

Getting to 'No'

A blueprint for a Fathers Rights resistance movement

Excerpted from the forthcoming book: *The War on Fatherhood*

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The working title of this paper was “A blueprint for a Fathers Rights resistance movement.” However, as the writing proceeded and the paper grew with each editing session, at some point I realized writing a comprehensive, detailed blueprint for building a Fathers Rights movement was a book-length task. What I have written is really an *overview* of the issues that should be considered toward constructing an actual blueprint for a successful Fathers Rights movement.

I Preliminaries—understanding the problem

The problem—the systematic discrimination, persecution, and now *criminalization* of fathers by virtue of their classification as “non-custodial parents” by the courts—has been in existence for the better part of 30 years.

The problem shows no sign of abating. Largely speaking, it is an invisible problem. The first question that needs to be asked and answered is: Why has there been no progress in all this time?

Finger-pointing is a staple of the Fathers Rights community. It has always existed because it is quite natural for a failed movement to explain away its failure by assigning blame.

1. Cultural context of the Fathers Rights movement

The problem is huge and multi-faceted, on this all agree. But what has to be comprehended first is the social and cultural environment within which this problem, and our movement, exists.

Parallels with other civil rights movements for “social justice” are often given to suggest how our movement should reframe itself to succeed. But there are no other civil rights movements analogous to what I refer to as the War on Fatherhood, and here’s why.

What have been the socio-political movements that have defined our recent history? Certainly the Civil Rights movement for African-Americans immediately springs to mind. Despite the fact that slavery ended a century earlier after the Civil War, racial injustice continued. The great Civil Rights movement of the sixties sought to end all the latent discrimination against black Americans that persisted.

A decade later, the women’s movement took full flight. “Women’s lib” and “feminism” became household words.

Presently, the latest class of people demanding attention from the identity politics crowd is homosexuals. Since it is debatable whether or not this aggrieved class is produced by “accidents of birth” as is true for racial and sexual distinctions—and also because the normalization of homosexuality is very much an evolving paradigm—I remove it from this discussion, but note that same-sex marriage and gay adoption are indeed issues that have significant bearing on Fathers Rights.

It cannot be denied that until these “social justice” movements of the sixties and seventies emerged, the white male dominated society. He may not have always ruled his family, hearth and home, but he overwhelmingly dominated positions of money, power and influence virtually everywhere else.

Both of these movements for “social justice” were unidirectional, that is, movement in one direction only: empowering people of color at the expense of ethnic European whites and women at the expense of men. In such a political environment it is virtually impossible for initiatives that intentionally favor whites at the expense of non-whites or men at the expense of women to see the light of day, let alone gain any political traction. This is realpolitik, and has nothing to do with the merits of any particular issue or cause.

But these two movements are not at the same stage. Black empowerment is mature, in the sense that the pendulum has gone as far as it is going to go, and we now begin to see a paradigm shift away from the excesses of “white guilt.” It is a given that within a few years racial preferences, aka affirmative action, will be declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court and will hopefully disappear altogether.

The women’s empowerment movement, on the other hand, *thrives*. The light at the end of the tunnel is not yet visible. It is said that we now live in a “post-feminist” world. Implicit in the use of this language is an acknowledgement that this feminist revolution is irreversible. It is still anathema for a politician to even pay lip service to a legislative or public policy initiative that would result in disempowering women to the benefit of men. Exhibit A is the grilling Justice Samuel Alito endured by Sen. Dianne Feinstein during his confirmation hearings. Alito was called to task on his dissent on *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*¹, where he opposed the majority on the judicial panel who ruled that a woman in an intact marriage has no legal or moral obligation to even inform—let alone seek the permission of—her husband, if she wants to abort a pregnancy.

I submit there is no better example of the dire state of the emasculation of men at the hands of the feminist revolution, where it is considered repugnant to even suggest that a husband has a right to be informed if his wife is pregnant and intends to abort—i.e., *to kill his own unborn child without his knowledge!*

But wait, there’s more!

After granting women the exclusive right to take the life of their unborn children, it hasn’t taken long for women to gain the power to actually kill their husbands, get away with it, and keep the kids to boot.

