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N.J.'s top court suspends former judge accused of helping her fugitive ex-boyfriend

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New Jersey's top court suspended a one-time judge Thursday, seven years after she was accused of harboring her fugitive ex-boyfriend.

But the state Supreme Court stopped short of firing former state Superior Court Judge Carlia Brady, the punishment recommended by an ethics panel, and the decision was largely symbolic since her term ended in April. The three-month suspension was for violating the judicial code of conduct.

Brady, who was a judge in Middlesex County, was arrested in 2013 when Woodbridge cops said she hindered their ability to track down her then live-in boyfriend, Jason Prontnicki. Prontnicki was later convicted of robbery and weapons charges and won't be released from prison until 2022, according to state records

While charges against Brady were later dropped, the court said she was not as forthcoming with police as she should have been, and her actions fell short of the standard judges must live up to.

The judge "did not prioritize law enforcement's urgent need to locate and arrest" the man she was in love with, the court wrote, but instead strategized to "preserve their relationship while maintaining her judicial career."

The opinion was backed by four of seven justices, one of whom thought she should have been fired outright.

Two didn't believe any punishment was necessary.

"Judges can be deceived in their personal relationships; judges can suffer psychological stress and trauma; and even judges are not immune from the abuses of the criminal justice system," Justice Barry Albin wrote. "I view Judge Brady as a victim, more deserving of an apology than a suspension."

Justice Walter Timpone, who represented Brady before he joined the court, did not participate in the decision.

"I am thankful this ordeal is over," Brady said in a statement, and she thanked Albin for concluding she'd been caught up in a "misguided criminal prosecution."

One of Brady's lawyers, Robert Flanagan, wrote in an email that the decision "essentially vindicated" the former judge.

Brady was one of New Jersey's first Filipino-American Superior Court judges, and she previously defended herself during an hour-and-a-half video hearing April 30.

She had called police about her boyfriend more than once, but she said she did not have any duty to partner with police to catch a fugitive.

While she asked "for forgiveness for any lapse in judgement," she said any mistakes were personal, not professional, and no punishment was necessary because the incident had already left her with a permanent stigma — and the court previously suspended her for 57 months without pay after her arrest, she said.