

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK  
COUNTY OF NEW YORK

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PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, by  
ANDREW M. CUOMO, Attorney General of the State of  
New York,

Plaintiff,

Index No.

-against-

**SUMMONS**

ANA LUCIA BAQUERO and  
CENTRO SANTA ANA, INC.

Defendants.

-----X

TO THE ABOVE-NAMED DEFENDANTS:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and required to serve upon plaintiff's attorney an answer to the complaint in this action within twenty (20) days after the service of this summons, exclusive of the day of service, or within thirty (30) days after service is complete if this summons is not personally delivered to you within the State of New York.

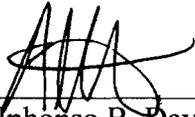
In the case of your failure to answer, judgment will be taken against you by default for the relief demanded in the complaint.

Plaintiff designates New York County as the place of trial.

Dated: New York, New York  
August 20, 2009

ANDREW M. CUOMO  
Attorney General of the State of New York

By:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Alphonso B. David  
Bureau Chief

Spencer Freedman  
Counsel

Elizabeth De León  
Assistant Deputy Counselor

Vilda Vera Mayuga  
Assistant Attorney General

Office of the NYS Attorney General  
Civil Rights Bureau  
120 Broadway  
New York, NY 10271  
Tel. (212) 416-8250  
Fax (212) 416-8074

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK  
COUNTY OF NEW YORK

-----X  
PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, by  
ANDREW M. CUOMO, Attorney General of the State of  
New York,

Plaintiff,

**VERIFIED  
COMPLAINT**

-against-

ANA LUCIA BAQUERO and  
CENTRO SANTA ANA, INC.

Index No.

Defendants.  
-----X

The People of the State of New York, by its attorney, ANDREW M. CUOMO, Attorney General of the State of New York, respectfully allege, upon information and belief:

**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

1. Pursuant to New York Executive Law § 63(12) and § 290 *et seq.*; New York General Business Law (“GBL”) Article 22-A §§ 349 and 350, and Article 28-C § 460-a *et seq.* (New York State Immigrant Assistance Services Law); New York Judiciary Law § 478; Title 8 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York (“New York City Human Rights Law”) and Title 20 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York § 20-770 *et seq.* (“New York City Immigration Service Provider Law”), plaintiff, the People of the State of New York, by Andrew M. Cuomo, Attorney General of the State of New York (“Plaintiff”) brings this action against Ana Lucia Baquero and Centro Santa Ana, Inc. (collectively referred to as “Defendants”), for repeatedly engaging in discriminatory, deceptive, fraudulent and illegal business practices,

including the unauthorized practice of the law in New York State, in connection with providing immigration-related services to New York State consumers. Plaintiff seeks injunctive relief, restitution, damages, penalties and costs against Defendants.

2. Defendants operate a business that includes providing immigration services to immigrants in New York State. In providing these immigration services Defendants, who are not attorneys admitted to practice law, improperly provide and represent to provide legal advice to immigrants on a wide range of complex immigration-related matters.

3. Defendants' illegal conduct has caused numerous immigrants to pay substantial fees for incorrect "legal" advice that could inflict permanent damage to their immigration status in the United States.

4. Unless enjoined, Defendants will continue to engage in this conduct and will continue to cause substantial injury to New York State residents.

#### **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

5. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to New York Executive Law § 63(12), which authorizes the Attorney General to seek injunctive relief, restitution, and damages against any person that engages in repeated fraud or illegality in the conduct of business.

6. Further, GBL Article 22-A, § 349 empowers the Attorney General to seek injunctive relief, restitution, and civil penalties against any person who engages in deceptive acts and practices in the conduct of business.

7. Similarly, GBL Article 28-C, § 460-h empowers the Attorney General to seek injunctive relief, restitution and civil penalties against any person who violates the provisions of

the New York State Immigrant Assistance Services Law, without requiring proof that any person has, in fact, been injured or damaged thereby.

8. In addition, New York Judiciary Law § 476-a, authorizes the Attorney General to bring an action for the unlawful practice of the law.

9. The Court also has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to its general jurisdiction under the New York Constitution, Art. VI, § 7, and New York Judiciary Law § 140-b.

10. Venue is proper in this county pursuant to New York CPLR § 503(a) because the Attorney General maintains an office in New York County.

