

I am for Gal's not having immunity any longer. Please review my below testimony. Thank you in advance.

April 10, 2015

One of the people who gave recent written testimony and specific statements, in support of Justice Chase Rogers, and which I read comments on in an article on WTNH, to which I am responding and was the reason I needed to get my testimony out again today, stated that "The blustering accusations of a small cohort of angry and misguided disgruntled litigants may make it difficult for you to hear".

What you need to hear is the truth. I am only one "story". The family courts, by allowing the actions of one person primarily, have victimized me and took this single mom with no other financial support and stripped her of an extra 26,000 that could have gone towards college savings for my children. The court system drained me of much more than just money. Leaving an abusive ex was one thing, facing an abusing court system was not what I expected.

First of all, people that are begging for court reform, well, this is no small group. Last year I testified at a hearing in regard to the role of a GAL and also the Shared parenting 50/50 assumption. I was there first thing in the morning and left after ten pm, there were still people waiting to testify when I left. For each person who testified there were mere minutes allocated. So that sums it up, this is not just a small group. That was on one date, there have been many such related hearings that all have to do with court reform. Understand too that I almost didn't make it. I hate speaking in front of groups and as many people who do not like public speaking the very thought of it was almost terrorizing. However, nothing could compare to the secondary victimization that I had endured at the hands of the very court systems meant to protect my children and I-that was real terror. If I could make it through that, well than public speaking would be a piece of cake comparably, and if not, well the need to address these very serious issues with the people that can make change, it was my duty to go. There are many others who like myself, at first, may have been afraid to speak up, or feared repercussions, retaliation, or may not have known about the legislation or had the resources to participate.

My point being, please don't minimize a group of people, many of which have legitimate complaints, as a small group-I believe it is far too many and shows something is wrong with how things are being handled.

Disgruntled...that is the word that really concerns me here.

I want to share a story about me, just another one of the "disgruntled litigators" spoken about and what I have endured in family courts. These are not made up events. Are there some disgruntled parents out there and even some who I wouldn't allow near my children-I am sure there are some. Is this whole group who are standing up and asking for change just a bunch of disgruntled parents who are stomping their feet because they are not getting their way or who don't have their children for valid reasons, no-no it is more than that, it is a combination I believe. I can adamantly state and present facts to show I am not just a "disgruntled parent" but one who has first hand knowledge of what bad things can happen to good parents in Connecticut's Family Court. I have full custody of my children and there are safety restrictions in place regarding their visits with their father, I am one of the fortunate but because I have what is needed to protect my children doesn't mean I no longer have a responsibility to share what is going on, it is what I need to do, there are others that need help.

I was abused physically as a child. Not just a spanking but things like a kick hard enough to put me on the ground or a push so hard I would bang into the furniture and be left with bruises. Sometimes I would actually pretend to be dead for a minute trying to worry my father so he would stop the beating. The abuse was part of my life, I watched my mom get abused and a sibling got their share as well. One time a friend's parent saw the abuse (as my dad didn't care who saw when he was in a rage) and DCF was called. DCF arrived a few minutes after my dad had sternly warned me I would be taken away (from my mom too) and placed in a foster home. I denied being abused and lived through some more torture and hated my life, my school, nor hardly had a friend (all because of my household situation and how a victim, especially a child is made to feel about themselves and they have no self esteem) until my mom finally left. As a young teenager I was without my dad except for perhaps a once a year visit with others around and as a grown woman I will tell you that I was not a victim of parental alienation but that I am thankful my mom got me away (as well as herself) from the abuse and away from my dad. I see my dad once a year or so now that I am older but he is no longer able to abuse me as he didn't have access when I was younger after we left. The courts didn't arrange this but I was old enough to make the decisions and did. I am grateful my dad didn't push for rights and wonder what the courts would have forced upon me if he did. What if I had a GAL like the one I will mention?

Perhaps that is why I married someone like I did. Now I actually wonder how it is possible I found someone even more damaging than my own father.

