

Newlyweds Ordered to Pay Photographer More Than \$1M In Damages

Do words matter? A Dallas County jury recently ruled – to the tune of \$1 million – that they do, according to a post by **Androvett Legal Media & Marketing**.

In March 2015, Dallas wedding photographer Andrea Polito filed a defamation lawsuit against former clients Neely and Andrew Moldovan.

Polito, who photographed the couple's wedding in 2014, alleged they launched a large-scale social media campaign against her over what they claimed were unreasonable fees associated with the delivery of their wedding photos.

In a TV interview, the couple charged that Polito was "holding their pictures hostage."

According to the suit, the newlyweds posted to social media and blogs that Polito "cheated" and "scammed" people, and that they were "pretty sure [Polito's] business was done."

As their online onslaught went viral, Polito said the allegations ruined the business she spent 13 years building.

"People knew me and my reputation," she told the ***Dallas Morning News***. "All the name-calling, all the bullying ... I was humiliated."

In court, Polito's attorney, **Dave Wishnew of Gruber Elrod Johansen Hail Shank LLP**, argued the Moldovans should be held liable for defamation, disparagement and civil conspiracy.

The jury agreed, awarding Polito \$1.08 million in actual and punitive damages.

“We hope that this sends a message that freedom of speech does not mean freedom from consequences,” Wishnew said. “The right to air legitimate grievances and opinions doesn’t extend to a concerted campaign designed to defame and destroy someone’s hard-earned business.”

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