



TORII LEGAL ASSISTANCE

OFFICE OF THE STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATE



BEYONCE, MEL GIBSON, TIGER WOODS AND CARRIE UNDERWOOD – FAMILY LAW BY: RUDY WARTELLA

Most of us remember Beyonce sing “to the left” in “Irreplaceable.”ⁱ Those of us with TVs have heard audio tapes of what appears to be Mel Gibsonⁱⁱ expressing disappointment with his ex-girlfriend. Country music fans have sung along as Carrie Underwood sang of vandalizing a customized four-wheel drive.ⁱⁱⁱ We also remember all of the speculation surrounding why Tiger Woods’ car hit a fire hydrant and a tree in the early morning hours near his residence.

There are lessons to be learned when we critique Beyoncé’s song, question Carrie Underwood’s lyrics, or think about Mel Gibson or Tiger Woods’ alleged behavior. Many relationships end. Although the Army does a great job taking care of families, Army marriages also face challenges. If a marriage is going to end, it is better to end these relationships on good terms.

After doing family law for almost 24 years, I have seen marriages fail for many different reasons. No matter what the reason, it is always best to be as civil as possible when going through a divorce. This is easier said than done, but there are some things that you should not do:

- Do not physically harm your spouse
- Do not verbally “abuse” your spouse
- Do not threaten to harm your spouse (Mel Gibson allegedly threatened his spouse on the phone)
- Do not send emails when you are angry. Keep in mind that your emails could be read by others (Your commander, your children, your parents, and the judge)
- Do not begin (or continue) an outside relationship until you are legally divorced -- this includes emails, sending photos, and social networking
- Do not involve your children in your arguments (Cooperate with reasonable visitation requests)
- Do not break, destroy, vandalize, or dispose of marital property.
- Do not blackmail (exhort) your spouse

Each state has different divorce laws. Most states have “no fault” provisions. But, even in some no-fault jurisdictions, marital misconduct could be considered when dividing up property and depending on the misconduct, when settling custody disputes.

If you are planning to divorce, it is important to be reasonable when deciding on custody/visitation and dividing property. Everyone experiences divorce differently, but try to be “fair” and you will be on your way to an amicable divorce.

ⁱ “Everything you own in the box to the left, In the closet, that’s my stuff, Yes, if I bought it, then please don’t touch.”

ⁱⁱ Gibson was investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department on domestic violence allegations.

ⁱⁱⁱ She sings of scratching its side with a key, carving her name into its leather seats, smashing the headlights with a Louisville Slugger baseball bat and slashing all four tires.