

FKA Twigs Says 'Dangerous' Shia LaBeouf Abuses Women

By **Lauren Berg**

Law360 (December 11, 2020, 5:50 PM EST) -- FKA twigs' relationship with Shia LaBeouf was a "living nightmare," the musician said in a lawsuit lodged Friday in Los Angeles, saying the actor beat and berated her, and that he used his reputation as an eccentric artist to continue a pattern of violent abuse toward women.

Tahliah Barnett, 32, known professionally as FKA twigs, met LaBeouf on the set of the film "Honey Boy" in 2018 and the two began dating later that year, but it wasn't long before the actor began exhibiting frequent bouts of violent rage and jealousy toward Barnett, according to the complaint that claims sexual battery, assault and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

The day after Valentine's Day in 2019, after abusing Barnett during the night at a hotel spa in the desert, LaBeouf was driving recklessly back to Los Angeles and threatened to crash the car unless Barnett "professed her eternal love" for him, according to the suit. When they stopped at a gas station, Barnett said she tried to escape, but that LaBeouf threw her against the car and tried to strangle her before forcing her back into the car.

It was at that point Barnett said she reached out for help and told a friend she was in an abusive relationship, according to the suit.

But it wasn't until March that she was able to escape from LaBeouf's house, she said. And then LaBeouf found her packing to leave Los Angeles and began verbally and physically abusing her, demanding that she stay — all of which was witnessed by Barnett's housekeeper, according to the suit.

It was around the same time that Barnett said she started experiencing the symptoms of a sexually transmitted disease, according to the complaint. When she confronted LaBeouf, she said he admitted that he had been diagnosed with the disease years earlier.

Barnett said LaBeouf knowingly exposed her and other women he had sexual relations with to the disease and never told them before it was too late.

"Although Tahliah has suffered greatly and will bear the scars of LaBeouf's abuse for the rest of her days, she will not be labeled a victim," Barnett said. "Instead, Tahliah has triumphed over LaBeouf's abuse and stands ready to hold him accountable for his actions."

It was after the relationship ended that Barnett said she met Carolyn Pho, another woman who had dated LaBeouf and survived his abuse. Pho survived the same bouts of jealous rage and public humiliation that Barnett dealt with, according to the suit.

While not a party to the suit, Pho has allied herself with Barnett against LaBeouf, according to the complaint.

In her suit, Barnett is seeking compensatory and punitive damages, as well as litigation costs. She said the point of the suit is to stop LaBeouf from hurting anyone else and that she intends to donate a significant portion of any money she receives to nonprofits that help survivors of domestic abuse.

"Most importantly, women everywhere are now on notice that LaBeouf is not the tortured artist he portrays himself as: he is a destructive and dangerous man," Barnett said.

Barnett's attorney, Bryan J. Freedman of Freedman & Taitelman LLP, told Law360 on Friday that he and his client tried to resolve the matter privately on the condition that LaBeouf would receive "meaningful and consistent psychological treatment."

"Since he was unwilling to agree to get appropriate help, Ms. Barnett filed this suit to prevent others from unknowingly suffering similar abuse by him," Freedman said.

Contact information for LaBeouf was not immediately available, but he told the New York Times in an email: "I have no excuses for my alcoholism or aggression, only rationalizations. I have been abusive to myself and everyone around me for years."

"I have a history of hurting the people closest to me," LaBeouf told the newspaper. "I'm ashamed of that history and am sorry to those I hurt. There is nothing else I can really say."

This isn't the first time someone has taken LaBeouf to court for his alleged violent temper.

In 2017, David Bernstein, a bartender at a restaurant in Studio City, California, said LaBeouf became belligerent — pounding his fist on the counter and yelling curses — when Bernstein refused to serve him any alcoholic drinks because he said the actor looked "significantly under the influence."

As LaBeouf was escorted out of the bar by security, he shouted accusations that Bernstein was a racist, the complaint states.

Bernstein sued LaBeouf for assault, slander and intentional infliction of emotional distress a month later. LaBeouf filed an anti-SLAPP motion in September 2017, according to court filings, and it was denied in February 2018.

The lower court found LaBeouf failed to show that any of Bernstein's claims arose from the actor's "constitutional right of free speech in connection with a public issue or an issue of public interest."

LaBeouf appealed, but in November 2019, a Second District Court of Appeal panel **agreed with the lower court**. The case was then voluntarily dismissed in October, according to court records.

Barnett is represented by Bryan J. Freedman and Sean M. Hardy of Freedman & Taitelman LLP.

Counsel information for LaBeouf was not immediately available.

The case is Tahliah Barnett v. Shia LaBeouf, case number 20STCV47437, in the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles.

--Editing by Philip Shea.

Update: The story has been updated with a case number and a copy of the complaint.