

A tool kit to destroy families

[[Washington Times](#), 9 December 2001, Commentary section (Forum), p. B5.] *Reproduced under the Fair Use provisions of 17 USC Sec. 107 for non-commercial, educational use.*

Amid the war against terrorism both abroad and at home, as we send our servicemen overseas to defend our homes and country, Attorney General John Ashcroft can apparently find time to undermine our heroes here on the home front by continuing federal action to destroy their families and children.

The Attorney General and Health Secretary Tommy Thompson have just announced the creation of a federal [Toolkit to End Violence Against Women](#). The [Toolkit](#) is a series of documents that rehash familiar but discredited hysteria about domestic violence and instruct mothers on how to use groundless accusations of domestic violence to end their marriages and remove children from their fathers. Like myriad existing government programs, this will do nothing to "end violence against women." What it will do is accelerate family destruction and increase violence against children.

Consider three long-established and undisputed facts:

* First, there is no epidemic of violence specifically against women. In 1999, the socialist-feminist magazine *Mother Jones*, hardly a bastion of male chauvinism, reported that "women report using violence in their relationships more often than men" and "wives hit their husbands at least as often as husbands hit their wives." While the politicians of feminism, such as the National Organization for Women (NOW), refuse to acknowledge this truth, its theorists admit and even celebrate the fact. "Women are doing the battering," writes feminist icon Betty Friedan, "as much or more than men." In his book, "Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say," former NOW board member Warren Farrell provides a bibliography of studies going back a quarter-century, many by feminist scholars, establishing beyond doubt that domestic violence is an equal opportunity problem. Professor Martin Fiebert of California State University has compiled a similar bibliography of [117 studies](#).

* Second, the hysteria over domestic violence is largely geared toward one aim: removing children from their fathers. Donna Laframboise of the *National Post* investigated battered women's shelters in the US and Canada and concluded they constituted "[one stop divorce shops](#)" whose primary purpose was not to shelter abused women but to promote divorce. These shelters, many of which are federally funded, issue affidavits against fathers sight-unseen that are accepted without any corroborating evidence by judges eager (for their own bureaucratic reasons) to justify restraining orders against fathers and the removal of their children. Feminists themselves contend that most domestic violence takes place within the context of "custody battles." "All of this domestic violence industry is about trying to take children away from their fathers," writes Irish Times columnist [John Waters](#), who predicts: "When they've taken away the fathers, they'll take away the mothers."

* Third and most serious of all, the most dangerous environment for a child is the home of a single mother. Children in single-parent households are at much higher risk for physical violence and sexual molestation than those living in two-parent homes.

A British study found children are up to 33 times more likely to be abused when a live-in boyfriend or stepfather is present. "Contrary to public perception," write Patrick Fagan and Dorothy Hanks, "research shows that the most likely physical abuser of a young child will be that child's mother, not a male in the household." Mothers accounted for 55% of child murders according to a 1994 Justice Department report (and fathers for a tiny percentage). As Maggie Gallagher writes in her 1996 book, "The Abolition of Marriage": "The person most likely to abuse a child physically is a single mother. The person most likely to abuse a child sexually is the mother's boyfriend or second husband. . . . Divorce, though usually portrayed as a protection against domestic violence, is far more frequently a contributing cause." Adrienne Burgess, head of the British government's Fathers Direct program, observes that "fathers have often played the protector role inside families."

Domestic violence programs provide a gravy train of government funding that empowers the divorce industry to seize control of more children, with predictable results: more divorce, more single-mother homes, more abused children. In no other area has the current administration been so committed to continuing the failed policies of the last one.

Do we really believe that the preponderance of firefighters and police officers who died on September 11 were "batterers"? More urgently, how long do we expect our servicemen to fight and die to protect their country and families when the government of their country seems bent on destroying their families?

STEPHEN BASKERVILLE The writer teaches political science at Howard University.