

FAMILY COURTS IN CRISIS

NEWSLETTER

May 2013

Battered Mother's Custody Conference (BMCC)
MAY 10TH &11TH

Mother's of Lost Children White House Demonstration
MAY 12TH

National Safe Child Coalition Capitol Hill Lobbying
MAY 13TH

Articles in the News

Washington Post, Washington., DC

Conference Shines Light on Plight of Battered Mothers Seeking Custody

http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-05-10/opinions/39167079_1_amy-castillo-domestic-violence-child-custody

Zoom News, Madrid, Spain

Cuando en la batalla por la custodia de los hijos se cruza un maltratador o un abusador

by Carolina Martin

<http://www.zoomnews.es/50366/actualidad/mundo/cuando-batalla-custodia-hijos-se-cruza-maltratador-o-abusador>

New York Times, NYC

Home Is Where the Harm Is by Joan Meier

www.nytimes.com/2013/03/06/opinion/when-abduction-is-liberation.html

On the Issue Magazine

Is World War Needed to Protect Our Children? by Phyllis Chesler

http://www.ontheissuemagazine.com/hot_topics/article/67

BMCC - Battered Women, Abused Children & Child Custody: A National Crisis

For its 10-year anniversary, the Battered Mothers' Custody Conference shifted its yearly location from Albany, NY to the nation's capitol, drawing presenters, advocates and victims of domestic violence from all over the world.

The conference, hosted at the George Washington University Law School, kicked off Friday, May 10 with keynote addresses from well-known feminist author **Phyllis Chesler**, expounded on current ideas and findings from her classic, recently updated book *Mothers On Trial*, and family law attorney **Toby Kleinman**. Kleinman tied in a historical perspective of domestic violence issues with the current movement to protect women and children from abuse by partners and a legal system they have long alleged aids and abets abusers while punishing the victims.

Speakers at the conference included **Lynn Rosenthal**, the White House Advisor on Violence Against Women, who spoke of the White House's interest and concern on the issues involved, along with attorney **Joan Meier**. Ms. Meier who heads up DV Leap (Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project) at George Washington University and who recently published an article in the NY Times, *Home is Where the Harm Is*, spoke about recent developments within the federal government relating to custody and abuse cases in family court, including family court-specific provisions in VAWA.

Dr. Joyanna Silberg, of Trauma Disorder Services for Children and Adolescents and the Leadership Council discussed "turned-around" cases, with legal professor/author **Wendy Murphy** speaking on innovative ideas and approaches for improvement of court practices. **Terry O'Neil**, president of the NOW Foundation and chair of the NOW Political Action Committees also spoke about the efforts of NOW in facing the present crisis in family courts.

Indie producer **Garland Waller** hosted a screening of her documentary *No Way Out But One*, which was co-produced with **Barry Nolan**, and recounts the story of **Holly Collins**, who fled the country with her three young children after the courts discounted all evidence and assigned custody of her two older children to their abusive father. In a landmark case, Collins, who attended the conference with her children, was eventually granted asylum and refugee status by the government of the Netherlands.

Els Lucas, the Dutch attorney who represented Collins' case, and a Dutch ambassador accepted humanitarian awards from the conference, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and the National Organization of Men Against Sexism. Attorney **Joan Zorza**, a leader in the movement to end domestic violence for more than 40 years, attended to accept a lifetime achievement award from the group.ⁱ

Other speakers and attendees included:

- **Donna Anderson**, author of *Red Flags of Love Fraud* and traits of sociopaths
- **Renee Beeker** on the National Family Court Watch Project. –
www.nationalfamilycourtwatchproject.org | Contact: ReneeBeeker@aol.com
- **Gabrielle Davis** on new resources to help guide survivor-centered, DV-informed family court practice
- **Jeane Decker**, Safe House Manager at Women's Resource Center in Scranton, PA
- **Barry Goldstein** and **Elizabeth Liu**, prominent attorneys who introduced their new book on representing domestic violence survivors in legal battles *Domestic Violence, Abuse, and Child Custody: Legal Strategies and Policy Issues*. www.domesticviolenceabuseandchildcustody.com & www.civicresearchinstitute.com | Contact: BarryG78@aol.com and

