

People

CBS News' Lara Logan: Surviving Rape – and Changing My Life

She survived a brutal sexual assault, a breast cancer diagnosis and a public scandal. How the TV journalist found strength in family – and a new life of love and healing in a small Texas town



Lara Logan and her family at home in Texas

AMANDA FRIEDMAN

The sun is setting at Lara Logan's rural Texas home, but the *60 Minutes* correspondent is busy making homemade waffles for her 6-year-old daughter Lola. "She calls herself Chef Bubbles whenever we cook," says Logan, happy to oblige the breakfast-for-dinner request. Her son Joseph, 7, gives her a big hug before dashing off to find the family's

newly adopted kitten Leo, while her stepdaughter Ashley, 11, swims in the pool out back. "I know that I did the right thing," she says of uprooting her family to leave behind a hectic life in Washington, D.C. "I had to change something."

This time five years ago, the veteran journalist, 45, was at the height of her career as a war reporter for CBS News when disaster struck. While reporting on the Arab Spring demonstrations from Egypt's Tahrir Square, a mob of hundreds suddenly turned on her, ripping every piece of clothing from her body and brutally sexually assaulting her. She was nearly beaten to death before a group of local women came to her rescue. A year later, while still recovering from the attack, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She eventually returned to work, but in November 2013 her highly publicized 60 Minutes report about the attack on Benghazi was found to be inaccurate, and Logan was forced to take a leave of absence. "It was one thing after another. It was really hard," she says. "But if you can take that many knocks and stay on your feet, you know that you can take just about anything."



Logan in Baghdad in '06

CHRIS HONDROS / GETTY

Persistent health problems and frequent hospitalizations stemming from her attack coupled with the stress of her job ultimately led Logan and her husband, Joe Burkett, 44, a retired Army master sergeant she met while stationed in Iraq, to make a change. "It sort of felt like everything was still looming over you, even if it wasn't," says Burkett. "I think she needed this more than she knew." A month before the family packed up to move to Burkett's small hometown outside of Austin, Texas, their son was diagnosed with severe learning disabilities. "I came to realize that I needed to be home," says Logan, who still travels as a correspondent for CBS but at a slower pace. Now settled in Texas, she has no regrets about the drastic relocation. "I have a window to be with my children when they really need me," she says, sitting down to the adults' dinner of takeout shrimp tacos, German bacon, onion flat bread and homemade margaritas on the patio. "It has had a profound impact on them."

It's a decidedly drastic change of scenery for the South African-born Logan, who made a name for herself as a fearless war-zone reporter while working for the likes of Reuters, ABC News and CNN. She spent years taking on risky assignments in battle zones like Afghanistan and Iraq, and in 2006 she was promoted to chief foreign correspondent for CBS News. The assault in Egypt, Logan admits, shattered her in countless ways. "The road is very long," she says of her recovery. Physically, "there is so much scar tissue. Since that time I have never lived without pain. It's brutal."

While she saw a psychiatrist after the attack, Logan's ability to confront her worst memories has also helped her heal on her own. "I just kind of deal with it. If it's sometimes being with my husband alone and having him touch me that triggers a horrible memory, having the ability to just say sometimes, 'I can't do this right now,' is important," she says. Logan credits her "good, strong" relationship with Burkett, as well as talking to other victims of rape, with helping her heal. "This gave me a special way to be there for people who need it."

When she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2012, Logan says it was a devastating blow. "I felt like someone had pushed me off the top of a building. Cancer is betrayal and uncertainty, everything beyond your control." Still recovering from Egypt, she underwent a lumpectomy and six weeks of radiation to treat the stage 2 cancer. (Her doctors advised her that chemotherapy would be unnecessary in her case.) Now in remission Logan

refuses to live her life in fear of cancer returning. Still, sickness was not the final straw. Her 2013 Benghazi report was publicly discredited after a source revealed much of what he told Logan was a lie, and she had to step away from the job she loved. "No one had to push me to take responsibility. I stood up very quickly." With the mounting stress and the deterioration of her health, Logan and Burkett left for Texas, where they would be closer to his relatives. "In many ways, especially after everything that happened, it's good to be wrapped up in your family," says Burkett. "It's a homey feeling. Very comforting."



Logan with her son Joseph

AMANDA FRIEDMAN

The move also meant that Logan could focus on her own family. While her son had excellent verbal skills, he was unable to read or write and was diagnosed with severe learning disabilities last May. He was found to be struggling with dyslexia (difficulty reading), dysgraphia (difficulty writing), dyscalculia (an inability to grasp basic numerical calculations) and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. "I was like, 'Where did that even come from?'" she says. "I had no idea that my husband was also dyslexic. It was just terrible because you know they are going to struggle, and you don't wish that on them."



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Being in Texas, Logan says, was ideally timed for her to put her son's needs first. "I needed to be a mom, and I needed to be the kind of mom that I wanted to be. I'm all in," she says. "I really believe in being there for my kids, and I really believe that I can help Joe learn how to read and write." While she's fully embraced her country surroundings – their new home came with wild turkeys in the front yard and Saturday nights at the local rodeo – she's still grateful that she's able to stay engaged doing the work she loves at *60 Minutes*. And now, looking out the window at the countryside surrounding her, she can see plenty of silver linings. "I am grateful that I did it," Logan says of stepping away from the fast lane. "I'm really very lucky."

– Emily Strohm

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