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Heir to Coca-Cola Fortune Tallies Nearly \$1B in Workplace Sexual Harassment Verdicts Against Him

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Heir to Coca-Cola Fortune Tallies Nearly \$1B in Workplace Sexual Harassment V Against Him

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Lil' Kim famously once said "I believe in money, power, and respect. First you get the money. Then you get the ... power. After you get the ... power [people] will respect you." For some, money and power are interchangeable. But along with the respect, money and power can also get you ill-repute. Some very rich men come to mind. Donald Trump, Harvey Weinstein, Jeffrey Epstein, Roger Ailes. Other than their obscene wealth, another common theme of these infamously rich men, is that of sexual misconduct. Being credibly accused of sexual harassment or assault seems to be a hefty price some billionaires are willing to pay to play.

On the continuum of sexual misconduct, there are sexual harassers and then there is Alki David, billionaire heir to the Coca-Cola bottling fortune, who has long been a controversial figure in the entertainment industry. A series of eye-popping jury verdicts against David and his businesses have catapulted David to the top of the sexual harassment food chain. As the founder of FilmOn, a streaming service, and Hologram USA, a company specializing in holographic performances, David's ventures have often been overshadowed by his extreme legal battles. Over the past decade, he has faced multiple lawsuits, particularly concerning allegations of sexual harassment, assault and workplace misconduct. For his part, David considers himself the self-appointed ambassador for the "wronged" men of the #MeToo movement.

This week yet another Los Angeles Superior Court jury awarded a plaintiff nearly \$1 billion in damages for workplace sexual assault. The case represents the fifth jury verdict in the past five years against David. David, who at times has represented himself and been excluded from participating in his own trials, has shown no remorse. After the massive \$900 million verdict in favor of David's former employee, who brought suit against him in 2020 alleging years of sexual assault, battery, and harassment, David posted on Instagram that "there is no \$900 million order against him and that all evidence shows that the alleged rape never happened. These newspapers got it all wrong because these newspapers belong to a network of criminal d—bags that employ the lawyers that wrote this fake order in the first place."

Chasity Jones: 'Jones v. David,' Case No. B301930 (Cal. Ct. App. Dec. 14, 2021)

Chasity Jones, a former employee at FilmOn, was the first to try a case to verdict against David in 2019. Jones accused David of multiple instances of sexual harassment during her tenure. Jones alleged that David had touched her inappropriately, made lewd comments and displayed sexually explicit content in the workplace.

At a trial that began in early 2019, Jones detailed a series of disturbing encounters. Among the most shocking allegations was that David rubbed his clothed but erect penis against her clothed backside while rubbing his hand over her vaginal area. According to the appellate decision, there were at least two other vagina-rubbing incidents perpetrated by David.

During trial, David admitted to egregious workplace conduct including screening an obscene video (titled "Two Girls and a Cup"), permitting a male exotic dancer to perform in the office, and frequently walking around with his pants down and his genitals tucked between his legs calling it his "mangina."

Jones called David as a witness during her case-in-chief. Almost immediately, David began insulting Jones, her counsel, and the litigation process. Despite the court's repeated admonishments, David's behavior escalated, according to court transcripts. Within minutes, he proffered his American Express Black credit card to Jones, telling her, "Take my card. Take my card. Here, take my card ... Go and buy whatever you want." David subsequently said, "Oh, f— it. Just enter a default judgment," before leaving the stand and exiting the courtroom.

The jury returned a special verdict in Jones's favor and awarded her over \$3 million in compensatory and economic damages. After a second phase of trial at which David disregarded a court order to be present, the jury awarded Jones \$8 million in punitive damages against David.

This verdict sent shockwaves through the entertainment industry, highlighting the pervasiveness of David's sexual harassment. It also emboldened other former employees to come forward with their own allegations against David, including Lauren Reeves and Elizabeth Taylor.

Lauren Reeves: 'Reeves v. Hologram USA,' Case No.: BC643099 (Ca. Superior Court, verd. Oct. 15, 2019)

Shortly after the Jones verdict, Reeves, another ex-employee, filed a lawsuit against David, alleging sexual battery, sexual harassment and wrongful termination. Reeves, a comedian and writer, claimed that David had groped her, tried to force her to watch pornography, and retaliated against her when she resisted his advances.