Mary Winkler, convicted of voluntary manslaughter and sentenced to just three years in jail for the 2006 shooting death of her minister husband, Matthew Winkler, served a total of 12 days in jail and two months in a mental health facility. Earlier this month she was released and given her three kids back, though formal custody of them is still pending as the slain minister’s parents are not happy at having to turn the kids over to the woman who shot their son in the back with a shotgun. Yet the “jury found her guilty of voluntary manslaughter after she testified about suffering from years of physical and emotional abuse by her husband.”²

These judicial atrocities are examples of “feminist jurisprudence”: the manifestation and injection of feminism, the social theory, into the legal sphere.

¹ *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Robert P. Casey*, US Court of Appeals, Third Circuit, Oct. 21, 1991

² “Convicted Killer Gets Custody of Kids,” *AP*, Aug. 4, 2008

If you accept that we live in a non-reversible post-feminist world, you might as well give up now and sue for terms.

The Fathers Rights movement implicitly seeks to regain power that men *have lost*; consequently, this means it needs to disempower women. It is pure denial and a strategic error to believe otherwise. *For fathers to gain custody rights of their children and freedom from criminalization based on a woman's allegation of "abuse," etc., the power that women presently possess to do these things must be taken away.*

Therefore, before any grand strategy for gaining "shared parenting" rights and such can take place, the reality of the cultural, social and political environment that presently does not comprehend anything contrary to the empowering of women must be acknowledged and addressed. Only then will rational strategizing and a coherent battle plan be possible. To paraphrase the classic line from Paul Newman's film *Cool Hand Luke*, the Fathers Rights movement must first, "get its mind right."

2. Fathers Rights as a counter-revolution

The Fathers Rights movement is essentially a counter-revolutionary movement. It seeks to overturn the feminist cultural revolution that has ruled the roost for the better part of two generations and counting. Once you understand this, it becomes clear that the Fathers Rights movement does not and cannot exist in a vacuum. The feminist sociology professor who teaches college freshmen that the patriarchy and the biological nuclear family are relics of a more primitive, unenlightened world... the social worker who interviews women and children entering the hospital emergency room to see if they are victims of domestic violence... the English teacher who includes Alice Walker rather than William Shakespeare in her syllabus... the U.S. senator and presidential candidate who brags about writing VAWA... the lesbian sociology professor who has her "Marriage and the Family" students fill out cards for the Statehouse supporting gay marriage... the conservative news show host on Fox who occasionally trots out a Fathers Rights advocate to make sport of him... etc., etc., all are part of *the problem*—not just the judge who took your child and granted your wife an abuse protection order!

II Fighting back

Essentially we are talking about a propaganda war, a war of information—more correctly, of *disinformation*. Clearly, therefore, a huge part of the problem is public perception. To employ the much overused cliché: we are engaged in a very real sense in a *war of hearts and minds*.

It is my contention that a war for hearts and minds cannot be won by disingenuous and deceptive methods, and the efforts so far to disguise the problem into a more politically palatable form is the first of the many cardinal mistakes of the Fathers Rights movement.

Any analysis of propaganda begins and ends with language. Using the verbiage of your enemy is the metaphorical equivalent of allowing the opposing army to choose the battlefield. The language used *is* the battlefield of the propaganda war we are engaged in. The lexicon of our enemy includes using the socially-constructed "gender" in place of the biologically determined "sex," "parent" instead of "mother" or "father," "partner" rather

than “husband” or “wife,” “choice” rather than “abortion,” and even “abuser” and “batterer” as synonyms for men who fight for custody of their children.

We need to create our own lexicon, and promulgate its use throughout the movement. “Fathers Rights” should be punctuated as a proper noun. It is a proper name, the name of our movement. Hence, it is capitalized, and no apostrophe.

1. This is a *Fathers Rights* movement

For as long as I have been involved in the movement, the predominant paradigm held that awareness of the problem can gain no traction because of an innate reverse-sexism in society. This is no doubt true, but the error comes in choosing how to react. The overwhelming “wisdom” of the intelligentsia in the movement believes that approaching the problem in a gender-neutral fashion and focusing on the children will circumvent the innate bias against recognizing men, as a class, as victims.

