

The Systems Failed Me, But I Will Not Let Them Silence Me.

By Lauren Kanarek

Propagate Content's documentary about my attempted murder is set to be released on Netflix on April 21. The producer promised to shed light on the truth. Instead, Propagate distorted the truth in the interest of ratings. I am telling my story now because the systems meant to scrutinize and hold people in power accountable have failed me, allowing harm and victimization to happen again and again.

On August 7, 2019, a man I knew and once respected drew a gun and shot me twice in the chest at point-blank range. That man was Michael Barisone, my former trainer in the equestrian sport of dressage.

His bullets destroyed my left breast and tore through my left lung before exiting my back. I was slipping in and out of consciousness and bleeding out when the police arrived; I flatlined twice in the ambulance during the 30-minute drive to the hospital. The trauma surgeons did everything they could to save me, including cutting a ten-inch incision across my abdomen to allow my body to swell from the blood transfusions and prevent additional damage to my heart and lungs. I spent days in a medically induced coma, and for several weeks, every breath I took depended on a ventilator.

And yet, those weeks when I fought for my life in August 2019 were only the beginning of the ordeal that I have suffered over the past six and a half years.

In court, the defense's theatrics marginalized both the brutal attack on my body and Michael Barisone's responsibility for his actions. The judge barred photos of my injuries because the jury might have difficulty distinguishing the bullet damage from the surgical repairs that saved my life, yet pictures of the injuries my shooter sustained while being restrained were allowed. Blaming the victim, they claimed I incited my own shooting. Influenced by judicial charades, the jury found him not guilty by reason of insanity.

I publicly posted that I was afraid prior to my assault, but nobody believed me, or they refused to listen. Around this same time, Michael Barisone was securing the gun he would later use to shoot me. I have not only been demonized by Barisone's sympathizers, but I am also confronted with death threats on a regular basis.

Michael Barisone's unchallenged lies have been intensified by media outlets chasing ratings over the truth. CBS's 48 Hours reduced days of my testimony to seconds, stripped of context, painted me as the instigator and recast the man who tried to murder me as the victim.

Propagate Content approached me after CBS aired their episode, and deceitfully promised to tell my side of the story. Regrettably, the recently released Netflix trailer callously mirrors 48 Hours' salacious tone and stands to victimize me, again.

Phrases like "destroy your life" and The Greatest Showman song lyric "look out cuz here I come" were pulled from unrelated social media posts and reframed as ominous threats to manufacture drama and hype viewers.

My spirits lifted on December 15, 2025, when The U.S. Center for SafeSport, an independent organization created by Congress to prevent sexual, physical, and emotional abuse in sports, "permanently banned" [Michael Barisone](#) from "the grounds of a United States Equestrian Federation licensed, endorsed, or sponsored competition" for reasons of "Sexual Harassment; Emotional Misconduct; [violating its Governing Body] policies/bylaws." According to the SafeSport website, his violations are "subject to appeal / not yet final."

Michael Barisone's behavior is not an isolated event, it is a repeated pattern. I experienced it myself in the lewd texts he sent me during my time training with him at Hawthorne Hill, and my physical and emotional scars are a permanent reminder that he is a dangerous man. Despite knowing this, Propagate and Netflix have chosen to amplify his distorted narrative for commercial purposes.

This is the reality for too many women: we survive harassment and horrific attacks, only to be doubted, blamed, and ultimately vilified.

I will never fully recover from what happened to me on August 7, 2019. But I will continue to speak out—not just for me, but for every woman who has been threatened, misrepresented, and harmed.

I was the victim. I am the survivor. Lies will not erase the truth.