



Catherine Youssef Kassenoff
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Dear Friends, Family and Supporters,

It is with a profound heartbreak, that I hope none of you ever experience, that I am writing my last post ever. Today, I will be ending my own life. I will be doing so in a dignified and idyllic setting in Europe. There are simply no other options left.

In the last four years of my life I have woken up every day to a nightmare like no other. I can no longer endure the abuse and terror of Allan Kassenoff, who has spent the last 4 years mercilessly trying to incarcerate me on false charges, as recently as March 2023. I have also endured the emotional devastation of being without my children for so long, homeless from Allan's repeated ex parte evictions of me from the homes I own and rented, deprivation of my property and obliteration of my life savings, the loss of my two dogs, the loss of my career and reputation, and the concomitant humiliation and ostracism from all this.

Uncategorized

FAMILY COURT DRIVES MOTHERS TO SUICIDE: FORMER BROOKLYN FEDERAL PROSECUTOR IS LATEST VICTIM

“I cannot survive this torment and the grief that comes from such a prolonged separation from my children.”

 **Amy Neustein, Ph.D.**
June 4, 2023

Last week, while most Americans were commemorating the Memorial Day Weekend, honoring military personnel who died while serving in the United States Armed Forces, a mother of three girls would become the latest casualty of a war on a different front.

Catherine Youssef Kassenoff, a former U.S. Attorney at the Eastern District of New York and former special counsel to two New York State governors, would end her life in utter despair at age 54. Her suicide note would reveal that death was her only surcease of sorrow:

“I cannot survive this torment and the grief that comes from such a prolonged separation from my children.”

For the last several years Catherine would be bereft of her three young daughters because of draconian family court orders issued without a scintilla of evidence against her and, even worse, without a modicum of regard for basic due process protections that are woven into the fabric of American jurisprudence.

Catherine was a casualty of the “Parental Alienation” apocryphal mental health theory that though heavily discredited by major mental health associations worldwide has been used to eviscerate mothers from the lives of their children in the United States (as well as in northern and western European countries, and in Australia, Brazil and Israel) when they present credible evidence to the court of physical and/or sexual abuse committed by the father. The statistics to support these calamitous expungements of mothers by the American family courts have been assiduously compiled by George Washington University Law School Professor Joan S. Meier, who has published widely in the peer-reviewed literature and has, likewise, spoken out courageously, and repeatedly, in the popular press.

Ironically, the day-to-day anguish visited upon Catherine is eerily suggestive of another era for women: before suffrage, entitlement to education, entrance into professions, and ownership of real property and bank accounts. I ask what has energized family court to degrade and demoralize women to such an extent that all social progress is obliterated by the barbarism of such courts, which use heavy-handed tactics of extortion, blackmail, and threats in lieu of due process.

Catherine, like many other mothers, also endured constant threats of incarceration if they would acquiesce to the overwhelming maternal desire to see one’s child, even from a distance: e.g., standing in the back of a crowded auditorium during a graduation commencement exercise for which they have lawfully obtained permission to attend, hiding in a corner to catch a glimpse of one’s child performing in a school play, or watching a child from outside a skating rink in a tournament. This surreal existence of oppressed mothers was eloquently encapsulated by Catherine who, in addition to her New York University law degree, earned a masters in molecular biology:

“I have woken up every day to a nightmare like no other...I would long for the girls and try to think of all the things they might need, even though I was held at such a distance that I did not even know what those things might be. I imagined who their friends were, where they went, who they spent time with, what their dreams were. I had nothing more than my own imagination to work with because for the last 3 years I was excised from being their mother. I could not tuck them into bed at night, take them to school, host their sleepovers, make their breakfasts, or take them on vacations.”

Another mother, worn down by relentless threats of the family court and law guardian, wrote in her suicide note addressed to her children: “Please forgive me for any pain I have caused or will cause you in the future...I have no choice.”

The leitmotif surrounding all these hapless tragedies, including children who have hanged themselves or taken fatal drug overdoses when forced to live with a sexually abusive, controlling and violent father, is a culture of barbarism and savagery that suffuses the family courts daily.

There are no hearings: mothers lose children abruptly via ex parte motions brought by fathers in collusion with “sympathetic” law guardians who ask the judge to remove the child from the mother based on the custody evaluator’s invoking of the spurious “parental alienation” charge. Such mothers are immediately ordered to vacate the family home, leaving their children and their pets behind; many cannot even gather their personal belongings or, as in Catherine’s case, her winter coat. When mothers subsequently petition the courts to be heard, suddenly there is no room on the calendar. When a court date is set, judges will not permit the mother’s exculpatory evidence to be heard. Appellate courts are loathe to get involved in family court proceedings and federal remedies are completely blocked by collateral estoppel issues, the domestic relations exception, and related abstention doctrines, all of which serve as the underpinnings of precedent setting cases prejudicial to mothers, many of whom are assessed heavy sanctions when they try to seek remedy from the federal courts.

Most egregious, while in the custody of the father (or in foster care where many children have been placed by the court in order to “normalize” the relationship between the sexually abused child and the abusive parent) some children evince signs of “grooming” for child erotica. However, the prostitution and trafficking of children is neatly suppressed by never allowing the mother to see the child other than in the presence of a court-contracting visitation center or program which receives 100% of its referral business from the court. While the visitation centers collude with the courts to suppress evidence, the mother must endure the financial onus of paying “ransom” to such centers to see her own children.

During desperate times in history – American slavery, European-sponsored pogroms against Jews, world wars, famine, and plagues – we see an uptick in suicides. In fact, these stats are often used by sociologists, historians, and others to gauge social upheaval. Why must we sacrifice our mothers? There are applicable federal statutes that can be invoked by the United States Department of Justice to bring an end to this debacle. Catherine’s valiant fight for justice must be heard from the grave.



*About the author: Amy Neustein, Ph.D., co-author of **From Madness to Mutiny: Why Mothers are Running from the Family Courts – and What Can be Done about It** (University Press of New England, 2005); sequel, **“Mother-Mugging”: The Civil Rights Crisis in the Family Courts – and What Can be Done about It** (Oxford University Press, forthcoming)*