

TO: Whom It May Concern

RE: Fatima Busaat Loeliger

DOB: 10/21/89

I am a Marriage Family Child Therapist with 18 years experience working with children and families. I have worked for Shasta County Children's Protective Services (seven years) and Shasta County Mental Health (two years). A large percent of my current private practice is providing parent-child assessments for Shasta County Family Court Services, Children's Protective Services and Shasta County Superior Court. I have testified as an expert witness in Shasta and Tehama Counties.

On May 6, 1997 I saw Fatima Loeliger in my office in Redding. She presented as a bright, self-assured child. She did not appear to be anxious or resistant to speak to me - in fact she seemed eager to talk and quite intense about wanting me to understand her plight.

She had been staying with her father for several days - (I am not sure how long) and was due to return to her mother's. She told me she did not want to go home because she was afraid her mother was going to hit her. She said her mother hits her a lot, mostly with her shoe - a burkenstock - and once with a hanger. She said the one time she hit her with the hanger was because she was watching a movie that had kissing on it and "Mom doesn't like me watching kissing." Fatima showed me the place on her arm where she got hit.

As far as the hitting with the shoe, Fatima said once it was because she was going barefoot, once for not brushing her teeth. Fatima said Mom threatens her not to look at or rub where she got hit "or else I'm gonna make it worse."

Fatima was not able to say how often she gets hurt but indicated it was a couple times a month maybe once a week. Not nearly as much as Sara, her cousin, who "gets hit a lot. Mom is mad at her almost every day. Sara has a big bump on her head from Mom punching her and throwing something at her."

Fatima also told me that her mother frequently curses at her calling her a "Fuck 'n bitch" and calling her "you're stupid like your father."

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Fatima said her mother would act nice when she came to pick her up but she'll yell in the car on the ride home and then at home she'd hit. When I asked her to tell me about the good things with her mother, she said there was nothing good with Mom, only her baby sister Fatima Ayan and her cousin Sara; that she'd miss them if she lived with Dad.

When I inquired if she and her mother could talk about problems - Fatima said "She won't talk; she'll yell. My Mom has a loud voice...I'll be in big trouble. She won't listen."

When I asked why she was coming forth now, she said her mother had been talking to her about Court, had told her that her father was trying to get custody. Fatima said she decided to tell because she "wanted to help Dad get it sooner."

It is my impression that Scott Loeliger's motivation to regain physical custody of Fatima is due to his genuine concern for her physical and emotional well-being. I have been informed by Dr. Loeliger that he tried to solicit intervention on the part of Tehama County C.P.S. and Tulare County C.P.S..

I was told that Anita Whilhelme of Tehama County was concerned but did not believe there was sufficient danger to warrant a 300 petition. Apparently Melissa Beal of Tulare placed Fatima in protective custody and authorized her to stay with her father but later retracted the placement after an interview with Sadia and Sara.

Dr. Loeliger complied with the return of Fatima to her mother. Later that week, she was interviewed in her mother's home. Apparently she retracted the statements she made to her father, Anita Whilhelme, Tehama County Police and myself - I am told that she told the Visalia Police Officer that her mother had not hurt her and she was sorry she had lied to her father.

Having reviewed the record provided to me by Dr. Loeliger I can appreciate how frustrated the Court may be with the chronic nature of these parents' custody litigation. Nevertheless, a thorough review of the documentation makes it irresponsible for the father's concerns to be cursorily dismissed.

I believe that Fatima told me the truth about fears and concerns with her mother. I do not believe that she was coached or coerced by her father to make those statements. In fact he

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was very hesitant to involve yet another professional but felt the urgency to do so because of the intensity of Fatima's pleas to him not to be returned. I believe that Fatima felt strong enough to come forth while with her father trusting he could protect her. When he was unable to do so (keep her with him) and she was returned to her mother, she may well have felt the need to retract in order to survive. This child told numerous authorities the same story yet she was returned. How can she be expected to make a statement against her mother when in her mother's presence?

I urge the Court to appoint a well respected professional who has experience with children in custody conflicts to review this entire case, to see Fatima on a regular basis, and make recommendations on her behalf.

Handwritten signature

Sincerely,

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