

OHIO HOME EDUCATION COALITION

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VIA FAX

Akron Beacon Journal
44 East Exchange Street
Akron, OH 44328

To the Editor:

Despite the thousands of words used to assail homeschoolers throughout your seven-day series, the truth of homeschooling was stated by your very words in the first article "From [homeschooling] parents' viewpoint, they can give their children individual attention, teach to strengths and address weaknesses, set the pace for learning and spend more time with their children. Most do."

The simple truth, obscured throughout much of the remaining coverage, is that the vast majority of homeschooling parents care deeply about their children and work very hard making homeschooling successful. Little of that perspective is offered in sensational accounts of marginal extremists, extremists who are present in any segment of society.

Would your readers really consider anonymous focus groups a basis for legitimate journalism? Would they agree if they were told that you created groups based on narrow, predetermined stereotypes, facilitated by market researchers and videotaped for your private viewing and repeated distillation back at the office? It should provide little solace to anyone that you claim an award for employing these techniques to study members of racial minority communities.

When you sought participants for focus groups for this series, many homeschoolers refused to be used in this way. We wonder who from other constituencies would agree to participate in this type of newspaper "research." Would school administrators ever allow themselves to be used in this format? Would teachers? Would any other profession?

As co-coordinator of Ohio Home Education Coalition (OHEC), I submitted a guest editorial to the *Beacon Journal* in January. In publishing, you chose to *add* words to the editorial, 42 to be exact. You substantially altered at least two paragraphs from my original. In citing the editorial in this week's series, you again repeat words which you attribute to me but which you added to my submission.

In October 2003, OHEC prepared a 9-page report, which was sent to your editor and reporters, entitled: "Selected Current Citations to Inform Research on the Subject of

Homeschooling.” We provided an extensive resource list and names of long-time homeschooling activists, authors and publishers, all well-known to homeschoolers, several involved for over 25 years. None of those activists or publishers was contacted in the preparation of this series. Only one author of the many cited was quoted in your reports.

The major theses of several of your articles are contradicted by the research material cited in our report and sent to your paper over one-year ago. This material was in your hands while you prepared this entire series and included research done by well-recognized, mainstream organizations and media outlets, far beyond the homeschooling community.

When I was contacted by your reporter in May, I was told that he "was long past the usefulness" of any of this material.

I refused to be interviewed for this series for these reasons stated above, and not for the reason you cite when I was misquoted in the article on November 17. You received these reasons in a letter that I sent to your paper in May.

It is immoral, irresponsible, and unjust to attack a movement that has strengthened hundreds of thousands of families and given hundreds of thousands of children for whom conventional school settings do not work a good opportunity to learn because an extremely small minority of that group has problems that have nothing to do with homeschooling.

Sincerely,

Peggy Daly-Masternak
Co-coordinator