- **Anne Grant**, Founder of the Parenting Project at Mathewson Street United Methodist Church, which observes courtroom hearings and analyzes custody cases. – www.custodyscam.blogspot.com | Contact: parentingproject@verizon.net
- **Kristen Hoffheimer**, is a lawyer in Virginia Beach who specializes in the representation of women in family law matters with a primary focus on complex child custody issues. – www.virginiadivorceattorney.com
- **Eileen King**, Executive Director at Child Justice, served on the panel *Predictable Acts of Targeted Violence*, contrasting how effective the system can be when evidence is pursued with serious intent (like the recent Boston Marathon bombing), with the systemic failures to protect children in abusive homes. – www.child-justice.org | Contact: eileen.king@child-justice.org
- **Liane Leedom**, a psychiatrist and author of *Just Like His Father?* – www.justlikehisfather.com
- **Janie McQueen**, author of *Hanging On By My Fingernails: Surviving the New Divorce Gamesmanship*, and *How a Scratch Can Land You in Jail*. – www.janiemcqueen.com | Contact: janie_mcqueen@yahoo.com
- **Alan Rosenfeld**, an attorney with over 20 years of experience providing high-quality representation for battered women and mothers of sexually abused children across the United States, and was legal counsel for the Collin's family – www.alanrosenfeld.com | Contact: alan@alanrosenfeld.com
- **Robin Shaye**, author of “...Until You Die”: *The Narcissist's Promise*. – www.robinshaye.com | Contact: thenarcissistspromise@robinshaye.com
- **Devin Therese Trego**, staff attorney at the Barbara J. Hart Justice Center. – www.wrcnepa.org/justice-center
- **Maralee McClean**, author of *Prosecuted but Not Silenced*. – www.mmclean.tateauthor.com | Contact: leighmcl@hotmail.com
- **Damon Moelter**, a young victim of child sexual abuse who sought liberation from his abuser by marrying at the age of 16 in order to obtain emancipation and escape the custody of his abuser.
- **Connie Valentine**, policy director of CA Protective Parents Association

Battered Women, Abused Children, and Child Custody: A National Crisis was created in 2003 by two mothers, Mo Therese Hannah, Ph.D. of Albany, NY, and Liliane Heller Miller of Charlotte, NC. Now in its 10th year, its on-going goal is to host a national public forum to address the many complex issues facing battered women as they strive to protect themselves and their children during divorce, custody, and visitation disputes.

In addition, they seek to raise public awareness by documenting civil, legal, due process, and human rights violations perpetrated on victims of domestic violence (women and children) by family courts, their professional appointees, Child Protective Services, other government systems, and all who have built an industry which profits from the suffering of mothers and children trying to escape domestic violence. – www.batteredmotherscustodyconference.org | Contact: hannah@siena.edu

MOTHER'S OF LOST CHILDREN - WHITE HOUSE DEMONSTRATION

Mothers and activists from around the US joined forces, rallying in front of the White House to protest the national crisis in family courts. Their banners and out-cries, calling on President Obama to address the problems within the courts, were seen and heard by passers-by. The day's activities were wrapped up with a candle-light vigil in remembrance of the millions of victims in the US.



Mother's of Lost Children's mission is to raise awareness; about child abuse, the civil and human rights being denied women to protect their children from physical, emotional & sexual abuse. www.mothersoflostchildren.org

NATIONAL SAFE CHILD COALITION - CAPITOL HILL LOBBYING

Mothers and advocates from all over the USA met to lobby Senators and Congressional members on Capitol Hill soliciting a Congressional Oversight Hearing on the failure of family courts in the 50 States to protect victims of domestic abuse during divorce and custodial hearings.

The failure of the US governments and United State judicial systems to protect victims of domestic abuse and violence under the principle of due diligence is documented in the *Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Gonzales vs. USA*, 2011.

Senators from all 50 States were presented with the information about the crisis in family courts all over the United States, and activist met with staff members from the offices of Congressmen Ted Poe, Jim Costa, John Conyers, and Tony Cardenas.

The National Safe Child Coalition works with national, state and local governmental agencies as well as private organizations. NSCC's goal is to bring together enough organizations, individuals and leaders to address the epidemic of child abuse in the USA. Our focus is prevention through educating, training and bringing an awareness to the public. – www.nationalsafechildcoalition.com / Contact: tammi@nationalsafechildcoalition.com (Tammi Stefano, Executive Director of Public Relations)

i Speaker's Biographies

Phyllis Chesler is an Emerita Professor of Psychology and Women's Studies at City University of New York. She is a best- selling author, a legendary feminist leader, a psychotherapist and an expert courtroom witness. Dr. Chesler has published thousands of articles and, most recently, studies, about honor-related violence including honor killings. She has published many classic works such as *Women and Madness*, *Mothers on Trial. The Battle for Children and Custody*, and *Woman's Inhumanity to Woman*. She is about to publish her fifteenth book in October, 2013, titled *An American Bride in Kabul*. – www.phyllis-chesler.com

Toby Kleinman, JD is a NJ attorney and a partner in the law firm of Adler & Kleinman. She has consulted in legal cases dealing with domestic violence and child abuse in over 45 states. She is an Associate Editor of *The Journal of Child Custody*, writes a Legal Affairs column for Division 56, the American Psychological Association's Division on Trauma, has published articles in The New Jersey Law Journal and has two chapters in the newly published book, *The Broken Family Court*.

