

21ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT

IN AND FOR THE PARISH OF LIVINGSTON

STATE OF LOUISIANA

CAUSE NO. _____ DIVISION _____

AMANDA JONES, PLAINTIFF

VERSUS

CITIZENS FOR A NEW LOUISIANA;
MICHAEL LUNSFORD; AND
RYAN THAMES, DEFENDANTS

PETITION FOR DAMAGES AND FOR INJUNCTIVE RELIEF

Now into Court comes Amanda Jones, Plaintiff herein, who submits this, her Petition for Damages, and for Injunctive Relief, pursuant to La. C.C.P. Art. 3601, *et seq.*, in the form of immediate issuance of a temporary restraining order, enjoining Defendants from willful and malicious injury, namely, defamation, of the Petitioner, and, after hearing, preliminary and permanent injunction; and would show the Court as follows.

I. PARTIES; VENUE; AND JURISDICTION

1. Plaintiff Amanda Jones, a competent person of the full age of majority, resides and is domiciled in Livingston Parish, Louisiana.
2. Defendant Citizens for a New Louisiana is a non-profit corporation, domiciled in Lafayette Parish, Louisiana, and registered to do and doing business in the State of Louisiana.
3. Defendant Michael Lunsford is domiciled in the State of Louisiana; on information and belief, Defendant Lunsford is a resident of Lafayette Parish.
4. Defendant Ryan Thames is a resident of and domiciled in Livingston Parish, Louisiana.
5. All facts giving rise to Plaintiff's complaints occurred in Livingston Parish, Louisiana.
6. Venue is proper in this Court.
7. This Court has jurisdiction over the subject matter of this lawsuit, and all claims raised herein.

II. UNDERLYING FACTS

8. Sometime in July 2022, Ms. Erin Sandefur, a member of the Livingston Parish Library

Board of Control, requested that the Board examine the content of books which she found to be inappropriate; Ms. Sandefur's request was placed on the agenda for the Board's meeting on July 19, 2022.

9. The public notice for the July 19, 2022 meeting referred to this agenda item only as "book content."

10. Plaintiff, Ms. Amanda Jones, attended the meeting on July 19, 2022. During the time allotted for public comment, Ms. Jones made the following statements:

My name is Amanda Jones. I am the 2021 School Library Journal National Librarian of the Year, an international speaker and advocate on behalf of libraries, and am President of the LA Association of School Librarians. I am here as a representative of that organization, but more importantly as a lifelong resident of Livingston Parish, parent of a child in this district, and taxpayer. I am here tonight because book content and book signage have been listed on tonight's agenda. I hope that what I am about to say is not needed, and that my fear that a member of the board is trying to censor books and signage is unfounded.

BIPOC, stands for "Black, Indigenous, and People of Color."

While book challenges are often done with the best intentions, and in the name of age appropriateness, they often target marginalized communities such as BIPOC and the LGBTQ community. They also target books on sexual health and reproduction. Considering that Livingston Parish has the highest rate of children in foster care per capita in Louisiana, and that number has doubled over the past few years, I find it ironic that any member of the community would want to limit access to any book on reproduction or relocate it away from the our children who need it the most. Once you start relocating and banning one topic, it becomes a slippery slope and where does it end?

All members of our community deserve to be seen, have access to information, and see themselves, in our PUBLIC library collection. Censoring and relocating books and displays is harmful to our community, but will be extremely harmful to our most vulnerable—our children. According to the Trevor Project, "LGBTQ youth are not inherently prone to suicide risk because of their sexual orientation or gender identity but rather placed at higher risk because of how they are mistreated and stigmatized in society."

Libraries are for everyone. According to the American Library Association, of which I am a member,

LIBRARIES ARE A cornerstone of the community dedicated to serving the information needs of everyone. As such, they collect and make available a wide variety of information resources representing the range of human thought and experience. With such a broad spectrum of ideas and information available, it is inevitable that people will occasionally encounter resources they believe to be inappropriate for their family.

