

U.S. Prosecutor Says Adopted Boy Punished for TV

August 23, 2011



A prosecutor said Beagley's 10-year-old daughter recorded this video.

An American woman put hot sauce in her adopted 7-year-old son's mouth not to punish the Russian boy for lying but to come up with sensational footage to get on a television show, a prosecutor said.

Jessica Beagley, 36, recorded the punishment on Oct. 21, 2010, for a segment titled "Mommy Confessions" on the "Dr. Phil" self-help television show, said prosecutor Cynthia Franklin. The Anchorage woman faces misdemeanor child abuse charges stemming from the footage.

The eight-minute video shows Beagley confronting her son Kristoff about misbehaving in school and lying, and then pouring hot sauce into the crying child's mouth and not allowing him to spit it out for more than a minute.

The footage also shows Beagley forcing the screaming boy into a cold shower before sending him off to bed.

Under a city ordinance, that is child abuse, Franklin told the jury in her closing argument Monday. "There is no reason in the world why someone has to hurt a child to get on a reality show," she said.

When the episode aired, it sparked public outrage in Russia, with some demanding that Kristoff and his twin brother, who were both adopted by Beagley and her husband from a Magadan orphanage, be returned to their native country.

Franklin told the jury that it wasn't Beagley's first attempt to get on the "Dr. Phil" show.

She had seen a segment in April 2009 titled "Angry Moms" and contacted the show but heard nothing for a year and a half, Franklin said. The show eventually called to find out if Beagley was still angry, she said.

Beagley then submitted audition videos, but was told they needed to see more than just yelling at the children: They needed to see her actually punishing her son, the prosecutor said.

That's when Beagley got the flip-cam ready, made sure there was enough hot sauce on the shelf in the bathroom and recruited her 10-year-old daughter to shoot the video, Franklin said.

Days later, she was on her way to Los Angeles to be on the show, Franklin added.

"It is all about the show," she said.

The episode aired on Nov. 17, 2010. A spokeswoman for the show, Stacey Luchs, declined to comment.

Beagley and her husband, a police officer, had tried more traditional means of punishment, such as spankings, timeouts and television restrictions, but none of those worked with Kristoff, who was originally named Daniil Bukharov, said William Ingaldson, Beagley's lawyer.

Beagley made the video and went on the show because she was desperate to find help for her son, he said.

While Kristoff's twin made an easier adjustment, Kristoff was more difficult, doing such things as urinating on the floor, Ingaldson said.

More recently the boy has been diagnosed with reactive attachment disorder and is in therapy, Ingaldson said.

He encouraged the jury to look closely at other footage submitted to the show where Beagley coaches the children on not getting into trouble and reminding them of what happens if they do.

"She is not trying to get these kids to misbehave. She is trying to do the opposite," Ingaldson said.

He reminded the jury that the boy actually did get in trouble in school the day the video was

shot.

"She did not punish him to inflict pain on him for its own sake," he said.

The Beagleys, who have four biological children, adopted the Russian boys in 2008 in the hope of doing some good, the lawyer has said. They remain committed to them, he said.

"This is not about whether she was trying to get on the 'Dr. Phil' show," he said. "If she could take back that video, I'm sure she would."

(AP, MT)

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/08/23/us-prosecutor-says-adopted-boy-punished-for-tv-a9078>