

What follows is a response to a situation that has been ongoing for several years. It involves personal matters which I do not believe should become public entertainment or blog-fodder. I am only posting this to help those who have already heard false or confusing information to hear what I know to be true, and for that reason, it is unnecessary to mention names. I hope others will show appropriate discretion in referencing this response.

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In July of 2008, an author who is a friend and colleague was on a speaking tour in another state. I was not present, but was at my home over a thousand miles away. The author's wife called someone who was present and threatened to kill herself in front of their children if her husband didn't return home immediately. A small group immediately assembled at the event. They agreed that the author should return home immediately and they sought to offer additional emergency support in a volatile situation. One of the people from that small group called me, explained what was happening, and asked if this course of action seemed wise. I said yes, only adding that if they thought she presented an immediate threat to herself or others, they should call 911 immediately.

The small group who met at the event wrote a letter to the woman expressing their concern and mentioned my name as someone who had been consulted. In the following days, she began to call me repeatedly. I spent many hours on the phone listening to her detail her grievances against her then-husband.

With increasing frequency in phone calls and emails, she would become enraged and use insulting, profane, and threatening language with me. She communicated deep animosity toward her husband and anyone associated with him.

Her interactions with me seemed increasingly unhealthy and inappropriate, so I reached the difficult decision to tell her she could best be helped by local professionals and I would no longer be involved.

After the couple's divorce, she from time to time sent out mass emails seeking to vilify her ex-husband and anyone associated with him. I checked on the validity of her accusations and in each case found them to be misleading and inaccurate. I didn't hear from her for a few years, but then in September 2014, she emailed me asking for an apology for the "spiritual abuse" of those who responded to her threat to self-harm in 2008.

She referred me to a website where she had drawn a large following, giving an account of events that, based on my extensive email archives from her spanning seven years, was highly inaccurate, unethical, and misleading. She accused me and others of covering up wrong-doing by her ex-husband and conducting a smear campaign against her to silence her. Some readers of that website have accepted her account as accurate and complete, and have launched a campaign to support her. Their desire to support a

person in pain is admirable, although some of their tactics strike me as reckless, as is their choice, so far at least, to publicize her account without seeking verification, and to use it to intimidate and harm others. Abuse is a serious thing, as is bearing false witness.

If any of her allegations were true, I would be quick to apologize. But her accusations against me are false, as are, to the best of my knowledge, all her other accusations against others. I have never covered up anything or been asked to cover up anything. I have never participated in or been asked to participate in a smear campaign. People who know me know that this kind of behavior is completely foreign to me. The only smear campaign I have seen is the one she is conducting, and I and others she accused are only speaking up now to try to stop the harm she and her supporters are causing through false accusations.

She and her supporters now demand that I and others refuse to attend or participate in any event where her ex-husband is a presenter or in a responsible position, a demand with which I can not in good conscience comply because I know many of her accusations are false, and do not know any of them to be true.

For example, she accuses her ex-husband of physical abuse back in 2008, but I have an email from her in 2008 in which she tells me of a single physical altercation between them which *she admits to initiating*. She claims she was “thrown around the room,” but she also sent me (unrequested) her medical records which suggest no such thing occurred.

I and others she has accused have repeatedly approached her for third-party review, mediation, and reconciliation (most recently on September 26, September 30, and November 7, 2014, and again on January 15 and 16, 2015), but she has refused each request, as our email records clearly show. A few weeks ago I sent her a detailed response to her allegations, including quotes from her own emails over the years that contradict accusations she is now making. I asked her for evidence that I was missing or misunderstanding anything. She responded with further insults and told me to never contact her again.

Up until this point, I have not wanted to respond publicly. Doing so, I felt, would only add fuel to an untended fire and add to the pain being suffered by this family. In addition, I did not feel the websites on which she was making her accusations were appropriate places for a responsible disclosure and evaluation of evidence. But because the circle of people being harmed by her behavior continues to grow, it is now necessary to do two things. First, I am offering this general response to let others know that my silence in no way means I agree with her allegations or have anything to hide.

Second, when people make serious allegations like those that she has made, their allegations should be taken seriously. In particular, when the custody and well-being of

children are involved, and when the character of religious leaders are involved, allegations should be handled with the greatest possible diligence and care. But allegations should not be considered facts until they are verified in light of all available evidence through responsible processes.

That's why law enforcement, the courts, and other responsible professionals should be consulted to distinguish factual from false allegations. This woman's disputes with her ex-husband have been under the jurisdiction of the courts and related authorities for years, and I understand that those proceedings are matters of public record. Her accusations against me and others, however, have not yet been adjudicated by proper authorities. For this reason, since she has refused repeated requests for mediation and professional third-party review, I am pursuing legal action so my testimony, email archives, and other evidence can be evaluated fairly in an appropriate setting. People who know me will know that I would not take this step unless I felt it necessary and right to do so.

It is my hope that the years of repeated harassment, false accusations, threats, and defamation of character many of us have experienced can soon come to an end. I also hope those who are supporting the woman in question will continue to do so, but without spreading false allegations on her behalf. I hope that deep and lasting healing for all those involved can soon begin.

Note: After I prepared this response but before posting it, the author in question posted a detailed statement responding to his ex-wife's allegations against him. Others who, like me, have been falsely accused are beginning to step forward. If you are involved and have a need to know, you can find those responses at appropriate websites. If other relevant information comes up that I feel I should share, I will add it to this post, but I hope that will not be necessary. - Brian D. McLaren