### **PARTIES**

11. Defendant Ana Lucia Baquero (“Defendant Baquero”) is an individual who resides in New York and conducts a business at 35-03 Ditmars Boulevard, No. 2, Astoria, New York under the name Centro Santa Ana, Inc.

12. Defendant Centro Santa Ana, Inc. is an S-corporation based in New York and registered as such with the New York State Department of State.

13. Defendants are primarily engaged in the business of providing services, for a fee, to individuals who reside in immigrant communities in New York City, including, but not limited to, immigration services.

14. The Attorney General has provided Defendants with pre-litigation notice pursuant to GBL § 349(c).

### **FACTUAL BACKGROUND**

15. The Attorney General commenced this action upon learning that Defendants engage in unlawful business practices, including the unauthorized practice of the law, in

representing individuals in immigration-related legal filings and proceedings before the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (“USCIS”).

16. New York State law regulates the conduct of businesses and specifically prohibits businesses from engaging in fraudulent and deceptive practices in the conduct of any business, trade or commerce or in the furnishing of any service. In violation of the law, Defendants repeatedly misrepresent to members of the public their ability and qualifications to provide legal services.

#### **State Law Regulating the Practice of Law**

17. New York State law expressly prohibits non-lawyers from providing legal advice to protect citizens against dangers of legal representation and advice given by persons not trained, examined and licensed for such work. Specifically, Judiciary Law § 478 makes it unlawful for any person to practice or appear as an attorney-at-law or as an attorney and counselor-at-law for a person in a court of record in this state, or to furnish attorneys or counsel or an attorney and counsel to render legal services, or to hold himself out to the public as being entitled to practice law.

18. The law not only prohibits non-lawyers from representing clients, but also prohibits non-lawyers from conveying the impression that they are legal practitioners of law or are qualified to provide legal services.

#### **State Law Governing Immigrant Assistance Services**

19. New York State residents seeking assistance in immigration matters may retain the services of a licensed attorney or, alternatively, seek out the services of non-attorneys, also known as “immigrant assistance service providers.”

20. Immigrant assistance service providers are regulated by GBL §§ 460-a through 460-j. The law seeks to prevent individuals from preying on the immigrant community by claiming to have the ability or authorization to handle immigration matters and to regulate a practice that had been wholly unsupervised and rife with abuse.

21. Immigrant communities are often targeted by, and immigrants find themselves at the mercy of, individuals who are not qualified to represent them, with little or no recourse for the severe consequences they often face as a result. These practices are particularly egregious because, since immigration cases can take years to process, the consequences of an immigration service provider's mistakes or fraud may not be apparent or detected until it is too late to remedy the significant negative impact to individuals and their families. The law is designed to protect individuals by ensuring that those assisting them in their immigration matters are knowledgeable, qualified, and authorized to perform services.

22. As such, the statute allows non-attorneys to provide only clerical services, such as completing immigration forms based on information provided by the immigrant consumer, notarizing documents if licensed to do so, translating documents, and mailing documents on behalf of consumers to the required government agencies for processing. Further, state law requires providers to comply with certain advertising, signage and surety requirements, as well as to provide consumers with written contracts.

23. Immigrant assistance service providers are legally prohibited from providing legal services including, but not limited to, giving legal advice to consumers on what form of immigration relief they should be seeking, and what immigration forms to complete and file, or appearing in immigration court or before officials with the USCIS. The reason behind this

limitation is that such advice and representation often requires extensive knowledge of complex immigration laws and the ability to apply such laws to fact-specific individual cases.

### **Federal Law Regulating Immigration Services**

24. For these same reasons, similar federal regulations promulgated by the Department of Homeland Security (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 8, Aliens and Nationality) governing this issue emphasize that providers are limited to typing up forms completed by clients, and may not engage in personal legal assistance in conjunction with their business activities.

25. Federal law also regulates who may represent immigrants in immigration court and who may appear on behalf of immigrants before immigration authorities such as the USCIS. The USCIS requires that representatives of immigrants complete and file a “Notice of Entry of Appearance as Attorney or Representative” (Form G-28). Only attorneys and accredited representatives of organizations recognized by the United States Board of Immigration Appeals (“BIA”) as defined in 8 C.F.R. §§ 103.2 and 292.1, may file Form G-28.

