

David Ignell: A human tragedy caused by OCS

By **SENIOR CONTRIBUTOR** - February 18, 2023

By DAVID IGNELL

Back in December, I wrote an article outlining how Alaska's unelected judges and attorney generals have repeatedly highjacked grand jury investigations into the Office of Children Services.

My article contained quotes from former State Rep. Tammie Wilson who in 2016 said "OCS has become a protected empire", and "poor parents are often targeted". Wilson called it "legal kidnapping" and said, "parents will do anything to get their children back."

Some readers felt most of this was old news and wasn't applicable in the Dunleavy administration, which took control of OCS in 2018. They noted Wilson had abruptly quit the Legislature in January 2020 to work for Dunleavy. They believed Wilson had helped straighten out OCS and it was on the right path.

These readers were dead wrong. The situation at OCS has gotten worse in the last six years under Dunleavy. OCS now backs up their kidnapping vans to the homes of respected middle-class families in addition to the poor. Their thirst for new victims appears unquenchable and Wilson appears to be compromised. She knows all about the tragedy you're about to read yet has been powerless to stop the ongoing trauma. Is your home next?

The problem isn't isolated to OCS and Dunleavy. Alaska's judiciary and its legal system bear full responsibility for allowing this tyranny to go unchecked. The backstop of constitutional rights many of you

have assumed exists in our state is a fiction. A chummy club of judges, lawyers, guardians ad litem, and expert witnesses make a comfortable living off this legal kidnapping. Their paychecks and prestige appear to take priority above the interests of the children they're sworn to protect. The professionals dominating our courtrooms fiddle while Alaska burns to the ground.

Consider the gut-wrenching ordeal of a Mat-su Valley family that follows.

OCS' reckless and willful destruction of this bi-racial family over the last 2 years is an absolute outrage. It would take a book to adequately describe all the trauma OCS has dished out to "AK Mom" and the five children she adopted as infants from 2005 to 2012, all with disabilities. However, I will attempt to encapsulate this ongoing tragedy here in the next 2000 words by focusing on the second child she adopted, "George."

George was born into this world with cocaine and marijuana in his system. AK Mom, a registered nurse, brought him home from the hospital when he was seven days old. Over the next 13 years George would be diagnosed with fetal alcohol syndrome, attention deficit disorder, and disruptive behavior disorder. In addition to these setbacks, he is autistic. Obviously, George could be a handful at times. He's the kind of kid many Alaskans want to ignore, but his condition is a product of our failed drug and rehabilitation policies.

George was one of the lucky FASD kids though. To his adopted mom, George was an absolute blessing and a child to be cherished. AK Mom loved him as though he was her biological son. She attended to all his needs and would defend him to her death. For 13 years she had successfully navigated through all these challenges and George's future was beginning to show significant promise. In 2019, a medical doctor observed that George was a "remarkable boy" from a "remarkable family guided" by AK Mom.

AK Mom made substantial sacrifices so that George and his siblings could be raised in Christian schools. An experienced educator very familiar with the kids described them as polite and respectful. When given tasks they were good at following directions and helping younger students. The educator acknowledged that some of the kids behaved improperly at times, but AK Mom never made excuses for them. She always cooperated with the school in formulating and carrying out appropriate consequences for any improper conduct. The educator called it a privilege to work with the family.

Similar observations have been consistently made by licensed social workers and behavioral health professionals. A provider to children with developmental disabilities recognized AK Mom as "not only a good mother but an exceptional caregiver." Another registered nurse said AK Mom has the patience of a saint and is especially well-suited for parenting children with FASD, having become highly educated in appropriate ways to deal with behavioral issues.

AK Mom and her family were very active in their church. One woman, herself a former guardian ad litem, praised the way that AK Mom handled troublesome situations with her children. She recounted how those in the church noticed a remarkable change in George over the last several months the family was together. This woman knew that AK Mom had brought George to a new psychiatrist who used Genomind

technology to get him off unnecessary medications while maintaining essential ones. The behavioral changes had been remarkable. She told me George was alert, communicative, and beginning to engage with the church members in a very positive way.

On April 2, 2021, the night before George's world suddenly fell apart, the family attended a Good Friday cantata at a different church where they were first time visitors. The family had started off the school holiday at a local park and doing trampoline jumping. By chance they had heard about the cantata, and it was George's idea for the family to cap off a great day together by attending the service.

