

False accusation will cost woman \$55,000

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A Ventura County judge has ordered a woman to pay her former boyfriend more than \$55,000 after she falsely accused him of raping and brutalizing her in Simi Valley in 2008 during a child-custody dispute.

The money is for attorney's fees and travel expenses after Tracy West requested a permanent restraining order against Louis Gonzalez and then dis-

missed the allegations just before the matter was set for trial.

Ventura County Superior Court Judge John R. Siniley in December ordered West to pay Gonzalez \$55,872. She had filed the civil court action in May 2008, requesting the court order and claiming he "perpetrated a horrific physical attack" against her.

West filed the paperwork seeking the restraining order a month after criminal charges against Gonzalez were dismissed. He was

arrested on Feb. 1, 2008, and was held in jail without bail until a judge dismissed the charges on April 23, 2008.

West was Gonzalez's former girlfriend. West and Gonzalez, senior vice president of a Las Vegas bank, had a child together.

West told Simi Valley Police Department detectives that Gonzalez ran up to her at her home on Feb. 1, 2008, hit her on the

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head and knocked her unconscious, then dragged her in the house.

She told detectives Gonzalez sexually assaulted her, burned her with matches and committed other violence.

The criminal case against him fell apart after his private investigator found 10 witnesses who were ready to testify that they saw Gonzalez in other locations at the time of the alleged attack.

The witnesses included workers at a car-rental agency, three teachers at a school Gonzalez's son attends, a deli owner, a Simi Valley bank executive and a business acquaintance of Gonzalez. Video recordings showing Gonzalez at a Las Vegas airport and a bank also cast doubt on West's claims.

In January 2009, Ventura County Superior Court Judge Patricia Murphy found Gonzalez "factually innocent" of the alleged crimes. The judge found no "reasonable cause exists" to believe he committed the actions.

Gonzalez's lawyer, Denise Placencio, argued that West

staged the entire incident because of a bitter child-custody dispute.

In an interview, Placencio said the recent December court decision that ordered West to pay Gonzalez should serve as a "cautionary tale" to anyone tempted to make false allegations.

"The truth will come out and there will be consequences, consequences in the custody courtroom and consequences to the wallet," Placencio said.

She said her client faced the possibility of five life sentences in prison as a result of West's criminal complaint. Gonzalez couldn't see or speak to his son until October 2008 because of the criminal charges and West's filing of the request for a permanent restraining order against him.

Gonzalez is now in a Las Vegas court seeking sole custody of the couple's 8-year-old son. A custody hearing is set for February.

West's lawyer, Marvin Longabaugh of Las Vegas, declined to comment.

The Star obtained court records indicating that Longabaugh filed a motion last month and withdrew as West's lawyer, citing several

reasons in a nine-page petition to the court. Longabaugh claimed that West prolonged the legal proceedings by "consistently having difficulties attending dispositions and hearings."

In addition, Longabaugh stated: "Ms. West insists upon taking actions that Mr. Longabaugh considers repugnant and with which there exists a fundamental disagreement between Ms. West and Mr. Longabaugh."

Longabaugh said he could not disclose those actions because of attorney-client privilege but would do so in court to refute any objections raised by West.

West's new lawyer, Michelle Lobello of Las Vegas, didn't return a reporter's phone calls.

West also faces a malicious prosecution lawsuit filed by Gonzalez in Ventura County Superior Court.

The lawsuit names West and her husband, Timothy Geiges, who is accused of helping her concoct the false story of rape and brutality. Gonzalez alleges false imprisonment, abuse of process and infliction of emotional distress and seeks an unspecified amount in dam-

ages.

Gonzalez's other lawyer, Jay Leiderman, said both sides are still exchanging information, and a trial is pending.

West's other lawyer in the case, Alan Nishimura of El Segundo, couldn't be reached for comment.

Placencio said she was disappointed that the Ventura County District Attorney didn't prosecute West. Placencio said she wrote a letter in October 2008 to the District Attorney's Office, saying she had evidence that West committed perjury.

West had accused Gonzalez of breaking her shoulder in the alleged attack, but "her medical records reveal that she broke her shoulder diving into the shallow end of a swimming pool," Placencio said.

The district attorney declined to prosecute West and closed the case against Gonzalez, an official said.

Meanwhile, the couple's 8-year-old son is doing fine, Placencio said.

"The boy is thriving in Nevada. He is doing well in his new school," the attorney said.

"West is allowed unsupervised weekend visits."