ELECTRONICALLY FILED Superior Court of California, County of Orange 07/22/2014 at 09:11:24 AM Babak Semnar (SBN 224890) 1 Clerk of the Superior Court SEMNAR LAW FIRM, INC. By Joseph Villegas Deputy Clerk 400 S. Melrose Dr., Suite 209 2 Vista, CA 92081 Telephone: (951) 293-4187; Fax: (888) 819-8230 3 Jared M. Hartman, Esq. (SBN 254860) 4 HARTMAN LAW OFFICE, INC. 400 S. Melrose Dr., Suite 209 5 Vista, CA 92081 Telephone (951) 234-0881; Fax (888) 819-8230 6 Attorneys for Plaintiff JANESSA RAY 7 8 SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF ORANGE—CENTRAL JUSTICE CENTER 9 30-2014-00735404-CU-MC-CJC JANESSA RAY, an individual, Case No.: Judge William Claster 10 Plaintiff, COMPLAINT FOR VIOLATIONS 11 OF: VS. 1. CALIFORNIA ROSENTHAL 12 ACT. TRADING FINANCIAL CREDIT, a 2. INTENTIONAL INFLICTION limited liability company, and Does 13 OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS. 1-10, 3. USURY, 14 4. FRAUD, Defendants. 15 TO THE CLERK OF THE COURT, ALL PARTIES, AND THE HONORABLE 16 SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE: 17 Complainant, JANESSA RAY, an Individual, by and through her attorneys of 18 record, hereby complains and alleges as follows: 19 INTRODUCTION 20 JANESSA RAY, (Plaintiff), through her attorneys, brings this action to 1. 21 challenge the actions of Defendant TRADING FINANCIAL CREDIT, LLC. Complaint for Damages

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JURISDICTION & VENUE

- 8. This action arises out of Defendants' violations of the Federal FDCPA, as incorporated into the State of California's Rosenthal Act; as well as the State of California's Rosenthal Act, the State of California tort for Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress, the State of California tort for Usury, and the State of California tort for fraud, all of which vest the state courts with subject matter jurisdiction.
- Defendant TFC is a California company with its primary place of business in the City of Los Angeles, at 3055 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 300, so therefore personal jurisdiction is established.
- 10. Because all tortious conduct occurred while Plaintiff resided in the County of Orange and witnesses reside within the County of Orange, venue properly lies in this Court.

PARTIES & DEFINITIONS

- Plaintiff is a natural person whose permanent residence is in the County of Orange, State of California.
 - 12. Defendant TFC is a California limited liability company.
- 13. Plaintiff, as a natural person allegedly obligated to pay a consumer debt to Defendants alleged to have been due and owing, is therefore both a "consumer" as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(3) of the FDCPA, and is also therefore a "debtor" as that term is defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(h) of the Rosenthal Act.
 - 14. Plaintiff had taken out a loan with Defendant TFC that placed a collateral

security interest upon her vehicle title, and Plaintiff took this loan out for living expenses and costs after her mother was laid off and Plaintiff's hours were cut, and Plaintiff is therefore informed and believes that the money alleged to have been owed to Defendant originated from monetary credit that was extended to Plaintiff primarily for personal, family, or household purposes, and is therefore a "debt" as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(5) of the FDCPA and Calif. Civil Code § 1788.2(d) of the Rosenthal Act.

- 15. Upon information and belief, Defendants were attempting to collect on a debt that originated from monetary credit that was extended primarily for personal, family, or household purposes, and was therefore a "consumer credit transaction" within the meaning of Calif. Civil Code § 1788.2(e) of the Rosenthal Act.
- 16. Because Plaintiff, a natural person allegedly obligated to pay money to Defendants arising from what Plaintiff is informed and believes was a consumer credit transaction, the money allegedly owed was a "consumer debt" within the meaning of California Civil Code § 1788.2(f) of the Rosenthal Act.
- 17. Plaintiff is informed and believes that Defendant is one who regularly collects or attempts to collect debts on behalf of themselves, and is therefore a "debt collector" within the meaning of Calif. Civil Code § 1788.2(c) of the Rosenthal Act, and thereby engages in "debt collection" within the meaning of California Civil Code § 1788.2(b) of the Rosenthal Act, and is also therefore a "person" within the meaning of California Civil Code § 1788.2(g) of the Rosenthal Act.

18. In March of 2012, Plaintiff entered into a financial loan with Defendant TFC with title to her vehicle secured as collateral in order to have living expenses because her mother had recently lost her job and because Plaintiff's hours working as a pre-school teacher with autistic children had recently been cut back.

