



PRESS RELEASE

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7.95 MILLION DOLLAR SETTLEMENT REACHED IN LAWSUIT AGAINST ANAHEIM UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT ALLEGING SEXUAL ABUSE BY WATER POLO COACH

Irvine, California - Attorneys representing four former student athletes at John F. Kennedy High School in Anaheim, California announced a settlement of \$7.95 million in lawsuits against Anaheim Unified School District (AUHSD) which accounted for a total settlement on behalf of five Plaintiffs.

The suit alleges that the District and its employees concealed from the victims' parents and law enforcement officials the fact that victims were sexually abused and harassed by former water polo coach Joshua Owens. Owens was a part-time girls water polo coach and swim coach at Kennedy High School within AUHSD. Owens was subsequently arrested and served time for his sexual abuse crimes.

Plaintiffs' counsel, Morgan Stewart, stated, "The size of this settlement testifies to the serious nature of the abuse and the failure of the District to prevent it. Child sexual abuse at Anaheim Unified High School District began as a serious problem and is becoming a full-blown scandal. Even after settling these cases, The District still refuses to take action against those who failed to report sexual abuse of a minor as required by law and continues to regularly take steps allowing for the hiring of abusive teachers."

Manly, Stewart & Finaldi represents 4 other former students of John F. Kennedy High School in cases against another former water polo coach Barham Hojreh. Hojreh ran both Kennedy's water polo program and a club program sanctioned by USA Water Polo. Combined Manly, Stewart & Finaldi represents nine total Plaintiffs who have brought claims against the club, Anaheim Union High School District and USA Water Polo.

These suits allege that Hojreh engaged in abusive behavior of female minors including, but not limited to, touching female children inappropriately and engaging in verbally and physically abusive behavior towards the female minors who were players on Hojreh's water polo team. It is alleged that Hojreh would sexually assault players under the pretense of coaching them on what to expect from opposing teams.

Mr. Stewart added: "The reprehensible conduct of Hojreh is amplified by the refusal of USA Water Polo's refusal to accept their responsibility for Hojreh's actions. The fact that Anaheim Union High School District recognized the need to resolve Owens actions, but have not resolve Hojreh's actions, evidences that these entities continue to not learn the gravity of the harm caused to these students and athletes."

[Manly, Stewart & Finaldi](#) is the nation's leading firm representing athletes in child sexual abuse cases against school districts, Universities and Olympic Governing Bodies. They recently represented 180 alleged victims of former Olympic Team doctor Larry Nassar resulting in a \$500 million-dollar settlement against Michigan State University. In 2018 the firm settled cases against the Torrance Unified School District for \$31 million on behalf of alleged victims of former wrestling coach and convicted child molester Thomas Snider, against Los Angeles Unified School district for \$8 million in cases involving former football coach and convicted child molester Jamie Jimenez and for \$14 million in cases involving former Los Angeles Unified District employee Ronnie Lee Roman.