26. An individual can obtain accreditation only through an organization recognized by the BIA. The organization must submit documentation showing that it has knowledge, information and experience in immigration and nationality law and procedure and must have an attorney actually supervising these matters. Further, the recognized organization must certify through the application process that the individual seeking accreditation, among other things, is a person of good moral character and will charge or accept a nominal fee set by the organization through which the individual gains their accreditation.

**The Attorney General's Investigation**

27. The Attorney General's Office received a complaint that Defendants are engaged in unlawful business practices, including the unauthorized practice of law, in representing individuals in immigration-related legal filings and proceedings before the USCIS.

28. As a result, the Attorney General commenced an investigation of Defendants' policies, procedures and practices in providing services to the public by, among other things, questioning Defendant Baquero and reviewing Defendants' documents, including a number of client files.

29. Defendant Baquero is officially registered through her company Defendant Centro Santa Ana, Inc. to provide general business services in New York State, such as (a) assisting individuals in completing immigration forms and other documents for submission to the federal immigration agencies and (b) providing individuals with translation and interpreter services.

30. Defendant Baquero is not, however, licensed to practice law in the State of New York, nor is she authorized or accredited to represent anyone on immigration related matters before any state or federal agency, including the USCIS.

31. The evidence reflects that Defendants in fact provide and/or represent that they provide legal advice and services to immigrants.

32. As a result of the above representations, individuals paid Defendants advance fees for these services.

33. In addition, Defendant Baquero repeatedly filed USCIS Form G-28 without being either an attorney or a representative of an organization accredited by the BIA to appear before

the USCIS. As of November 14, 2007, Defendants had filed Form G-28 in connection with 8 applications or petitions and had 37 applications for which the address of record for the immigrant applicant is that of Defendants.

34. Defendants repeatedly failed to complete immigration forms correctly and failed to include required documentation. As a result, immigrants frequently received letters from the immigration authorities informing them that their immigration application could not be processed because it lacked the necessary information and/or documentation. Consequently, their applications faced numerous and unnecessary delays due to Defendants' actions.

35. The USCIS also notified Defendant Baquero, via certified mail, of her ineligibility to practice before the USCIS but did not receive a response.

#### **Violations of the Law**

36. The Attorney General's investigation confirmed that, in violation of GBL § 349, Defendants engaged in fraudulent and deceptive business practices in providing immigration-related services, including misrepresenting their ability and qualifications to provide legal advice and represent clients in legal proceedings.

37. The investigation revealed that, in violation of Judiciary Law § 478, Defendant Baquero practiced and appeared as an attorney-at-law without being admitted and registered. Further, the Attorney General's investigation confirmed that, in violation of GBL § 460-e, Defendants engaged in the unauthorized practice of law by advising individuals in immigration matters such as instructing individuals on which immigration forms to complete and file with the immigration authorities in order to obtain a certain immigration benefit, and determining and advising individuals on the best course of action for their immigration matters. In fact,

Defendant Baquero did file USCIS Form G-28 for each individual that used her immigration assistance services and filed immigration forms with the USCIS in violation of the law.

38. The Attorney General's investigation also revealed that Defendants failed to comply with the requirements of providing immigrant assistance services as required by GBL §§ 460-b through 460-g.

39. Specifically, Defendants repeatedly failed to provide individuals with written contracts, in both English and the language that individuals could understand, that include certain disclosures and information required by GBL § 460-b, including an itemization of all services to be provided and its fees, and informing individuals of their right to cancel the contract within three business days without any penalties or fees. In fact, Defendants failed to have any type of contract or other written agreement by which immigrants would retain Defendants' services.

40. Defendants also failed to display signs in their place of business, as required by GBL § 460-c, in English and in any other language in which Defendants offer Immigration Services: (a) alerting individuals of their right to cancel the contract within three business days without penalty; and (b) alerting individuals that Defendant Baquero is not an attorney, cannot provide legal advice, and is not authorized to represent individuals before immigration authorities.

41. Defendants also failed to secure a surety bond payable to the People of the State of New York, and in an amount determinable by the income received from providing Immigration Services, as required by GBL § 460-g.

42. Defendants also failed to provide individuals with copies of every document filed on their behalf with immigration authorities as required by GBL § 460-e (7).

43. Similarly, based on these omissions, Defendants violated the provisions of the New York City Immigration Service Provider Law that mirror GBL §§ 460-a through 460-j.

