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Money and politics corrupting domestic violence laws and enforcement

*Domestic violence industry uses stereotype
of heinous abusers to cover up myriad injustices*

Proponents of common-sense domestic violence laws say dialogue is long overdue. They want an objective examination of the issue, one that avoids closed-door legislative and judicial maneuvering. This has not been easy because domestic violence is now big business, providing significant revenue for attorneys and law enforcement, social services and judicial agencies. The system hides behind a stereotype of heinous abusers, but the reality is myriad injustices.

- In Colorado Springs, a 70-year-old man suffering from Alzheimer's became agitated when he forgot his car had been sold. When he couldn't find his car in the garage, he repeatedly hollered, "Where's the car?" Attempting to calm him, his 74-year-old wife grabbed his arms. Seeing the struggle, a neighbor called police who charged the man with domestic violence. He spent four days in jail without his medication while domestic violence counselors interviewed his wife, attempting to evince stories of past abuse from her.
- A 2-year-old girl was left by her mother with an 11-year-old as her "baby-sitter." The mother had a restraining order against the girl's father, and he had been convicted of domestic violence after she claimed he had hit a wall in her presence. The 11-year-old called the man one night and told him they had been left alone for two days and were frightened. The children did not know where their mother was and there was no food. He took food to them and helped them as best he could. When the children told her later that he had been there, she had him arrested and subsequently he was jailed for violating the restraining order. She has been in trouble herself several times for violence, including incidents at the children's school.

These cases (from www.dvmen.org) are only two of many that represent the nefarious and well-hidden side of the domestic violence industry. Blatant politicking and generalized misstatements don't help matters, either. James Castelli of Boston, who analyzes the legal impact of social issues, states that "rather than seeking to heal the wounds that afflict society as a whole, the term domestic violence has become a political wedge that has been driven between men and women by groups who seek to benefit from gender warfare."

Castelli suggests that the annual October "Domestic Violence Awareness Month" be a time to address violence in a society that can no longer deny a woman's capacity for aggression. "They can no longer deny that women batter their husbands or that statistics show that children in America are battered mostly by women. They cannot excuse female murderers by the convenient defense of 'battered wives syndrome,'" Castelli says.

Equal Justice Foundation vice president Mike Spaniola recalls a county commissioner candidate campaigning at a bar in Vail Village (Colorado) in October 2000. Standing on stage next to the county's Democratic Party chairwoman, the man recited the feminist mantra: "Women are smarter, better and stronger than men."

Of the pandering statement, Spaniola states: "Playing one sex against the other is the gender equivalent of race baiting. Politicians should be presenting solid ideas to attract votes rather than denigrating entire segments of voters to gain votes. To do otherwise is social suicide; it's destructive and unconscionable."

Erin Pizzey founded the first modern women's shelter near London, England, in 1971. She no longer associates herself with the domestic violence industry. "Any country that has tried to create a political solution to human problems has ended up with concentration camps and gulags," she said.

Critics also cite the media's misplaced and egregious allegiance to the domestic violence industry. David Hamu of Mesa, Ariz., who heads Arizona Fathers' Rights, sees the result as threefold: "We are destroying American families, we are criminalizing fatherhood, and we are trivializing the real pain of women and men who have suffered real domestic violence."

Hamu says the surge in false claims of domestic violence has been extraordinary.

"Women who have experienced no domestic violence and, in many cases, women who have committed acts of domestic violence, have used the 'no tolerance' policy to obtain child custody and often sole custody, not out of love for the children, but out of desire for a more lucrative divorce settlement, especially the increased child support awards that are associated with sole custody.

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The Equal Justice Foundation is a non-profit organization that promotes progressive justice and civil liberties for all citizens. For more information, contact Dr. Charles Corry at (719) 520-1089, or e-mail him at ccorry@ejfi.org. EJF's Web site is www.ejfi.org and the foundation also sponsors www.dvmen.org dealing with domestic violence against men.