



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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**Press Release- Vacated Conviction**

Today, based on the work of the District Attorney's Conviction Integrity Unit, the Court vacated a murder conviction from 2010.

Judge Patrick Butler granted the District Attorney Office's Motion to Vacate the 2010 conviction of Traci Housman. Traci Housman had been arrested for Murder in the Second Degree after fatally stabbing her husband, John Housman, in their home in Boulder on August 2, 2009. On February 12, 2010, Ms. Housman accepted a plea offer to Criminally Negligent Homicide with a sentence of probation.

At the request of the original lead detective on the case, as well as Ms. Housman, the Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU) of the District Attorney's Office reviewed Ms. Housman's conviction. After the initial review, Senior Deputy District Attorney Alison Brand and defense attorney Josh Maximon thoroughly reviewed the case file as well as information provided by Ms. Housman. She provided new information about the prior history of domestic violence, as well as the incident itself. The information that she provided about the incident is consistent with the physical damage throughout the hallway and the house. Also, her version of events is consistent with photographs of the crime scene and her injuries. In addition, the People reviewed the criminal history of both parties, including other acts of domestic violence, to determine who was the predominant aggressor. The additional information led to the conclusion that Ms. Housman was the victim in an emotionally and physically abusive relationship with Mr. Housman that escalated to the tragic incident on August 2, 2009.

Based on the thorough examination of the case, the Conviction Integrity Unit determined that if Ms. Housman had presented this information to a trial jury, the prosecution would have been unable to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Ms. Housman did not act in self-defense.

District Attorney Michael Dougherty and the CIU consulted with John Housman's family throughout the process of reviewing this conviction and filing the motion to vacate the murder conviction. They objected to vacating Ms. Housman's murder conviction. They chose not to make a statement during the court hearing, but their position was noted in the motion filed by the DA's Office and during the hearing today.

District Attorney Michael Dougherty had established the DA's Conviction Integrity Unit to investigate claims of wrongful convictions. The CIU works collaboratively with the University of Colorado Law School, private defense attorneys, and the Public Defender's Office. This collaborative approach seeks to ensure a transparent, effective, and thorough review of legitimate claims of actual innocence and to uphold integrity and trust in our justice system. Today's decision is supported by prosecutors, domestic violence advocates, and defense attorneys.

**District Attorney Anne Kelly of the Twelfth Judicial District stated,** "When a victim of coercive, controlling violence uses defensive violence to survive, it requires the criminal justice system to take a much deeper look at the entirety of the relationship that victim has with their abuser. That is exactly what the Boulder County District Attorney's Office did here. I fully support the decision of the District Attorney's Office to request vacatur of Ms. Housman's conviction. I applaud the extraordinary work that the Conviction Integrity Unit performed in reaching this brave and just conclusion." *(DA Kelly helped start our office's Domestic Violence Acute Response Team when she served as a Senior Deputy District Attorney in our office).*

**Anne Tapp, Executive Director of Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Non-Violence stated:**

"Traci Housman survived not only the trauma of an emotionally and physically abusive relationship, but the horror and guilt of having used lethal force to defend herself from an enraged partner intent on seriously harming her. The dynamics of intimate partner abuse can be complex and confusing. Survivors know what their abusive partner is capable of – they have survived past assaults; they know when threats are real. But in too many cases, the complexity of a domestic violence survivor's safety and choices have not been well understood by the courts or legal system.

We are fortunate to have a District Attorney who recognizes this and has dedicated resources to make the justice system more just for survivors of abuse. On behalf of Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence (SPAN), I commend District Attorney Dougherty and the Conviction Integrity Unit for their willingness to bring new insights to past decisions in an unwavering commitment to justice."

**Attorney Josh Maximon stated,** "True justice is attainable only when our institutions are willing to identify mistakes and take corrective action. Today, by vacating this conviction, we are righting a wrong. I am honored to be part of the team that fixed this injustice."

**Former Boulder District Attorney Stan Garnett stated,** "I respect the process here, particularly the willingness to consider new information that is presented. It was, and remains, a tragic case. The goal is to reach the right outcome and I respect the DA's Office taking this action today."

**District Attorney Michael Dougherty stated,** "The overarching goal of the District Attorney's Office is to seek justice. I want to acknowledge the original lead detective, Chuck Heidel, for bringing this case to our attention. I appreciate the hard work of our Conviction Integrity Unit as well as the partners who helped with this review. Based on that thorough analysis, as well as the new information provided by Ms. Housman, it is a valid claim of self-defense. A great deal of work and analysis led to this decision; it is the right thing to do."