Just because you enter a library, it does not mean that you will not see something you don't like. Libraries have diverse collections with resources from many points of view, and a library's mission is to provide access to information for all users. All library users have the First Amendment right to borrow, read, view, and listen to library resources, according to the ALA. If an individual is concerned about a children's or young adult's resource or its location in the library, that individual has the right to go through the library's reconsideration policy that is already in place. Each family has the right to determine which library resources are acceptable for its own children, but individuals must also realize that they must afford the same rights to all other parents.

The citizens of our parish consist of tax payers who are white, Black, brown, gay, straight, Christian, non-Christian—people from all backgrounds and walks of life, and no

one portion of the community should dictate what the rest of the citizens have access to. Just because you don't want to read it or see it, it doesn't give you the right to deny others or demand its relocation. If we remove or relocate books with LGBTQ or sexual health content, what message is that sending to our community members? Why is your belief system any more important than others'? What will be next if you accomplish your mission? Parents have a personal responsibility to monitor their own child's reading and nobody else's.

The LPL Director Giovanni Tairov has accomplished wonders for our public library and made it into an award-winning system. There's a reason the Louisiana Library Association named him the 2019 Public Library Director of the Year. Trust his judgment and those of the other dedicated LPL employees. There is a solid collection development policy in place. Nobody is putting pornography in children's sections of the library. Stop that false narrative. The librarians over the collection have library science degrees and use professional reviews, which list ages of relevancy and age appropriateness, before deciding where to place them in the library. There is already a book challenge process if a community member does not like a particular book or location of a book in the library. As board members, I would hope you already know that.

To board member Erin Sandefur who placed this item on the agenda, I will say this—You once posted on social media that there are folks who do not agree with you and that we can be one of your greatest teachers. That is an admirable statement. I would love to teach you about how harmful censorship, book policing, and agenda items like these affect our youth and historically marginalized community members.

To the entire board, I will say this: I grew up in this parish being taught that God is love. What I've come to realize is that what many people mean is that God is love only if you have the same religious and political beliefs as them. I have lived in our parish for 44 years. I am a mother of a child in our school system. I have been a LPL card holder since 1983. I have watched our public library grow to be one of our parish's biggest assets—something we can be proud of. I will remind board members that regardless of your own beliefs on the topic of book content and location, to think about this—no one on the right side of history has ever been on the side of censorship and hiding books. In the words of author Stephen Chbosky: "Banning books gives us silence when we need speech. It closes our ears when we need to listen. It makes us blind when we need sight." Hate and fear disguised as moral outrage have no place in Livingston Parish.

Thank you for allowing me to speak tonight.

11. Defendant Michael Lunsford also attended the July 19, 2022 Board meeting.

A. Defendants Michael Lunsford and Citizens for a New Louisiana

12. On July 20, 2022, the day after the meeting, Defendants Michael Lunsford ("Lunsford") and Citizens for a New Louisiana ("CFANL") initiated its public campaign to defame Plaintiff Amanda Jones.

13. The initial post by CFANL, on July 20, 2022, provided:

The ultimate question: why oh why would WAFB censor a "children's book"? In case you missed it. Numerous members of Citizens for a New Louisiana were present last night at the Livingston Parish Library board of control meeting. Short version: should certain books be shelved in the kid's section? Some local "anti-censorship" folks showed up to denounce moving to the adult section sexually explicit and erotic materials targeting eight to ten-year olds (like the attached).
HT Ryan Thames

14. On July 22, 2022, CFANL, in a public Facebook post, posted a picture of Amanda Jones speaking at the July 19, 2022 Board meeting; the picture shows Plaintiff's head and upper body

in a red circle; the circle has a white border (similar to a target). The text above the picture provides:

Here is Amanda Jones at the Livingston Parish Library board meeting on Tuesday, July 19, 2022. **Why is she fighting so hard to keep sexually erotic and pornographic materials in the kid's section?** The content in question is so very terrible that The Advocate (Baton Rouge, LA) won't even print it! They show (attached photo) Amanda Jones as the President of the Louisiana Association of SCHOOL Librarians. **What kind of influence would she have over what your six-year-old kindergartner sees in your local SCHOOL's library.**

[Emphasis added.]

