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# TRAILBLAZERS

WEST

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**What was the genesis of the idea/path that has made you a trailblazer?**

I approached our investigation into allegations of sexual misconduct leveled at a former coach for the Chicago Blackhawks during the 2010 playoffs, and the organization's internal response after learning about the allegations, in the same way I conducted federal investigations during my 13-year tenure as an Assistant US Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. My objective was to ensure this was an independent, thorough, and fair investigation based purely on facts; one that would stand up to significant outside scrutiny. The Chicago Blackhawks made the courageous and, in my opinion, correct decision, to make our investigative report public, which allowed them to publicly face and properly address these difficult issues.

**What sort of change has resulted from the concept?**

These investigations, and particularly one going back more than a decade, are complex. In the Blackhawks investigation, we peeled back decades-old travel records, emails, and text messages, interviewed more than 100 witnesses central to the case, and spent months preparing a 107-page investigative report. Our findings described certain cultural problems found in many professional sports teams and the need to address those problems head on.

**What bearing will this have on the future?**

If sports and other industries are going to prevent incidents of misconduct from happening, organizations must take a close look at what allows these behaviors to occur and go undetected or unaddressed. We need a cultural shift, particularly in professional sports, that emphasizes player safety—both physical and mental—and produces an environment where employees, whether in uniform or not, feel that their voices will be heard if they raise their hand with a concern. Hopefully, our work will help further this cultural shift.