Ms. Kleinman has taught classes at the Harvard School of Public Health, is a Director of the Advisory Board to the Leadership Council on Child Abuse and Interpersonal Violence (LC), is on the Board of Advisors of the Domestic Violence and Legal Empowerment Project at George Washington Law School.

Having given Keynote addresses at the Institute on Violence Abuse and Trauma in San Diego, the Association of family and Conciliation Courts and The Battered Mothers Custody conference Ms Kleinman was recently the keynote speaker at the Cummings Foundation Broken family Courts conference.

Voted a NJ Super Lawyer, Ms Kleinman has trained family court judges in several states, is an adjunct Professor to the Center for Psychological Studies at Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale Florida,

and is called as a guest expert on network television, including *Good Morning America* and *World News Tonight*. | Contact: toby@adlerkleinman.com

Joan S. Meier, JD is the Founder and Executive Director of DV LEAP (Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project) and Professor of Clinical Law at George Washington University Law School. Over the past 20 years she has litigated hundreds of domestic violence cases at both the trial and appellate court levels. She has also engaged in national and local domestic violence advocacy efforts in collaboration with the domestic violence community, consulted for numerous organizations including the Department of Justice and American Bar Association, and delivers regular trainings and workshops for lawyers, judges, advocates, and mental health professionals. She has served on the Mayor's Commission on Violence Against Women and several other boards and commissions addressing domestic violence. At the law school, Ms. Meier has founded three pioneering inter-disciplinary domestic violence clinical programs and has received awards for her scholarship. Ms. Meier was a featured commentator in the PBS documentary, *Breaking the Silence: Children's Voices*, which aired in Fall 2005. Professor Meier received her B.A. magna cum laude from Harvard University in 1980, her J.D. cum laude from the University of Chicago Law School in 1983, and clerked on the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. – www.dvleap.org | Contact: jmeier@law.gwu.edu

Wendy J. Murphy, JD is an adjunct professor at New England Law | Boston where she teaches a seminar on sexual violence and directs two projects she developed in conjunction with the school's Center for Law and Social Responsibility. The "Sexual Violence Legal News" project is an internet-based alert service that distributes appellate cases of interest, with editorial comment, related to interpersonal violence. The "Judicial Language Project" uses socio-linguistic research to critique the language used in law and society to describe interpersonal violence. – www.wendymurphylaw.com | Contact: wmurphy@nesl.edu

Barry Nolan is an award winning journalist and communications professional who has reported on many of the major events and personalities of our times. From the Negev desert to the rain forests of Borneo, from summiting Mt. Ranier to test diving shark repellent, from interviewing Presidents and pretenders, to catching crooks and confronting killers, he has covered an enormous range of news, personalities and current events. *No Way Out But One* is his first independent production.

Among his numerous awards are Emmys for producing, hosting and commentary, a LA Press Club Award, a Gabriel Award, and an Iris Award.

He spent two years on Capitol Hill as a senior staff member of the House/Senate Joint Economic Committee. He has been a freelance producer and blogger for [Boston Magazine](#). Currently he is a political speechwriter and PR consultant. – www.nowayoutbutone.com | Contact: barrynolan@aol.com

Terry O'Neill is feminist attorney, professor and activist for social justice, and was elected president of NOW in June 2009. She is also president of the NOW Foundation and chair of the NOW Political Action Committees, and serves as the principal spokesperson for all three entities. O'Neill oversees NOW's multi-issue agenda, which includes: advancing reproductive rights and justice, promoting diversity and ending racism, stopping violence against women, winning lesbian rights, ensuring economic justice, ending sex discrimination and achieving constitutional equality for women. – www.now.org

Lynn Rosenthal is the White House Advisor on Violence Against Women. From 2000-2006, Ms. Rosenthal served as the Executive Director of the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) where she represented 54 state and territorial coalitions whose collective membership included more than 2,000 local domestic violence programs.

Ms. Rosenthal played a major advocacy role in the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act in 2000 and 2005 and has assisted states and local communities with implementation of this groundbreaking federal legislation. She partnered with The Allstate Foundation to develop a highly successful national initiative to promote economic empowerment for survivors of violence.

