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'He got his,' former Council employee declares

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Daniel Sturm interviewed Heather Eman, now a self-employed insurance auditor, last week.

How do you feel about the outcome of the case?

Eman: I want people to know that it really did happen. This will allow that Mr. Adado won't be able to do this again. He isn't in office anymore. And this is the point we wanted to make.

Adado paid attorney's fees, but because the lawsuit was dismissed he has incurred no actual legal punishment. Does this make you feel like he's getting away with it?

Eman: I'm OK with it, because he still paid a large sum to his attorney out of his own pocket. And he lost his political position. He would be mayor now if he hadn't messed around. It's like karma. Everything comes around. He got his. I don't believe that he's seen in the community the way he was before this happened.

You met Adado while working as a waitress, in 1998. At the time he recommended you for the receptionist job, weren't you already aware of his behavior?

Eman: I didn't expect that he would behave that way in an office setting. I was only aware of how he behaved in a bar setting, which is very different.

So you wouldn't have had problems with his behavior in a bar setting?

Eman: I have an easier time accepting this in a bar. When you're a waitress you tend to understand that those things may happen, whereas it caught me offguard in the office.

City Council has reestablished the personnel committee, and they have adopted a sexual harassment policy. Do you think that will fix the problem?

Eman: I think that Mr. Adado being out of office fixed the problem.

You don't think that the sexual harassment policy is a helpful tool?

Eman: I think that it is a good tool for a department that has somebody governing it. But there is nobody governing

the Council. The Council staff is still at-will, and the Council members will be able to do whatever they want to do to them, as long as no one else is telling them 'you can't.' The public who governs them in a way by electing them can't be aware of how they use and misuse their power. And that is still going on, even though Mr. Adado is gone.

What do you mean by misuse of power?

Eman: I think the Pulse has reported on the misuse of power by Carol Wood. Even though she's an at-large Council member, she specifically worked in other Council members' wards [taking other Council members' calls]. She went outside of her boundaries, and that's not right. She was also very supportive of Mr. Adado, and she made it very difficult for me on purpose. [Eman's lawsuit states that Wood confiscated the secretary's computer immediately after she reported the harassment to City Attorney James Smiertka.]

How did people react after you filed the lawsuit?

Eman: It put pressure on my family, when the city brought in every male person that was a friend of mine and questioned them - more than 20 people. Those people have families and careers, and they have reputations. By doing that the city was pressuring me to withdraw the suit because it was hurting my friends. I would have settled in the very beginning. But, yet, the city went ahead and still fought the case, using more taxpayers' money to fight it. It was a witch hunt!

How difficult was it for you to find a job afterward?

Eman: It was very difficult, because people knew that I was the person that had filed a lawsuit against the city. I interviewed for three positions, where I had the positions until they figured out who I was. They didn't want that hassle. The city could have easily brought the new employers into the lawsuit as witnesses. Nobody wants to be involved in a two-year lawsuit. I also didn't have any references. There was nobody at the city that would speak on my behalf. I lived on credit cards for a year, and took out \$30,000.

What advice would you give to female employees who are in similar situations?

Eman: Even if at the time it feels like your job is all you have, I found that this was completely untrue. In the beginning I was willing to sacrifice my pride and my self-respect, and play Adado's game, because I thought I couldn't find another job like that, and that I couldn't support my son. I had never been unemployed since I was 15. But it's not as horrible as it seems. It's not worth staying. There is more out there!

Have your experiences with Adado changed your attitude towards men?

Eman: I guess I didn't know that some men could be as gross as they really are. I didn't know that men got off on underwear. I thought that adults would know better.

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