

Speaker 1:

When she decided to leave, it turned into, "He's my kid. I gave birth to him. You're not his parent." You can imagine the panic. So she wanted the house, \$400 a month, and child support after she stole the money, she just wanted everything. I stayed up one night and I went to answer.com and just asked the random question and said, "What can I do?" And a lawyer said, "Hey, you're, you're okay if she's treated you as a parent and referred to you as a parent the time that y'all had this kid. You need to get yourself a lawyer. There is a law that will protect you."

My name is Davina Coker, but everyone knows me as Day Coker. I've been a HVAC contractor to be 12 years in April. I started out working for a company that let me clean the units and then I eventually started my own company. I've had my company about almost five years now. The whole thing is I was married in a same-sex relationship. We had our baby before any laws were in place, like they are now. When we had him, I wasn't allowed to be listed on the birth certificate, so we did not know how to legally put things in place so that I would have parental rights, and that was really where the issue started.

Skip to a year later, we decided to part ways. In that instance, I wasn't protected because my name wasn't on the birth certificate. It didn't give me any legal rights to my son. I had no knowledge of if I had any right to even bring a case about. She left the relationship and got with someone else. This other person also had kids, so they wanted to close me out, basically take my son and make it their family and act like I never existed. At that point, I was fight or flight. I chose fight. Even if she was like, "Okay, I'm not mad. You can have him for a week." I would still have to worry about this later on, and that's what I didn't want to deal with. I just couldn't take that chance.

I later on just googled on my phone LGBT community lawyer, Angela popped up. That's how it all started. I went out for a consultation and we just clicked and she was as passionate about what I was going through. She is just as frustrated and irritated as though it was her child. If someone says they don't want you to see your kid, you'd be surprised how much motivation you have to work literally all day. Angela ended up handling the divorce as well as the custody, but they tried to make them two separate issues.

First day we went to court, Angela said to me, "We're going here with our heads head and our hands clean. That's the only way you're going to win this." We didn't have any dirty tricks. The judge put us on a recess and was like, "You have to fill out this form and it has to be notarized." And she's like, "Okay, here's what we'll do. You sign this, I'm going to type the form up on my computer. Then you take it downstairs and you have it filed." And she goes, "I'm a notary." We had that thing filed by the time we came back from lunch, she submits the paper to give to the judge and the judge was like, "Well done." I mean at every impasse, she worked it out and it was pretty awesome.

After we leave court that day, my ex-wife takes my son out of the daycare he was at that I knew he was at and puts him in a daycare that I have no idea where he is. She can't take him out the state, but her thing is, I don't want you around him. The former daycare teacher where he was has a friend that works at this other daycare who just happens to be the same daycare she placed him at. The next time we go to court, the judge compels her to say where he is, but she wouldn't when we left that time. Now she's been told, you can't restrict him from me and you have to tell me where he goes to school. She signed him up for school, and she listed everybody she could as emergency contact before me. Her mom was on there, at the time her fiance was on there. All these people except for me, and I should be the second person listed.

This is when the claws come out. She broke into the house and tore everything. Broke all our pictures and stabbed the mattress and left the knife and this note saying, "I will kill you." And I took pictures of it

and when we went to court, I had to tell the judge about it. One day I'm at work and I get a confirmation from the bank saying, your account's been closed. It's like 6:00 in the evening on a Friday, and I go and I'm calling the bank and they're like, "Hey, your account's been closed. Thanks for doing business with us." I was like, "No, I didn't close it." Somehow she was able to go into the bank and show proof that she was on this account, which I had never added her to, and withdraw \$14,567.37, which took me straight to the police station that day.

The police station's like, "That's a civil matter. It's not a criminal matter because you guys are married." I'm trying to investigate with the bank to see how this even happened, and they're like, "You added her to the account back in 1997." We're seven years apart in age, in '97, I was 17, she was 10 years old. I was like, "No, no, that didn't happen." We had to get a cyber investigator involved. When she stole that money, she went into court under oath and told the judge that her lawyer told her to do it. So then her lawyer quit. We were in a courtroom. The judge awarded us 50/50 custody with no child support. Getting the 50/50 decision was surreal because it validated who I always said I was from day one. I was there in the delivery room. I have pictures of holding him when he was born.

I've been there since day one. So the whole time we were in court, hearing her tell me, "You're nobody to him. You're not his parent," I'm his parent. It just gave me the validation and I went to see Angela one day just to hang out and say, "Hey," to her. It happened to be my birthday. And she's like, "Guess what? I got an awesome present for you." And she's like, "You're a divorce." And I was like, "What?" Start dancing in the office and everything. The path that I'm on now, she helped me through all of that and I'm in a better place and I'm a better person because of all of it. When we got the verdict, it gave me the right to my identity back.