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Gallegos case a chilling contrast to Andrea Yates murders

Man who tried to save drowning son still faces felony charges

Many people still recall the Paul Gallegos case. He's the dad who broke his leg trying to save his boy from drowning in a river near Denver—only to be charged with felony child abuse by the Jefferson County District Attorney's office when his son died.

A year later, we have a situation in which a mother, Andrea Yates, drowns her children and receives a surprising amount of support, if not, sympathy. Paul tries to rescue his child from drowning and is charged with a crime, and few seem to care.

In addition, the Jeffco's DA office decided last summer not to press charges against a mother in Conifer who ran over and killed her toddler late last July. The woman backed out of her driveway, crushing the child with her car. The Jeffco DA's office ruled it an accident and never filed charges against the woman. (The DA's office was not immediately forthcoming with the woman's name.)

In the Gallegos case, the prosecution claims a blood test shows he had a form of amphetamine in his system, but did the mother in Conifer receive any such thorough testing for chemical substances or could it have been said that she had too much caffeine coursing through her veins at the time of accident?

Gallegos also has another thing going against him: a prosecutor motivated largely by politics, Mr. Johnson, making it the entire affair an unconscionable miscarriage of justice (if not justice, then certainly compassion).

The *Washington Times* Weekly Edition (March 25, 2002) attributes the following to an article, "When parents kill," by Dahlia Lithwick on March 12 in *Slate* on www.slate.com.

"A 1969 study found that while mothers convicted of murdering their children were hospitalized 68 percent of the time and imprisoned 27 percent of the time, fathers convicted of killing their children were sentenced to prison or executed 72 percent of the time and hospitalized only 14 percent of the time.

"Perhaps it comforts us to believe that anyone who violates the sacred mother-child bond is simply crazy; it would be unimaginable if these mothers were making rational criminal choices."

Gallegos' case No. is 01CR844. We hope the media will follow this case vigorously. The Jeffco DA public information officer is Pam Russell. She's at (303) 271-6905 in Golden. Her e-mail address is prussel@co.jefferson.co.us

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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.