One would think that the abject failure of all various “*parent’s*” or “*children’s*” rights organizations and approaches over the past decades would have by now convinced everyone that this is very bad advice. But unfortunately this crippled logic persists and indeed flourishes throughout the movement.

Again: hearts and minds cannot and will not be won over by disingenuous, “clever” marketing/branding/messaging. Perhaps the best example of the failure of this approach is the Children’s Rights Council. This organization took scrupulous care in grooming its image and message as one about *children*—and not about *fathers*; that children’s well-being is best ensured by the care and companionship of both of their *parents*.

The CRC recruited prominent credentialed *women* as *spokespeople* and board members to promote their warm, fuzzy message. But this changed nothing. Politicians as well as the media remained unresponsive. This is because any effects of law and policy changes recommended by the CRC—even though framed exclusively from the perspective of the well-being of children—would enhance the rights of fathers at the expense of power wielded by women. And this is obvious to all—and even if not obvious to some particular politician, feminists would make damn sure they “got religion.”

The problem of children being denied their parents is overwhelmingly one of children being denied their *fathers*. Everyone knows this. Women who happen to find themselves on the wrong end of a child support order—or, even more rarely, an abuse protection order—are collateral damage. They have been hit by “friendly fire.” Therefore, to correct the problem of children suffering without the care and companionship of both of their parents, the power of women to veto the involvement of the father, given to them by the state via the family court, has to be curtailed.

Again, hearts and minds cannot be won by impure and disingenuous strategies. Virtually everyone knows a sales pitch when they see one. This fundamental dishonesty in describing the problem and then expecting sympathy and support is doomed to fail. *A successful Fathers Rights resistance movement requires authenticity, not a slicker marketing campaign.*

Let us embrace the problem for what it is. *Let us mean what we say and say what we mean.* We will discover that more hearts and minds—of men *and women*—will open to

our message when we dispense with the tactical, “clever,” marketing-driven messaging and strategies.

Here is the *real* problem, restated. This is how it should be presented, because this is the truth:

Women have been empowered by the state to criminalize the fathers of their children. Financial incentives via usurious child support awards encourage women to use the power that the state gives them to severely restrict the father's relationship with his child or to simply remove him from the picture entirely. This is only the beginning of a much larger problem. As a consequence, a third of all children in our nation now grow up without their fathers. The social science is virtually unanimous in acknowledging the unique developmental benefits to children raised by a father (not that it should be necessary to obtain the seal of approval from behavioral “experts” for something that is manifestly obvious to anyone with a lick of sense). The statistics of criminal behavior, social and behavioral pathologies that correlate unerringly to father absence scream out for an overthrowing of the present feminist paradigm in domestic relations law and policy and a return to common sense. Father absence is a social cancer that has virtually unlimited repercussions throughout every facet of modern life.

2. The War on Fatherhood

English is the richest of all languages. It has far more words to describe far more shades of meaning than any other language. Fortunately, it provides a word that encompasses all aspects of this tragedy: *fatherhood*. The relationship between a father and his child, and all that flows from it. There is no need to speak of harm done to fathers and children separately. What is under attack is the very institution of fatherhood. The messaging that directly and unambiguously addresses the real problem is “War on Fatherhood.”

This messaging implicitly targets the notions of “blended families,” single motherhood as well as gay marriage and gay adoption.

Entry point to the Fathers Rights resistance movement: Do you acknowledge the problem and are you willing to fight your enemy?

The Fathers Rights resistance movement has a front door. Permission to enter is granted to those willing to acknowledge the true problem and sign on to the declaration below. This assures that the movement is truly “on message,” and prevents the foolishness that has pervaded for so long from diverting energy and resources from developing a coherent resistance movement.

I believe there is a War on Fatherhood.

I am enlisting in the war effort to fight against those that are waging this war on me, my children, and the institution of fatherhood.

Signed and dated: _____

3. The *fundamental cause of the problem*

Like the blind men handling different parts of the elephant and all disagreeing about its shape, our movement is notorious for misunderstanding the fundamental cause of the War on Fatherhood. The most common misdiagnosis is the belief that it is all about money and the state's corruption and relentless quest for power. It is undeniably true that federal and state regimes that profit from creating NCP (noncustodial parent) fathers/child support obligors have "built the perfect beast" that perpetuates the problem—but this is not the *source* of the problem. The domestic violence, child abuse, supervised visitation regimes that generate so much revenue and employment were not created *solely* out of a desire for revenue.