The trial unveiled a pattern of predatory behavior by David. Reeves recounted episodes where David allegedly tried to forcefully kiss her and once grabbed her by the throat. Some of the incidents which were alleged included:

- David asked Reeves if she had seen his "mangina" on Instagram. When Reeves said "no," he instructed her to wait where she was, as he disappeared into one of the offices. Seconds later he walked out of the office naked with his penis tucked between his legs.
- David grabbed Reeves' finger, put it in his mouth, and sucked on it in a very sexual manner.
- David told Reeves that her "finger tastes like celebrity balls" (a reference to a celebrity whom Reeves was dating at the time).
- David asked Reeves if she wanted to have sex with him and added, "just so you know, you could have sex with me whenever you want."

- David told Reeves he needed to go to a zip-tie store to buy supplies for his “rape room,” explaining that he liked to “tie women up.”
- As Reeves walked up the stairs, David said, “I like the view,” and then grabbed her buttocks, stating that she had “buns of steel,” took off his belt and slapped Reeves on the buttocks.

In November 2019, a jury ruled in favor of Reeves, awarding her \$5 million in compensatory and punitive damages, reflecting the severity of David’s misconduct.

Mahim Khan: ‘Khan v. Hologram USA,’ Case No. BC654017 (Cal. Superior Court, verd. Dec. 2, 2019)

In the ongoing legal saga, Khan, a former production assistant at Hologram USA, filed a lawsuit alleging sexual harassment, assault and battery. Khan claimed that David had slapped her buttocks, once lifted her off the ground to simulate a sexual position, thrust his pelvis into her face and simulated oral sex, rubbed her vagina, frequently grabbed her pelvic area, peppered her with unwanted kisses, gave her a lap dance in front of a client, and put his hands under her dress to cup her breasts. She also testified that at times David would pull his pants down, grab her by the neck and shove her into his crotch.

The Los Angeles County Superior Court jury deliberated for only an hour before awarding Khan \$50 million in punitive damages along with the \$8.25 million she had already been awarded in compensatory damages. The verdict was reported to be one of the largest sexual harassment awards in U.S. history.

Elizabeth Taylor: ‘Taylor v. David,’ Case No.: BC649025 (Cal. Superior Court, verd. Dec. 13, 2023)

Elizabeth Taylor, not to be confused with the iconic actress, was another employee at FilmOn who brought forth allegations of sexual harassment and wrongful termination at the same time as Chasity Jones. Taylor claimed that David had exposed himself to her, touched her inappropriately, and made overt sexual propositions. Taylor alleged that David repeatedly touched and groped Taylor without her consent, held her upside down by her ankles and carried her across the office with her underwear exposed in the presence of other staff members and tied her to a chair with a computer wire, among other accusations. The lawsuit also alleged that Taylor was fired the day she reported that she had been sexually harassed by David.

A trial in September 2019 ended in a hung jury. David represented himself in the circus-like trial, with David making frequent profanity-laced outbursts, being fined \$10,000 by the judge and even being excluded from the courtroom on more than one occasion. After a retrial in December 2023, a jury sided with Taylor, awarding her \$8.4 million.

Karl Zirpel: ‘Zirpel v. Alki David Productions,’ 93 Cal. App. 5th 563 (2023)

Karl Zirpel worked as the vice president of operations for Alki David Productions (ADP) before David fired him for allegedly disclosing information that Zirpel reasonably believed evidenced a violation of safety standards and for disclosing information about ADP’s working conditions. A California jury returned a special verdict in Zirpel’s favor, finding ADP had violated state whistleblower statutes, and awarded Zirpel \$369,000 in economic damages; \$700,000 in emotional distress damages; and \$6 million in punitive damages. The court of appeals affirmed the punitive damages award on the basis that there was sufficient evidence of reprehensible conduct given David’s verbal abuse of Zirpel, which was “laced with obscenities and homophobic epithets.”

The jury verdicts involving David paint a distressing picture of money, power and disrespect. The substantial damages awarded across multiple cases underscore the severity of David's actions and serve as a stark warning to those who might exploit their positions of authority. David's behavior was on full display during each of his trial leading one of the plaintiff's attorneys to say "When someone shows you who they are, believe them." These cases also highlight the resilience and courage of the plaintiff-survivors, who, despite facing a billionaire with vast resources, stood firm in their quest for accountability. Their victories no doubt brought personal vindication, marking a broader cultural shift away from victim silence to employee empowerment.

Jeffrey Campolongo *is the founder of the Law Office of Jeffrey Campolongo, which, for over a decade, has been devoted to counseling employees, working professionals and small businesses in employment discrimination and human resource matters.*

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