

# Opinion | Infants are being penalized in the name of ‘men’s rights’

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Arleta Ramirez with her daughter Savannah Ramirez Ridgway, 5 months, on Dec. 28 in Bristow, Va. (Carolyn Van Houten/The Washington Post)

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We were deeply saddened, though not surprised, when reading the Feb. 1 Metro article “[Custody fight imperils breastfeeding by mom.](#)” This story is all too familiar to those who study the family court system.

For the past four decades, we have researched how U.S. domestic-relations courts, built on the ingrained adversarial system of justice, have cruelly and senselessly torn infants and children from their mothers. Let’s examine the background of cases that come before the domestic courts that pose questions about custody of a nursing infant. To begin with, mothers of newborns are immersed in the 24/7 demands of motherhood, as infants are known to barely sleep through the night. A mother is therefore not likely to leave her partner unless there is domestic violence, cheating or severe mental abuse. However, if she should decide to divorce and seek custody of her infant, she will be savagely attacked by the other side for “weaponizing” breastfeeding against the father to gain an advantage in a custody dispute. Does this attack on mothers make any sense? Yet courts are telling Mother Nature to take a back seat to champion the “rights” of a father to deprive his child of both the biological and psychological benefits of breastfeeding naturally given to babies since the beginning of time — and in so doing place the infant at risk.

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