

# Filmmaker Todd J. Stein's *The Final Fight* Exposes a Broken Legal System

*The Final Fight, a true-story indie film, shines a harsh light on guardianship abuse, exposing a little-known legal system harming families nationwide.*

NEW YORK CITY, NY, UNITED STATES, January 22, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Few Americans understand how the guardianship system works, until it touches their own family. [The Final Fight](#) brings it into focus through a gripping story inspired by real events. Creator and writer Todd J. Stein's, *The Final Fight* tells the story of a determined son locked in a devastating legal battle to free his father from an abusive, court-appointed guardianship. Blending courtroom drama with emotional urgency, the film exposes how a system intended to protect vulnerable adults can instead strip them of their rights, autonomy, and dignity.



The Final Fight Inspired by A True Story

At the heart of *The Final Fight* is a real-world crisis that devastates families nationwide. Julie Belshe, Founder of the National Guardianship Liberty Movement, voiced support for the project. “Having witnessed the impact firsthand, I can attest that the current guardianship system systematically strips vulnerable individuals of fundamental human rights, erasing their identities, autonomy, and dignity,” said Belshe. “*The Final Fight* offers a voice to those who have been silenced and transforms a lived experience into the kind of awareness that can drive real change.”

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If it wasn't for Todd, I wouldn't be sitting here today.”

*Marvin Stein, In An Interview, Prior to His Passing in 2022*

The project has also drawn support from nationally recognized elder-rights advocate Kerri Kasem, founder of the nonprofit organization Kasem Cares. Inspired by her highly publicized fight to gain access to her late father, legendary broadcaster Casey Kasem, Kerri founded Kasem Cares to protect seniors from isolation, exploitation, and abuse. "Stories like Marvin's have to be told," Kasem said. "This is a human rights violation. These people need to be prosecuted for what they are, criminals."

According to national estimates, one in ten older adults experiences some form of abuse, financial, physical, or psychological, with approximately 90 percent of cases involving a family member as the perpetrator. For every reported case, Kasem notes, as many as five more go unreported. "Isolation is one of the most dangerous and overlooked forms of elder abuse," she stated in an interview with Stein conducted for his companion documentary project to The Final Fight, which chronicles his father's story. Kasem herself was forced to fight simply to see her father after he was placed into guardianship by his then-

wife, a case that drew national attention and helped expose systemic failures within the guardianship system. "That is the number one red flag," Kasem has said, "when someone who is not incapacitated is placed into a guardianship." With the U.S. Census projecting that by 2030 one in five Americans will be over the age of 65, Kasem stresses the urgency of reform. "We're all going to get old," she has said. "And we're all going to need protection."

The Final Fight is rooted in a true success story, and serves as a cautionary tale. Todd Stein's real-life legal battle to free his father, Marvin Stein, ultimately succeeded, but countless others remain trapped in the system today. In a February 2020 video interview for the documentary version, Marvin Stein stated, "If it wasn't for Todd, I wouldn't be sitting here today. Todd saved my life." Marvin Stein passed away in December 2022. Marvin's story was chronicled in a cover



Todd J. Stein with Kerri Kasem, of Kasem Cares

Anatomy of an Involuntary Guardianship			
	INSTIGATE	EVALUATE	ADJUDICATE
The Process	 <p>Petitioner files to declare you incapacitated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anyone can petition</li> <li>Fraudulent statements are routinely put forth</li> <li>No due diligence or attempt to find interested parties</li> <li>Judge appoints your attorney</li> </ul>	 <p>Committee evaluates you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MD plus two on court list</li> <li>Not experts in brain or aging</li> <li>Subjective criteria</li> <li>Easier to take ALL rights</li> </ul>	 <p>Judge makes final capacity determination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You are likely not in court</li> <li>No jury, due process, evidence</li> <li>Closed hearings/records</li> <li>Judge appoints guardian</li> <li>Approves everyone's fees paid from your estate</li> </ul>
Key Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Home deemed "unsafe"</li> <li>Medicated to mimic dementia</li> <li>May be hidden from family</li> <li>Isolation can cause depression, cognitive decline and premature death</li> </ul>  <p>Guardian sequesters you in an institution</p>	<p><b>JUDGE</b></p> <p>Attorneys Doctors Guardians Aides Assisted Living Hospitals Social Workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removes "interested party" status, bifurcates docket</li> <li>Defamation, gag/stayaway orders, sanctions, appeals</li> <li>Based on fraudulent records</li> </ul>  <p>Team gets rid of loved ones/support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unnecessary motions and litigation to increase billing</li> <li>Guardian liquidates all assets</li> <li>No oversight on accounting</li> <li>May void your estate plan</li> <li>Guardian receives kickbacks from others in the racket</li> </ul>  <p>Judge approves liquidation and excessive billing</p>
	ISOLATE	ELIMINATE	LIQUIDATE

Guardianship Facts and Details

article of The New York Times, "[The Fight of This Old Boxer's Life was with His Own Family](#)", written by John Leland in 2021. Stein states, "An estimated 1.3 million older adults are currently under some form of guardianship in the U.S., a figure believed to be significantly higher due to the absence of a national guardianship database." This lack of centralized data is an issue Stein continues to advocate for as a community elder-rights advocate.

Recently, Stein met with New York State Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright (AD 76), along with members of the Coalition of Victims Against Guardianship, led by Marian Kornicki. The group's goal is to raise awareness among elected officials and encourage legislative support for guardianship reform. Assembly Member Seawright expressed her understanding of the victims' experiences and her appreciation for their advocacy efforts. "This isn't just a legal issue, it's a human one," said Stein. "Families are being silenced by a system that operates largely out of public view. The Final Fight exists to put faces, voices, and emotional truth to a crisis most people don't know exists until it happens to them."

The screenplay received early recognition on the festival circuit, with praise for its emotional clarity and procedural authenticity. To help bring the feature to the screen, Stein and his team are developing a proof-of-concept short film, a focused, cinematic excerpt designed to showcase the tone, performances, and stakes of the feature. This strategy follows a proven independent-film path used by acclaimed projects such as Whiplash and Thunder Road, both of which began as shorts before securing full financing.

Stein states, "The approach behind The Final Fight follows a creative pathway similar to the one that launch Damien Chazelle's Whiplash. My idea is to lead with a short film version of the project that captures the the emotional core, tone, and intensity of the story first, allowing that proof to drive the project forward with support for a full length feature." The connection between Whiplash and Stein's strategy isn't superficial; it's structural, philosophical, and tactical, it's the same playbook applied, to design and build momentum through audience response and carry the film to its next stage.

Stein released a crowdfund Seed&Spark campaign, a platform known for championing socially relevant independent films, while fostering long-term audience engagement. Supporters of The Final Fight are not only helping fund a film, but also amplifying a story centered on justice, family, and accountability. Contributors are invited to take part in the filmmaking journey through exclusive behind-the-scenes access, film credits, and direct engagement with the creative team. Stein added, "We're offering incentives that include a special 'thank you' credit at the end of the film. It's a meaningful way to honor the legacy of someone who was under guardianship, or to recognize those who are currently living through a system where their voice has been silenced." More information can be at [TheFinalFightFilm.com](http://TheFinalFightFilm.com).

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