

Lawyers Argue Whether Johnny Depp's Opening Testimony In Amber Heard Trial Hurt Or Helped His Case - Exclusive

BY AMANDA RAY BYERLY/UPDATED: APRIL 20, 2022 1:17 PM EDT



Franco Origlia/ Getty Images

The following article includes allegations of domestic abuse.

Actor [Johnny Depp](#) stunned everyone when he took the stand on April 19 during his defamation case against his former wife [Amber Heard](#) and announced that he was on a quest for the truth to prevail. "My goal is the truth," he declared, per People. "It's been six years of trying times," he revealed. "It's pretty strange when one day you're Cinderella, so to speak, then 0.6 seconds you're Quasimodo. I didn't deserve that, nor did my children, nor did the people who have believed in me for all these years. I didn't want any of those people to believe that I had done them wrong or lied to them or that I was a fraud. I pride myself on honesty."

But that's not all. Equally shocking was Depp's testimony on April 20 about the physical abuse he witnessed as a child and the way in which it played a role in his marriage to Heard. "I wanted to try to make it work," Depp confessed, per the New York Post. "I thought maybe I could help her," he added. "Ms. Heard had spoken of suicide on a couple of occasions, so that also becomes a factor, that's something that lives in the back of your brain," he explained. "I'm sure it's somehow related to my father remaining stoic as my mother would beat him to death."

Many, however, are wondering whether Depp's testimony helped or hurt his case. Fortunately, Nicki Swift sat down with two law experts to hash it all out.

Celeb attorney expert says Johnny Depp 'got off to a rough start'



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While we still don't know how Depp's testimony was ultimately received by the jury, Chris Melcher, [celebrity lawyer](#) and partner of Walzer Melcher, told Nicki Swift that the actor got off to a "rough start". Melcher explained, "Johnny's attorney asked a simple question why he sued Amber. Answers to softball questions are usually rehearsed, but Johnny gave a long response that was hard to follow. He was then asked to explain the abuse he suffered as a child, which was a tough issue to tackle with a witness who was obviously uncomfortable. Attorneys like to go in chronological order but that is not the best way to tell a story."

Meanwhile, Rachel Fiset, managing partner of Zweiback, Fiset & Coleman, noted that although Depp's testimony was "measured" it also "came across that he wanted his name cleared from accusations at any cost." She added, "His testimony about the abuse he endured as a child appeared sincere and was likely very compelling to the jury." According to Fisk, however, it could come back to haunt him. "While testimony relating to childhood abuse may garner sympathy with a jury, it may also lead a jury to conclude that his life has resulted in an unfortunate pattern of abuse."

The other hurdle? As Domenic Romano, an entertainment lawyer and founder of Romano Law, explained, "Since they are both public figures, Depp would have to prove 'actual malice.'" He added, "Depp has little to gain and a lot to lose by proceeding with this case."

Johnny Depp 'is winning in the court of opinion' says one law expert

Even after a "rough start," Christopher C. Melcher, ranked as a [best family law attorney](#) in California, believes that Johnny Depp was eventually able to get back on track. "The longer Johnny testified, the more comfortable he became," Melcher noted. "He came across as genuine, vulnerable and kind. That helps counteract Amber's claims of abuse. One of the worst things I see celebrities do when faced with abuse allegations is to make an angry denial, as it shows the person as aggressive and may confirm the allegations," Melcher explained.

Melcher also argued that Depp sharing his childhood trauma was especially pertinent to the case. "It supported Johnny's claim that he withdrew when Amber was abusive toward him. It also explained why Johnny suffered from substance abuse problems. He said he took drugs and alcohol not to party but to numb, and that he eventually had to face the demons of his childhood. It was heartbreaking testimony," Melcher said.

While the case is far from wrapping up, Melcher concluded that "Johnny is winning in the court of opinion, even if does not win in the Court of Virginia. He is showing that Amber was the dominant aggressor in their relationship, and that the portrayal of herself as the innocent victim of abuse is false."