I think of this "perfect beast" as a skyscraper. Title IV-d, VAWA, state child support and domestic abuse regimes are the superstructure of the skyscraper, not its foundation. They are the steel trusses and girders upon which are laid the floors and offices that populate the skyscraper—where the actual workaday work is done by the busy-bee bureaucrats that grease the wheels of this "beast."

Attempts to fix the problem that focus just on the office workers, or try to tear the building down by attacking its superstructure alone, will not work. As long as the foundation is intact, the skyscraper can and will be repaired or rebuilt. We need to find a cure for the disease itself, rather than administering palliatives for its symptoms.

The fundamental cause of the problem has been clearly identified for years, but men in the Fathers Rights movement have stubbornly resisted acknowledging it. It is no coincidence that most if not all of the people that have publicly identified the fundamental problem are women: Phyllis Schlafly, Kathleen Parker, Christina Hoff Sommers and Erin Pizzey come immediately to mind as some of the more articulate women who speak directly to the consequences of men's collective failure to stand up to feminism.

As was explained in the previous section, the fundamental source of the problem is a sociological and cultural movement that began in earnest about 40 years ago: women's empowerment, aka feminism. The feminist movement seeks the empowerment of women. It does not seek equality of the sexes. Its open-ended goal is the transformation of what was hitherto a patriarchal society into a matriarchy.

This is not secret information. It is taught to practically every college student who needs to satisfy a behavioral science or general education requirement. In sociology and women's studies classes, patriarchy is taught alongside such other socio-political pathologies as racism, colonialism and Nazism. A tremendous amount of agenda-driven, pseudo-scientific, social science research constantly streams out of universities. This "research" is regurgitated within classrooms to impressionable students of both sexes, who then take this knowledge with them into the real world upon graduation and use it to inform their work as doctors, lawyers, police officers, judges, social workers, politicians, reporters, and ... teachers... completing the vicious cycle.

Treating fathers who fight for custody of their children as batterers and a presumed danger to their children is only to be expected when considering the indoctrination *all* the actors in these court tragedies receive as part of their education and training. If this were

not so, how would it be possible that such a wholesale abrogation of rights of one half of the adult population would go unnoticed by the media? In a world with a ravenous appetite for scandal, force-fed by a media industry that respects practically no restraints on “the people’s right to know,” how is it possible that injustices of the magnitude experienced by fathers under the color of law on a daily basis go unreported?

The reason is cultural. The reason is sociological. And to cure this disease, cultural and sociological paradigms must be challenged and overthrown. It can’t be avoided.

Conspiracy is defined as “An agreement to perform together an illegal, wrongful, or subversive act.” The “Real Wheel of Abuse” (*Appendix*), illustrates the causal relationship between feminist propaganda in academia, the media, legislation, the rape of fatherhood in the courts, the social costs of father absence and domestic violence. What we face is, quite literally, a conspiracy.

Men have allowed feminists to define the terms of debate, to metaphorically choose the terrain of the battlefield. At legislative hearings on shared parenting and abuse protection reform bills, Fathers Rights advocates plead with legislators that the present laws are being used unfairly against fathers and that as a consequence children lose their fathers. Feminists testifying in opposition warn legislators about the dangers to women from their “abusive,” batterer husbands or boyfriends, quote statistics from pseudo-scientific, agenda-driven research about the epidemic of violence against women, and occasionally trot out “survivors” as witnesses to hammer the point home: *Don’t you dare support these batterers and their anti-woman legislation!*

Every veteran of the custody wars knows that in the courtroom, any charges made by one side that are not rebutted are held to be true. But on the macro level, men don’t seem able to translate this knowledge into the political arena.

To date, men have been fighting for Fathers Rights by taking a defensive approach—*only!* Feminists have been attacking *men, masculinity and the patriarchy*. They tell legislators in no uncertain terms that the few men who fight for custody of their children and lose do so because they are unfit and/or batterers. They promulgate the lie that women rarely lie about domestic violence. They have somewhat successfully defined Fathers Rights advocates as “the batterer lobby.”

