

# Epiphany of a Patriot

*March 7, 2005*

**Marc Snider**

[WWW.NHCUSTODY.ORG](http://WWW.NHCUSTODY.ORG)

I used to be a patriot.

I still remember driving to work in a surreal fog on the morning of 9/11, awash in the emotion and pain of my recent separation from my ex-wife, ex step-daughter, and daughter. I was aghast when I heard the radio broadcast relaying that a plane had hit the WTC, and then further shocked still when the second impact was reported. I would alternate between extreme sadness for the victims and rage toward the perpetrators in the days that followed those heinous events, though the pain I felt I was sharing with the American community as a whole somehow seemed to offset in some measure the personal despair I was experiencing as the breakdown of my family and my life overtook most every fiber of my being. I had moved out of the family home less than two weeks earlier after my daughter's mother demanded a divorce and was already badly missing my little girl.

In the weeks following 9/11 American flags were very hard to come by. I gave up searching and instead printed an 8.5" x 11" full color flag I had located on the internet. I taped that flag in the rear window of my truck with heartfelt pride just days after 9/11 and there it had been, stoically, proudly, ever since. There were more than a couple of occasions in the weeks and months of aftermath when I found myself breaking down into sobbing tears as I drove down the road and deeply contemplated the orphaned children, dead parents, and countless scores of lives affected by that savage terrorist-inflicted tragedy. I would often play Lee Greenwood's 'Proud to be an American' and well up with pride as I cried tears of righteous nationalism for the victims of the tragedy and the violated values of American morality and freedom.

I wrote letters to the President urging him not to listen to the naysayers and in support of his foreign policy decisions. Historically I've been a news junkie and scholar of world events, even obsessively, over the years and I was riveted by the intensity of American nationalism, the prospective clash of civilizations, the international proliferation of ever-more-devastating weapons, and a variety of other compelling and newsworthy issues that brought to the surface my inner feelings of patriotism. After all, this country, our America, was certainly the bastion of light in a darkening world, poised to lead the civilized and free across the globe in the pursuit of the worldwide dissemination of democracy alongside our superior morality, ethicality, and lofty values.

I was a true patriot.

As the months and years passed I would discuss, debate, and even argue long and hard with family members, friends, acquaintances, and anyone who would engage me about national security, global warming, radical Islam, China's economic growth and threat to Taiwan, Russian

nuclear assistance to Iran, and the European/American steel rift. I would pontificate at length about our need to seal the country's borders, support the Patriot Act, consider pre-emptive action overseas, and repeal the death tax. I would weigh in to local radio talk shows to voice my view on how American military action was too politicized and wasn't being conducted in accordance with the most important principles of troop protection. I would bristle over the stories on corruption at the United Nations and how the Security Council and member states had undermined the U.S. in the runup to the Iraq invasion.

I watched the Presidential debates with fervor and conviction, though I considered myself neither a Republican nor a Democrat. I'd make note on an almost daily basis as to the status of the legislative battle over judicial nominees, allegations of Executive Branch corruption as they related to Halliburton, and the Democratic assertions that the judiciary was being hijacked by John Ashcroft's religious values on behalf of the right wing of the country. I would ponder the Republican charges of purposeful congressional paralysis by the Democrats, the debate over oil drilling at ANWAR, and the California fiscal crisis. The global migration of the American labor force and associated adverse implications on the U.S. economy would cause me much consternation and I would spend significant amounts of time researching, considering, and engaging in discourse over the potential ramifications of the outsourcing of America. There were a plethora of issues I would pay close attention to, study, and attempt to work through in the privacy of my own thoughts as well as in the company of others who expressed concern about such issues.

I was a true patriot.

All the while, in the years subsequent to my divorce and unwanted separation from my daughter, I was being dragged through the family law system in the state of NH. I don't bring up NH in particular because it has any significance other than being mine and my daughter's state of residence. I ended up spending over thirty thousand dollars in litigation and GAL expenses trying to stay an integral part of my daughter's life, even as her mother was doing everything within her power to keep us apart (and continues to engage in an attempt to alienate my daughter from me to this day).

Though I am one of the fortunate non-custodial parents in the United States who had the means to fight for access to my daughter, for both of our sakes, I still had many days where I felt perilously close to the emotional breaking point as my daughter's mother and her immoral and unethical attorney used the court system against me wherever and whenever possible. I was then, and am now, being bled dry to the tune of over 25% of my income, such that I am unable to save money for my daughter's college. And this is true despite the fact that I essentially left my ex-wife and her stepdaughter, who had nothing to their names when I met them 6 years prior to the divorce, financially set for life. I was fortunate enough to hit it big during the high tech boom of the late 90s and left them with a fully furnished half million dollar home and no mortgage, luxury SUV and no car payment, fifty thousand dollars in the bank, and not a penny of debt.

