



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on December 8, 2017  
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## Save a Girl's Life, Get Treated Worse Than a Terrorist

*From the print edition of The New American*

In February 2013, when Linda Pelletier took her 14-year-old daughter, Justina, to Boston Children's Hospital (BCH) for flu-like symptoms, the family had no idea of the nightmare that lay before them. Before the ordeal was over, Justina was the victim of what her father, Lou Pelletier, describes as medical kidnapping, torture, and abuse. It would take 16 months and the bravery of a man the Pelletiers had never met for Justina to finally be released and allowed to go home.



That man is Martin Gottesfeld, and he is now in prison awaiting trial on charges that he hacked BCH and knocked out its Internet during a major fundraising drive. He is facing a possible 15-year sentence, and based on court records provided to *The New American*, it appears he is being railroaded by a legal system that — after refusing to protect young Justina — seems intent on punishing him with a heavy dose of persecution by prosecution.

Long before Justina was taken to BCH, she had already been diagnosed with (and was being treated for) mitochondrial disease, a rare genetic disorder. Even with her condition, Justina was an active teenager. She was involved in competitive ice-skating and other activities enjoyed by kids her age. That all changed because a BCH doctor in the seventh month of his internship decided to set aside Justina's diagnosis of mitochondrial disease (which had been made by Dr. Mark Korson, the chief of metabolism at Tufts Medical Center in Boston and one of the foremost experts in the field of metabolic disorders, who had been successfully treating Justina).

Instead, that freshly minted BCH intern decided that Justina was suffering with a mental illness called somatic symptom disorder. That new diagnosis was then rubber-stamped by BCH psychologist Dr. Ioana Simona Bujoreanu, who just happened to be researching somatic symptom disorder under a grant from the National Institutes of Health. Eschewing even the appearance of objectivity, Bujoreanu approved the diagnosis after one 25-minute examination of Justina, without consulting any other physicians. As investigators say, follow the money. With her funding dependent on the grant, one is left to wonder if Bujoreanu conveniently "found" a case of the disorder to study. After all, if the only tool covered by your expense account is a hammer, every problem gets treated like a nail.

On Valentine's Day 2013, Justina's parents tried to discharge her from the hospital. BCH staff sought and received the "help" of the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF), which took Justina into custody as a ward of the state. DCF justified the action by accusing the Pelletiers of "medical child abuse." Justina was transferred to "Bader 5," BCH's psychiatric ward, and all treatment for her disease was stopped. She was held there and at another facility for 16 months, during which time she was in constant pain and her health declined to the point that the girl — who had led an active lifestyle before her incarceration at BCH — was bound to a wheelchair and unable to use the bathroom



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without assistance.

The Pelletiers fought a protracted battle to free their daughter and save her life. Time after time, the decision of the court was against them. And while BCH was exposed in the media, the well-connected hospital (BCH is a teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School) seemed willing and able to weather the storm of bad press. It also appeared to have enough pull to avoid being investigated.

Enter Martin (Marty) Gottesfeld, a senior systems engineer with extensive knowledge of computer networks and a bone to pick with the “troubled teen industry” — a loosely connected, multi-million-dollar industry made up of hospitals, boot camps, behavioral modification programs, and residential treatment programs that too often manage to fly under the radar of accountability.

Justina’s father had bravely broken a gag order and told of the abuse, torture, and mistreatment of his daughter. He told of notes she had managed to sneak out to him folded up in origami that spelled out — in horrid detail — hospital staff laughing as they left her sitting on the toilet for hours, dragging her across the concrete floor causing her toenails to tear off, and refusing her pain medications. Her untreated genetic condition left her in a dangerous position. Lou Pelletier said his daughter’s life was in very real danger.

*Photo: Joseph Barillari*

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