And in response, men merely quote various studies showing how children benefit from a relationship with the father, plead that child support in Massachusetts is unreasonably high, and some are bold enough to argue for tweaking the abuse protection laws because they are often used by women as a tactic to gain custody of children. On this last item, it should be mentioned that the conventional wisdom in our movement holds that gaining shared parenting legislation must be the first objective, and then, afterwards, we should turn our attention to fixing the domestic violence laws. This is another cardinal error of the movement, since shared parenting legislation is held up because of the (usually back room) objections by domestic violence feminazis. When they say “Jump!” our legislators ask “How high?” *We cannot get shared parenting laws passed unless the domestic violence feminazis have first been de-fanged.* Fixing so-called “abuse prevention” laws should have the *highest* legislative priority, not the lowest.

And this backward thinking on legislation is symptomatic of another cardinal error of the movement: failure to actually attack our enemies. In legislative hearings, for example, Fathers Rights advocates never see fit to attack the very people who demonize *them!* They are so afraid of being labeled “misogynist” that they never even think to do what they know they have to do when fighting their own cases in the courtroom.

A sports analogy is called for. The predominant strategy of Fathers Rights to date can be compared to insisting on keeping your entire soccer team within the penalty box to maximize defense and minimize the number of goals scored against you. It is unlikely that you will succeed in keeping the ball out of your net for over 90 minutes, but it is a certainty that you will never score a goal if your team never ventures out of the penalty box and—*heaven forbid!*—beyond the midfield line into enemy territory.

4. Attacking the enemy is a primary function of the Fathers Rights resistance movement

The successful Fathers Rights resistance movement must have an aggressive, offensive strategy. This will include investigating the public and private lives of our opponents, digging up the dirt and flinging the mud. How many purported “battered women advocates” who are exposed as violent themselves will it take before the seeds of skepticism bear fruit in the minds of the public, and eventually, legislators?

The Fathers Rights resistance movement must dedicate a sizeable fraction of all its resources and energy to offensive actions and activities that directly attack its enemies.

The enemy is all individuals and agencies that through their beliefs and actions work to promote the War on Fatherhood.

Here is a short list of some of our local enemies:

- Feminazi attorneys such as Wendy Murphy and Gloria Allred.
- Marilyn Ray Smith, (once?) Chief Legal Counsel of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Child Support Enforcement division (DOR/CSE), and chief architect of the original Massachusetts Child Support Guideline.
- Judges that clearly get pleasure from figuratively raping fathers in family court, such as (now retired) Judge Edward Ginsburg.
- Feminist, anti-father Guardians ad litem such as Lundy Bancroft and the frighteningly large number of homosexual GALs and family court judges who advertise their dysfunctional lifestyles on their own web sites.
- Media outlets that are thoroughly biased in favor of women, such as *The Boston Globe* and *The New York Times*.
- Domestic violence feminazis such as Toni Troop and all feminazi domestic violence agencies such as Massachusetts’ Jane Doe, Inc.
- Feminized politicians who toe the feminist line on social issues and policies such as Mass. governor Deval Patrick and Delaware Sen. Joe Biden who authored VAWA. Ignorance does not excuse evil. Evil is as evil does.

This list is as long as you want to make it. It should include all feminist academicians who are brainwashing students in our schools, colleges and universities. First discredit, then demonize. If at all possible, criminalize. Dig up dirt. Try to destroy their reputations and their careers. If you can, cause them financial and economic hardship. In such endeavors, the enemy of your enemy is your friend. Make alliances with people who have a different, perhaps completely unrelated beef with these enemies. Share information and work together to *cause them harm*.

5. Precious energy and resources wasted trying to 'educate' enemies

One of the most frustrating things is watching new activists, particularly well educated and professional men, “discover” that the reason why the movement never makes progress is because the Fathers Rights crowd have an image problem: they present themselves and are perceived as angry men who have become unbalanced by the bad experiences of their divorce. Politicians often take these newbies aside and give them the “inside word” in private meetings. The gullible new Fathers Rights activist, champing at the bit to gain respectability, then spends inordinate amounts of time, energy and resources trying to educate these politicians, making sure that they themselves present the proper image, eschewing anger and avoiding any negative talk about women or feminism, and above all, *never showing anger*.

