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## Talk show host 'elated' after defeating lawsuit

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Talk show host Sally Jessy Raphael savored her victory Thursday in an invasion of privacy lawsuit against her, but the Church of Scientology member who sued Raphael vowed to continue her struggle.

A Washtenaw County jury found that Raphael and her production company did not invade the privacy of Dorothy Dickerson of Albion. Nor did they violate the state's eavesdropping law by broadcasting a surreptitiously obtained tape of a conversation between Dickerson and her children, the jury decided.

Dickerson, an instructor at the Church of Scientology's Ann Arbor branch, sued Raphael in August 1991 for \$72 million. The 61-year-old woman said Raphael invaded her privacy and hurt her relationship with her children. She filed the lawsuit after a brief segment of a conversation, recorded by Raphael's crew with the daughters' knowledge, was broadcast on a July 1991 show.

"We're elated! It's a wonderful vindication not only for the Sally Jessy Raphael show, but the right of Americans to get information on controversial topics," Raphael said in a telephone interview from New York. "There have been attempts by organizations like that to silence shows like us. This is more of a victory for the First Amendment than for Sally Jessy Raphael."

Raphael said she might do a follow-

up show about the case and the church. Her show airs at 3 p.m. weekdays on WDIV-TV (Channel 4) in Detroit.

Outside the courtroom, Dickerson said she at least taught a lesson to talk show hosts such as Raphael. She plans to appeal.

"The media will take a second look at doing this again," she said.

A prepared statement, issued later on her behalf, called the suit a "David and Goliath" situation and said the show "manipulated my family for the benefit of their ratings."

In the tape, Dickerson confides to her daughters, Valda Gratias and Emma Urban, that she makes only \$5,000 a year and loves washing dishes for the church. On the show, the women said Dickerson had been brainwashed by the church, which has been likened to a cult.

Raphael's lawyer, Greg Curtner, argued during the trial before Washtenaw County Circuit Judge Melinda Morris that Dickerson's daughters had a First Amendment right, as participants in the conversation, to record it. Michigan's eavesdropping law permits recording as long as one of the parties is aware of it.

"This is a vindication of the rights of Americans to know about controversial issues and the evil that is Scientology," Curtner said.

But Beth Akiyama, a Scientology publicist, said the church, "was never part of this case. . . . The credibility of Scientology is well known to be very high. The IRS recently granted us a tax-exempt status as a church."

Dickerson's lawyer, Robert Logeman, said he would likely appeal the case as a violation of the state's eavesdropping law. "If a third party is involved, such as the camera crew, both parties must agree to the recording," he said.



Sally Jessy Raphael