The abuse I dealt with that caused me to be what the licensed psychologist who gave written testimony describes as a "disgruntled litigant" was far more than just physical. I was used to physical abuse so for the most part I could "tolerate that". My only concern was my head as he had hit me or pushed me into the wall on more than one occasion and I was afraid of long term damage or even death. My plea to my husband often was "not the head" please "not the head" as I covered my head to protect myself. There was one occasion where he pushed me head first into the corner of a wall so hard that the back of my ear swelled so big and seemed to fuse to my head. There was a black eye another time. There were other "events" as well. Ironically the day my ear was swollen so badly I had a meeting with a therapist that day and I made it there with ringing in the ears the whole time and feeling out of it (possible concussion?). I didn't tell the therapist what had happened that morning for the reason that I feared getting my then husband arrested and him retaliating. What I did do was talk to the therapist about packing a bag and getting ready to leave him one day and started to find out about Connecticut's resources for DV victims.

I stayed out of fear at first. He was mentally ill as well. There were incidents with guns and bags of ammunition and booze and pills and there were more police reports over the years that would make you shudder. One police officer told me if I hadn't called one night that he could only for see a homicide or suicide but with a bag of ammunition suicide was probably not the first incident that could have

happened. I thought the kids were safer if I was with him then if the kids would ever be with him alone should I proceed with a divorce. I stopped leaving the kids alone with him. I put them in daycare even though he was not working. We often left the house. He threatened if I ever left he would kill me but in other threats made it known he would try to take the kids and the house and who would trust a high school drop out verse he who was a college grad. Sometimes he threatened suicide and a few months before I finally left his suicide threat kept me with him longer, another tactic I feel he used. A victim will believe these things for a long time. A victim is usually not worried about herself but about the children as well as other family members and how they can be hurt.

But it wasn't the physical abuse that stays with me today. It was the other abuse. There were extremely private things he did that I will not share. There were other things I can share. He called me fat and ugly constantly. He told me almost every day that he was depositing a little bit of rat poison into my food but just enough so that I wouldn't get deathly ill but rather lose some weight and he would claim he was joking and laugh and laugh, but then later leave a box of rat poison in the house for me to see. I once saw him playing with nasal spray I was given for allergies and later after using it I needed to be taken by ambulance because right after I used it I couldn't walk, felt everything spinning and was disoriented and when I arrived at the hospital I was projectile vomiting. And he also had a way of manipulating things so I was the crazy one. I felt crazy as these things couldn't really be happening-they were too much like horror movies, so I believed he would never want to hurt me that much. But I knew I was in constant fear living with him. I could no longer eat anything in the house that had been opened. There is a show called "who the bleep did I marry". I watch that and cry and have awful memories some times as the show hits close to home, so very close. I have not shared a lot of this with many people as firstly it sounds unbelievable, the very courts would have doubted me and nothing else would have been believed, who would believe it and why would someone stay. If it weren't for the dozens of other bizarre police reports that followed after I left, and that I learned had happened during our marriage, and more information I learned about this stranger-my husband, I may not have believed it myself.

The real fear was leaving. I knew I was going to leave it was just a matter of when.

When came soon after I decided to check on what he did every night on the computer for hours and hours. He was beginning to act erratic and spent almost every night, throughout the overnight hours on the computer staying awake all night. I was concerned because of how he was acting. I heard him go out for a cigarette break one night outside and while he was there I ran to the room with the computer and did a history search to see what type of websites he was on and also looked at his Google searches.

He was looking up information such as how to slip someone a mickey (poison their drink), wondering what the lethal dose of rat poison and antifreeze are, other violent and "terrorist like" activities and also inappropriate things about young children.

That was it. My plan was in progress. I would go into the room each night that I could and print the information he was searching and a few days later he erased the history but I had it printed already. I needed to protect my kids and myself.