I submit that one of the reasons for failure is that there haven't been *enough* angry fathers together at the same time and place.

Here in Massachusetts, two examples come to mind. The first from several years ago when a well-meaning new activist sought to educate Margaret Marshall, the chief justice of the Supreme Judicial Court. Countless letters were sent, and posted to our list-server.

Most recently, an incredible amount of time, energy and resources have been spent attempting to educate Governor Deval Patrick. After all, the governor created a blog area on his web site specifically for citizen input. Tremendous amounts of energy were spent to move a shared parenting thread to the very top of this list.

Despite warnings that Deval Patrick, whether sincere or not, had already been thoroughly indoctrinated by the other side—his wife was a domestic violence zealot, he was raised without a father, he was a lifelong, liberal Democrat, etc.—and that he was already “well educated” on these issues being a thoroughly feminized college-educated resident of Massachusetts, these Fathers Rights activists had to find out for themselves. So, two years later, when pressed at a public meeting in the Berkshires, Patrick finally admitted that Fathers Rights was not going to be his “particular focus”:

“The sort of the running debate between us is about trying to get me to champion this issue rather than the forty legislatures you have working on it, and I keep deferring because I got some other things on my list. It's not that I don't care. It's not that I am not sympathetic to the issues that you're having with your daughter and your ex-wife and so on-it's just not my particular focus. And I know that every

time we're together you want to make it my particular focus.”³

Now, two years later, they more or less acknowledge that it was a waste of time.

The frustration on my part comes from wondering what could have been accomplished if instead of wasting all that energy trying to educate a known enemy, that same amount of energy was spent *attacking* Deval Patrick (after, naturally, at least one obligatory overture to him had been made). Perhaps nothing, but at least he would have been made aware that he had been targeted by a voting block.

III Fathers Rights as a resistance movement

Because of the tremendous damage done to fatherhood via child support orders, encouraging child support defiance is another staple of the movement. These usurious child “extortion” orders serve to cut fathers off at the knees, preventing them from further litigating their own cases in pursuit of their children and justice.

If it were practical, the universal withholding of child support—a child support strike—would indeed be a catastrophic WMD lobbed upon the system. However, though there will always be heroic individuals willing to stare down the state, lose their homes and jobs and livelihood and ultimately serve jail sentences, it has to be acknowledged that it is simply not realistic to expect NCP wage earners en masse to quit their jobs, learn to earn their living under the table, and essentially go underground. Very noble perhaps, but not practical for the mass of men living “lives of quiet desperation.”

I don't discourage this tactic. I know that I did not find it practical. Each man can wrestle with his own conscience. I say nothing further about any effort to promote an organized child support resistance movement.

1. Micro-level resistance—the individual court case

The good news is that there are many other areas where resistance is not only possible but can also be extremely effective, and furthermore contains little risk of loss of liberty or criminalization. **In fact, this personal, micro-level resistance must be the very heart of the future of the Fathers Rights movement.**

If a substantial fraction of men refused to cooperate with the divorce/custody machine we could draw blood and force the system to take notice. By attacking its lifeblood: money, we would be returning fire.

First off, it requires that we convince men to educate themselves so they gain the confidence to “take charge of [their] case,” as *Liberty Bell Union* advertises⁴. Fathers must be encouraged to demand shared physical and legal custody of their children (unless demanding sole custody is appropriate), and not permit their attorneys, if they insist on using one, from coercing them into settling for NCP status with a survivable financial

³ Governor Deval Patrick responding to questions from Renny Del Gallo and Will Smith, August 5, 2007, Great Barrington Town Hall meeting.
www.berkshirefatherhood.com/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=699&cntnt01returnid=69

⁴ *Liberty Bell Union*, the pro se training program designed by and for Fathers Rights advocates.
www.libertybellunion.org

arrangement. Presently, far more men than we might want to admit actually *agree* to become noncustodial parents. Yes, we all understand the legal pressures that are brought to bear, but in the final analysis, too many men make this compromise.

