

By JOSEPH G. LARIOS

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**C HICAGO (*jGLi*)** – The jury trial of Filipino recruiters and others who trafficked 350 highly-skilled Filipino teachers to Louisiana (LA) started last Wednesday (Dec. 5) and is expected to last until Dec. 14 before Judge A. Kronstadt of the United States District Court in Central District of California in Los Angeles

Among others, the jury will decide whether to allow the Filipino teachers to be granted by the U.S. “T” visas, which are designed for certain human trafficking victims, who cooperate with law enforcement against those responsible for their enslavement. Until the filing of this case, most “T” visas are granted individually on a case-by-case basis. This case will

resolve if it is possible for the  
U.S.

government to grant mass "T" visas to a certain class of victims.

In their class action suit, the Filipino teachers led by Mairi Nunag-Tanedo of East Baton Rouge Parish School System allege that when they arrived in the U.S. sometime on or before 2010, the defendants, including Lourdes "Lulu" Navarro of Universal Placement International based in Los Angeles, abused and exploited them, orchestrating "a system of psychological coercion and intimidation to exert continued control over the teachers, including filing lawsuits against teachers who complained publicly, isolating teachers from other Filipinos and threatening deportation or non-renewal of teacher visa."

The teachers hold "H-1B specialty occupation visas to serve as teachers in public schools."

Aside from Ms. Navarro and UPI, who are identified in the complaint as "Recruiter Defendants," the other defendants named in the class suit are Legal Facilitators hired by Louisiana Schools Districts as well as employees of East Baton Rouge School Board (EBRPSB) and agents EBRPSB identified as Employer Defendants, who were aware, or reasonably should

have known of their Recruiter Defendants' and Legal Facilitator Defendants' egregious conduct, and who took steps to ensure the trafficking scheme was viable.

## **EMPLOYER DEFENDANTS**

The Employer Defendants are:

1. East Baton Rouge Parish School Board (EBRPSB) of 1050 South Foster Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70806;
2. Charlotte D. Placide, former Superintendent of EBRPSS (from 2004 to June 30, 2009), of LA, sued in individual capacity, and her capacity as an agent of EBRPSB;
3. Millie Williams, director of Personnel services of EBRPSS, of LA, sued in her individual capacity and agent of EBRPSB; and
4. Duran Swinford, also of LA, of Mississippi, sued in individual capacity and as agent of EBRPSB.

The Recruiter Defendants are:

1. Universal Placement International, Inc. (Universal) of California (CA), based in Los Angeles, engaged in business of

recruiting teachers from  
hilippines

P

for employment in US;

2. Lourdes "Lulu" Navarro, owner and president of Universal,  
of Glendale, CA;

3. Hothello "Jack" Navarro, director of Universal, also of Glen  
dale,

former husband of  
Lourdes

though "hold himself out as her current husband;"

4. PARS International Placement Agency (PARS) based in Q  
uezon City

,  
Philippines

, engaged in the business of recruiting teachers from the  
Philippines

for employment in the  
US

; and

5. Emilio Villarba, owners of PARS, of Quezon City, brother  
of Lourdes Navarro. Universal and

PARS

are interchangeable and alter egos for purposes of liability.

Payment made to

PARS

are receipted as Universal payment.

Legal Facilitator defendants are:

1. Robert B. Silverman, a lawyer of Westminster, CA; and
2. Silverman & Associates of Westminster.

And the RICO Defendants are:

1. Recruiter Defendants;
2. Individual Employer Defendants; and
3. Legal Facilitator Defendants.

## **DAMAGES V. DEFENDANTS**

According to the complaint, defendants have been engaged in and continue to engage in ongoing contacts with Plaintiffs and other Class Members, including recruiting, obtaining labor, contracting, seeking to collect on contracts, providing immigration-related services to, transporting, harboring, providing and/or employing Plaintiffs and/or other Class Members.

Class Actions allegations by plaintiffs bring claims for damages, Injunctive, Declaratory relief on behalf of themselves and all similarly situated persons pursuant for actual, punitive, treble, compensatory, and/or punitive damages.

In an earlier email to this reporter, Atty. Don A. Hernandez, lawyer for Ms. Navarro and UPI, said, "I am forwarding to you a recent Order of the District Court here in Los Angeles, dismissing the document servitude allegations against my clients. In short, the allegations that my clients improperly withheld travel documents from the Plaintiffs teacher class are no longer part of the lawsuit because the Judge has dismissed those claims.

"Also, the Plaintiffs have advised us in writing that they no longer intend to pursue claims for fraud and violation of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) against my clients. This decision eliminates any claims that my clients intentionally misled the teachers with respect to the amount of money that was being charged as placement fees or that they extorted money from the teachers."

Alliance-Philippines (AJLPP), Bantay - LA, Echo Park  
Community Coalition (EPCC) and the Partido ng Manggagawa

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(Labor Party)-USA called on the Filipino-American community and all labor advocates, especially those living in Los Angeles area, to support these teachers by showing up at the jury trial that will be held on December 5-7 and 11-14, 2012 starting a 8:30 AM at the US District Court in the Central District of California at Roybal Federal Building and US Courthouse at 255 East Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012. # # #

Watch out for the upcoming media-outlet oriented, subscription-based website of *Journal Group Link International* that guarantees originally sourced stories, features, photos, audios and videos and multi-media contents.)

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