The Caucasian mom and her 5 Alaska Native children stood out in the crowd of 50 people that night. Today, two years later, people from that church still remember how well behaved the family was before, during, and after the cantata. One person remembers talking with George and how excited he was about his upcoming 14th birthday on Easter Sunday. As George and his family enjoyed the church's presentation of the Last Supper, they had no idea they too had just eaten their last supper together.

The next afternoon, George's family was summoned to the Alaska CARES center in Anchorage. While George and his siblings were held in one room, AK Mom was interrogated in another. The interrogation was led by Dr. Barbara Knox, the Medical Director of CARES. Knox sat at one end of the room flanked by two Protective Service Specialists. To their left sat two "navigators" who are supposed to assist families. Behind Knox in a hidden room with a two-way mirror sat two Anchorage Police Officers. At the other end of the room, alone by herself, sat AK Mom.

After a quick round of introductions, Knox did most of the talking. The navigators said nothing. To give readers a sense of what that interrogation felt like, an ADN headline from Nov. 15, 2021 provides a good summation: "Mass exodus at Alaska child abuse clinic as medical director accused of bullying and misdiagnoses." The story quotes a former forensic nurse at CARES whose position was eliminated in March of 2021 after she registered multiple complaints about Knox. The nurse said, "I am very fearful for anybody who has to bring their kids to Alaska CARES right now."

George's family were some of those unfortunate people the forensic nurse feared for. Knox is long gone from CARES, yet AK Mom's nightmare continues. Significant evidence exists indicating Knox was intentionally duped by the OCS and she was used as a tool to gain control of the five children and intentionally harass AK Mom. The Protected Empire is out to punish people who stand up to them.

The problem with Alaska CARES and its connection to OCS goes much deeper than most people want to publicly admit. The fear is real. None of the sources I've spoken to want to be named publicly. Some have expressed fear their children and grandchildren will be targeted by the Protected Empire.

If lawful and well-respected community members can be harnessed by this fear, imagine how easily manipulated those with past blemishes are. This is one of the reasons why a special grand jury investigation into the OCS and the legal system that protects the Empire is imperative.

After six hours of interrogation, Knox told Alaska Mom that they were taking her children away from her. No judge was involved in this decision. The state's claim against AK Mom was "Medical Abuse". A fancier phrase the professionals like to use is "Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy". OCS defines MSBP as "unnecessary and harmful or potentially harmful medical care at the instigation of the caregiver."

Knox then asked AK Mom to go into the adjoining room and help prepare her children mentally to be taken away. When AK Mom told her children what was about to happen, one of George's brothers curled up on the couch and started crying uncontrollably. George's 12-year-old sister "Karen", who wasn't on any medications asked, "they're taking us for meds?" When another adult responded "yes", Karen said, "then I don't have to go." OCS took Karen anyway.

Before they were separated, Karen grabbed a paper towel and a marker, drew a heart and then wrote "I love you Mom" and gave it to her mother. Karen, George, and their siblings were then all taken by OCS to the Alaska Native Medical Center where they were held for the next few days. George didn't get to celebrate his 14th birthday as he had excitedly anticipated on Good Friday. His wrapped presents remained unopened. He never got to taste the birthday cakes his mom had baked for him to share with friends at church and later at home with his loved ones.

But OCS was just getting started with their reckless and senseless infliction of pain on George. OCS and ANMC took him off the medications the psychiatrist using the Genomind technology had prescribed. A nurse who witnessed the resulting carnage described it as awful and horrible.

After a few days inside ANMC, George and his siblings were placed together in an emergency foster home for a few additional days. Then OCS split them up and sent them into separate homes. By April 26 George had been moved by the OCS five times. He had already tried to run home to AK Mom once, walking several miles before he was picked up and returned to OCS.

On May 1, George got in an argument during breakfast at his most recent foster home near Dimond Center and had applesauce thrown on him. He went up to his room, packed his belongings into his duffel bag, and headed out the door towards his mother. He didn't know how to get there, other than knowing he lived in the valley away from the mountains. He couldn't cope with his FASD, ADHD, DBD, and autism on his own anymore. Somehow, he had to find his way home.

