

In May of 2019, I fled from an abusive relationship, leaving the home that I owned, with just my children and the clothes on my back. This leaving was overdue, as my then-wife had become increasingly more violent. Her relentless abuse was emotional, physical, and sexual in nature. The daily mistreatment had slowly worn me down from a Special Operations Team Sergeant to a shell of a man who could barely tell reality from the harsh fiction she had created.

My leaving turned out to be the ultimate betrayal for her, however, and my then-wife put every effort into drawing me back under her control. When terms of endearment did not work, she began to threaten me with the tools she knew she had at her disposal, the tools that the United States Army had provided her to destroy me. Naively believing that the Army would support me, I did not take her threats seriously. Eventually, I hired a lawyer to attempt to divide our marital property, most notably, the house which I had paid for entirely. After numerous attempts to resolve the issue outside of the courtroom, my lawyer and I sued my then-wife for the house that I owned in which she was living. I filed the suit on a Friday in January; she told the Army on Monday--the next business day--that I had sexually assaulted her two-years prior to the filing.

What followed was a nearly two-year ordeal that included interviews with my then-wife in which the narrative and the details of our life changed with each telling. She was allowed to alter dates and details freely as she was presented with conflicting evidence, including the date of the assault itself. During my Article 32 hearing, the Primary Hearing Officer determined that no probable cause existed to support the charge of sexual assault; the chain-of-command, however, decided to proceed anyway, for reasons we will never know. Almost two-years after her accusations were made--with the house issue long resolved--we proceeded to a court martial.

At this point, I was still under the impression that due process would save the day. The timing of the accusations strongly suggested fabrication, and almost two-years of investigation had failed to turn up a single piece of corroborating evidence to support her claims. I also possessed what I foolishly thought would be my salvation. Over the course of our brief marriage, I had meticulously documented her abuse at the behest of a lawyer. I possessed hours of recordings of my then-wife abusing me physically, emotionally, and sexually, as well as her directing abusive behavior at my children. In one, my then-wife loudly orders me to murder my sons' mother to prove my love for her while hitting me. As it would turn out, the panel would hear none of these recordings.

The trial itself was so farcical, I could not possibly begin to summarize it in under an hour. The prosecution withheld evidence and, at times, outright lied. My then-wife was so out-of-control on the stand that the judge threatened to not allow her to testify. The highlight, though, was the revelation that the prosecution had failed to turn over nearly three giga-bytes of information in discovery and had lied on official documents regarding the turn-over. This led to a forty-one day recess in the trial that sunk the momentum my defense team had gained. The panel returned to a case they barely remembered to make their decision. I was found guilty and sentenced to three-years of confinement for sexual assault and domestic violence.

I spent this time separated from my children and my elderly parents. While incarcerated, my marriage dissolved. I lost essentially everything. Meanwhile, my accuser received benefits and pay. I left prison three months ago with nothing. At the age of forty-nine, I am forced to live with my father. I do not have a car, and I am only one week into a job that was hard to get. While my case is still under appeal and could eventually be overturned, I am currently a registered sex-offender and convicted felon and have to live as such. I am subjected to monitoring and have had to submit to humiliating polygraph testing. Worse than any of this, however, is that I endured relentless abuse from a woman I loved and now have to deal with this trauma alone. Worse than alone, in fact, because society has deemed *me* the abuser. The Army never supported me or my family during this entire ordeal; all of the support was given to my accuser.

It is hard enough for a man to come forward when he is being abused. By showing men that there is no support and possible repercussions for extricating themselves from mistreatment, reporting in the future will essentially be unheard of. Of a completely different concern, military recruitment numbers will continue their downward trajectory, as young men are less willing to submit themselves to the risk of incarceration. Real threats to our safety, as a nation, exist when recruitment goals are not met. It is time to act now before more families are hurt. It is time to stand up, speak out, and change this system that has destroyed so many lives. Creating a Conviction Integrity Unit is the first step in undoing the uncountable number of wrongs that have occurred over the last several years. Thank you.