

# THE GAZETTE

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## EDITORIALS *SAVED* SATURDAY NOVEMBER 30, 2002

### Rights and responsibilities

The "fathers' rights" movement may or may not be correct about the desirability of changing child-custody and other laws, but its case is often undermined by the vehemence of its own adherents. Like outspoken feminists on the other side of the marriage and gender wars, they sometimes seem more interested in exchanging vitriol and promoting their own agenda than in protecting children.

Fathers' rights advocates are increasingly claiming that instances of men committing suicide, murder or other violence are caused by their family troubles or bias in the court systems. The Associated Press quoted Lowell Jaks, president of the Alliance for Non-Custodial Parents Rights, as saying: "... when you cause this much pain to so many men, there are going to be repercussions — a certain percentage are going to crack." Jaks, according to AP, has sent out newspaper ar-

ticles to his members noting the problems with child custody and child support that angered John Muhammad, the alleged Washington-area sniper, and Robert Flores, who killed three University of Arizona nursing professors.

Then there's David Roberts, president of the American Coalition for Fathers and Children, who says child-support orders are part of a "war on fathers" and contribute to the suicides of more than 5,000 divorced fathers each year.

No one should expect courts to give custody to men with a propensity toward killing themselves or others. There needs to be less stress on the rights of parents and more on their joint responsibility to raise children in stable marriages — or at the bare minimum, in the context of a civil relationship between mother and father.