Prior to her service at NNEDV, Lynn was director of the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence and on her return to Florida in 2006, Ms. Rosenthal developed the state's first comprehensive plan to help survivors of violence find housing. She most recently served as the Executive Director of the New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Lynn Rosenthal has a bachelor's degree in social work from Florida State University. – www.whitehouse.gov/blog/author/Lynn%20Rosenthal

Joyanna Silberg, PhD is the coordinator of Trauma Disorder Services for Children and Adolescents at Sheppard Pratt Health System and the Executive Vice-President of the Leadership Council on Child Abuse and Interpersonal Violence. Her psychotherapy practice specializes in children and adolescents suffering from dissociative symptoms and disorders, and her forensic practice specializes in child sexual abuse. She is past-president of the internal Society for the Study of Dissociation (ISST-D) and contributing editor to the society's journal, the Journal of Trauma and Dissociation.

She is the recipient of the 1992 Walter P. Klopfer Award for her research, and the 1997 Cornelia Wilbur Award for clinical excellence. Joyanna is the editor of The Dissociative Child and co-editor of Misinformation Concerning Child Sexual Abuse and Adult Survivors. She has written numerous articles on trauma and dissociation in children and adolescents and has presented nationally and internationally on dissociation, child abuse, psychotherapy, and protecting abused children in family court. – www.thechildsurvivor.com | Contact: jlsilberg@aol.com

Garland Waller is both TV producer and professor. She teaches graduate and undergraduate writing and producing courses in the TV and Film Department at the College of Communication at Boston University.

Under the banner of Garland Waller Productions, Garland has produced, written and directed several productions. The most recent is the award-winning, independent documentary [No Way Out But One](#). Before that, her much lauded indie documentary, *Small Justice: Little Justice in America's Family Courts*, brought attention to a little known and rarely covered scandal – that in America, men who batter their wives and sexually abuse their children can get custody in family courts.

In 2012, the Documentary Channel premiered *No Way Out But One*. Passion River Films distributes the feature film. Intermedia distributes the educational version.

Awards and recognition for *No Way Out But One* include the Colorado Film Festival Silver Award, The Award for Film and Media Excellence from The Institute on Violence, Abuse, and Trauma presented the award at the

international conference in San Diego, The Bare Bones Film Festival in Oklahoma, a Telly Award for Best Documentary Selection, an Indie Award, and an Accolade Award: Best Documentary Selection

Garland also wrote “[The Yuck Factor, The Oprah Factor, and the “Stickiness” Factor: Why the Mainstream Media Hasn’t Covered Family Court Injustice.](#)” This is one of the chapters in DV Abuse and Child Custody: Legal Strategies and Policy, published by The Civic Research Institute.

Garland speaks at national conferences, colleges and universities about family court issues and the failure of the mainstream press to cover this national scandal. She has spoken at MIT, Dartmouth, Boston University, Penn State, as well as at NCADV National Conference, the Institute on Violence Abuse and Trauma, the Battered Mothers Custody Conference, and Women’s E News, and NOVA Southeastern University’s Center for Psychological Studies. – www.garlandwallerproductions.com | Contact: garland@garlandwallerproductions.com

Joan Zorza, Esq. is the founding editor of both Domestic Violence Report and Sexual Assault Report, and has been working to end violence against women and children for more than thirty years. A member of the bars of Massachusetts, New York and the District of Columbia, she has written extensively on child custody, domestic violence, stalking and sexual assault matters, and is the author of the three volume set of books, Violence Against Women Volumes (2002, 2004, and 2006), and Guide to Interstate Custody: A Manual for Domestic Violence Advocates (1992, 1995). She was awarded for her work on custody by the Department of Justice in 1998, by the City of New York Human Resources Administration for her work on behalf of victims of domestic violence in 2000, and by the Sunshine Lady Foundation for her work on violence against women in 2002. She is on the research advisory committee of the International Association of the Chiefs of Police, a member of the board of the American Bar Association’s Commission on Domestic Violence and represented or supervised lawyers and law students in cases on behalf of more than 2,000 battered women and almost 200 sexually abused children as an attorney at Greater Boston Legal Services and at the National Battered Women’s Law Project of the now defunct National Center on Women and Family Law. She no longer represents any clients, but remains involved with many organizations and through her writings and speaking to increase the safety of women and children. – www.zorza.net | Contact: joan@zorza.net

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Quenby Wilcox, Founder of Global Expats (www.global-xpats.com), and Safe Child International, is a career Expat Mom and activist whose work has focus on domestic violence as a human rights violation. Her research, and lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill and with the US State Department, as well as her analysis of the issues and challenges involved in cases of international divorce and custody battles are posted on www.worldpulse.com/user/2759/journal.