Daniel Greenfield** notes that "Bill Clinton hasn't firmly stated that he would stop. His definition of 'compensation' might still include money donated" to the **Bill, Hillary and Chelsea Clinton Foundation**. "So like everything he says, this is meaningless," Greenfield adds. "Furthermore paid speeches are a means of providing huge sums of money to the people whom they expect will be shortly running the country. Once they are running the country, then the donors cash in."

The **Islamic State** (a.k.a. ISIS, ISIL) is urging its supporters to assassinate outspoken conservative **Pamela Geller** of the **American Freedom Defense Initiative** for organizing the "Muhammad Art Exhibit and Cartoon Contest," in Garland, Texas in May. Geller's home address in New York City was published on Twitter last month by a user believed to be "a British Islamic State jihadist kingpin," reports the *International Business Times*. Depicting the Muslim prophet Muhammad is strictly forbidden in Islam. Two gun-toting Islamic militants showed up at the cartoon contest hoping to cause mayhem but were gunned down during a shootout with a police officer. In May, Islamic State claimed to have 71 fighters in 15 different U.S. states.

Though many have declared the **Occupy Wall Street** movement a failure, it won a major propaganda victory when it forced the phony political issue of "income inequality" into the national political debate, one of its leaders writes in the *Atlantic*. **Michael Levitin**, a co-founder of The Occupied Wall Street Journal, writes that "Occupy's chief accomplishment was changing the national conversation by giving Americans a new language—the 99 percent and the 1 percent—to frame the dual crises of income inequality and the corrupting influence of money in politics." Indeed it's difficult to turn on talk radio without hearing the phrase "the 1 percent"—even among conservatives. Sen. **Ted Cruz** (R-Texas) said earlier this year that "the top 1 percent earn a higher share of our income nationally than any year since 1928," and Sen. **Marco Rubio** (R-Fla.), proposed attacking the problem by modifying the earned-income tax credit (EITC), which is a subsidy for low-wage earners.

After two decades of falling crime rates nationwide, rising levels of intense cop-hatred across America appear to be contributing to a spike in violent crime in major cities, according to **Heather Mac Donald**, a senior fellow at the **Manhattan Institute**. The "most plausible explanation of the current surge in lawlessness is the intense agitation against American police departments over the past nine months," she writes in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed. "Gun violence in particular is spiraling upward in cities across America," Mac Donald contends. For example, in Baltimore it is up more than 60 percent compared with this time last year, and this May was the most violent month the city has experienced in 15 years. The never-ending drumbeat against the police has caused what St. Louis, Mo., police chief **Sam Dotson** calls the "Ferguson effect." A backlash is in progress. Police officers are laying off of discretionary enforcement activity and the "criminal element is feeling empowered," Dotson explained.