His rages were beginning to be directed at the children. I knew how that game would continue. The day we left things were really bad. He was yelling at my daughter in a rage. He came at me with all of his might and pushed me with his arms into my chest leaving me out of breathe. He was red with rage but for no reason, it literally came out of nowhere. Later that day is when I finally left, terrified and never "looked back". Later in the day he had another incident involving guns which I didn't know he had at the time where he had gone after a family of four on the beach (two children included). He told everyone the weapon and 4 bullets he had were just for self defense. His mental illness was out of control, mixed with opiate use and alcohol these were loaded weapons themselves. I tried to get safe through out the years by asking the police not to return weapons to him and other things, but he warned me once if I kept asking the police to withhold his weapons he would get one illegally (such as a handgun) which would be much worse for me. He also had rights and at one point the police had to return his weapons.

I left though after this day....

After leaving I stayed in a safe house with my children and tried to get legal help.

Ironically a person who is now a judge warned me about coming out of hiding and entering the court systems for restraining orders and divorce. The now Judge had cautioned me knowing in advance I was safer in hiding than going through the legal system.

But there was a home, a job to get back to (to provide for my children)and schools and friends for the children to return to. I wanted a normal life for my children. They deserved that. I was responsible just as my ex was for allowing the situation my children were exposed to, I owed it to them to do all I could to assure their happiness and well being and to do all I could to give them a good, secure and safe life.

What followed is a nightmare.

After moving back into my home with my children and my ex moving out and restraining orders issued to protect us there were police incidents one after another I would learn of. There was one where he was shooting a gun in the woods although he was not supposed to have a gun any longer. There was another where he was frightening customers in a bar as he was parked in front and looking into the bar with binoculars for some time and when police confronted him he was drunk, swearing and throwing up his arms at walking towards them violently. There was another where he scared a teen age girl who was working at a gas station yelling at her about her job and swearing at her. Another most significantly was when he was seen about to enter a Domestic Abuse office and had been spotted stuffing things up his sleeves. Police searched him before he entered and what they found will stay in my memory for all time. In his shirt sleeves there were sharp gardening type shears, a chefs knife, a pocket knife and another pair of sharp scissors-UP HIS SLEEVES. He was taken away by ambulance and a Mental Health eval was done, due to hippa laws I do not know what happened.

My ex husband had been in three other Mental health departments or facilities over the years including Whiting Forensic while he was incarcerated during the divorce and listed as mentally unable to defend himself in court proceedings.

Mental illness is a disease, any one of us can be affected, and I am not blaming the disease nor does that make someone a danger automatically. People with mental illness deserve help and to be treated as anyone else. When someone is a danger or not getting help, it is another thing. In his case he was a danger to himself, my children and I, and others at times.

There was another incident that occurred where he threatened he was coming to my home where he knew I was with the children at the time, and he was coming to do something horrific he stated to others. The police stopped him in the neighbor's yard and he was screaming, swearing and needed to be tazed. Even after being tazed he continued to be aggressive and combative, with that much strength and rage still present after being tazed it showed how dangerous he could have been. If he had reached me I can only imagine the rage he was in and what he could have done.

