

baby up in the nursery, and Tama gave her consent. Tama had told the labor nurse she intended to breast feed her baby, yet after the birth, the nursing staff fed the baby a soy-based formula.

Ruth Highbarger, an active member of the LeLeche League comments: "Because meconium was present at the birth, indicating some distress, it is all the more reason why the child should have been offered the breast early on. It is so typical of hospitals to completely disregard the wishes of the parent regarding his or her expressed desire to nurse their child. Early nursing is critical for the mother and the baby for both physical and emotional reasons."

As a woman using Medi-Cal, Tama's choices were even more limited. As all the later events revealed, Tama's daughter had suffered an allergic reaction to the soy formula, which Dominican personnel, Dr. Lenz, and CPS dubbed "symptoms of withdrawal." When the formula was changed, the symptoms went away.

CPS placed the baby into custody of Tama's father. On February 7, Tama and Gideon had their baby returned, and the case was closed. Tama had agreed to a service plan with home visits by the county health-nurse and counseling at The Parents Center. While these seem very reasonable measures, there are reports of information obtained at these sessions turning into more charges by CPS against the women receiving the counseling.

Tama and Gideon knew that if they were still homeless when the baby was born, they greatly risked losing their child to CPS. But Tama was able to find housing, a modest one-bedroom trailer with a kitchen, shower/bath, electricity, and heat in a legal park connected to the sewer system. She thought she was home free.

But a week before Tama delivered, a neighbor at the trailer park came to her. "Be careful," she warned. "Watch out for CPS. They come here a lot. They took my baby away." Although she was haunted by the woman's words, Tama discounted the danger. "I thought there must have been some reason why they would

ANOTHER CHILD IS LOST

In Heather's case, her inability to wage a lengthy, frustrating, and expensive court battle effectively ensured the outcome. Another child had been "placed" in the foster care system, and effectively removed from the love, care, and protection of her birth mother. Another child under government control and at taxpayers' expense. Another child from which Child Protective Services receives \$122 a day for the burden of "having to care for the children of parents who won't or can't."

Heather arrived with her aged and dying mother, and her 80-year-old father,

to visit her newborn daughter for the first time. CPS worker Valerie Warner came out and told Heather there would be no visit because the foster mother had called and told her Heather had threatened to kill her baby at the visit. Heather, angry at this vicious lie, rose and loudly protested. "I said no such thing!" she yelled. Valerie Warner disappeared behind a door, and reappeared with uniformed police officers armed with guns. "Here I was, still weak from the birth, with my mother who had had three double-bypass heart operations and was actually dying, and my 80-year-old father. And they acted like we posed a threat to them," Heather recounts. The visit was canceled. Heather's mother died a few weeks later, having missed her only chance to ever see her granddaughter.

Kathleen (not her real name) is homeless and pregnant. She is due any day. She is terrified CPS will take her baby at birth if she goes to Dominican Hospital. No public agency in Santa Cruz has provided housing for her during her pregnancy, yet she certainly risks losing her baby at birth if she is unhoused. The Santa Cruz camping ban law outlaws living in a vehicle, putting pregnant, vehicularly-housed women at risk of ticketing, arrest, and making them targets for CPS "removals."

According to Santa Cruz paralegal Richard Harrington, "It is a well-known fact that most impoverished people, hav-

ing few other attachments such as the wealthy do, often shower love, affection and devotion upon their children, making them among the happiest of children. It is the acme of sadistic, fascist cruelty even to try to take what these people have away from them, or to have social workers try to make them feel guilty for wanting to preserve what they have that wealthy people often lack."

Lisa Ann, a street musician and jewelry maker, has lost a son and a daughter to the CPS system. What is peculiar about Lisa's case is that her first baby was taken at birth 12 hours after a Cesarean section at Dominican Hospital, with no allegations of neglect or abuse ever charged.

The official reason was because she tested positive for marijuana at birth. A more likely scenario is that her wealthy, estranged father neither approved of Lisa's countercultural lifestyle, nor supported her raising a child. He and his childless wife early on showed great interest in getting Lisa's baby. Shortly after Lisa's infant son was "removed" by CPS, he was "placed" with Lisa's father and stepmother, over Lisa's repeated and sustained objections.

Then, in the summer of 1995, Lisa gave birth to a beautiful baby girl named Star. Lisa and her husband carried Star everywhere, and she cooed, smiled and rarely even cried. Lisa was living in a

camper then. Her baby was well fed, clothed, and diapered. But when Star was four months old, as Lisa held her in her arms, she was surrounded and detained by police in the parking lot of Union Grove Music. Shortly thereafter, a CPS worker tore her baby out of her arms saying only, "Santa Cruz CPS has a prior interest in the baby." The late Judge Black later sanctioned the placement, stating: "Because the first baby was taken, they could take the second baby."

Last February 14th, Commissioner Charlotte Cloud ruled to terminate Lisa's parental rights to her son. Lisa was stunned to be told a major reason was that "no mother-child bond existed." "I was never allowed to have a relationship with my son," she said. "He was stolen at birth."

A SHIELD OF SECRECY

Child Protective Services works behind a shield of secrecy. Families are not allowed to see their files; court proceedings allow no witnesses and are not public. No tape recordings of the proceedings are allowed. In most cases, the mothers are not even accused of a crime, hence, have no right to a public defender, to a jury trial, or even to face their accusers.

According to Dan Brennan, a father who is fighting to regain custody of his daughter in the Santa Cruz Family Law System, CPS has no motivation to find these mothers to be adequate. "It creates a conflict of interest for them," Brennan said. "As long as the child is placed, that agency receives funding for that child, \$122 a day. They pay a typical foster mother \$500 a month. The rest of the money can go to pay their salaries, office furniture, phones, or to hire new employees to go and ferret out more 'abuse.' I believe it is now \$47,000 per child CPS gets if they can declare a baby adoptable.

"The Bill of Rights guarantees a quick and speedy trial, the right to cross-examine our accusers, that the punishment must fit the crime, and that one is innocent until proven guilty. I believe that in the last 10 years, we have seen all of these rights seriously eroded. CPS operates under a veil of secrecy. I believe all their records should become public."

Lisa Ann boldly asserts, "They conduct their proceedings in secret because illegal things are being done. If the public knew what they were doing, they would be outraged." Melissa Berrengé, PhD, a CPS-approved psychologist, wrote an extensive psychological evaluation of Lisa Ann. She