15. Michael Lunsford/CFANL specifically stated that Plaintiff Amanda Jones had “showed up [at the July 19, 2022 meeting] to defend THAT book. It was on the list and she absolutely defended having it in the kids’ section.”

16. Michael Lunsford/CFANL also stated that he planned to go to Plaintiff’s place of employment: “Don’t worry about that teacher’s school we’re going to be scheduling a visit tomorrow.”

17. When another individual commented that Plaintiff was “just advocating for all of our libraries that are public, not just our kids school,” Michael Lunsford/CFANL responded: “let’s be clear. she’s on the public payroll and “advocating” for having erotica in the kids section.”

18. Later on July 22, 2022, CFANL posted the following on Facebook, and tagged Plaintiff Amanda Jones:¹

If it’s so erotic the Advocate (Baton Rouge, LA) won’t print it, should it really be in the Livingston Parish Library’s kids’ section?

19. On July 23, 2022, CFANL posted the following on Facebook:

Not difficult: should an eight-year-old have unfettered access to erotica in the kids section of the Livingston Parish Library?

20. On August 3, 2022, CFANL posted a picture of Facebook’s “standards on nudity or sexual activity,” and tagged Amanda Jones:

Facebook won't allow us to show you the book we found today in the Livingston Parish Library's children section. Is this the kind of "educational material" the Louisiana Association of School Librarians (LASL) wants your children to have access to?

21. Under the August 3, 2022 statement (paragraph 20), Michael Lunsford/CFANL

¹ At some time subsequent to Defendant’s initial post targeting Plaintiff, Plaintiff blocked CFANL on Facebook. CFANL then began tagging Plaintiff on her library association Facebook Page (Louisiana Association of School Librarians, a page that Plaintiff runs as president of the Association).

stated “instructing children on how to perform sex acts is not a constitutionally protected right.”

22. On August 6, 2022, CFANL posted a picture of a book entitled “Let’s talk about it: the teen’s guide to sex, relationships, and being a human” with the following text:

“It’s not for children,” they said. Except that’s not what the Livingston Parish Library’s website says. Last time we asked Amanda Jones’ Louisiana Association of School Librarians (LASL) if this was the kind of garbage they want children to have access to, they responded by untagging themselves.

23. On August 7, 2022, CFANL posted the following statement on Facebook:

This is what we’re up against, y’all. There are librarians in Livingston Parish who believe that sharing erotica and instructing juveniles on sex acts is progressive; while “laughing” at the idea of letting kids be kids and calling it “sending us back to the dark ages.” Let that sink in.

When she suggests that people are “getting off” on this material, Alice unwittingly admits that the what we’re finding in the children’s section “appeals to prurient interests.” That means, “having or encouraging an excessive interest in sexual matters,” and it’s the legal test for identifying obscene material.

The YA section, by the way, starts at sixth grade (eleven years old).

24. On August 8, 2022, CFANL posted a link to a news article titled “Michigan town votes to defund library over books with graphic sexual content,” with the caption “[i]s there a lesson in here for Livingston Parish Library?”

25. Based on information and belief, Defendant Michael Lunsford, Director of Citizens for a New Louisiana, is responsible for creating the group’s Facebook posts.

26. Defendant Lunsford and Defendant CFANL have portrayed, and continue to portray, Amanda Jones as a criminal and a pedophile – one who supports dissemination of “pornographic materials” to elementary school children.

27. Plaintiff Amanda Jones’ comments at the public meeting are set out *supra*, and obviously contained nothing even remotely resembling the accusations leveled by Defendant Lunsford and Defendant CFANL.

