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Gigi Jordan, Charged in Her Son's Death, Wages Publicity Blitz as She Awaits Verdict

By JAMES C. MCKINLEY Jr.

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Gigi Jordan, a multimillionaire on trial for murder in Manhattan, has given jailhouse interviews and hired a public relations firm. Credit The New York Times.

Most murder defendants avoid making public statements after a trial starts, and that rule goes double once a jury begins its deliberations.

But when testimony ended in the murder trial of Gigi Jordan, a multimillionaire on trial for poisoning her disabled 8-year-old son, that seemed to be a trigger for Ms. Jordan to open a renewed offensive, both in court and in the news media.

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Out came [Alan M. Dershowitz](#), the celebrated law professor, to argue the judge should consider self-defense as he decided on jury instructions. Then [Ron Kuby](#), one of New York City's top civil rights lawyers, was hired to move for a mistrial, saying the judge erred when he kept some medical experts from testifying who might have buttressed part of Ms. Jordan's story.

Her media strategy covered print, television and the Internet. Last Tuesday, on the eve of jury deliberations, she gave jailhouse interviews [to The Wall Street Journal](#), the [CBS television station in New York](#) and [to Dr. Phil](#) McGraw, the daytime television psychologist. In all three interviews, she repeated her story that she had killed her son, and tried to kill herself, to prevent him from being sexually abused by his father.

Furthermore, Ms. Jordan put up [a website](#) purporting to contain evidence never heard at the trial. She has paid Google to advertise the site whenever people search for her name. The ad appears atop all search listings, with the title, "The Truth on Gigi Jordan — What You've Heard Is Wrong."

Evidence at trial showed Ms. Jordan, who made her fortune with companies that provide intravenous drugs at home, was worth about \$50 million when the trial started. She has employed at least 11 lawyers, including top names on the defense bar, and has had five or six lawyers in the courtroom every day of the two-month trial. She also has hired [Source Communications](#), a public relations firm.

Defense lawyers and former prosecutors say Ms. Jordan's strategy of courting public opinion, even as a non-sequestered jury deliberates in her case, is as risky as it is rare. For starters, she may antagonize the judge who will sentence her.

That became clear on Monday morning in State Supreme Court in Manhattan when Justice Charles H. Solomon angrily noted that it was reported on the "Dr. Phil" show that she had said that the jury was not allowed to hear testimony for the defense from a forensic psychiatrist, Dr. Frank Putnam. In fact, the judge said, it was Ms. Jordan's lawyers who decided against calling him.

One of Ms. Jordan's lawyers, Norman Siegel, reminded the judge that Ms. Jordan had a First Amendment right to give interviews, even if journalists misquoted her.

"First Amendment right to lie on the television?" the judge snapped. "What kind of right is that?"

A minute later, the judge asked if it was a coincidence "that all of this is going on while the jury is deliberating." Mr. Siegel said the judge had advised jurors to avoid news coverage of the trial.

"I believe they are not looking at anything," Mr. Siegel said.

"I hope not," the judge replied.

Last week, Justice Solomon also took the defense lawyers to task when The Journal quoted Ms. Jordan as saying she turned down several plea bargains from the Manhattan

district attorney's office because she wanted a chance to tell her story at trial. Prosecutors said in court they never offered her a deal.

Ms. Jordan, 53, admitted she gave her son, Jude Mirra, who had autism, a fatal dose of drugs at the Peninsula Hotel in Manhattan in February 2010. Her lawyers argue that she was under the influence of an "extreme emotional disturbance" and have asked the jury to convict her of manslaughter rather than murder, as state law allows.

The jury of seven men and five women finished four days of deliberations on Monday without reaching a verdict. Deliberations were suspended on Tuesday for Election Day, and will resume on Wednesday.

Ms. Jordan claims she planned to kill Jude and herself because her first husband had threatened to kill her and had vowed to make sure her son ended up in the custody of her second husband, the boy's father, a man she was convinced had repeatedly raped the boy. Both men deny the allegations.

Eugene O'Donnell, a former prosecutor who teaches at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, said wealthy or famous clients who were accustomed to managing their public personas sometimes found it hard to remain silent at trial.

"This seems to be more circuslike than usual," Mr. O'Donnell said. "It's hard for clients to grasp the consequences for this could be catastrophic." He noted that Ms. Jordan, in her interviews, had never admitted she made a mistake. "That's not likely to go over well with a sentencing judge or a parole board," he said.

Indeed, Ms. Jordan's press strategy left many experienced defense lawyers in Manhattan's Criminal Courts Building shaking their heads. "It seems to be like the caboose is driving the train," said Mark Cohen, a defense lawyer. "What do you accomplish by aggravating the judge?"

"If you have got money, you can put a spin on things just having the spending power to do so," he added. "It may ultimately come back to bite her."

Ms. Jordan's defense team — Mr. Siegel, Allan L. Brenner and Earl S. Ward — are barred by professional rules of conduct from talking about evidence outside court during a trial. They said they neither sanctioned nor arranged the interviews.

On "Dr. Phil," in an hour-long segment about her case that was broadcast nationally on Friday, the host repeatedly challenged Ms. Jordan's assertion that she had acted rationally. He pointed out she had millions of dollars, enough to flee the country, to pay for bodyguards or to put Jude in a secure institution. "Why not run?" he asked several times.

"I felt completely incapable of protecting him," she replied. "That's all I can tell you. Whether that was rational or not, I can't say. But I don't think I'm a coldblooded murderer."
