

Charges dropped against falsely accused Texas man

A reporter

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A young Texas man has escaped the threat of life imprisonment on false charges of burglary, leveled by an ex-girlfriend, because a selfie taken with his mother proved he could not have committed the crime. Media reports brought the outrageous frame-up to national attention this week, five months after the charges were dropped.

The police apparently did not even conduct an interview with the young man before arresting him, the procedure normally carried out to determine whether a “suspect” has an alibi and may be wrongly accused.

The case is a warning of the dangers inherent in efforts to undermine the presumption of innocence and the claim that all accusers must be “believed—central themes of the #MeToo movement promoted by leading media outlets such as the *New York Times*.

Christopher Precopia, 21, was arrested on September 22, 2017, at his job, on a warrant filed by Bell County, Texas, where his former girlfriend lives. She charged that he had broken into her home and attacked her, carving an “X” onto her skin.

The arrest warrant claimed that police in Temple, Texas, “received a report of an assault with weapons.” A policeman was sent to the home of the girlfriend, and she said that Precopia “came towards her in an aggressive manner and pushed her to the ground, punched her in the face and cut her with a box cutter.”

According to a local television report, the woman declared in a handwritten statement, “I could hear the slices being made and it stung a lot,” adding that she escaped her attacker’s grasp, grabbed her Taser, turned, and “he was gone.”

Precopia was charged with first-degree felony burglary of a habitation with intent to commit additional felonies, with a potential sentence of up to 99 years if convicted, under the savagery that passes for

law in Texas. His parents took out \$150,000 in loans to post bond for him and hire a lawyer.

The young woman and Precopia had dated for six weeks some three years before the alleged attack, when Precopia was a 17-year-old high school senior and she was a 15-year-old sophomore. The two parted bitterly and had no contact for more than two years. Precopia did not even know where she lived.

Sometime after the arrest, while the case was proceeding toward trial, Precopia’s mother Erin realized that she had evidence proving Christopher could not have committed the crime. She had taken a selfie with her son and two friends at an event at a hotel in Austin, Texas, 70 miles away, at about time the assault was supposed to have occurred, on September 20, 2017, at 7:20 p.m.

Metadata for the photo, reviewed by a forensic expert hired by the prosecutor’s office, proved it was taken at 7:02 p.m. The two friends and other witnesses confirmed Precopia’s presence at the hotel. Other electronic data, giving the location of Precopia’s cellphone, also verified his alibi.

Bell County District Attorney Henry Garza said the charge against Precopia was dropped on June 21 “in the interests of justice” after Precopia’s lawyer brought the selfie to the prosecutor’s office. In response to media inquiries last week, Garza said that no charges had been brought against the young woman who had accused Precopia, although the case was still under review.

Precopia’s lawyer, Rick Flores, told the press, “He was very fortunate that she chose a date and time that he just happened to have a rock-solid alibi for.” Either the day before or the day after, Flores added, Precopia’s alibi would have been that he was sitting at home watching television, and he would likely be facing life in prison.

The arrest for a violent felony entirely disrupted life for Precopia and his parents for nine months and could have destroyed his future entirely.



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