

Stephen Williamson:

After someone is the victim of a false arrest, not only are their lives turned upside down, but they feel profoundly unstable, sort of the security and the stability that we all take for granted, that we all sort of take for granted and use to make sense of our life, and the daily routine and terrain, all of that gets upended when you're the victim of an incident like this. And even after someone is released from confinement, released from jail, even after they hire a lawyer, and they know that we're going to pursue a claim on their behalf, there's this stigma that sort of stays with them. There's an insecurity, there's a fear.

Oftentimes, there's an aftermath that they have been out of and away from their lives for a period of days or a week or whatever it is. And their job may have found out, their friends may have found out, their family may have found out that they've been arrested. And of course, they don't have the full story. And of course, they assume the worst. And of course, the person, our client explains as best they can. But people have their stereotypes and people jump to conclusions and people assume the worst. And what we've seen as part of what the client has to go through and what they have to sort of dig out from is restoring their sense of self, and restoring their reputation and disproving to their employer and to their friends and family that they did anything wrong.

Automatically, there's this stigma, even if the person is a perfectly law-abiding citizen who's never done anything wrong and the arrest is just completely bogus, there's still a stigma that immediately descends on the person. And there's still all of these assumptions that the people around them make that they have to dig out from and fix. And it's not easy. And oftentimes, people will tell me, my clients will tell me, it's been six months and we've shown that the arrest was false and we're pursuing the claim and it looks like it's going to be successful. And they dropped the charges. But still, my friends wonder, still I'm getting looks at work, still there's an assumption that's being made about me that I can't seem to shake. And that's a terrible thing. And people are so frustrated and angered by that. And it also has a tangible effect because it impacts people at work.