Through much of this there was a GAL in the family case. This GAL was the reason I have feel the way I do about the court system. One person given so much power and using it in ways that it wasn't meant to be, that can affect so many people-this is the need for change. The criminal courts were willing to offer me a 50 year standing protective order, which I declined because they couldn't guarantee they could arrange the same 50 years naming the children under protection. The 50 year standing residential stay away protective order I did get does mean he can not come near the residence I and my kids live in. To get this type of order there has to be real threat of danger, this is very hard to get. There were also court orders where he could not have any contact for 3 years with the children-these orders were probation orders and protective orders by the criminal courts. During this time, within the first year, the GAL was helping my ex, even wanting sleep overs for he with the children. Thankfully when the GAL seemed to be ignoring the wishes of my older child and making her afraid the courts honored my requests (through my attorney) and allowed an AMC who helped be the voice of my daughter, I am grateful for that. So please know I do believe there are good things that are available through the courts as well. The gal seemed to friend my ex and his family beyond anything ethical. There are records the GAL herself has turned over to show she placed her hands over his (my ex) while he was in jail or in the court house lock up-he wrote her how much that meant to him and she gave those records in. She was constantly hugging a family member of his in front of me and giving them praise while saying negative things about me. These behaviors are not ethical. She pushed into my attorney one day. She or someone falsified something on a form as if I or someone I had help me, had written it in. My ex husband's attorney admitted to another attorney of mine that the GAL was giving him advice that was obviously to directly help my ex. These are true incidents. I imagine if you wanted proof I could provide names and the courts could investigate further. This information and more is already in the hands of many people to be looked into. These sound so off the wall and yet these were true happenings and can be verified. GALs are to be neutral, not for one parent or the other. She was anything but. She also lied. She claimed I was physically restrained at court one day. I was not physically restrained, matter of fact the GAL should know (and which I learned when I went to ask for a video of the court house for the date in question to present as testimony) that for a marshal to restrain a female, that a female has to do it whereas she claimed it was by a male. Also there would have to be a written incident report, there was none, however she lied to the courts in documents about this, at one point stating I was coming at my mother in law, in later reports to the court she suddenly added that I was coming at her. She while in court, or to the courts, made it seem that she was somehow afraid of me and yet the opposite was true, she acted like a bully on many occasions and I was afraid of her. Why she tried to paint this picture at court and then was aggressive with me outside of court ,or even at court while we were not in front of the judge or the marshalls, it made me all too aware of how dangerous she could be, manipulating things. She also lied to the courts stating she had spoken to both children's schools regarding the children but had only spoken to one school in her GAL role to gather info. She belittled the restraining orders, telling one school there was no reason for them being cautious or on "high alert" despite "restraining orders or ...whatever". She said in the same message she had worked with hundreds of children and yet her case history shows I believe about 5 at most, unless she meant something other than her role as GAL. She told the school she expected them to treat her better. The school thought her to be inappropriate and saved her voicemail and gave me a copy. I have another document from my other child's school where they state she lied about something else when she called not to speak to the school but looking for the other child's school information. She fabricated things she sent to the schools, even prior to meeting me, which they received from "her paralegal" who was named. This named paralegal also sent me communications later on as well as my attorneys and even to the courts once, if I recall correctly. The paralegal even left me a voice mail one day and spoke to me on another occasion. When my child's school alerted me to what they felt was odd behavior and communications from the paralegal this was looked into more. She actually had a mother who had passed away with the same name years before. At first I thought this was a coincidence as perhaps it is possible a paralegal and her mom could have that same first and last name and what if I was wrong. Later a communication was received from "her paralegal" which now listed the middle name added in the signature as well. Of course the middle name was the same of her deceased mother. How bizarre is this, and why did she do this (was it to make herself seem more important having a paralegal or so it could seem it wasn't her communicating in case it could be used against her one day), and also more importantly who was I speaking to when I spoke to "her paralegal" about my case as well as my children when this "other" woman called me. The Gal constantly called me hyper sensitive and belittled both abuse and possibility of harm to the children because of the father's "child desires", and didn't even want to hear about it when I wanted to bring it up. Later when she was given documents of a Pinterest account the father posted online that showed naked pictures of young children he had taken off the Internet and re posted she didn't address that issue although I believe she would be a mandated reporter, shouldn't she have checked to see if it was considered illegal? She was constantly doing her own motions so I had to get legal representation to argue my ex's motions and hers as well. The GAL in one motion fought for my 11 year old to go out of the country with the father's mom despite my concerns, including the fact that I didn't feel the grandma could safely and adequately care for my child, and my child had never been without me for more than a weekend. I had given a list of reasons why I didn't think it was a good idea and the list was large. I gave her the list in front of the AMC as well. In her motion she made me seem foolish by putting down insignificant reasons I gave for instance I didn't want my child to be away on my birthday (making me seem selfish) and then she distorted another reason totally saying I wanted to use the money for a trip to Disney which is not what was said, she took something totally out of context. Because I was afraid to go against the GAL I gave in and that was the last time I would go against my parental intuition when it came to my children because I was cornered in court. My child ended up being left in a hotel room twice, once after 10 pm where the grandma left the hotel for dinner and a second night where the grandma left the child in the hotel after midnight. I called the GAL after learning this and wanted to speak with her but the GAL's response was "I am just here to stay quietly in the background"

