

**STOP CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE • STOP COURT OVERSIGHT OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE •  
STOP OFTEN LINKED CHILD ABUSE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE • STOP LOOKING AWAY •**

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***Prosecuted But Not Silenced: Courtroom Reform for Sexually Abused Children***, written by **Maralee McLean**, calls our hearts and minds to sharp attention. We simply cannot look away from this reality, from this clear cut example of what can take place in and within all too common poorly informed, flawed, biased, and at times even dishonest judicial and legal processes. Far too frequently these processes and their professional participants actually enable the perpetration, and virtual protection of the perpetration, of child sexual abuse. Too often, we find complete misunderstandings, and at times even purposeful blurrings and distortions, of parental rights, parental protections, child abuse, intimate partner abuse, accompanied by wobbly definitional shells such as the odd, risky and most frequently fallaciously applied “parental alienation syndrome” concept that has emerged.

Here, in this daring, disturbing, and in places immensely wrenching, book by Maralee McLean, we are taken on the abuse and litigation of abuse journey of author Ms. McLean and her daughter. And what a bloody path we tread here, a path fraught with double binds, trick twists, traps, and impossible choices. How does an abused woman who is a mother choose between the risk of losing custody on the one hand, and the risk of further sexual abuse of her child if she stays with the parent abusing her child. How does this woman make her way through the tangled web of sloppy, inadequate, nonsensical, uninformed, poorly administered, and cruelly denied justice?

As Ms. McLean writes, “A mother’s first instinct is to protect her child, and when the means and the power to do this are stripped unjustly from a mother, there are no words to describe the constant heartache that is felt as each day passes by.” McLean tells us “my heart was ripped out every time my precious little girl told me and others what most people would describe as unimaginable.” The abuse this child experienced is indeed difficult to want to know about, and yet we must pay attention to the reality that some children do indeed endure such abuse. We also must pay attention to the terribly inadequate response to this abuse displayed by some courts, evaluators, clinicians, law enforcement officials, and other professionals.

For the most part, society’s eyes are closed, shut, to the reality that too many courts do not protect the innocent from injury or further injury. Rather, the courts too frequently risk, and sometimes even exacerbate further, injury of the innocent. We cannot tell ourselves this sort of thing is not taking place. We cannot say that our system of justice protects us from the tragic failures of justice these misunderstandings, blurrings and distortions promote. We are talking about human lives here.

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