When more fathers refuse to accept the business-as-usual NCP status, this alone will have a powerful effect. The courts will become even more overburdened. The laws of physics require that an object move along the path of least “action,” i.e., the path of least resistance. Non-cooperation applies an opposing force to the status quo that demands fathers be transformed into “noncustodial parents.”

The next step would be to convince all these fathers who don't cave on custody and are willing to head to trial, to refuse to cooperate with the standard operating procedure: appointing a GAL, getting various psychological evaluations, bringing in more “experts,” accepting supervised visitation, hiring more attorneys, etc. A judge cannot force you to cooperate with a GAL investigation, nor to get a psychological evaluation. Of course you will be warned, even by your attorney, that such actions can only harm you in the long run.

Men must not merely tell the judge at the hearing that he will, for example, not cooperate with a GAL investigation; he must put his objections in his pleadings, stating the reason why: “guardians ad litem are fundamentally biased against fatherhood.” Imagine if three out of every four divorce pleadings contained language where the father claimed that the system fundamentally discriminates against men, perhaps making use of boilerplate language of feminist bias in the courts that can be provided by our organizations. Imagine the impact on these GALs who rely on court appointments for their income. Typically, a GAL might bill for a total of ten or so hours of visits with the parents and their collaterals. Well, guess what? That income is suddenly halved. And furthermore, a father would not need to dredge up the law citation and write a pleading as to why he should not pay for half of the GAL fee. He cannot be asked to pay for *any* of it if he has refused to cooperate at the outset, *in writing*, when the GAL is assigned to the case!

The stance of the father in a custody case, with or without a 209A order should be simply this:

“I demand shared physical and legal custody of my children. If my soon-to-be ex-wife disagrees, then I demand sole physical and legal custody, and will permit as much visitation to her as she requires, within reason. Furthermore, if the court intends to deny me the minimally acceptable shared custody of my children, I demand it produce findings of fact as to why and how I am a danger or harmful to my child. If the court intends to take custody of my child away from me, I demand it give the reasons why I am unfit and constitute a danger to my child.”

Then, fold arms, sit back, and watch the system spin its wheels.

This is not in any way a guarantee that a given father will do better in court if he follows this advice. It is a description of how the successful Fathers Rights *resistance* movement *must* operate on the micro level. This is something that practically every divorcing father can do with no risk of criminalization. In fact, I assert that it is incumbent on every father in a high conflict divorce to act this way. The *Fatherhood Coalition* sought to encourage this behavior as standard practice in Massachusetts to mixed results.

2. Macro-level resistance—everywhere else!

Resistance to the perfect beast extends beyond one's own personal case. Far too many good men have "hung separately." Most of the activities that various organizations and individuals do now can be characterized as resistance. Every freeway sign. Every letter to the editor. Every courthouse protest. Every verbal testimony at a public hearing. This is all resistance, and of course it must continue. The publicity-stunt tactics of *Fathers-4-Justice* exemplify the type of protesting known as "direct action." Clearly, Matt O'Connor's creation has been the most successful Fathers Rights enterprise in the entire history of the movement. Combining humor with the simplest, most indefensible issue of the War: NCP fathers denied visitation with their children, propelled *Fathers-4-Justice* through the media's lace curtain in England.

2.1 Bringing the War to the streets: Counter-demonstrations

Until such time as we in the US can muster a "thousand people in the street" to support Fathers Rights, it only makes sense to confine public protests to counter-demonstrations. On this there is no shortage. Out opponents in and out of government provide a constant stream of public events that are protest-worthy: judicial education junkets, child support enforcement PR events, domestic violence propaganda events and similar male-bashing love fests, and here in Massachusetts, Governor's Council judicial approval hearings, to name just a few. Such counter-demonstrations can be successful with even a small number of participants.

Important point: These counter-demonstrations should not be necessarily peaceful and respectful. We are protesting people and institutions that deserve *not* respect, but *disdain*. With respect to peaceful versus... not peaceful, I believe that the success of our movement will eventually require civil disobedience, in which "peaceful" becomes a relative term.

2.2 Bringing the War to the courts

Certainly, legal challenges to state actors, whether via constitutional grounds, class action suits, challenges to Title IV-d federal child support statutes, RICO pleadings, or any of the other legal mechanisms that countless Fathers Rights advocates have tried, must continue.

