

7/24/20

Your Honor,

My name is Alexandria Rumsey. My story and connection to Maria started several years ago.

I was married to the defendant from 09/16/11 - 04/30/18. During my marriage, I was also a victim of partner abuse by Josh. I ended up being able to leave the marriage safely, though it wasn't without a great deal of fear. I've been left with lasting trauma that I am still working very hard to heal from. When I was informed that I had the opportunity to write a Victim Impact Statement, my initial thought was that this may finally be my opportunity to speak out against my own experience and advocate for justice. Speaking out is something I've been wanting to do since I left my abusive relationship with Josh a few years ago. Until recently, I haven't felt able to speak out about my abuse safely because I was scared of retaliation from Josh. My hope is that speaking out now will ensure that Maria receives justice and that other women will not have to experience domestic violence or death.

Though our marriage started out in what seemed to be a fairly normal fashion, it slowly began to take on characteristics of a very unhealthy relationship. At the time, I didn't know to call it abuse. But that's what it was. I had grown up with the common understanding that "abuse" usually meant things like hitting, yelling, screaming, and throwing things at the other person. Though I felt deeply insecure and unloved in my marriage, I hadn't considered that what I was experiencing was also abuse.

One of the main areas that took a particular toll on me was in our sexual relationship. I was diagnosed with a medical condition that meant "normal" intercourse caused me a great deal of pain. For years I sought medical help and different therapies to try and alleviate the pain. During this time we would still frequently engage in sex. Even though he was aware of the distress it would cause me. It finally became apparent that to continue would cause me great mental and physical distress. When I asked Josh for space to respect my need to heal – he ignored my needs and continued to shame, guilt, coerce, and rape me.

Often, I was made to feel like all of our troubles were my fault, because I was "broken." Josh stated he deserved better and I tried everything in my power to make myself good enough to live up to his ever-changing expectations. The abuse took many forms, most of which were to do with him being controlling. Among other things – he would commonly belittle my abilities and opinions, guilt or coerce me into sexual activities I didn't want to do, withhold finances, restrict my time with family and friends, and use silence as a weapon. He was also looking for casual hookups and threesomes. In his mind these affairs were to be beneficial to our marriage. Due to his psychological abuse, I was convinced that all of this was my fault and what I deserved.

I sought professional counseling, as I knew I was at the end of my rope. At the time, I thought that the issues with physical intimacy were the bulk of our problems. However, during my first session, the therapist made it clear that the issues with our intimate life were the least of his concerns. He advised me strongly that Josh's behavior toward me was alarmingly controlling and checked many of the boxes of abuse.

After receiving professional advice, I finally found the courage to confront Josh on some of these behaviors and how they affected me – including being diagnosed by a psychiatrist with PTSD, depression, and anxiety as a result of his treatment– and I was dismissed out of hand by Josh.

When I was finally able to leave the marriage, I did so with a great deal of anxiety. I felt very scared of Josh, even to the point of having panic attacks at the idea that I might be forced to go back and live with him. Though, admittedly, at the time I couldn't put my finger on what exactly I was so terrified of happening. I just knew I did not feel safe. After hearing of the brutal way in which Josh murdered Maria and his cold calculations to cover it up – all of my worst fears flooded back and were validated in the most horrible way.

No one should ever fear their partner; the very person who has vowed to cherish, love, and protect them. The betrayal goes so deep. For me, it got to the point that I no longer felt safe even falling asleep in the same room with Josh. Feeling like if I let my guard down, I would wake up to his unwanted touches. I felt so broken down and diminished that I doubted my own ability to do something as simple as pay our bills - much less try and leave, though I was terrified at the thought of staying. Going through all of that has made me feel so insecure and uncertain in other relationships. I was utterly convinced by Josh that no one else could ever want me with “my issues”. And now, it feels too dangerous to put myself in such a vulnerable situation again.

At the end of the day though, myself and other survivors are the lucky ones. Maria was forced to live her last moment in what I can only imagine was absolute terror, as Josh strangled her. Maria and other victims spent their last seconds alive seeing the person they thought loved them - kill them.

Since learning of Maria's death, it has forced me to relive much of the trauma from my own marriage. I have, and currently do, struggle with survivor's guilt. Knowing that Josh killed Maria when she was trying to leave him makes it very clear to me that had circumstances been slightly different – it could have been me that wasn't able to leave with my life. I find myself circling around the endless argument that, if only I had been able to speak out sooner, or warn Maria of my own experience of abuse from Josh, then perhaps he would have been held accountable to his actions sooner.

However, with our current cultural climate, speaking out against abuse is something that is still a taboo subject- especially when the abuse occurs in more subtle forms, such as the early warning signs prior to physical abuse that I experienced. When I tried to advocate for myself, I was silenced by disbelief and shame from others. I want to break that silence.

It is my belief that Josh's controlling behavior and abusive tendencies have grown rapidly and dramatically more severe in just a few years' time since our marriage ended. If he were allowed to serve a reduced sentence, I fear for other potential victims as well as for my own safety, now that I have spoken out.

In addition, I feel very strongly that his abusive behavior, and that of other abusive relationships, needs to be treated with more severity. My primary wish is not to make an example out of Josh

or other abusers- rather, it is to finally begin to turn the tide in what is culturally acceptable treatment of intimate partners.

As long as abusers feel like they can get away with their behavior – because we as a culture aren't willing to call them out on it, or hold them truly accountable– they will keep abusing. Abuse lives in the silence.

And in that silence, the victims are left to question their own reality, blame themselves for the terrible treatment, and become a shell of who they were meant to be. Or, as in the case of Maria and so many others, have their lives taken from them all together.

For me, the idea that Josh, a person who I've known, been married to, slept with, traveled with, cared for and loved could be capable of such a level of inhumanity as to kill his own wife is unfathomable. Then, on top of that, instead of seeking redemption and taking responsibility for his horrible abuse- to go to the extreme opposite end and cover up his deeds and lie about it-- to have treated Maria, his wife, in such a manner is simply horrifying and unacceptable.

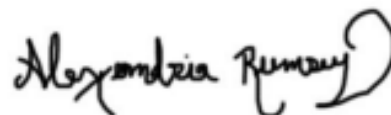
This is why I'm asking that Josh be held accountable for his actions to the fullest degree of the law.

Maria's death has impacted me to finally confront my abuser, to share my story, to advocate for other abused women, and to cry out against the atrocities of Maria's death. I ask the court to ensure that justice is served to the full extent of the law so that I and other women are protected in the future. But above all, that Josh recompense for even a portion of the loss of Maria's life.

7/26/20

I wrote the vast majority of this letter before Josh committed suicide. I considered going back and changing a lot of the wording and tense of the letter. I decided in the end to keep it as it was. This felt most authentic and relevant to me. Also, my hope is that if you ever have this situation when presiding over a similar case, that maybe my experience and words will help make an impact if other victims aren't able to speak for themselves.

Thank you for your time in reading and considering this letter.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alexandria Rumay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, decorative flourish at the end.