

Renee Rayton: These cops show up to arrest me, and I said, "For what?" And they said, "For illegal cultivation of marijuana." They were raiding the place. And then I don't know how many days later, I saw the indictment and couldn't believe it. I didn't realize I was part of any grand jury indictment. I just wanted to see the warrant with their probable cause because I was like, "I didn't do anything."

Doug Richards: What made Renee unique is that she was a police officer, or she had been. Renee had a career in law enforcement, where she was a street cop up in Pitkin County, for both Aspen and in the sheriff's office. When I first met Renee, she was devastated. The thing about these arrests is the prosecutors, they don't care about what else is going on in your life.

Renee Rayton: They took me down to the DEA's office and I got questioned there. I was in there quite a while. It was my dad's birthday. I was supposed to go to dinner. Don't mean to get emotional, but my dad had passed away earlier that year, so it was his birthday and I was supposed to go to dinner and go to his grave with my mom and sister. And so I didn't get out until midnight, I think that night. No one would let me make a phone call. They just were like, "Yeah, we'll get back to you." They never did. They didn't care.

Doug Richards: And so Renee was in the process of grieving the loss of her father when this all happened. She's a member of law enforcement, has always been a law-abiding person, just followed the rules constantly. And to have her name just sort of dirtied up by these false accusations, she was devastated.

Renee Rayton: And they walked me out, and then they put me in handcuffs near a car, and then transported me to the jail. I had a lot of discussion with them on the way to the jail because I'm going from Westminster to Arapahoe County, and I also let them know about their undercover informant. I was just like, "He's a creep." He would call me and say, "What are you wearing?" He asked me one day, "Where's your boom boom room?" And he just creeped me out. In fact, one day, I was in my office and the other woman that did licensing there was in there, and he walked in and she left. And I was real short with him, and he finally left. And I said, "Please don't ever leave me alone with that guy again." So I told them, "Your cop was inappropriate," and so I told them that too on my ride, but they didn't care.

Doug Richards: Renee was really frustrated throughout the entire process because Renee was also somebody who before this really believed in law enforcement and the criminal justice system, and was just completely blindsided by everything, and just couldn't figure out why this system that she really believed in was failing her, why it didn't work, and why she was having trouble getting these prosecutors to understand that she did nothing wrong.

Renee Rayton: Total, I went to court over 20 times. I was working and I would probably get really pissed off and mad when I would have to go to court because I knew that

nothing was going anywhere, and that was so frustrating to me. And I know it's just the system. It's the system, and I had no clue that the system was this bad.

Doug Richards:

Being a former prosecutor, I understood why the elected DA just had his hooks into this case, or at least into Renee as a defendant in this case, thinking that there's a member of law enforcement, like a dirty cop. I mean, as a prosecutor, with drug conspiracies, you are always looking for the dirty cop. I mean, when I was a federal prosecutor, there was always that element to it, so I understand the elected DA's mentality of, okay, there's a cop involved. She must be dirty.

I didn't immediately think it was going to go to trial. I thought this was something that we were going to be able to quickly work out. It was clear she wasn't involved. It was clear they didn't have enough evidence to proceed. But one of the problems though with this was that Renee was a member or a former member of law enforcement. So that made the prosecutors, and not just the prosecutors, the elected DA in this case, really reluctant to let the case go. And so even though the evidence was not good or strong at all against Renee, because there was no evidence, the prosecutor, the line prosecutor didn't have a lot of discretion when it came to Renee because the elected DA was so convinced that Renee must've been involved. The problem was the elected DA didn't really know anything about the case other than what maybe a DEA agent was whispering in his ear about what was happening. It made it difficult for everyone, including the lying prosecutor, to try to reach a pretrial resolution on the case. So because there was no resolution, we have to gear up for trial, and that's what we did.

Renee Rayton:

With Doug and Drew, I just was like, "I want to go to trial right now," because my patience was really low, and I needed to be patient, and I didn't understand that from where I'd come from, as far as getting stuff handled and getting it completed, so they had to listen to me vent. Doug, I would say, is so good at, he'll listen to you, but then he'll bring you back to where you need to come as far as focus goes. So I might go off on a tangent with something, and then he'd bring me back to center of what we need to focus on to get things going the right way, or completed, or whatever we needed to do.

Doug Richards:

From the moment a client comes to my office, I prepare as if the case is going to trial. So I do not want to get stuck where we're flat-footed and we realize the case can't be worked out and it's got to go to trial. So from the moment they come into our office, we are working the case up, preparing for trial, issuing subpoenas, issuing open records requests, sending our investigators out to interview witnesses, doing analysis, hiring experts, or consulting with experts. I mean, we are preparing as if the case is going to trial.

I did ask the prosecutor multiple times why we're going to trial. Why is this case moving forward? And she was adamant that there was evidence that Renee did something wrong in this case. The other thing is that she believed that because Renee was part of law enforcement that she knew or must have known what

was going on. That's not a legal standard in the law. I think when the prosecutor was actually forced to prepare for trial or look at what was really not evidence, Renee just was present at a place where there were other people doing illegal things, and she was being shielded from that.

The prosecutor finally folded their tent, and two weeks before trial, dismissed the case. The day that we learned about the dismissal, my paralegal, Claire, and I were walking to court on another case. And we received a call from another lawyer in our office who was CC'd on an email from the DA, saying that she's planning to dismiss the case. I still remember Claire and I high-fiving in the middle of the intersection downtown Denver because we were walking. And so then we contacted Renee and said, "Hey, Renee, we need to talk. There's been a development in the case. Can you come to the office and bring your family? There's something serious we need to talk about." And I mean, I guess I probably didn't make it sound as dire as that, but I knew that I didn't want to let on that it was a dismissal. I wanted to give her the news in person.

Renee Rayton: Doug kind of presented it as, we need to talk just before the hearing, just to go over some stuff, and bring whoever's going to be there down, just so we're all on the same page. And so I'm just like, "What is going on?" So my mom and my sister and Gretchen came down there, and we were just like, "What does he want to go over?" And then he handed me the dismissal, and it was a relief. It was very emotional. It was a very happy day. People don't realize that even though I got to go through all that, my mom and sister had to, too. And I think Drew and Doug were great to them as well, and just very patient, and would talk through things, and they were just great. I'm very thankful for them.

Doug Richards: Renee rang the bell and we opened champagne. It's when those moments happen that you do realize the amount of stress that your client was under because they just are overcome with emotions, and they just break down and cry, and they're happy and they're sad, I mean, all of the things. And it was a really special day.

Renee Rayton: I would hire Doug all day long. I think about the high-powered attorneys that were involved in this case as well, and I'll take Doug over them. I mean, he looked at every avenue and really went through every piece of evidence, and he did a lot of work, I would say, instead of just going to court and trying to make deals and stuff. Doug was so thorough and he went above and beyond. And I would pick Doug over anyone if I had to do it again.