

I live in a neighborhood of Columbus called Olde Towne East. It's a lovely place with a diverse community and tons of charm. My husband, Nick, and I moved there in October of 2019 because it reminded us of our community back in Los Angeles, which we had left in 2017 to move back to Ohio and start a family.

This was our first home we purchased, and we had high hopes of acclimating into the neighborhood and making new friends with our neighbors. The house sits on the corner of Franklin Avenue and Garfield Street, with an open lot on the left side. Our only next-door neighbor was Doug Schifer. We always had an amicable relationship with Doug. Though we had our differences, he was a tolerable neighbor.

From October 2019 to November of 2020 we had many encounters with Doug. He was always lingering around the dilapidated fence that separated our yards, looking for a conversation or some company. Our dogs did not get along well, which made it hard to have the animals out at the same time due to the poor state of the existing fence. We therefore had an unwritten rule as neighbors: do not let the dogs out to their yard at the same time. We would always check if the other dogs were out, and if they were, we would wait until they were brought inside to let our own dogs out.

We were made aware early on that Doug had very different political views from our own. He would constantly make his opinions known and did not seem to have much personal awareness when it came to discussing sensitive topics. We respectfully had discourse with him regarding many topics: black lives matter, abortion, women's rights, taxes, healthcare, immigration. All of our conversations were met with an open mind.

Doug knew that we were proud Bernie Sanders supporters, and advocated for equal rights, for women's rights, and for black lives. 2020 was a year filled with political controversy and social unrest. Doug made it very clear where he stood with everything:

"I'll shoot those BLM protestors if they come anywhere near my property. Heck I could go downtown and take care of them, I have buddies who are ready for a war. We are armed and ready." He'd make comments like this all the time, accompanied by very racist comments about black people that I won't repeat. He'd say: "THOSE PEOPLE are looters and criminals. The protestors are the rioters, we all know that."

Doug voiced his opinions in a much more direct and abrasive way when he was intoxicated, which was often. He would often get so drunk that he would need to get "a shot" of sorts at a medical clinic to aid him in recovery from days of drinking himself beyond repair. These habits started to become concerning to my husband and myself, and we did our best to steer clear of Doug whenever he was having these drinking benders.

Doug also made it known many times that he was armed and that he had weapons in his home. We would see his weapons sitting on his back stoop from time to time. Sometimes he would come home and unload several guns from his truck. What for, we did not know.

Nick and I made a mental note of Doug Schifer as we observed these behaviors—that should he be challenged Doug could be a dangerous man. Therefore we treated him kindly, shared our food we grew with him, offered him beverages, and Nick even helped him with architectural drawings for his business. Doug was very different from all of our other friendly neighbors, so we made an effort to keep the peace.

Doug discovered in our first year living next door that we are Jewish. He made antisemitic comments a few times. For example, Nick hadn't mowed the backyard in a few weeks and Doug one afternoon commented from across the fence "Are you one of those lazy Jews who pays other people to mow his grass?" and "Is that a Jew thing?"

In our first few months living in our home, Nick made mention of the dilapidated fence to Doug, suggesting that we replace it. Doug proceeded to say: "Yeah Henry (the previous homeowner and also a Jew) was on me about that too, what is it with you Jews and this fence."

On a Friday during the summer of 2020, I was out in our backyard harvesting some kale and other veggies from our planter for dinner. Doug leaned over the fence and asked, "What you guys making tonight?" to which I replied, "It's Shabbat, I'm making a salad and we're roasting some zucchini." Doug then asked me what shabbat was and I explained the weekly observance and tradition of Shabbat to him. He then told me "Oh you guys are Jews - well I thought you were nice people!" He made this joke and laughed at it, finding it funny.

These are just a few examples of Doug Schifer's persona and what type of neighbor he was to us.

On Saturday, November 7, 2020, Nick and I had some friends over for Shabbat dinner. I vividly remember that lovely day - it was 75 degrees and sunny. We grilled in our backyard and enjoyed a beverage or two.

In the later part of the afternoon Doug returned home and entered his property from the rear—walking through his garage (which opens to the back alley), into his yard and up to the back steps of his home. He saw we were in our backyard entertaining guests and that our dogs were outside with us.

Less than five minutes after Doug entered his home, he decided to let his dogs out into his yard without checking to make sure our dogs were inside. This sparked the beginning of our encounter with Doug which forever changed the way we felt about our home and our neighborhood.

Our dogs lunged at the fence to bark at one another, and I grabbed ahold of my dog to try and pull him away. Doug did not make much of an effort to pull his dog off the fence, and proceeded to shout, "Fuck you, you hippie bitch, it'd be nice to let my dogs out every once in a while!" I was totally caught off guard, not expecting such a crude comment. Over the next 10 minutes Doug

proceeded to shout threatening and antisemitic slurs at me, Nick, and our four friends. Saying things like “Hitler should have burned all your people!” “No wonder Hitler wanted to burn all your people in ovens!” “If that fucking cur comes near my fence again, I’ll shoot it!” Later he also threatened to poison our dogs. It was very clear that Doug was intoxicated and upset.

We were all appalled at the words coming from our neighbor. They were absolutely horrid and dangerous. Doug did not realize that we were all (but one) Jewish.

We decided to distance ourselves from Doug and remain indoors for the rest of the evening. We all felt safer inside.

For the next hour Doug tried to fight Nick every time that he encountered him outdoors. Nick decided to sage our home, which is a tradition of burning sage to cleanse a home of negative energy. When he was doing so at our front door, Doug walked by and said, “Hope it’s only the outside of your home burning tonight, Jew.” Nick then went to drop off a contractor that was doing work on our home, and upon his return ran into Doug by the front of our home. Doug proceeded to square up to Nick and called him a “fucking heeb,” a derogatory term for a Jew.

