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## **Respect for fathers**

In response to the many articles I have read regarding Elian Gonzalez and his father, the disintegration of the family has altered the American way of life, resulting in government intervention to solve the problems that were once resolved within the family. The result is a fatherless America.

Children are paying the price. Fatherless homes produce: 71 percent of teenage pregnancies, 63 percent of youth suicides, 90 percent of runaway children, 75 percent of children in chemical abuse centers, 71 percent of high school dropouts, and 85 percent of incarcerated juveniles.

Also, 84 percent of reported sexual abuse occurs in single-parent homes and 64 percent of the perpetrators are the mom's boyfriend.

Our judiciary needs to learn that fathers are not second-class citizens incapable of ultimately making a difference in their children's lives. Stand up, fathers! It is our duty to raise the bar.

When our country learns our own children need their fathers, then and only then can we begin to attempt to impose our values on those from other countries. Let Mr. Gonzalez take his child home!

— **Mark R. Durham Sr., Rockford**