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**Attorney Lauren P. Raysor Files Notice of Claim Seeking \$1.5 Million in Damages for Bakery Owners after Mount Vernon Mayor Orders Shop to be Shut Down**

*Claim Says Closure Was Motivated by Retaliation, Cites Harm to Reputation, Emotional Distress, and Loss of Business*

MOUNT VERNON, NEW YORK — On September 28, 2018, Attorney [Lauren P. Raysor](#) was joined by attorney Pamela D. Hayes in announcing they filed a Notice of Claim at Mount Vernon City Court on behalf of M. Miesha Stokely and Montika Jones, Co-Owners, Cupcake Cutie Boutique. The Plaintiffs are seeking \$1.5 million in damages for harm to the bakery's reputation, intentional infliction of emotional distress and loss of business.

The Notice of Claim states that Richard Thomas, Mayor, City of Mount Vernon, engaged in a pattern of harassment by using city employees to harass and intimidate Ms. Stokely and Ms. Jones because of their relationship to Damon Jones, Publisher/Owner of *Black Westchester* newspaper and a vocal critic of the mayor and his administration. Mr. Jones is Ms. Jones' husband and Ms. Stokely's stepfather.

Ms. Jones, who is also a Detective with the City of Mount Vernon Police Department, has been the subject of alleged harassment under Mayor Thomas' administration.

On August 1, 2015, Cupcake Cutie Boutique, Inc., which is located at 8 South 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Mount Vernon, New York, signed a leasing agreement. Two months later, the shop applied for a Certificate of Tenancy with the City of Mount Vernon. The city granted a temporary Certificate of Tenancy and continued to operate without interruption.

On July 2018, the landlord submitted a report of Test and Maintenance of the Backflow Prevention Device to the City's Water Department. Once the report was received, the Building Department refused to issue a permanent Certificate of Tenancy to Cupcake Cutie Boutique. On August 3, 2018, Mayor Thomas ordered Cupcake Cutie Boutique to be closed down without notice, without a violation, and without due process. Three days later, the owners requested and received a new Temporary Certificate of Tenancy from the Building Department.

Ms. Stokely and Ms. Jones claimed that the Mayor and the Building Department caused irreparable harm to the establishment and its reputation by stating the store was unsafe and a detriment to the public.

In addition to Mayor Thomas and the City of Mount Vernon, the following have been named as Defendants; the Building Department and Commissioners Daniel P. Jones and Guy Lorrius; the Mount Vernon Police Department and Deputy Commissioner Joseph Spiezio.

“As a husband, father and business owner, it is unacceptable to have my family and our businesses personally and politically retaliated against for my speaking Truth to Power on local Mount Vernon issues,” Mr. Jones said.

“Mayor Thomas and his administration’s corruption know no limits or boundaries,” Ms. Stokely said. “With the filing of this notice of claim, I have taken steps to protect my business, preserve my integrity, and clear my name. As a business owner and native of Mount Vernon, these unlawful actions of retaliation taken against me by Mayor Thomas are disheartening. Today is the day that we say NO to Mayor Thomas and his corruption. As a community mentor of the youth and an advocate for small women-owned businesses, I stand today representing all honest and hardworking business owners. This travesty is trying to ruin my reputation and my business, but I will not stand down.”

“What Mayor Thomas and the city administrators did to my clients was an absolute abuse of power,” Ms. Raysor said. “They used their positions in government to silence a dissenting voice and attempt to force a local business to close its doors for good. This is not the way local government should act.”

For more information, call (914) 733-8080 or visit [www.laurenpraysor.com](http://www.laurenpraysor.com).

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**About Lauren P. Raysor**

[Lauren P. Raysor](#) is an attorney concentrating in personal injury, civil rights, bankruptcy, matrimonial and family law. She has litigated numerous cases over the years, taking more than 35 cases to verdict and has argued before the Appellate Division in the case of *Makeda Barnes Joseph v. Universal Music Group*. She served as Corporation Counsel for the City of Mount Vernon, where she was in charge of the city’s Law Department. Ms. Raysor is currently outside counsel for the New York State Dormitory Authority, and served as the Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Upper Manhattan Region, outside counsel to the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone and counsel at a Wall Street law firm.

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