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Statement of Gloria Allred

Today I'm here to announce a complete victory in a federal lawsuit which I filed alleging that my constitutional rights of free speech and due process and the rights of other Bill Cosby protestors were violated when we were denied entry to Bill Cosby's "Far from Finished" comedy show on May 2, 2015.

On that date in May, I spoke at a Bill Cosby protest outside of the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Center in Cobb County Georgia. After I spoke at the protest, someone gave me a ticket to Mr. Cosby's show and I approached the theater.

I was interested in attending Bill Cosby's performance in part to gain insight that would help me in the representation of the many alleged victims of Bill Cosby whom I represented. When I was near the main entrance, I was stopped by a Cobb County official who asked to see my government ID and my ticket. I presented my driver's license and my ticket. The official then checked a list, informed me I was on it and directed me to a side entrance away from the main entrance where other ticket holders were entering to see the show.

I entered the side entrance as directed and found myself in a room with two uniformed Cobb County police officers. One officer seated at a table informed me that he had "bad news" for me. He said that I was on a list and that I could not enter the theater.

When I asked why I could not enter, a Cobb County police officer explained that he had a "list," compiled by 'Outback Productions' or Bill Cosby representatives, of protestors who should not be allowed to view the Cosby Performance, and that my name appeared on the list.

I explained that I did not plan to protest or disrupt the Cosby Performance and that I had a ticket for entry, but the police officer explained that those facts did not matter.

After the police officer explained to me that I was not permitted to enter the Centre that night, he instructed me to exit "the property" and that, if I refused to exit the property, I would be considered a "criminal trespass" and subject to arrest. At no point was I provided with notice or an opportunity to be heard before being placed on the Centre's do not admit for entry list.

When I asked whether any of the protestors outside who had a valid ticket could enter the Centre and view the Cosby Performance, the police officer explained that, even if someone had a ticket to the performance, if they were on the list, they (a) would be denied entry, and, (b) if they refused to leave, the Cobb County police department would treat them as trespassers.

I obeyed the police officer's instructions and left the Centre's property; I was unable to watch the Cosby Performance.

Later as we investigated how this denial of my rights happened, I was appalled to discover evidence that I had been placed on a police "security watch list", that police "intelligence" specifically reported on me by name and that a representative of Bill Cosby was communicating with police by email about what Cosby's representative called "agitators." As a result of these events, I filed a lawsuit on November 18, 2015, in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division against Cobb County, Georgia, and the Cobb-Marietta Coliseum and Exhibit Hall Authority alleging that my First Amendment rights and due process rights and the rights of a number of other Bill Cosby protesters were violated when we were denied the right to view and listen to Mr. Cosby's performance without justification of explanation wholly on account of our viewpoints about Mr. Cosby.

I was seeking a court order which enjoined the defendants from carrying out the Centre's viewpoint based censorship admissions policy.

Today we are able to announce a successful settlement of this case.

In the settlement the defendants agreed to a consent order which states in part, "That so long as a person does not pose an immediate and objective threat to the safety of others, any member of the public holding a ticket for the listed

public performance at the Centre may attend the show. That, in certain circumstances, the Authority can deny entry to a person if it objectively appears that the person imminently will disrupt the performance. A person who states, “I will not disrupt the performance,” for example, is not someone who can be objectively determined as such a threat. A policy of allowing public performers discretion to exclude private citizens on any (or no) basis is not narrowly tailored to achieve any legitimate governmental interest in protecting the performer’s rights to speak. That the Authority will not delegate to a performer the right to ban people from attending public performances in the Centre. That the Authority will enter into a consent order to be in effect for one year subsequent to its effective date.”

The defendants have agreed that the consent order will be an order of the federal court. That means that if it is not complied with in accordance with the terms of the settlement that I could seek to hold the defendants in contempt of court.

In addition, Cobb-Marietta Coliseum and Exhibit Hall Authority agreed to pay \$40,000.00 for my damages, attorney’s fees and costs.

This extremely successful outcome would not have been possible without the outstanding legal advocacy of Georgia civil rights attorney, Cary Wiggins. Mr. Wiggins, who represented me in this matter recognized the importance of this case and these issues as soon as I contacted him. He knew that government had no right to punish me or other protestors by excluding us from the Bill Cosby “Far from Finished” show solely on account of our expressed viewpoint about Mr. Cosby. In other words, he agreed that my constitutional right to free speech was violated when I was refused admission to the Bill Cosby “Far from Finished” show when I had a ticket and indicated that I would not disrupt it.

I am very grateful for Mr. Wiggins excellent representation of me which led to this successful outcome.

With this settlement we have achieved a victory not only for me, but also for other protestors who wish to exercise their right of free speech about other performers in the future.

Government may not delegate to Bill Cosby or any other performer the right to ban ticket holders from attending a public performance at the Cobb Energy Centre, simply because the performer does not like the viewpoint of the ticket holder's free speech.

I am very glad that we have achieved everything that we have sought to do when we filed this lawsuit and I am pleased that we have achieved a result that will protect others in the exercise of their free speech in the future.

Gloria Allred
Attorney at Law
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