My child support now goes toward helping pay for trips to France and Mexico and ski vacations for my daughter's mother and her new husband (husband #3), while my 8 year old daughter reports having to pay for her 3rd grade backpack with her birthday money. The NH courts refused to grant

me a penny of offset for the afterschool program I have my daughter enrolled in on the days she is with me, nor for any of her clothes or other necessities at our home together, or toward any expenses whatsoever incurred at our home for utilities or anything else. If you are a non-custodial parent you obviously understand the situation and need no further information, as you are likely living in a similar state of disbelief at how you have been treated by the blind scales of American family justice.

I started doing some research earlier this year and came to find that the numbers of non-custodial parents (and in the overwhelming number of cases they are fathers) suffering similarly from both emotional and financial impoverishment is unconscionable. The problem is literally everywhere. It is difficult to project yourself into a situation where you've worked so hard to plan for your child's present and future only to have it all taken away after having divorce filed against you. Further, and more importantly, to be kept away from your own child and have your child denied the access to you that you know she/he desires and requires to ensure a healthy development can psychologically put you over the edge. The selfishness and narcissism that is so prevalent in our society today, coupled with family law policy around the country, has generated a generation of largely fatherless children and largely childless fathers. Even those fathers who are fortunate enough to have retained meaningful access to their own children are frequently left financially devastated to the degree that they are unable to provide for their children's best interests at present and into the future.

Point is that with all of the pain I have come to realize has been, and is being, inflicted on parents and children around this country under the guise of 'family law' I suddenly decided, during an epiphany last week, that perhaps my patriotism has been misplaced. Yes.... Yes, it has.

What of the high moral ground we stand for as Americans? What of the better lives we have planned for the children and families of other 'uncivilized' countries around the world? Hmmmm...

I haven't had the opportunity to pay much attention to the world or national news over the last two months as I've been focused, obsessively, instead on doing everything I can to support the effort toward family law reform in New Hampshire. I've found during that effort that there are scores of individuals who claim to represent the always politically correct, but always amorphous, 'best interests of the children'. These people are mostly attorneys and other divorce industry insiders, but there are also child advocates, feminists, and others who directly advocate the continued abrogation of equal parenting rights through opposition to equal parenting protections for fit parents. These people seem to think, in their wisdom, that Judges and Attorneys and GALs (usually another word for Attorneys) are better suited (while getting paid handsomely) over the course of hours to decide what is best for American children than those children's fit parents are, even in those cases of no-fault divorce (or no-fault separation outside of marriage) where one of the parents is forced unwillingly into a dissolution of the family unit. And this parent who is forced unwillingly into said family dissolution is overwhelmingly the one who these Judges, Attorneys, and GALs decide shouldn't get to be equal parents to their children... Hmmmm...

Try as I might to ponder the thoughts and rationale of such intelligent, educated, and self-righteous people I am truly at a loss to come to grips with their direct contribution to the destruction of the American family through emphatic support of the status quo, its massive

incentivization of divorce, and the associated uneven hand dealt non-custodial parents (usually fathers) by American family courts. Heck, who can make sense of what our family law system does to our military heroes as they return from the overseas battle for freedom only to be met by stolen children, outlandish support arrearages, and nowhere near the justice and freedom they've been taught they're risking their lives for overseas...?

Yes, I have had a sobering and heartfelt epiphany.

Last week, after three and a half years, I took down that American flag in the back window of my pickup and boxed it up. I won't be cuing up Lee Greenwood again any time soon (and will change the station if he comes on the radio), and I don't much care about Iran's nuclear ambitions, Syria's support of Iraqi insurgents, China's pinning the Yuan to the dollar, or France's bad attitude. The Democrats and Republicans can duke it out on CSPAN or FOX or CNN or wherever and I've little concern. American labor exodus....? Social Security reform...? The one and a half billion dollars slated for the preservation of marriage (forgive me if I don't chuckle)...? Gay marriage...? Who cares...? Not this non-custodial parent. For I have seen the light. Until family law policy and the associated devastation of the lives of children, parents, and families in the United States is reconciled, there is no high moral ground. And I shan't pretend there is. The Orwellian nation that has evolved on American territory is not the nation of our founders. It is instead much closer to a police state where children are frequently denied [one of] their parents due to the influence of \$\$\$. The soapbox of lofty American values is a weak mirage and nothing more. I can't speak for every NCP, but this one no longer has a dog in any of those fights...