



PRESS RELEASE

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RIVERSIDE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT SEX ABUSE SCANDAL GROWS AS MANLY, STEWART & FINALDI AND THE SENATORS (RET.) FIRM, LLP ANNOUNCE NEW LAWSUIT AGAINST ALLEGING SEXUAL ABUSE OF THREE MORE CHILDREN BY FORMER LIBERTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' AIDE FERNANDO FIGUEROA

Irvine, California – Prominent child sexual abuse survivors' law firms Manly, Stewart & Finaldi and The Senators (Ret.) Firm, LLP, have filed a third lawsuit against Riverside Unified School District, former Liberty Elementary School Principal Esther Garcia, and several other school administrators on behalf of three additional victims of child sexual abuse allegedly perpetrated by former Liberty Elementary School teachers' aide Fernando Figueroa. The firm currently represents eight victims with active lawsuits against the District. A prior lawsuit by the same firms on behalf of three other alleged victims was settled by RUSD late last year for \$6.2 million. [Click here for complaint.](#)

Figueroa was arrested in February of 2017 on multiple counts of child sexual abuse, was indicted last year by a Riverside County Grand Jury on felony charges that he sexually abused 11 children on the Liberty campus and is currently in jail awaiting trial. The charges include lewd and lascivious acts with multiple children under of 14 and oral copulation with a child under 10.

“This lawsuit represents scandal within RUSD that is spreading like cancer. It is further evidence of a continuing pattern of abuse and disregard the civil rights of students and families who are overwhelmingly poor and Latino,” said Morgan Stewart of Manly, Stewart & Finaldi.

Stewart also noted that, based on evidence gathered in the first lawsuits, RUSD and several of its employees have been reported to the State Attorney General, the California Department of Education, the Riverside Police Department, and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing for falsifying records and child endangerment related to the cases and that investigations are said to be ongoing.

The plaintiffs allege that RUSD negligently hired and failed to monitor and supervise Figueroa which allowed him unfettered access to victims during the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years. They also allege that a number of victims, eyewitnesses, and parents reported Figueroa's alleged sexual misconduct to Liberty teachers and to Principal Esther Garcia before or during the time Figueroa was abusing them. Yet, plaintiffs allege, Garcia and her staff took no action and specifically failed to alert local authorities as required by California's mandatory child abuse reporting law. It is also alleged that RUSD failed to conduct an adequate background check of Figueroa, who had been accused of child sexual misconduct with a family member before RUSD hired him.

According to attorney Ronald Labriola of The Senators Firm, the newly filed case “involves facts and circumstances that are virtually identical to the previously-settled cases, all of which reflect an epic failure by RUSD and its administrators to protect children under their care.”

The new lawsuit alleges that Figueroa molested the three minor plaintiffs on the Liberty campus and that the abuse resulted in serious emotional and psychological distress.

“We are ready and willing to take the new case to trial to allow citizens, many of whom are parents or grandparents, to judge for themselves RUSD’s conduct in failing to prevent these horrendous acts,” said Labriola, who added that a refusal of RUSD to resolve the case, “Could result in a trial verdicts greatly exceeding the earlier settlements, including punitive damages not covered by insurance.” He said he hopes to start trial in the new cases before the end of the year and that lawsuits on behalf of additional victims are likely to be filed soon.

[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.