After Nick got home from dropping off our contractor, we sat down to eat dinner. During our dinner we heard an extremely loud crash come from the front of our home. We ran outside to inspect the noise and we discovered that a brick had been thrown at our front storm window. We all suspected it was Doug.

We continued to mingle with our friends and attempted to calm our nerves, as we were all feeling threatened and unsafe at this point—especially knowing that Doug had weapons in his home and was very intoxicated. We ultimately gathered in our living room to watch President-elect Joe Biden deliver his first address to the nation. Not a minute or two after President-elect Biden started to speak there was a deafening crash in our living room and there was glass everywhere. It was on our dog beds, on our couches, the living room carpet, and some of it got into my drink. Someone had thrown a rock through or punched through the glass of our side door to our front porch.

Everyone rushed out of the room and some of our party went outside to see what had caused this event. As I and some of our friends made our way to the front porch, I heard Doug’s front door close. At this time we were convinced it was Doug who had broken into our home.

I called the police to report Doug as dangerous and attempting to break into our home, after threatening our lives for the past few hours. While we waited for law enforcement to come to our home, my father-in-law rushed over to make sure we were safe. He accompanied Nick to our back studio, which is accessed by walking through our backyard. While in the backyard, they encountered Doug. He proceeded to threaten my father-in-law’s life and to yell antisemitic slurs at him. Doug said, “Hitler should have burned you in ovens!” and “I’ll put a bullet through your head!” My father-in-law simply asked Doug “Why are you doing this?”

My father-in-law and Nick came back inside and moments later law enforcement was at our home. They interviewed us all and attempted to get Doug to come outside. Doug did not answer his door and had turned off all of his lights.

Coincidentally, a similar situation had occurred in the past with Doug and a different neighbor. The neighbor had called the police on Doug after he threatened her life, and when law enforcement came to Doug's home he refused to come out. I know this because he retold the story to me one evening and laughed at how he "was sitting in his upstairs window watching the police with a gun pointed at them." I felt it was important to share this with the officers who were there at our home. When they pointed their flashlights at the top bedroom window, they saw Doug sitting there watching them. He still refused to exit his home.

The officers were kind and supportive that evening, helping us to understand our rights with filing a complaint. Once the officers left, two of our guests also went home.

I felt extremely vulnerable and unsafe in my home. I did not want to sleep in our house out of fear that Doug would break in as we slept and attempt something worse than what we had suspected he had already done.

Nick and I, including two of our guests who were spending the night, decided to sleep at Nick's parent's home in Bexley that evening. We brought our dogs with us.

The next morning we woke and returned to our home, anxious to see if any other damage was done that evening. Luckily, there was none. As we started unpacking our car, we were approached by our neighbor whose home is directly across from ours. They told us that they had security camera footage from the previous evening, and that they'd like to share it with us should it be of any help with the incident.

The video footage from the camera shows Doug Schifer making multiple attempts to break into our home, with a successful second attempt—shattering our front porch glass door.

That next day Nick and I filed a complaint with the intent to pursue a hate crime charge against Doug Schifer.

Doug changed the way I felt about living in my own home. He changed the way I felt about going into my own backyard and enjoying time outside. He changed the way I felt about my neighborhood and safely walking on our sidewalks. He changed how I felt about standing near a window, as I now feared that he was constantly watching us with a weapon pointed at us.

My home felt foreign and as though living there was a risk. For months I did not draw our blinds, or go into our backyard, or walk on the sidewalk in front of Doug's home. I would choose to walk in the street. I started having nightmares of Doug, his "buddies", and him speaking of coming and harming my husband and me. This became a recurring dream.

Sentencing Hearing Statement – Tiffany Kinney
September 10, 2021

In the time that passed while we pursued a charge against Doug, something really special transpired. Our neighborhood supported and uplifted Nick and I in such a special way. We had gift baskets, letters, and visitors come by. Many neighbors voiced their concern and wished us well, while many others shared similar experiences they had had with Doug over the years.

We learned through the kind people of the Olde Towne East community that our encounter was not the first in the neighborhood, nor the worst. Other neighbors had had weapons pulled on them by Doug, were called derogatory terms for being black and Jewish, and had dealt with Doug abusing his powers as their landlord by disrespecting their privacy and right to occupy a dwelling.

I wanted to make a statement because the focus of this charge against Douglas Schifer should not solely be about how he threatened the Jewish lives of Nick, my friends, and me that November 7th evening. It should be about his tenure in the neighborhood of Olde Towne East and how so many of the good people who occupy homes in this community have had to endure his racism and hatred for the past 20 years.

Olde Towne East residents have worked hard to create a community that is abundant with love, acceptance, and a vibrant culture. An individual like Doug Schifer is extremely dangerous and a high risk to be living in our neighborhood. We are all different in wonderful ways, all accept and love one another for it, and we should be able to celebrate our differences openly and safely. Doug Schifer's hatred and racism has no place in our community.

Nick and I have a child now, and the safety and well-being of our child is our number one priority. I want our son, Isaac, to grow up in a positive and loving environment, around all of our wonderful neighbors. Living next to a tormented and hateful individual like Doug is something I can no longer tolerate now that I have this new precious life to care for.

Doug needs therapy. He needs rehabilitation. He needs imprisonment to learn from his mistakes. No one should be able to threaten people's lives and torment individuals for the color of their skin or the religion they choose to practice and get away with it. I ask of you Judge Deavers, to please consider a decent length of time for Doug's prison sentencing, a monitored path to sobriety, a requirement to no longer live in our neighborhood, and a restriction from owning any weapons.

This I ask not just for Nick, Isaac, and myself - but for all of our loving neighbors who make the Olde Towne East community so special.

Thank you.

/s/ Tiffany Kinney

September 10, 2021