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## **Myths about domestic violence fix the blame, not the problem**

### *Special-interest social groups stereotype perpetrators*

Domestic violence laws are publicized to fit the classic definition of recurring violence involving physical injuries. The reality is that today's laws are so wide ranging as to encourage injustices and false charges.

Depictions of domestic violence, often intended as humorous, showed a woman hitting a man over the head with a rolling pin or throwing a dinner plate at him. Today such domestic violence is still not taken seriously. Instead we stereotype the man as perpetrator. Men are errantly labeled as primary aggressors because media, police and courts view men in that way.

As a result, abusive women in need of treatment view society condoning their violent behavior, creating further risk for men and children. This approach also ignores long-term contributing factors such as psychological and emotional abuse by a woman against a man.

When a 49-year-old Colorado Springs woman pleaded guilty in November 2000 to stabbing her husband, Gerard Miranda, in the back, he said the plea was the final chapter of a 20-year ordeal of domestic violence. His case gained national attention when he was forced to pay alimony to his estranged wife who was in jail for stabbing him.

Miranda wanted others to know how difficult the criminal justice system can be for male victims of domestic violence. "It is a big relief for my entire family that this matter has drawn to a close," he said. "I believe that when women are the perpetrators in domestic violence matters, the court views the issues differently because society views women as non-violent."

In 1999, a U.S. Justice Department report finally admitted that 20-year-old data verified that wives hit husbands at least as often as husbands hit wives. Even liberal-slanted *Mother Jones* magazine reported the story this way: "A surprising fact has turned up in the grimly familiar world of domestic violence: Women report using violence in their relationships more often than men."

The study was by Terrie Moffitt, a University of Wisconsin psychology professor. *Mother Jones* reported, "In light of the persistence of domestic violence, researchers are beginning to consider a broader range of data, including the possible significance of women's violence. This willingness to pay attention to what was once considered reactionary nonsense signals a fundamental conceptual shift in how domestic violence is being studied."

University of Alberta professor Ferrel Christensen whose research and writing involve human sexuality and gender equality, states, "Encouraged by the only-men-are-abusive propaganda and by the dark side of human nature, many individual women bent on cutting 'their' children out of the fathers' lives have exploited the stereotypes just discussed. Primarily this is done by making the legal system itself a weapon of abuse, through false accusations or insinuations to authorities."

Christensen, president of the Movement to Establish Real Gender Equality (MERGE) since 1987, notes that divorce is often highly traumatic and can enrage even decent people. The really terrible injustices often occur when a person has psychotic or borderline personality disorders.

Research shows that many of such people tend to make false accusations in stressful situations. Worse yet, today's politically leveraged legal system often readily accepts accusations of abuse without question.

Men are coming forward as victims of spousal abuse, but men's-rights advocates say the number is dramatically underreported. David Burroughs, chairman of the Forum for Equity and Fairness in Family Issues in Fair Hill, Md., said, "Most men know that if they hit their partner, she's likely to be injured and police may be called. However, women know that if they hit their partner, he's unlikely to be injured or to call for help, and the police are unlikely to intervene."

In his 1999 book, "Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say," Dr. Warren Farrell states, "Men do not speak up, organize or publicize, so biases against women are eliminated and biases against men remain."

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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](mailto:ccorry@ejfi.org). EJF's Web site is [www.ejfi.org](http://www.ejfi.org) and the foundation also sponsors [www.dvmen.org](http://www.dvmen.org) dealing with domestic violence against men.*