By 6 pm that evening, George found himself sitting on a bench alongside the southbound lanes of Glenn Highway, just north of the Memorial Plaque outside of JBER. He was tired, hungry, and his rheumatic leg was in extreme pain. Wearing clothes now stained by the dried applesauce, George tried to think of what to do next.

George wasn't sure how far he'd walked or how much further he had to go. He knew he was in a bad situation. The sun was descending across the sky, and he sensed home was still a long way away. He bowed his head between his knees.

Google Maps reveals George had walked 20 miles in the past 10 hours. He had at least 35 more miles to travel if he took all the right turns. But sunset was only 4 hours away and he never would have made it.

What George didn't know was that no one was looking for him. His foster family had not reported to the Anchorage police that he had run away. How George was found in this condition and brought to safety was a complete miracle of God. It's an amazing and incredible story that will be told some other time.

Today, nearly two years later, the ending to this tragedy has not yet been seen. OCS has moved the children an aggregate of 55 times in the past 22 months. Two more moves are currently being considered. OCS has prevented AK Mom and her other four children from seeing her youngest child, "Damien", now 11 years old, since Aug. 26, 2022.

Last summer the second youngest child, "Lawrence" was put in the care of an opaque "transport company" for months where he was stored in locked motel rooms in both Fairbanks and Anchorage. Like his older brother George, Lawrence has been diagnosed with FASD, ADHD, DBD, an anxiety disorder, and autism.

Lawrence tried to escape from his second story motel room in Fairbanks by lowering himself with a sheet out a back window. He fell and hurt his ankle and didn't get far before being returned to the transport company. The Protected Empire has treated Lawrence like a piece of cargo while all the judges and lawyers fiddled on with their sophisticated, reprehensible tunes.

This case represents just the tip of the iceberg of government tyranny in Alaska. Since writing my original story, my inbox has been flooded with several more nightmarish accounts about OCS. Last month, the 2022 Principal of the Year learned the hard way what happened when our Legislature passed HB 172 sponsored by Dunleavy's office.

Twelve years ago, a resident from the village of Hoonah and his family learned how easy it is for State officials to lock up innocent people and ignore their ethical responsibilities. I have it on excellent authority there are many more innocent people locked away in our prisons.

Our burgeoning state government has become like a leach. No longer able to sustain itself on the flesh and blood of the poor, and recently your PFD, it has turned its attention to the middle class and even the affluent. Beware of expressing your faith publicly like Principal Fulp did.

What has happened to this place that we used to admirably call the Great Land? My sense is it all starts at the top, as documented some 3000 years ago in Ecclesiastes 5:7. History repeats itself.

Alaskans have the power to overcome this tyranny, but only if we have the will. We must quit thinking in terms of Democrat Party this and Republican Party that and become united under the concept of Justice for All. Start calling and emailing the offices of your elective representatives and the Governor.

Grab a picket sign and join sit-ins that are being scheduled throughout the state at government offices and courthouses. Demand independent grand jury investigations and support constitutional amendments that will return elective power to the people over judges and prosecutors. Influence your local city councils and tribes to pass resolutions denouncing this tyranny. Insist that oaths by public officials be taken seriously and criminal sanctions be imposed when willfully violated.

Most importantly, please join me in prayer. Lift your voice so God and those around can hear your plea and join in. Pray for the reunification of AK Mom's family. Pray for the release of Thomas Jack Jr., from prison back to his loved ones. Pray for Justice for the countless other Alaskan families who have been victimized by OCS and our legal system. Pray that those individuals responsible for each of these State caused tragedies will seek redemption for their souls. Pray that Alaska's leaders will renew their faith in God and be guided by the following instruction found in Zechariah 8:16-17:

"These are the things you are to do: speak the truth to each other; in your courts, administer justice that is true and conducive to peace; don't plot harm against each other; and don't love perjury; for all these things I hate, says God."

Be sure to lift up George in your prayers – that he will soon reach home and finally unwrap those two year old gifts he's resolved not to open until then.

Amen.

David Ignell was born and raised in Juneau, where he currently resides. He holds a law degree from University of San Diego and formerly practiced as a licensed attorney in California. He has experience as a volunteer analyst for the California Innocence Project, and is currently a forensic journalist and author of a recent book on the Alaska Grand Jury.