This is the area where the Fathers Rights men who have become legal experts can shine. The Fathers Rights resistance movement must apply a constant pressure to the legal and judicial power structures. There must be a constant barrage of lawsuits hammering the gates of judicial power.

2.3 Study Wars: Bringing the War to the university halls

Also, our movement should conduct its own agenda-driven (though fair and accurate) research. Steve Basile of the *Fatherhood Coalition* produced two groundbreaking studies on the issuance of abuse protection orders in one Massachusetts district court⁵. The studies have been referenced numerous times in subsequent social science research. As a

⁵ Steve Basile, "A Measure of Court Response to Requests for Protection," *Journal of Family Violence*, 20 (3) June 2005, and "Comparison of Abuse Alleged by Same- and Opposite-Gender Litigants as Cited in Request for Abuse Prevention Orders," *Journal of Family Violence*, 19 (1) February 2004

result of Basile's work, the state responded with an iron fist to prevent future "mischief." They quickly passed legislation making abuse prevention court dockets off limits to the public. Consequently, court data is going to be increasingly more difficult to obtain for future unbiased research in Massachusetts. The history of Basile's research and the response to it are well documented on the *Fatherhood Coalition* web site⁶.

But there is no shortage of fruitful areas for research. A high priority should be placed on the mainstream media's bias on coverage of domestic violence. It would not be too difficult a task to take one big media entity, such as *The Boston Globe*, and prove their bias by comparing the difference in language used in their coverage of domestic violence stories; specifically, how the appearance of the words "domestic violence" in their stories depends on the sex of the victim.

IV Summary

In the spirit of the old saw about what to do first when trapped in a hole, the first order of business for our movement is to "stop digging." We must first stop the bleeding by correcting the cardinal errors of the past:

1. Stop trying to make Fathers Rights politically correct by disguising it as a "children's" rights or "parent's" rights issue. The problem is the discrimination, persecution and criminalization of *men* via their transformation into noncustodial parents.
2. Stop using the language of our enemies, such as "parent" where "father" is meant and "partner" in lieu of "husband" or "wife," as well as "gender" instead of "sex," "child support," and "pro choice." The power of words can't be overestimated.
3. Make abuse protection reform the top legislative priority. Real shared parenting legislation can't succeed until its primary enemies have first been de-fanged. Progress on child custody will come quicker if we first fix the abuse prevention laws, which will implicitly disempower the domestic violence regime that prevents shared parenting legislation from becoming law.
4. Stop wasting energy and resources trying to educate enemies. Education is a resource-intensive process. We can't afford to waste our limited resources trying to educate the uneducable.

With respect to the pro-active side of a resistance movement, all the macro-level activities mentioned require further elaboration and detailed planning, i.e., *a true blueprint*. All the activities that people share on the various Fathers Rights blogs and email lists are all wonderful examples of this part of the movement. Of course, it goes without saying, the more organized and concerted the efforts the better.

What I believe is needed first, however, is acknowledgement and action on the other, ideological aspects of the movement that I have taken great pains to define in this document. To wit, the Fathers Rights movement must first "get its mind right."

1. Understand the real nature of the problem, and stop hiding from it.
2. Understand the social, cultural and political environment within which the movement exists and why it has been unsuccessful so far.

⁶ www.fatherhoodcoalition.org/cpf/Gardner_209A_study_index.htm

3. Obtain universal buy-in on the “War on Fatherhood” messaging; and solicit willingness to engage the enemy.
4. Promulgate our own lexicon. We are engaged in a “War on Fatherhood.” We spell it “Fathers Rights,” not “father’s rights,” or “fathers’ rights.” Capitalized, no punctuation, as is correct for a proper noun. We are “fathers.” We do not have “partners,” we have wives or girlfriends. If we are in favor of abortion, then we demand abortion rights for men; if we oppose it we are not “anti-choice,” we are “anti-abortion” and “pro-life.”
5. Attack your enemies; don’t bother trying to educate them. Educate the educable.
6. Propagate a resistance mentality and mindset among as many divorcing fathers as possible.

There is no shortage of fronts in the War on Fatherhood. To each his poison. Let a thousand flowers bloom!

Appendix

The *real* 'Wheel of Abuse'