- 19. The contract that Plaintiff entered into was for Plaintiff to receive \$4,000.00, but for Defendant TFC to receive reimbursement of not only the \$4,000.00 principal amount but also an Annual Percentage Rate of 92.098% and therefore receive in return a total of \$11,925.63 through monthly payments of \$331.27.
- 20. This loan violates the State of California Usury Laws, which cap annual percentage rates at 7%, or at a maximum of 12% if that amount is contractually bargained for by the parties in writing. See Calif. Civ. Code §1916.12-1.
- 21. Upon information and belief, Defendant TFC in their contract labels their loans a "bona fide principal" loan of \$2,500.00 or more with the deceptive intention of evading California's usury laws.
- 22. After paying approximately \$2,000.00 towards the principal, Plaintiff's hours working as a teacher for autistic pre-school kids were again cut back again and as a result Plaintiff was therefore not able to make the full monthly payments of \$331.27.
- Plaintiff called Defendant TFC in an effort to negotiate a lowered monthly payment for the rest of the amount owed.
 - 24. Defendant TFC claimed that they could not negotiate that with her, and she

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"Bett Thompson" who also claimed to them that Plaintiff was being investigated for

- Upon information and belief, "Bett Thompson" was acting on behalf of, at the direction of, and in association with Defendant TFC because the only two people associated with Plaintiff that "Bett" called were the two references listed in Plaintiff's
- Plaintiff left a voicemail for "Bett" and asked for "Bett" to send her proof of her credentials as an investigator, which of course never occurred because "Bett" is not an investigator and there is no such entity as the "California Inspector General's
- In approximately January or February of 2014, Plaintiff began receiving multiple phone calls per day from Defendant TFC, and Plaintiff ignored many of these calls because it was too stressful for her to receive the calls during business hours while
- In March of 2014, Defendant TFC repossessed the vehicle from Plaintiff's
- On March 17, 2014, Defendant TFC sent Plaintiff a notice that they are charging her \$400.00 for the repossession plus additional amounts of storage fees and late fees, and they could only waive the \$400.00 repossession fee if she were to pay the loan off in full for \$8,882.83.
 - Defendant TFC claimed to Plaintiff that they eventually sold the vehicle 37.

for \$5,000.00, which should have put Defendant at having received a total of approximately \$7,000.00 into the loan repayment.

- 38. On April 30, 2014, Defendant's agent Peter sent an email to Plaintiff informing her that after selling the vehicle the pay off balance was \$1,424.78.
- 39. Plaintiff requested proof of the amounts owed, and Defendant's agent Peter sent her via email a statement dated April 28, 2014 showing that she actually owes them \$4,282.83.
- 40. Plaintiff has suffered severe mental anguish and emotional distress by way of multiple episodes of crying fits and hysterics, loss of sleep, anxiety, fear, embarrassment, humiliation, and lack of attention and focus at her job working with pre-school age autistic children as a result of Defendant's extremely outrageous behavior for the following:
 - a. Charging Plaintiff almost triple the amount of her principle amount loaned,
 which contained a usurious amount of interest at 92.098% APR;
 - b. By setting her up to go into default by not working out a payment plan with her when she initially tried and they knew she could not afford to pay the monthly amount;
 - c. By having "Bett Thompson" call Plaintiff and her two friends listed as her references to falsely claim that Plaintiff was being investigated by the fictitious entity of "California Inspector General's Office" for fraud, and
 - d. By misrepresenting the amounts that Plaintiff owed to them, varying from

\$8,882.83 in March of 2014, then \$1,424.78 after the vehicle was sold for

references to federal codes in this section refer to those codes as they read January 1, 2001.

48. At all times during the aforementioned actions, there was in full force and effect the following usury laws creating a limitation upon interest pursuant to Calif. Civ.

Code §1916.12-1:

The rate of interest upon the loan or forbearance of any money, goods or things in action or on accounts after demand or judgments rendered in any court of this state, shall be seven dollars upon the one hundred dollars for one year and at that rate for a greater or less sum or for a longer or a shorter time; but it shall be competent for parties to contract for the payment and receipt of a rate of interest not exceeding twelve dollars on the one hundred dollars for one year and not exceeding that rate for a greater or less sum or for a longer or shorter time, in which case such rate exceeding seven dollars on one hundred dollars shall be clearly expressed in writing.

49. At all times during the aforementioned actions, there was in full force and effect the following usury laws creating a limitation upon interest pursuant to Calif. Civ.

