



Respecting Accuracy in Domestic Abuse Reporting

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November 14, 2005

Fred Upton, Chairman
Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet
2183 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Complaint about the Corporation for Public Broadcasting

Dear Chairman Upton:

We are writing in regard to the PBS program *Breaking the Silence: Children's Stories*, a documentary about the treatment of abused children by divorce courts in America. The program falsely concludes that children are frequently awarded to abusive fathers by divorce courts.

As such, the program directly violates the legal mandate of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to ensure “strict adherence to objectivity in all programs or series of programs of a controversial nature.” Even though CPB did not create this program, CPB is nonetheless obligated by law to assure that all public broadcasting programs conform to journalistic standards of objectivity and balance.

Breaking the Silence was released by the Public Broadcasting Service on October 20. Even before its release, this controversial program has been surrounded by allegations of bias, misrepresentation, and fraud. We know the following to be true:

1. Breaking the Silence (BTS) was funded by a \$500,000 grant from the Mary Kay Ash Foundation, which has previously funded misleading television programs about domestic violence.
2. The program's directors refused to interview persons who would have presented a balancing perspective on the issue, leaving a one-sided and inaccurate portrayal. [<http://www.familytx.org/research/articles/PAS/BreakingTheScience-OstrichSyndrome.html#rejected-interviewees>]
3. The program makes numerous sweeping claims that unfairly libel fathers. These claims are easily refuted by government reports and/or widely-accepted research:
 - a. BTS claims that children are “most often in danger from the father.” But government statistics show that more children are abused and neglected by their mother than their

father. [http://faq.acf.hhs.gov/cgi-bin/acfrightnow.cfg/php/enduser/std_adp.php?p_faaid=70]

b. BTS claims, “All over America, battered mothers lose custody of their children.” But the US Census Bureau reports that in 2002, “about 5 of every 6 custodial parents were mothers.” [<http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/p60-225.pdf>]

c. BTS indicates the vast majority of divorced dads who seek custody of their children are “abusive.” But research shows women are just as likely as men to commit domestic violence. [www.csulb.edu/~mfiebert/assault.htm]

d. BTS claims that the parental alienation syndrome “has been thoroughly debunked by the American Psychological Association.” But the APA responded on October 24, 2005 that the BTS claim was “incorrect.” [www.therealitycheck.org/GuestColumnist/mrosenthal110405.htm]

4. The program features Sadia Loeliger, who is portrayed as a heroic mother who battled a biased divorce court system to regain custody of her child. But recently-released documents prove that Ms. Loeliger had been found by a California Juvenile Court to be a serial child abuser. [www.glennsacks.com/pbs/loeliger.php]

5. Six months before the program was scheduled to be aired, the program directors were apprised of Ms. Loeliger’s history of child abuse, but they chose to conceal that important information from program viewers. [www.glennsacks.com/pbs/loeliger-producers-warned.php]

6. To date, CPB and PBS executives have failed to comment on the substance of any of these charges.

The controversy surrounding *Breaking the Silence* has been reported on numerous news outlets, including Fox News, NPR radio, and various newspapers. We are enclosing a number of these articles with this letter. Several PBS affiliates have already aired opposing perspectives, or refused to air the program all together.

RADAR – Respecting Accuracy in Domestic Abuse Reporting – believes that fundamental journalistic principles of balance, integrity, and accuracy have been violated by this program. RADAR asserts that the Public Broadcasting Service should retract this flawed show.

Furthermore, RADAR has requested PBS to produce an objective 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.

We the undersigned call on you to investigate CPB’s egregious violation of its Congressional mandate to ensure “strict adherence to objectivity in all programs or series of programs of a controversial nature.”

Gordon E. Finley, PhD

RADAR: Respecting Accuracy in Domestic Abuse Reporting

Marc Angelucci
National Coalition of Free Men – Los Angeles Chapter

Paul M. Clements
President, DADD-NH

Charles E. Corry, PhD, F.G.S.A.
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Harry Crouch
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Michael Geanoulis
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James Hays
President, Coalition of Fathers and Families NY, Inc.

Donald C. Hubin, PhD
Director, Columbus Chapter of Parents and Children for Equality

Lee Newman
Executive Director, Stop Abuse for Everyone – New Hampshire

Alan Rusmiser
Vice-president, Alabama Coalition for Fathers and Children

Albert Schafer
President, Coalition of Parent Support

Lisa Scott
Taking Action Against Bias in the System

Tom Smith
American Union of Men

Marc Snider
www.NHCUSTODY.ORG

Terri Lynn Tersak
President, Center for Children's Justice - Carolinas Chapter

David Usher
President, American Coalition for Fathers and Children – Missouri Coalition

The following organizations also indicated their support after this letter was delivered to Congress:

Stephen Baskerville, PhD
American Coalition for Fathers and Children

Pastor Kenneth Deemer
Director, Shattered Men

Gregory Romeo
Executive Director, Tulsa Area Fathers' Rights Association

James Semerad
Chairman, Dads and Moms of Michigan PAC

Enclosures