



It's The Law!



Identity Theft—Who's To Judge The Victim?

by Will Marling

(NAPSA)—To get a thorough understanding of the trauma that identity theft can cause, consider the case of one such victim: Jaimee Napp.

Struggling to recover and not aided by Nebraska criminal law, she took her perpetrator to civil court. Her claim was for more than financial damages. Her suit also included emotional and psychological injury.

I don't know if District Judge John Hartigan considers himself an expert in traumatic reactions for victimization. For those of us who work with victims of crime of all types, the statements of record of a recent case wouldn't appear to demonstrate that he would or should.

Napp disclosed her traumatic reactions to the violation in Judge Hartigan's courtroom. The fact of the crime was not contested. It was the impact of the crime that was doubted, apparently by the judge himself. Napp's attempt to seek civil remedy for the emotional as well as financial impact caused by her victimization was met with the judge's clear and stinging devaluation, "It's not like someone took her soul."

What the judge doesn't seem to know is that identity theft can seem far worse. With identity theft, thieves don't care if they destroy your credit, saddle you with debts, and damage your ability to generate income or demonstrate how truly vulnerable you are.

Perpetrators also don't seem to care that identity theft victims commonly have real fears about the future. Victims discover firsthand how a few pieces of personal information become keys for ruthless individuals to unlock a person's very capacity to live freely.

In the world of victim assistance, making judgments about the effect of anyone's loss might be



There's an increasing call for the courts to come down hard on identity thieves.

a job for a jury, but most people in the judicial system don't seem up to the task. Victims need to be treated with dignity and compassion; they need support as they cope with their physical, financial and emotional losses.

The record indicates that a capable professional testified to the traumatic impact and Napp provided meaningful documentation. I thought the role of an officer of the court was to render the competence of the expert rather than divining the expert's testimony.

I have the highest respect for the judges in our land, including Judge Hartigan. Judges are the final guardians for the rule of law and the application of justice. While the judge's judicial neutrality might be debated in future legal proceedings by others duly empowered to assess it, his lack of understanding of the real impact of identity theft victimization is far less in question.

At the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA), we get calls from victims daily. These citizens speak to the trauma, loss and struggle of victimization that

cause the very reactions Napp described. She testified to traumatic reactions with her identity theft violation. Napp is neither outrageous nor petty. She is quite typical, in fact, demonstrating common reactions to the attacks on her identity. She's traumatized and people did her harm.

Fortunately, NOVA has a partnership with the leading identity theft protection service provider, LifeLock, to help aid identity theft victims where possible. Its members get alerts of potential threats—both credit and noncredit; online access to a personalized dashboard showing current threats; relentless identity monitoring for exposure of personal information; phone support 24 hours a day, seven days a week; stolen or lost wallet remediation services to help cancel and replace credit and debit cards; and comprehensive recovery services. It can be found online at www.lifelock.com and at (800) 543-3562.

Napp is the victim of a crime. Whether Nebraska knows it or not, the rest of the country does.

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