Code §1916.12-2:

No person, company, association or corporation shall directly or indirectly take or receive in money, goods or things in action, or in any other manner whatsoever, any greater sum or any greater value for the loan or forbearance of money, goods or things in action than at the rate of twelve dollars upon one hundred dollars for one year; and in the computation of interest upon any bond, note, or other instrument or agreement, interest shall not be compounded, nor shall the interest thereon be construed to bear interest unless an agreement to that effect is clearly expressed in writing and signed by the party to be charged therewith. Any agreement or contract of any nature in conflict with the provisions of this section shall be null and void as to any agreement or stipulation therein contained to pay interest and no action at law to recover interest in any sum shall be maintained and the debt cannot be declared due until the full period of time it was contracted for has elapsed.

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION ROSENTHAL ACT CAL. CIV. CODE §§ 1788-1788.32

- 50. Plaintiff repeats, re-alleges and incorporates by reference the above paragraphs, as though set forth fully herein.
- 51. By having "Bett Thompson" call Plaintiff's two friends in September and October of 2013 listed as Plaintiff's references in her loan application to make the false representation that Plaintiff was being investigated for fraud, Defendant TFC violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692c(b) of the Federal FDCPA, which is necessarily a violation of the California Rosenthal Act via Calif. Civ. Code 1788.17.
- 52. By having "Bett Thompson" call Plaintiff in September and October of 2013 to falsely claim that "Bett" is from the "California Inspector General's Office"—which doesn't exist—and to falsely claim that Plaintiff committed the crime of fraud, with intention of shaming Plaintiff and thereby forcing her to make payments, Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692d, 1692e, 1692e(7), and 1692f of the Federal FDCPA, which are necessarily violations of the California Rosenthal Act via Calif. Civ. Code 1788.17.
- 53. By misrepresenting the amounts that Plaintiff owed to them, varying from \$8,882.83 in March of 2014, then \$1,424.78 after the vehicle was sold for \$5,000.00, but then sending an invoice dated April 28, 2014 showing she owed \$4,282.83 Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692d, 1692e, and 1692f of the Federal FDCPA,

which are necessarily violations of the California Rosenthal Act via Calif. Civ. Code 1788.17.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION INTENTIONAL INFLICTION OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

- 54. Plaintiff repeats, re-alleges, and incorporates by reference all other paragraphs, as if fully set forth herein.
- 55. "A cause of action for intentional infliction of emotional distress exists when there is '(1) extreme and outrageous conduct by the defendant with the intention of causing, or reckless disregard of the probability of causing, emotional distress; (2) the plaintiff's suffering severe or extreme emotional distress; and (3) actual and proximate causation of the emotional distress by the defendant's outrageous conduct.' A defendant's conduct is 'outrageous' when it is so 'extreme as to exceed all bounds of that usually tolerated in a civilized community.' And the defendant's conduct must be 'intended to inflict injury or engaged in with the realization that injury will result." (Hughes v. Pair (2009) 46 Cal.4th 1035, 1050—1051 [95 Cal.Rptr.3d 636, 209 P.3d 963]).
- 56. It was extreme and outrageous for Defendant to have someone claiming to be "Bett Thompson" from the "California Inspector General's Office"—which doesn't exist—to call Plaintiff and her two friends listed as references on her application to falsely claim that Plaintiff is being investigated for fraud.
 - 57. No civilized community would tolerate such extremely outrageous

2014, they obtained approximately \$3,000.00 more than the principal amount, which

usury laws of the State of California do not apply to this loan, which induced Plaintiff into a false sense of security that the loan was legal, when in reality Defendant TFC knew their representations were false because they were calling this a "bona fide principal" loan of \$2,500.00 or more for the purpose of evading the usury laws, and Plaintiff so relied on their representations and has suffered damages by way of Defendant receiving approximately \$7,000.00 in total on the \$4,000.00 loan and still claiming Plaintiff owes them approximately \$4,282.83.

- 71. Also upon information and belief, when Defendant TFC informed Plaintiff by way of email dated April 30, 2014 that her pay off balance was \$1,424.78, Defendant TFC knew this amount was false and intended to induce Plaintiff into a position of false security that her payoff amount was manageable, but then when Plaintiff requested proof they sent an invoice dated April 28, 2014 indicating that she actually owed \$4282.83.
- 72. Plaintiff is further informed and believes that the aforesaid conduct was malicious and oppressive, as those terms are defined by California Civil Code sections 3294(c)(1) and 3294(c)(2), entitling Plaintiff to punitive damages.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays that judgment be entered against all Defendants, and Plaintiff be awarded damages from all Defendants as follows:

As To the First Cause of Action (Rosenthal Act):

1. An award of actual damages pursuant to California Civil Code §

TRIAL BY JURY Pursuant to the Seventh Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, Plaintiff is entitled to, and demands, a trial by jury.

DATED: 7/21/2014 HARTMAN LAW OFFICE, INC.

JARED M. HARTMAN, Esq. Attorney for Plaintiff