

## **“Polygamist Sect’s Children Must Be Returned to Parents”**

### **Texas Supreme Court Rules in Favor of Polygamist Group**

By Alicia Williamson on 6/02/2008

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On May 29, 2008, in a crushing blow to the state of Texas' massive seizure of over 400 children from the group known as the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the Texas Supreme Court ruled that child welfare officials overstepped their authority and the children must go back to their parents.

#### **Parents Apprehensively Waited Ruling From the High Courts**

Since the trial began, many of the parents from the sect, along with their lawyers have been apprehensively awaiting the ruling from the high courts. It was just last week when the lower court said child welfare officials were wrong to take the children from their parents and that Child Protective Services failed to show any immediate danger to the children. Thursday, the children, who have been in custody for nearly two months were ordered returned to their parents by the appellate court after Child Custody Services appealed the lower court decision ruling when Texas District Judge Barbara Walther stated that the children should be returned to the care of their parents. According to a ruling issued, “removal of the children was not warranted” the justices said in Austin, Texas.

#### **Largest Child-Custody Case in U.S. History**

The ruling breaks down the largest child-custody cases in U.S history. According to state officials, the removal of the children was necessary as a way of ending a cycle of sexual abuse going on at the ranch, where it was reported by a telephone hot line call that teenage girls were forced to marry and have sex with older men. The person making the call was never found and parents denied any abuse. They claimed that they were being persecuted for their religious beliefs. After the phone call, every child at the sect’s ranch was removed with half of the children being five years of age or younger.

#### **Moms Are Clearly Happy With the Outcome**

A spokeswoman for legal aid attorneys by the name of Ms. Cunthia Martinez, and representing 38 mothers from the sect was quoted as saying: "The moms are clearly very happy at the news that it looks like they're going to get their kids a lot sooner than expected. It's definitely an emotional day." Approximately, 430 children from the ranch were in foster care while the Supreme Court considered the case. Texas officials claimed that there were 31 teenage girls at the ranch who were pregnant or had been pregnant, but later conceded that at least half of those mothers were adults. The sect, a breakaway sect of the Mormon church, which renounced polygamy more than a century ago, teaches that polygamy brings glorification in heaven.

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