44. Defendants also violated New York's civil rights laws by illegally seeking to defraud immigrants based on their alienage, citizenship status and national origin.

45. Based on the foregoing, Defendants violated New York General Business Law, New York Judiciary Law, and New York Executive Law.

46. Unless enjoined, Defendants will continue to engage in this fraudulent and illegal conduct and will continue to cause substantial injury to New York State residents.

**FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION:**  
**NEW YORK EXECUTIVE LAW § 63(12)**  
**FRAUD**

47. New York Executive Law § 63(12) prohibits fraud in the conduct of any business, trade or commerce.

48. By reason of the conduct alleged above, Defendants are repeatedly engaging in fraudulent acts and practices in connection with the transactions in violation of New York Executive Law § 63(12).

**SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION:**  
**NEW YORK GENERAL BUSINESS LAW § 349**  
**DECEPTIVE ACTS AND PRACTICES**

49. New York General Business Law § 349 prohibits “deceptive acts or practices in the conduct of any business, trade or commerce or in the furnishing of any service” in New York State.

50. By acting as immigration service providers, Defendants conduct “business” or provide a “service” within the meaning of New York General Business Law § 349.

51. Defendants misrepresented to the public that Defendants can represent individuals seeking to file applications before the USCIS despite having no legal authority or qualifications to do so.

52. By reason of the conduct alleged above, Defendants are engaging in deceptive conduct in violation of New York General Business Law § 349.

**THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION:**  
**PURSUANT TO NEW YORK EXECUTIVE LAW § 63(12) - ILLEGALITY**  
**VIOLATIONS OF NEW YORK GENERAL BUSINESS LAW § 349**  
**DECEPTIVE ACTS AND PRACTICES**

53. A violation of state law constitutes illegality within the meaning of New York Executive Law § 63(12) and is actionable thereunder when persistent or repeated.

54. Defendants' repeated and persistent violations of GBL Article 22-A, § 349 are thus violations of New York Executive Law § 63(12).

55. By reason of the conduct alleged above, Defendants are repeatedly and persistently engaging in illegality in violation of New York Executive Law § 63(12).

**FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION:**  
**NEW YORK JUDICIARY LAW § 478**  
**UNAUTHORIZED PRACTICE OF THE LAW**

56. New York Judiciary Law § 478 prohibits individuals from practicing or appearing as attorneys-at-law without being admitted and registered.

57. By advising individuals on immigration matters such as instructing individuals on which immigration forms to complete and file with the immigration authorities in order to obtain a certain immigration benefit, and advising individuals on the purported best course of action for their immigration matters, Defendant Baquero repeatedly and persistently violated New York Judiciary Law § 478.

58. By filing Form G-28 for each one of her customers, Defendant Baquero repeatedly and persistently violated New York Judiciary Law § 478.

59. By reason of the conduct alleged above, Defendant Baquero is engaging in the unauthorized practice of the law in violation of New York Judiciary Law § 478.

**FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION:**  
**PURSUANT TO NEW YORK EXECUTIVE LAW § 63(12) - ILLEGALITY**  
**VIOLATIONS OF NEW YORK JUDICIARY LAW § 478**  
**UNAUTHORIZED PRACTICE OF THE LAW**

60. A violation of state law constitutes illegality within the meaning of New York Executive Law § 63(12) and is actionable thereunder when persistent or repeated.

61. Defendant Baquero's repeated and persistent violations of New York Judiciary Law § 478 are thus violations of New York Executive Law § 63(12).

62. By reason of the conduct alleged above, Defendant Baquero is repeatedly and persistently engaging in illegality in violation of New York Executive Law § 63(12).

**SIXTH CAUSE OF ACTION:**  
**NEW YORK GENERAL BUSINESS LAW §§ 460-a through 460-j**  
**IMMIGRANT ASSISTANCE SERVICE PROVIDERS**

63. New York General Business Law, Article 28-C (§§ 460-a through 460-j) regulates the conduct of immigration service providers in New York State. The law defines an "immigrant service provider" as any person "providing assistance, for a fee, or other compensation, to persons who have [...] come to the United States [...], in relation to any proceeding, filing or action affecting the non-immigrant, immigrant or citizenship status of a person which arises under the immigration and nationality law, executive order or presidential proclamation, or which arises under actions or regulations of the [USCIS, United States Department of Labor, or the United States Department of State]."

