



Film director fights for his future

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Jim Holt

The next movie film director Dror Soref is inclined to make might be called Rebel With a Cause.

It's about a guy who just wants to make movies who gets falsely accused of ripping people off in an alleged Ponzi scheme, arrested while naked, put behind bars, losing everything in the process – his money, his house, his reputation – only to sit one day in court and hear “you’re free to go” and the “criminal case against you is dismissed.”

Soref has a fire in his belly after the criminal case against him was dismissed in March. And he's fired up to regain his reputation.

An Israeli filmmaker who immigrated to the United States, Soref first attended San Francisco Art Institute, and then the Cinema School of the University of Southern California. Paying his dues along the way, he directed his share of commercials and music videos.

But then his debut feature film as a writer and director, however, won festival awards in 1993, including Best Picture. The movie was ‘The Seventh Coin’ starring the late Peter O’Toole. And now, he’s eager to get back on track.

“I want to do a film about equal justice under the law,” Soref said quietly with an easy wry smile that hid any indication he lost nearly two years of his life.

“I want to address the whole issue of justice,” he said, still smiling. “I’m joining different groups, all relating



to the pursuit of justice and alleviating human suffering.”

Dror Soref is serious and he’s committed.

False imprisonment

Today Soref filed a lawsuit for false imprisonment and an “unconstitutional deprivation of liberty” against a number of institutions that helped in his arrest.

He’s suing the California’s Department of Business Oversight – formerly known as the California Department of Corporations – the California Department of Insurance, the County of Los Angeles, District Attorney Jackie Lacey and others.

It’s about a film director who gets falsely accused... arrested while naked, put behind bars, losing everything in the process... only to one day hear ‘you are free to go... the case is dismissed for absolute lack of evidence.’ I then wanted to ask the judge: ‘where do I go now to get my reputation back?’

For close to two years, county prosecutors were just as serious and just as committed to seeing Soref land behind bars.

After an unusually long five weeks of preliminary hearing – a process which normally takes a couple of days – during which prosecutors tried to convince the judge the case should go to trial, the judge found no reason Soref should stand trial.

Resigned to the judge’s decision, DA spokesman Ricardo Santiago told The Signal at the time: “On March 16, 2017, the case was dismissed after not being held to answer at the preliminary hearing,”

The case against Seward was later dismissed pursuant to a deal she made with the DA’s office in which she agreed to testify against Soref in trial. In addition “Seward agreed to return \$1.13 million to more than 40 victims, many of whom are elderly,” DA spokesman Greg Risling told The Signal last month. “The money has since been paid.”

Case dismissed

Soref said he will never forget the day he got his freedom back.

“The judge said a preliminary hearing has a very low standard to go to trial. So I’m thinking ‘we’re going to go to trial.’

“Then he said but, there is a standard.”

At this point in the story, Dror Soref is beaming.

“He said ‘there is a standard and a quantum of evidence that is required to take it to trial and the prosecution was not able to provide that,’” he said.

The judge dismissed all charges against Soref, making him suddenly a free man that day in court.

“I looked at my family and friends, all smiling. It was over. I felt such relief. That was a really great thing.

“Then, I wanted to ask the judge ‘Where do I go to get my reputation back? Which department in this huge building do I go to get it back?’

It would be easy if there was simply an office in the courtroom where ruined reputations could be restored.

The reality, Soref has been learning he said, is a long and lonely road.

Asked to describe it, he said: “An iron curtain.”

“I started writing press releases for a friend,” he said. “Nobody else would hire me. I was ignored completely by agents who did not call me back.

“I knew it was all over,” he said, noting in his reflection “But some people were amazing, really fantastic.”

Not Forgotten

The Movie ‘Not Forgotten’ starring Simon Baker of The Mentalist fame on TV and Chloe Grace Moretz was released in 2009.

The film is a story that takes place in a Tex-Mex border town where a man and his wife face their tortured pasts as they struggle to save their kidnapped daughter.

To hear Soref describe it, the movie is the “story of a man who starts anew.”

Then, suddenly, the irony hits him.

Dror Soref is a man starting anew and, if he has his way, “not forgotten.”

