

25-6059

(Print on 8½ by 11 inch Paper on White paper)

No. 25-_____

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

CRISTINA M. LANCRANJAN, Petitioner,

v.

THE SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, Respondent;

BRETT F. TRUITT, Real Party in Interest.

ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE SUPREME COURT OF
CALIFORNIA

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

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ORIGINAL

FILED
OCT 15 2025
OFFICE OF THE CLERK
SUPREME COURT, U.S.

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the **Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause** is violated when a state court, with knowledge of extrinsic fraud that results in void orders, refuses to remedy the fraud and instead relies on those void orders to unconstitutionally strip a litigant of her fundamental parental rights, the attorney-client privilege, and the right to a fair trial.
2. Whether a state court engages in unconstitutional retaliation in violation of the **First Amendment** when, immediately after a litigant files a motion to disqualify the judge for bias, the court strikes the motion and issues a series of punitive rulings, including sanctioning a domestic violence victim for seeking a protective order.
3. Whether a state's justice system effectuates a complete breakdown of due process when it permits one party to illegally seize all marital assets and then denies the indigent, self-represented party access to those same funds to secure legal counsel, creating an unconstitutional structural imbalance that weaponizes the legal system as a tool of abuse.

LIST OF PARTIES

All parties to the proceedings below were:

- **Cristina M. Lancranjan**, Petitioner here.
- **The Superior Court of California, County of San Diego**, Respondent below.
- **Brett F. Truitt**, Real Party in Interest below.

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PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

Petitioner respectfully files this petition for a **Writ of Certiorari**. Concurrent with this petition, Petitioner has filed today an **Emergency Application for a Stay** of all underlying state court proceedings with the Circuit Justice for the Ninth Circuit to prevent immediate and irreparable harm.

OPINIONS BELOW

The final order of the Supreme Court of California summarily denying Petitioner's petition for review was entered on August 13, 2025 (App. B). The underlying Final Ruling on Child Custody from the Superior Court of California, County of San Diego, was entered on August 11, 2025 (App. A). The Superior Court's order striking Petitioner's Statement of Disqualification was

entered on May 16, 2025 (App. D).

JURISDICTION

The Supreme Court of California issued its final order denying review on August 13, 2025 (App. B). This petition is timely filed. This Court's jurisdiction is invoked under **28 U.S.C. § 1257(a)**.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS INVOLVED

The **First Amendment** and **Fourteenth Amendment** to the United States Constitution are involved in this case.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

This case is a testament to the catastrophic breakdown of a state court system and its failure to protect a victim of domestic abuse from a campaign of financial, psychological, and legal warfare. For two years, Petitioner has been trapped in a legal prison, where the very institutions designed to provide justice were weaponized to strip her of her parental rights, her financial stability, and her constitutional right to a fair trial.

After a 19-year marriage, the Real Party in Interest illegally seized the marital estate and left Petitioner—the stay-at-home parent of their child—financially destitute. This initial act of financial abuse set the stage for a relentless campaign of litigation predicated on extrinsic fraud.

On **October 15, 2024**, counsel for the Real Party in Interest filed a fraudulent, unserved "discovery declaration." This jurisdictionally void document became the "fruit of the poisonous tree." Based on this void filing, the trial court sanctioned Petitioner over \$15,000, and, on January 9, 2025, unconstitutionally stripped her of her parental rights regarding her son's education and healthcare. This led to the child being forcibly vaccinated against Petitioner's will

and removed from his stable homeschooling environment, causing him profound distress.

The court systematically dismantled Petitioner's ability to defend herself. The judge allowed her attorney, after he took her money awarded for the upcoming move away trial and after Petitioner notified the Court in her letters that he committed malpractice regarding her case, to withdraw right before a critical custody trial, then repeatedly denied her pleas for access to the marital funds needed to hire new counsel. Forced into self-representation, Petitioner faced an openly hostile court. On **May 16, 2025**, after enduring months of biased rulings, Petitioner filed a formal Verified Statement of Disqualification against the judge (App. D). That same day, the judge improperly struck the motion, acting as a judge in his own cause (App. E).

The court's actions became increasingly punitive. On **September 10, 2025**, in a clear act of retaliation, the court denied Petitioner's meritorious Request for a Domestic Violence Restraining Order (DVRO), suggested she needed "mental help," and sanctioned her an additional \$5,000 for having sought the court's protection (App. F). Instead of addressing the evidence of abuse, the judge told Applicant, "I'm really starting to worry about you... You're letting this whole thing consume you... with hatred," before sanctioning her for bringing the request (Transcript, Sept. 10, 2025, attached as Exhibit F). These are not mere errors of discretion; they are structural constitutional failures that have rendered the state court proceedings fundamentally abusive, unfair and illegitimate.

