

# Camille Cosby gone from public eye in year after last interviews

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NEW YORK – On Nov. 14 last year, during a radio interview about an exhibit at the Smithsonian that featured part of their large art collection, Bill and Camille Cosby were asked to comment on then-recent allegations that the comedian had drugged women in order to have sex with them.

“This question gives me no pleasure, Mr. Cosby, but there have been serious allegations raised about you in recent days,” National Public Radio host Scott Simon said. The Cosbys stayed silent.

“You’re shaking your head ‘no,’” Simon continued. “I’m in the news business. I have to ask the question. Do you have any response to those charges?”

That was the second time the Cosbys had been asked about the allegations. Eight days earlier, on Nov. 6, a reporter from The Associated Press, interviewing them about the same exhibit, asked about comedian Hannibal Burrell, who had said Cosby “rapes women” in his stand-up act.

Bill Cosby interrupted, “No, no, we don’t answer that.” Camille smiled and remained silent.

The AP posted that interview footage on Nov. 19. Since then, more than 50 women have accused Cosby of sexually assaulting them, drugging them, or both.

Cosby, 78, tried at first to continue a comedy tour, but then he dropped out of the public eye. His wife has not been seen in public since the AP interview was released.

In her only public statement regarding the accusations against her husband, Camille Cosby questioned the accusers’ motivations and actions. “None of us will ever want to be in the position of attacking a victim,” she wrote last December. “But the question should be asked – who is the victim?”

So, why does Camille Cosby, a 71-year-old with a Ph.D. in education, stay with her disgraced husband? And what has her life been like in the past year?

“With the numerous sexual allegations, many of them resurfacing, I think she may be in shock, traumatized, or perhaps she has convinced herself that her husband did not commit these monstrous acts,” said Dr. Treva B. Lindsey, assistant professor of Women’s, Gender, Sexuality Studies at Ohio State University. “Camille Cosby was socialized within this society as well, and may have internalized our collective impulse to victim-blame and slut-shame.”

Dr. Chloe Carmichael, a clinical psychologist who does not treat Camille Cosby, said she could be suffering extreme emotional and psychological distress due to her husband’s alleged actions and his admitted infidelities.

“Camille has suffered a deeper betrayal,” she said. “When she learned the man she relied upon as her partner and most intimate confidant has admitted to predatory sexual behavior, such as drugging young women for sex, it was likely to be emotionally disorienting for her, making it difficult to know what else in life is not what it seems.

“Learning that the person she trusted the most and even stood behind to protect is absolutely nothing like the man she thought she married would be humiliating, frightening and potentially scarring for life.”

The Cosbys own at least two homes – one in Santa Monica, Calif., and another in Deerfield, Mass. – where Camille Cosby could hole up and wait for the storm to pass. But with her husband having been deposed once, and with additional lawsuits and possibly criminal investigations in the works, hiding from the scandal could be wishful thinking.

So could Camille Cosby try to escape the drama by opting for divorce?

Lynda Sheridan, a Los Angeles-based family law specialist, said Camille Cosby would be financially protected if she left her husband.

"California is a no-fault community property state, and the courts apply the equal division rule in dividing the community estate," Sheridan said. "Since Camille and Bill have been married so long, I'll assume everything they own is community property.

"Generally speaking, infidelity doesn't play much of a role in a no-fault state. However, to the extent community funds are or were expended for a non-community purpose – such as Bill's defense legal fees for his conduct, the monies used to engage in the alleged behavior, gifts to mistresses, etc. – those monies are subject to reimbursement to the community.

"Absent limited exceptions, the court would ascertain what the assets are, and Camille would receive her one-half plus monetary monthly spousal support consistent with her and Bill's marital standard of living." Sheridan said.

Carmichael said advancing age could also be a factor in Camille Cosby's decisions.

"Older couples may feel they don't want to spend the rest of their lives in a messy divorce, but the idea of an elderly person tolerating abuse simply because they are older is unconscionable," she said. "I encourage people of all ages to make choices from a position of empowerment. We often find strength and energy through standing up for ourselves, and lose strength and energy by lowering our standards."

Bill Cosby has never been charged with a crime and has continued to deny allegations that he sexually assaulted women.