

The New York Times | <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/15/us/houston-texas-revenge-porn.html>

Woman Is Awarded \$1.2 Billion in 'Revenge Porn' Lawsuit

A jury ruled in favor of a Texas woman who said her ex-boyfriend had psychologically and sexually abused her by sharing intimate images of her online without her consent.



By Amanda Holpuch

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A Texas woman was awarded \$1.2 billion in damages last week after she sued her former boyfriend and accused him of sending intimate images of her to her family, friends and co-workers from fake online accounts.

The woman, who is identified only by the initials D.L. in court documents, sued her former boyfriend, Marques Jamal Jackson, claiming he had psychologically and sexually abused her by distributing so-called revenge porn, a term for sexually explicit photos or videos of someone that are shared without consent.

The couple started dating in 2016 and were living together in Chicago in early 2020 when they began a “long and drawn-out break up,” according to the lawsuit. D.L. temporarily moved to her mother’s house in Texas and Mr. Jackson began accessing the security system there to spy on her, the lawsuit said.

In October 2021, the couple officially ended their relationship and D.L. told Mr. Jackson that she no longer wanted him to have access to what the lawsuit described as “visual intimate material” of her that she had allowed him to have while they were a couple.

Instead, he posted the images on several social media platforms and websites, including a pornographic website, and in a publicly accessible folder on the online file-sharing service Dropbox, the lawsuit said. He identified her in the material, using her name and address, and images of her face. He created fake social media pages and email accounts to share the material with her family, friends and co-workers, including by sending them a link to the Dropbox folder. On the social media pages where he had posted the images, he tagged accounts for her employer and for her personal gym.

The lawsuit says that this was still happening days before the complaint was filed in April 2022.

Mr. Jackson also used D.L.’s personal bank account to pay his rent, harassed her with calls and text messages from masked numbers, and told her loan officer that she had submitted a fraudulent loan application, the lawsuit said.

In a March 2022 email to D.L. cited in the lawsuit, Mr. Jackson said, “You will spend the rest of your life trying and failing to wipe yourself off the internet.”

Mr. Jackson could not be reached for comment. It was not clear if he had a lawyer.

He also did not appear in court on Wednesday, when a jury in Houston ordered him to pay \$200 million for past and future mental anguish and \$1 billion in punitive damages.

Brad Gilde, a lawyer for D.L., said that he did not expect the full \$1.2 billion to be paid out, but that he hoped it would serve as a deterrent for others.

"The communication from the jury is that you make it your mission to ruin someone emotionally for the rest of your life, then you are going to be facing a judgment that's going to ruin you financially for the rest of your life," he said.

Mr. Gilde said that D.L. was doing better since the jury members reached their decision because it showed that they heard her and believed her.

The jury found Mr. Jackson liable for violating Texas' revenge porn law, but Mr. Gilde resisted using the term to describe the case. He described the violation as "image-based sexual abuse," a term that is preferred by many advocates for survivors of sexual abuse and lawyers who represent them. These groups have concerns that "revenge porn" trivializes the actions and can suggest that victims did something to cause their privacy to be violated. The term also overlooks situations in which a person shares images of someone without consent for financial gain, entertainment or social status instead of because of a personal grievance.

Mr. Gilde said law firms rarely took up these types of "person-versus-person" cases because there was no insurance involved or other reliable means of recovering damages.

The jury's verdict, Mr. Gilde said, "is a validation of her of her desire to shed light on this issue, to encourage others to do the same, and also encourage law firms to take these cases and to engage law enforcement to ensure that this type of activity doesn't happen again."

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