

## **Freedom of Speech - Should Adoption and Foster Care be Excluded?**

*When childrens welfare is at stake and tax dollars are being spent, the media must ignore experts" that attempt to silence or slant the news.*

Marion, IA ([PRWeb](#)) October 4, 2004 -- Following the tragic Jackson family story out of New Jersey, Adam Pertman, executive director of the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, wrote that media coverage of stories involving adopters who adopt as a source of income and then neglect and abuse the children blurs the success" of the foster care and adoption system.

Perhaps the most fundamental right we have in United States is the right to freedom of speech. Without this right our other rights will soon crumble. In the area of foster care and adoption, far more news coverage is desirable, not less. Not only does adoption and foster care represent a significant chunk of our tax dollars but childrens welfare is at stake. Like any business, the people running the system" try to grow their business every year, processing more and more children. What a strange objective for a country that is so wealthy and supposedly free - to get as many children out of their homes as possible, targeting citizens who are less affluent and less able to defend themselves.

The truth about the outcome of foster care and adoption is hidden by various means. Statistics lump adopter abuse with other parental abuse, making it appear that it is only natural parents who abuse. The media, cautioned not to stigmatize" adopters, misleads readers by reporting that it was parents" rather than adopters" that neglected or abused a child. Social workers have immunity from prosecution for their errors.

Maddeningly, when the media does report a story of horrendous abuse by foster or adoptive caregivers, those in the system" insist that the problem is a lack of resources, using their own incompetence as the basis for a request for even more of our tax dollars. Thus the only accountability is to be rewarded with additional funding. If you were the child that was removed from your family, given to strangers and then starved, beaten, molested or tied up in a basement how would you feel about this? How would you feel if you were the parent and had been trying for years to find a way to get your child back?

Whenever a child is neglected or abused while she is in the system or adopted, the media should assess the circumstances from which a child was taken against the outcome of succeeding placements" - and interview the natural family and others rather than trust exclusively the cleverly worded accusations of social workers and others in the system. If the original problem was poverty, the media should assess the economic impact to the community of keeping the child in her own family compared with foster and/or adoptive situations.

People are horrified when they see news footage of children taken from the only 'parents theyve ever known" to be returned to their parents following a prolonged court battle. Yet social workers remove children suddenly and traumatically from their true parents every day. Then they continue to move them from placement to placement, increasing the trauma and the likelihood of abuse. Even if the foster caregivers are kind and decent people, they may be raising other children who are hurting, jealous and cruel. How many fostered kids recount how quickly they learned not to cry?

If a child is being very badly abused in his own home then intervention is warranted. But social workers now take children from their homes on the basis of reports of mild abuse, mild neglect or even just the threat of harm" meaning absolutely no abuse or neglect is even alleged. Children may be removed from their homes or taken

directly from school without parents knowledge.

The reports of abuse or neglect do not have to be substantiated in advance and the means of substantiating them may be questionable. The use of leading questions and other means to get a child to describe abuse that never took place is one method of substantiating" abuse. Another method is denying a parent any contact with her child unless she signs some paperwork. Pitting one parent against another in a divorce situation or just using the divorce situation itself as a reason for child removal may occur. If a child has been abused while in custody of one parent, just at a moment when the child most needs comfort and security of the remaining parent, she is torn away and given to strangers.

Social workers it seems have no other tools to handle a situation other than removal of a child. Perhaps even worse, when they make the same accusations against every parent, making every case appear equally dangerous, they may contribute to judges sending children back to parents who are truly unfit.

When a law sounds innocuous like the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 does, it may be the opposite - unsafe for families and even worse, unsafe for children. The constant promotion of adoption benefits promoters but it is not being done for children.

Now that we have federal adoption bonuses for the adoption of children in foster care, have the children originally in the system gotten adopted? Has the overall number of children in the system gone down? How often is the youngest adoptable" child taken from her home while social workers show little interest in the older children? Now that courts can sever parental rights for no reason after a child has been kept in the system for a relatively short time, how frequently are court proceedings delayed by lawyers and others? When enough time has passed a parent may be proven innocent of child abuse and drug abuse yet her parental rights will be terminated anyway.

When those in the system claim they either try to reunite families or get the kids adopted, this does not mean that they try to reunite families. Few cute little adoptable" children are given the hope of reunification with their own family although some more difficult children may be permitted to go home. As with many situations where no real choice is presented, children may find their only chance at permanency is adoption with complete separation from siblings, grandparents and parents.

The media should investigate whether legislators and others they are interviewing about adoption and foster care will profit from the removal or adoption of children or whether they have ties to the system.

When the press is advised by experts" to suppress or slant a news story, when officials say they want to protect the system" instead of the children, that is the time for the media to move in for a closer investigation. What citizens dont know affects children in a significant way. What they dont know costs them billions in misspent tax dollars. What they dont know may prevent them from making any decisions for their own children ever again.

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