Petitioner desperately sought relief from the California appellate courts, filing multiple writ petitions and appeals, detailing the fraud, the bias, and the ongoing abuse. Each time, the appellate courts summarily denied relief, failing in their duty to correct the profound constitutional violations and leaving Petitioner defenseless. The final state court order denying

review was entered on August 13, 2025 (App. B). The Real Party in Interest is now fulfilling his threats by filing motions to strip Petitioner of custody and have her declared a vexatious litigant for the very act of fighting for her and her son's rights.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE WRIT

I. The State Court's Refusal to Remedy Known Extrinsic Fraud Caused a Systemic Collapse of Due Process.

A fair trial in a fair tribunal is the bedrock of due process. When a court is made aware of extrinsic fraud that has corrupted its own orders, the **Fourteenth Amendment** requires it to act. Here, the trial court was repeatedly notified that the October 15, 2024, declaration was jurisdictionally defective. The court's refusal to remedy this foundational error and its subsequent reliance on the "fruit of the poisonous tree" to sanction Petitioner and strip her of her fundamental parental rights is an abdication of its constitutional duty. The failure of the state's appellate courts to intervene transformed this from a trial court error into a systemic failure of the state's justice system, sanctioning the abuse and requiring this Court's review.

II. The State Court's Retaliation Against Protected Speech Demands this Court's Intervention.

The right to challenge the fairness of a judicial proceeding without fear of reprisal is a cornerstone of the **First Amendment**. The record shows a clear pattern of punitive rulings immediately following Petitioner's motion to disqualify the judge. Striking the motion on the same day it was filed (App. E) was a violation of the principle that "no man shall be a judge in his own cause," a tenet of due process this Court reaffirmed in *Caperton v. A.T. Massey Coal Co.*,

556 U.S. 868 (2009). The court's subsequent decision to sanction a domestic violence victim for seeking a protective order (App. F) is a particularly chilling act of retaliation that deters access to justice and punishes a citizen for exercising her constitutional rights.

III. The Right to a Fair Trial Was Rendered Illusory by the Constructive Denial of Counsel.

The **Fourteenth Amendment** guarantees a meaningful opportunity to be heard. That right is meaningless when one party illegally seizes all marital assets and then uses those assets to fund a litigation war against a now-indigent, self-represented opponent. The state court's repeated refusal to grant Petitioner access to her own money for legal representation created an unconstitutional structural imbalance that made a fair trial impossible.

IV. This Case Presents an Issue of Exceptional Public Importance Regarding the Inherent Inequality Faced by Self-Represented Litigants.

In *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), this Court recognized that separating people on the basis of a classification creates an inherent inequality and a "feeling of inferiority" that inflicts an intangible harm unlikely to ever be undone. A similar principle applies here. When the justice system allows a wealthy, represented abuser to weaponize the courts against a financially devastated, self-represented victim, it creates two separate and unequal tracks of justice. This structural imbalance does more than just create a disadvantage; it inflicts a profound psychological harm, generating a sense of hopelessness and inferiority that tells the unrepresented that the law is not for them. This case presents a stark example of this systemic failure, where the promise of "equal justice under law" has been rendered a nullity. The Constitution must protect all citizens, not just those who can afford attorneys.

CONCLUSION AND PRAYER FOR RELIEF

The petition for a writ of certiorari should be granted. This is a demand for justice for Petitioner, her child, and all self-represented litigants who look to the courts for protection and find only further harm. This Court should reverse the judgment of the Supreme Court of California and remand with instructions for the state courts to provide Petitioner with comprehensive relief, including:

- 1. Vacate All Void Orders:** Vacate the fraudulent October 15, 2024, discovery order and all subsequent orders that flow from it, including all monetary sanctions and the finding of a waiver of attorney-client privilege.
- 2. Order a New Trial Before an Impartial Judge:** Order the disqualification of the trial judge and the assignment of a new, impartial judicial officer to conduct a new trial on all contested issues.
- 3. Ensure Financial Parity and Access to Counsel:** Order the trial court to ensure Petitioner has immediate access to her share of the marital estate and to award attorney's fees sufficient to secure competent legal representation.
- 4. Impose Sanctions for Misconduct:** Instruct the state court to consider significant monetary sanctions against Respondent and his counsel for their pattern of litigation abuse and extrinsic fraud.
- 5. Refer for Disciplinary and Judicial Action:** Order the referral of opposing counsel and Petitioner's prior negligent counsels to the State Bar of California for investigation, and referral of the trial judge to the Commission on Judicial Performance.
- 6. Grant Custody:** Award sole legal and physical custody of the minor child to Petitioner to

ensure his stability and protect him from further conflict.

7. **Grant Such Other Relief** as this Court deems just and proper to restore Petitioner's constitutional rights and ensure the integrity of the judicial process.

Respectfully submitted,

Cristina M. Lancranjan, *Pro Se* Date: October 15, 2025 /s/Cristina Lancranjan