64. By failing to provide written contracts to their clients, Defendants repeatedly and persistently violate GBL § 460-b.

65. By failing to post signs where Defendants provide immigration services, indicating that they are not attorneys nor are they authorized to represent individuals before the USCIS, Defendants repeatedly and persistently violate GBL § 460-c.

66. By advising each immigrant on the process to follow and forms required to adjust their immigration status, Defendants repeatedly and persistently violate GBL § 460-e.

67. By failing to retain client documents for three years, Defendants repeatedly and persistently violate GBL § 460-f.

68. Defendants fail to comply with the surety requirement provided by GBL § 460-g.

69. By reason of the conduct alleged above, Defendants are engaging in illegal conduct in violation of New York General Business Law §§ 460-b through 460-g.

**SEVENTH CAUSE OF ACTION:**  
**PURSUANT TO NEW YORK EXECUTIVE LAW § 63(12) - ILLEGALITY**  
**VIOLATIONS OF NEW YORK GENERAL BUSINESS LAW §§ 460-b through 460-g**  
**IMMIGRANT ASSISTANCE SERVICE PROVIDERS**

70. A violation of state law constitutes illegality within the meaning of New York Executive Law § 63(12) and is actionable thereunder when persistent or repeated.

71. Defendants' repeated and persistent violations of GBL Article 28-C, § 460-b through 460-g are thus violations of New York Executive Law § 63(12).

72. By reason of the conduct alleged above, Defendants are repeatedly and persistently engaging in illegality in violation of New York Executive Law § 63(12).

**EIGHTH CAUSE OF ACTION:**  
**PURSUANT TO NEW YORK EXECUTIVE LAW § 63(12)**  
**VIOLATIONS OF NEW YORK CITY IMMIGRATION SERVICE PROVIDER LAW**  
**§§ 20-770 through 20-780**

73. Title 20 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York §§ 20-770 through 20-780 (“New York City Immigration Service Provider Law”) regulates the conduct of immigration assistance service providers in New York City.

74. By advising each immigrant on the process to follow and forms required to adjust their immigration status, Defendants repeatedly and persistently violate NYC Immigration Service Provider Law § 20-771(e).

75. By failing to provide written contracts to their clients in English and in a language that they would understand, Defendants repeatedly and persistently violate NYC Immigration Service Provider Law § 20-772.

76. By failing to post signs where Defendants provide immigration services, indicating that they are not attorneys nor are they authorized to represent individuals before the USCIS, Defendants repeatedly and persistently violate NYC Immigration Service Provider Law § 20-773.

77. By failing to retain client documents for three years, Defendants repeatedly and persistently violate NYC Immigration Service Provider Law § 20-775.

78. By reason of the conduct alleged above, Defendants are engaging in illegal conduct in violation of NYC Immigration Service Provider Law §§ 20-770 through 20-780.

79. By their actions in violation of NYC Immigration Service Provider Law §§ 20-770 through 20-780, Defendants are engaging in repeated and persistent illegality in violation of New York Executive Law § 63(12).

**NINTH CAUSE OF ACTION:**  
**PURSUANT TO NEW YORK EXECUTIVE LAW § 63(12)**  
**VIOLATIONS OF NEW YORK STATE HUMAN RIGHTS LAW**  
**DISCRIMINATION BASED ON NATIONAL ORIGIN**

80. New York State Human Rights Law § 296(2)(a) prohibits discrimination in public accommodations based on national origin.

81. In its capacity as an immigration service provider, Defendant Centro Santa Ana, Inc. is a place of public accommodation and illegally seeks to defraud immigrants based on their national origin. Similarly, Defendant Baquero, as an agent of Defendant Centro Santa Ana, Inc. and its main provider of immigration services, targets immigrants based on their national origin.

82. By reason of the conduct alleged above, Defendants are repeatedly engaging in discrimination in connection with the transactions in violation of New York State Human Rights Law § 296(2)(a).

83. By their actions in violation of New York State Human Rights Law § 296(2)(a), Defendants are engaging in repeated and persistent illegality in violation of New York Executive Law § 63(12).