and didn't help any more than that, nor did she ever address it in court. My child ended up coming home on an airplane by herself before the trip was to be over and I had to pay the fee to arrange it. The main thing this GAL did wrong was to ignore the criminal orders saying that what would be arranged in family courts during the divorce would supersede any criminal orders prior and she wanted the father to have more rights. Yes I too had attorneys and they tried to be my voice but the time and expense trying to reason with the GAL was not getting anywhere. My first attorneys through New Haven legal had to drop me because of the time and expense, all due to the efforts of the GAL on behalf of my ex. My next attorney and the GAL had words, because my attorney had one grievance against her already, the GAL mentioned her not wanting another, sounds like a threat to me but I wasn't part of the conversation so I can't say for sure. My next attorney worked hard for me with my removal action against the GAL and the GAL actually filed a grievance against her later on more than just my family was affected by this woman. My ex husband told me the GAL advised him to file a grievance against my attorney as well. My ex husband also admits that he and the GAL had ongoing email communications often where she was helping him and putting me down even giving legal advice about child "art" he had posted and that the GAL was on his side on the issue and I wouldn't be able to use it in regards to custody issues and that he would be calling the GAL to testify on his behalf and she would agree, that was much of what he stated to the best of my recollection. If I understand correctly it was court ordered by the Judge that she turn over all communications when she was withdrawing (rather than go through the removal) from the case, guess what, they weren't all there, I know because some of what turned over didn't include emails she had sent to me prior which I had record of, nor were these emails my ex speaks of which I know he had no reason to lie about. On another occasion when she told me to bring some paperwork at a meeting with my children at McDonald's she laughed and made fun of me in front of my kids exclaiming her comments loudly like a bully, the AMC was there at the time. At the end of the visit she told my girls they better go out to me rather than me go to them so she and I wouldn't fight or something similar to those words. On the drive home my older daughter cried and asked why the GAL would act like that and why we have to deal with her and that she is a bully and the next day my daughter went to her school guidance counselor to share just that. The school counselor would testify to what she recalls of my daughter's words if that is ever needed. The other issue was at one point before she withdrew my ex and I came to an agreement. We together wrote it up and were to present it to the courts. It was very fair and in the best interest of the children. We had spoken together in the court house and reached what we both thought was acceptable and I felt was more importantly safe for the kids. The gal advised my ex not to speak with me or my family (although my mom was to be a "family supervisor") any longer and that she wouldn't be agreeing with our joint decision as parents and would not sign off on the agreement. The gal told the family services in the court where you have to meet before seeing the judge that she wouldn't meet with me in the room, she also didn't herself agree to meet with family services as well as advising me ex not to??? There was no reason for this. My ex later told me it was because the GAL wanted more rights for him, and didn't like me, again despite that there were criminal orders of protection in place. This of course was a waste of the courts time and to cause agreeing parents to continue to battle in court, how awful, but I have heard others with this same story. The ironic thing is that when she didn't agree to what I am my ex husband had wanted to initiate, she ended up making things more drawn out for him and he got less of what he wanted (not because of me but the court process). So the GAL, besides hurting me which is what she intended, also hurt my ex husband.

None of the above surprises me, why, because her own divorce case law, yes it can be found publicly (law libraries can help) shows that she was required to have a psych eval and at first glance the doctor thought her to be narcissistic and borderline personality. This was not proven in the end I should mention. There are documents from hospitals that show my ex has been diagnosed with narcissistic traits as well as borderline personality and bipolar. Could she feel sorry for him because of the personality issues noted above? Mental illness and/ or personality disorder don't mean someone can't be a great attorney or GAL but ...the problems just keep adding up.

It was recently brought to my attention that the GAL's own son had signed a petition against bill 5505 (in part bill 5505 would strip GAL's immunity as they have now in most cases) due to the fact that he had endured as a child a high conflict divorce and was so glad to have a gal and amc in his case. That may in itself show her own family divorce was quite difficult and left an impression on the son and yet she was now in charge of someone else's children's very safety.

