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continued from front

ing & Exploited Children, agrees with that assessment.

"Let me tell you, it is very difficult to get media attention for any family abduction," he said.

Allen said that the public assumes that such abductions are civil, private affairs, when in fact they are often motivated out of rage or revenge and can be dan-

gerous to children involved.

"These children suffer significant harm, it's a serious problem," he said.

Another type of case that typically receives little attention is those involving runaways. Both Allen and Good said that they aren't given as much attention because it's assumed the person ran on their own free will, when runaways may be running towards dangerous situations.

Good added that missing children cases involving white people tend to get more attention.

"White kids tend to get more attention; let's face it," she said.

Another big barrier is language. Allen recalled a story about seven years ago in Houston where a Spanish-speaking woman had her child abducted outside a market. Although she got attention from the Spanish-language media, like Univision, she couldn't get any mainstream media attention because of her inability to speak English.

Good said that missing children in immigrant communities is actually a "fairly huge" problem, but don't get much attention because the cases often involve children being moved across borders. These make for complicated stories that the media is reluctant to follow, if they are aware of them at all, she said.

"The power of media cannot be overstated," said Allen of how important it is to get a case in the press if it is to be solved. He also said that his organization bypasses the media by using its own national network of people to spread the word of missing children, who place pictures on community bulletin boards.

In order for a case to be picked up by the press it needs have some element that captures a producer's or editor's attention,

according to both Allen and Good, particularly stories that frighten the public.

Kyron Horman had all the trappings of a news story, said Allen. The 7-year-old boy was abducted, presumably by a stranger, just outside of the science fair at his elementary school. It could've happened to any parent.

Allen points to another case in Sarasota, Fla. five years ago where a child was abducted from a car wash. The incident was captured on a security camera and quickly made its way onto television because of the ease with which the perpetrator committed the act.

White kids tend to get more attention; let's face it.

— Meaghan Good of the Charley Project

Both Allen and Good said that more attention is also given to families with a higher social status.

Good points to a case late last year that involved Viola Brown Martin, the mother of Angela Martin, a contestant on the television show American Idol. The case got national attention, but had it not had the connection to the popular television show, it's unclear how it would have been handled.



Allen said that only about four or five missing children cases are put in the spotlight each year. He actively lobbies to get media coverage, but said that too often he gets the same refrain:

"There's too many missing kids out there."

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