**TENTH CAUSE OF ACTION:**  
**PURSUANT TO NEW YORK EXECUTIVE LAW § 63(12)**  
**VIOLATIONS OF NEW YORK CITY HUMAN RIGHTS LAW**  
**DISCRIMINATION BASED ON**  
**ALIENAGE, CITIZENSHIP STATUS AND NATIONAL ORIGIN**

84. Title 8 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York (“New York City Human Rights Law”) § 8-107(4) prohibits discrimination in public accommodations based on national origin, citizenship status and alienage.

85. In its capacity as an immigration service provider, Defendant Centro Santa Ana, Inc. is a place of public accommodation and illegally seeks to defraud Latino immigrants based

on their national origin, citizenship status and alienage. Similarly, Defendant Baquero, as an agent of Defendant Centro Santa Ana, Inc. and its main provider of immigration services, targets immigrants based on their national origin, citizenship status and alienage.

86. By reason of the conduct alleged above, Defendants are repeatedly engaging in discrimination in connection with the transactions in violation of New York City Human Rights Law § 8-107(4).

87. By their actions in violation of New York City Human Rights Law § 8-107(4), Defendants are engaging in repeated and persistent illegality in violation of New York Executive Law § 63(12).

#### **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

**WHEREFORE**, Plaintiff respectfully requests that a judgment and order be issued:

A. Permanently enjoining Defendants, their employees, agents, successors, heirs and assigns, directly or indirectly, from engaging in the fraudulent and illegal practices alleged therein;

B. Permanently enjoining Defendants from engaging in the business of providing immigration services;

C. Permanently enjoining Defendants from engaging in the unauthorized practice of the law;

D. Directing Defendants to provide an accounting of each immigration assistance service transaction;

E. Directing Defendants to pay restitution and compensatory damages to the immigrants harmed by their illegal conduct;

F. Directing Defendants to pay a civil penalty of \$7,500 to the State of New York for each violation of General Business Law Article 28-C pursuant to GBL § 460-h;

G. Directing Defendants to pay a civil penalty of \$5,000 to the State of New York for each violation of General Business Law Article 22-A pursuant to GBL § 350-d;

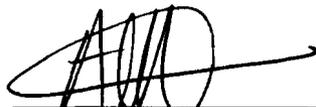
H. Awarding Plaintiff the costs of this proceeding, including \$2,000 in additional costs against Defendants pursuant to CPLR § 8303(a)(6); and

I. Granting Plaintiff such other and further relief as this Court finds appropriate and equitable, including injunctive and declaratory relief as may be required in the interests of justice.

Dated: New York, New York  
August 20, 2009

ANDREW M. CUOMO  
Attorney General of the State of New York

By:



Alphonso B. David  
Bureau Chief

Spencer Freedman  
Counsel

Elizabeth De León  
Assistant Deputy Counselor

Vilda Vera Mayuga  
Assistant Attorney General

Office of the NYS Attorney General  
Civil Rights Bureau  
120 Broadway  
New York, NY 10271  
Tel. (212) 416-8250  
Fax (212) 416-8074

**VERIFICATION**

STATE OF NEW YORK    )

COUNTY OF NEW YORK   )    ss.:

ALPHONSO B. DAVID, being duly sworn, deposes and says:

I am the Bureau Chief in the office of Andrew M. Cuomo, Attorney General of the State of New York, and am duly authorized to make this verification.

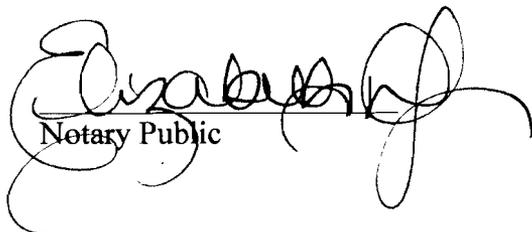
I have read the foregoing complaint and know the contents thereof, which are to my knowledge true, except as to those matters stated to be alleged on information and belief, and to these matters I believe them to be true. The grounds of my belief as to all matters stated upon information and belief are investigative materials contained in the files of the Attorney General's office.

The reason this verification is not made by plaintiff is that plaintiff is a body politic and the Attorney General is its duly authorized representative.



ALPHONSO B. DAVID

Sworn to before me this  
20<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2009



Notary Public

**ELIZABETH DE LEÓN**  
Notary Public - State of New York  
No. 02DE6146784  
Qualified in New York County  
Commission Expires May 22, 2010