

"Breaking the Silence"

Anti-Family, Anti-Father Program Aired On PBS

On Thursday, October 20, PBS released "*Breaking the Silence: Children's Stories.*" Funded by the Mary Kay Ash Foundation, the show purports to be an exposé of how the courts ignore the plight of abused children.

But in truth, the program is a direct assault on fathers and families.

#1: *Breaking the Silence* Distorts the Truth about Child Abuse

The website of the DHHS Administration for Children and Families reports that, of children abused by one parent, twice as many children are abused by their mother as by their father. (US DHHS: Who Typically Abuses Children? 2003)

But *Breaking the Silence* makes the claim that children are "most often in danger from the father."

So who's telling the truth?

#2: *Breaking the Silence* Distorts the Truth about Child Custody

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that in 2002, "about 5 of every 6 custodial parents were mothers (84.4%), and 1 in 6 were fathers (15.6%)." (U.S. Census Bureau: Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2001)

But according to *Breaking the Silence*, the opposite is true: "All over America, battered mothers are losing custody of their children." *Really?*

#3: *Breaking the Silence* Distorts the Truth of Domestic Violence

A recent report from the Independent Women's Forum states, "approximately half of all couple violence is mutual...when only one partner is abusive, it is as likely to be the woman as the man." (IWF: Domestic Violence: An In-Depth Analysis, 2005)

But according to this program, the vast majority of divorced dads who seek custody of their children are "abusive." Again, this claim is made without providing any proof.

The purpose of the program is to make it much harder for divorced fathers to stay involved in

their children's lives. The "documentary" contains so many distortions, a better title would have been, "*Breaking the Science.*"

#4: *Breaking the Silence* Distorts the Truth - Period

1. The filmmakers portrayed one mother as a victim in spite of having been warned that a court had found that she committed eight counts of child abuse.
2. Stories the filmmakers solicited were excluded from the film if they contradicted the film's premise.
3. There is disagreement among experts in the American Psychological Assn. over the validity of Parental Alienation Syndrome. The APA Communications Director has stated, "The APA does not have an official position on PAS -- pro or con." Yet the film falsely claims that the APA has "debunked" PAS.

Call PBS Today

A coalition of organizations concerned with misrepresentation of facts by the media are calling on PBS affiliates not to broadcast *Breaking the Silence* because it so egregiously violates basic journalistic standards of accuracy and fairness. Additionally, PBS should produce and promote a new documentary that focuses on the plight of children abused by their mothers, and the anguish of fathers who are prevented by the courts from protecting their children.

1. Call Pat Mitchell, PBS President, at 703-739-5000.
2. Contact your local PBS affiliate at <http://www.pbs.org/stationfinder/index.html>

For More Information

Find out more on RADAR's website at <http://www.mediadar.org>.

RADAR (Respecting Accuracy in Domestic Abuse Reporting) is a network of concerned men and women working to assure that the problem of domestic violence is treated in a balanced and effective manner.