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Maryland Dad Gets \$852K Judgment For Ex-Wife's False Allegations

"As is so often the case with emotionally-charged claims of child sexual abuse, mere findings of innocence were insufficient to shield Darryl Ginyard from its many adverse effects. For example, for months at a time after each new allegation, he lost custody of his children." A jury awarded a Maryland man \$852,000 due to the ex-wife's false allegations of child sexual abuse.

Darryl and Amani Ginyard had two daughters who are now seven and eight years old. The couple divorced in 2005 and agreed to divide custody equally, but that lasted only two months. According to Darryl's testimony, his ex-wife immediately began to interfere with his access to the girls. She began by telling the police that he was intending to take the girls out of town, apparently to thwart her access to them. That was false, but the police paid Darryl a visit anyway. Two months after that, Amani Ginyard made the first of her many allegations of child sexual abuse against Darryl. It seems that she told the children's therapist that Darryl was abusing the girls and the therapist, being bound by law to do so, reported the allegations to child welfare authorities. They investigated and found nothing to substantiate the charges. Into the bargain, the girls denied the allegations. Undeterred, Amani Ginyard continued making false claim after false claim - eight in all in a period of two years. Each was investigated and each was determined to be wholly unfounded. But, as is so often the case with emotionally-charged claims of child sexual abuse, mere findings of innocence were insufficient to shield Darryl Ginyard from its many adverse effects. For example, for months at a time after each new allegation, he lost custody of his children. Again and again his ex would claim abuse and the family court would order him to stop seeing his daughters. Again and again Ginyard would be investigated and again and again he was found to have done nothing to harm his girls. But during those investigations, he would be prohibited from seeing them. Once in 2006, he was separated from them for nine months. Despite the repeated findings of innocence, police seemed less and less able to convince themselves that a man, so often charged, had done nothing wrong.

He testified last week that as the allegations accumulated, questioning by detectives went from hour-long talks to two- to three-hour interrogations.

Harrowing as that must have been, the police were the least of his worries. The false reports also affected his job.

In 2006, sometime after his company's human resources department was notified of a court subpoena for child sexual assault, Ginyard was let go from his job at the bank, he testified. He was not able to find work with a bank until January of this year, he said.

I'd like to know just what "his company's human resources department was notified of a court subpoena for child sexual assault" means. That is, I'd like to know who did the notifying. Whatever the case, he lost his job due to the false allegations in 2006 and didn't get another bank job until earlier this year. That's almost five years. It took all that to make the judge in the custody case see the light of day.

In February 2010, after a two-day trial, Circuit Court Judge Paul F. Harris Jr. ruled that the allegations were false and that Ginyard did nothing to his children. Harris reversed the earlier custody decision, giving primary custody to Darryl Ginyard. The girls' mother now gets visitation.

[Ginyard's attorney, Lorraine] Lawrence-Whittaker said the case since has gone to the Court of Special Appeals, which upheld Harris' ruling.

That's good news, but the false allegations have had their lasting effects.

Ginyard testified that the years of false allegations damaged his relationship with his daughters. He said he has become withdrawn with the girls and is afraid to do things normal parents do - like hug or snuggle with his children while watching a movie.

"I don't let them stay in my room a lot," he said. "I have to distance myself from them, no matter how much I care about them, because of the way things have transpired.

"... I don't want to put myself into a position like that at all."

Given the malicious and hurtful nature of what Amani Ginyard did in her campaign to deny Darryl access to his children and they access to him, he sued her. Last week a jury awarded him \$852,000 in actual and punitive damages. There's no word on whether Ginyard ever expects to see a dime of the money he's been awarded. Likewise there's no word on whether Amani Ginyard, as the non-custodial parent, pays child support. Still, a win's a win in anyone's book. The larger issue is the ease with which false allegations are made, their devastating consequences and the relative indifference of courts to their falsity. After six years of abuse by his ex using the police and courts as her cat's paw, Darryl Ginyard got custody of his kids and a sizeable verdict. But other dads aren't so lucky. Other dads see their children taken from them by the same or similar tactics and are unable to prove their innocence sufficiently to either reverse the ruling of the family court or successfully sue the wrongdoer. As but one example of many, Jeffrey Ruggiero is still fighting to get his daughter back even though his ex-wife is doing 14 years behind bars for her multiple false allegations against him. The lessons are simple. Until police and courts start taking a balanced approach to allegations of abuse, this will continue to happen. It beggars belief that a judge ruling in a custody case wouldn't, after the second false allegation, begin to see a pattern. But in this case it took eight - *eight!* And as long as mothers pay no price for false allegations, they'll continue to make them. After all, Amani Ginyard's worked. For years they did exactly what she wanted them to do - keep the children from their father. It all went wrong for her in the end, but in another case, they might have continued working indefinitely. Once courts stop believing the myth that fathers are uniquely dangerous to their children, they'll start transferring custody when the first allegation turns out to be false. And that will put a stop to

this nonsense as nothing else will. But until that day, expect more of the same. Thanks to Ned for the heads-up

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