The son of the GAL went on to say how he is now in grad school doing so well.

That is great for him and luckily his mom got quite a bit of support financially after her divorce settlement (again public case law shows this), but for me I am a lower income mom with no support from my ex. One of the things the GAL asked or agreed with at my divorce was that my ex should be allowed 6 months at any job before giving support although she knew he hadn't kept a job more than a few months in over 12 years. This means no support for my kids unless I want to pay to go back and fight this in court. I do not want to go back to court at this time. I am exhausted from the process and feel my family needs a break. The GAL also cost me 26,000 in attorney and other fees to protect my children (even though she was state paid I had to hire attorneys to protect my family from her poor choices) when from day one the criminal courts already protected them until she used her power to undue what the criminal courts had done. I can't say it was all the GAL as I did have attorneys but again the attorneys get paid and so every minute I was paying and they knew I didn't have the money to keep the battle going forever which the GAL was willing to do. The GAL had no right to do this. Why didn't the Judge put a halt to it? I guess it is just too hard to know all of the details. A later judge did stop things because of the criminal orders. It is a random thing sometimes. There is no savings in the bank for my children, this money could have been used towards college education for my girls.

The GAL is no longer in the picture as I was one of the strong ones and was able to survive what the family courts allowed and take a stand and when seeking the GAL's removal thankfully the GAL withdrew. What if I wasn't so capable or didn't have money for legal representation I was able to borrow and repay. It could have possibly been one of the many cases where a protective mom loses custody to an unsafe father.

It is not the whole system that is bad. There are good things and the courts can protect children as they are meant to do. There is a new GAL in our case and she agrees that the prior GAL didn't act appropriately, from what she has learned. The new GAL has been in touch with my ex's probation officer since she has come aboard whereas the prior GAL never did so, to the best of my knowledge, wouldn't this be something she should have done? I feel the new GAL has been fair to both my ex and myself. However there are bad apples out there as there are in any field. There are legitimate complaints that have gone unanswered. There are kids that are in danger right now. There

are GAL's, at least one, that needs to be off the list. Gal's don't need protection of immunity. If they are ethical and truly working towards the best interest of the child that can be proven, if they are not, so too can that be. Give a parent this right, the right when they have been hurt by acts of court personal that are unethical or corrupt.

And as an update my ex husband had continued to publicly post comments on the Internet about shooting guns, inappropriate comments about young children and about a knife he purchased and new binoculars all since our divorce. He had been arrested more recently for shoplifting whiskey -about a year and a half ago (there is a video of him online doing it) and for DUI or DWI and is currently pending a court date for plea for driving while license suspended, and is homeless (and that doesn't make him a bad person but it is the combination of everything that shows he had not been stable). The police incidents seem to be far less this past year and perhaps being homeless he is also getting some type of help where he is residing? He is still the father on my children and they do see him with supervision from a family member and I balance keeping my children safe with giving them as much normalcy as possible. The GAL if she were still in our case would have been fighting on behalf of my ex, despite all of this and without regard to my children's well being, minimizing his every behavior and police report and lashing out at me for reasons I still do not know. I have to believe SOME of the other stories I have heard, not because I know all of the details or facts, but because if it can happen to me it can happen to others. I will continue to make good choices for my children, never having a guarantee that anything is 100% safe but helping them keep a relationship with their father, as this is what they want, and keeping them safe at the same time. I think that things are going well and my 14 year old is getting older and making her own feelings known and I listen to her wishes, as I always have but even more now that she is older and more mature. Even though the prior GAL is out of our case it has left me with such distaste for the whole system that I think back to the warning I once received about family courts, from someone who worked in them and wish others that are facing what I once did are given the help they need.

Hoping for change in family court, it is long past due.  
Not "a disgruntled litigant" without reason  
Milford, CT.

If you would like to reach out to me, even though I chose not to put my name down, many of you may know my case, please feel free to contact me at [daisygirlsmom@gmail.com](mailto:daisygirlsmom@gmail.com)