

Jeff Golden, Fathers And Children's Equality, (FACE) speech: National Cry for Children @ the Lincoln memorial, Washington D.C. Nov. 7, 1999

Have any of you heard of a child wanting to divorce his parents? There have been few such cases, but they are few and far between. Why, then, if two adults decide to dissolve their marriage, are the children required to divorce one of their parents? They shouldn't have to, but the way things work today, they do. One of the parents becomes the "custodial" parent. The kids continue to have a parent-child relationship with that parent. The "non-custodial" parent becomes a visitor and a paycheck.....20% of our 2000 members are women. Who are they? Some are non-custodial mothers, but most are there for the man in their life-a boyfriend, husband son or friend. The mother gets custody in 90 - 95% of divorce cases and nearly 100% of cases where the parents are unwed. When a newcomer comes to one of our meetings, often he will say "My lawyer did a pretty good job for me." I ask what he means by this. He says, "Well he did a good job of representing me in divorce court." I ask him to clarify this. "Who has custody of the kids?" He'll say "we have joint custody." "Oh" I'll say. "How often do you get to see them?" "Every other week-end and one evening a week." "Who has the house?" "She does" "Who has the car?" "She does" "Who pays the child support?" "I do, she has the kids." After a few more questions, I'll ask "why did you bother getting a lawyer?" Could you have done any worse if you had NO lawyer?" Usually he will agree with me. Then I ask why he came to our meeting. He'll say something like "Yesterday was my kid's birthday, and she wouldn't let me see him." or "Christmas is coming up and she's taking them out of state to visit her family" Joint custody means nothing. The children are the custodial parents property. The non-custodial parent is, as I said before, only a "visitor." for a few days a month. That's no way to build a parent child relationship That's no way for a child to learn that he has two loving parents

I want to tell you a little story. Washington D.C. seems like an appropriate place for me to tell this story: I was in third grade in Newark, N.J. during the 1952 Eisenhower-Stevenson presidential election campaign. One day, a group of adults came into class and spoke to the teacher. She interrupted class One of the adults said "we want to know, if you could vote, who would you vote for for president?" Stevenson won that vote by a landside. The adults left the classroom talking among themselves smiling and nodding to each other. What happened here/ We were a bunch of eight-year-olds. We had never studied politics or the election campaign. All we were supposed to do was learn multiplication tables. *Why were these adults so interested in our opinions? Because children reflect the views and opinions of parents. Our parents didn't even have to talk to us about the election for us to know their opinion. We probably overheard "adult" conversations at home most of the communication between parent and child is non-verbal. Throughout their childhood, Kids learn what their parents like and don't like they learn through demeanor, if they please adults who care for them they will receive praise and maybe an extra helping of dessert. The actual election in our voting district corresponded exactly with classroom election a few weeks earlier.*

What does this story have to do with child custody? If there is only one parent in the house the children will learn only that one parents opinions and values. The child doesn't learn the non-custodial parents morals, or work ethic, or religious convictions or other values. If the custodial parent doesn't want anything to do with the other parent, the child picks up on this too. Soon the child starts saying "I don't want to go with daddy" The custodial parent says "the child says he doesn't want to go with daddy." That's his own opinion. I didn't tell him to say that. I can't FORCE him to go But the custodial parent DID TELL HIM. She did it through non-verbal communication. She did just as surely as my third grade classmate's parents told them their family was voting for Stevenson. And she can and SHOULD force the child to have a relationship with the other parent. We DO force kids to do things: "Eat your vegetables" "Do your Homework" "It's time to go to bed" "Go to school" It's okay to force kids to do things that are good for them. A child has no more right to say "I don't want to see Daddy" than he does to say "I don't want to go to school any more"

There's a name for the condition I just described. It's called "Parental alienation syndrome" Type that into your web browser and you'll recognize symptoms you've seen in your own child.

In Millennium issue TWO we'll take some excerpts of the rest of Jeff's's speech, the Grandparent case in the U.S. Supreme court and other interesting stuff like "WIFE GUILTY OF HARBORING DEADBEAT DAD". Some quotes from Ron Henry's speech will get you up in your seat saying YES! YES! YES! And some interesting e-mail addresses. Peace & Love all.

www.paawareness.org