28. Defendant Lunsford and Defendant CFANL’s statements are defamatory *per se*, expressly accusing Plaintiff of criminal conduct, and by their very nature tending to injure Plaintiff’s personal and professional reputation.

29. Defendant Lunsford and Defendant CFANL’s statements comprise words which tended to harm Plaintiff’s reputation so as to lower Plaintiff in the estimation of the community; to deter others from associating or dealing with Plaintiff; and otherwise to expose Plaintiff to contempt and ridicule.

30. Defendant Lunsford and Defendant CFANL’s statements incited expressions of

violence toward the Plaintiff. ?

31. Defendant CFANL has sent five (5) public information requests to Plaintiff's employer, requesting copies of information related to Plaintiff Amanda Jones, including, but not limited to, her personnel records and copies of all emails transmitted and received.

32. The most recent public information request was sent by Defendant CFANL on August 8, 2022.

33. Defendant CFANL's continued public information requests are designed to harass and intimidate Plaintiff; to interfere with her employment; to harm Plaintiff's reputation and to lower the Plaintiff in the estimation of her employer; and to deter her employer from continuing her employment.

34. Defendant CFANL's, and Defendant Lunsford's, actions have caused the Plaintiff to suffer anxiety and emotional distress.

B. Defendant Ryan Thames

35. Defendant Ryan Thames operates a Facebook site which he has titled "Bayou State of Mind."

36. On or around July 21, 2022, Ryan Thames created and posted a "meme" of Plaintiff. The picture depicts Plaintiff Amanda Jones, smiling and seated behind a desk. Printed above and below Ms. Jones on the picture: "After advocating teaching anal sex to 11-year-olds I had to change my name on Facebook. Amanda Jones now identifies as 'Amanda Beth'". Defendant Ryan Thames posted the picture with the heading: "This woman is a proud librarian. Librarian of the year lol Good job Schools."

37. Defendant Thames' post circulated around social media and across the country for weeks.

38. Thames' post was eventually removed; based on information and belief, this was not voluntary, but was due to Facebook's intervention and removal of the post.

Evidence?

39. Defendant Thames' posted statements accused Plaintiff of advocating pedophilia, and were defamatory *per se*.

40. Defendant Thames' posted statements were designed to harm Plaintiff's

reputation and to lower the Plaintiff in the estimation of the community; to deter others from associating or dealing with the Plaintiff; or otherwise to expose Plaintiff to contempt or ridicule.

41. Defendant Thames' actions have caused the Plaintiff to suffer anxiety and emotional distress.

42. After Defendant Thames' post was removed, Thames continued to publicly ridicule and mock Plaintiff.

43. Defendant Thames published a cartoon titled "Snowflake Logic," showing two men in prison. One of them men is saying "I killed a man," the other is saying "I memed a librarian."

44. Defendant Thames posted another meme stating "Librarians uniting against censorship while not telling their donors they are actually advocating for "how-to guides" for middle schoolers to have oral and anal sex."

45. With respect to Plaintiff's professional accolades, Defendant Thames commented "award winning means nothing."

46. Defendant Thames made several statements to the effect that Plaintiff was sexually targeting children; was providing guidance for middle schools to teach oral and anal sex; and was grooming children to be sexually molested.

47. Statements made by Defendants about Plaintiff are false in every aspect.²

48. A private citizen arguing against a policy of content-based restrictions on the availability of books in public libraries is, quite simply, a patriot, acting to protect the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. Amanda Jones' patriotism, however, does not make her a public figure, nor should it subject her to harassment, ridicule, and accusations of the most despicable of criminal predilections.

49. Plaintiff is employed at a public school. Along with accusing Plaintiff of heinous crimes against the children whom she is bound to protect, and inciting fierce hatred and contempt for Plaintiff, Defendants have published Plaintiff's place of employment, and have threatened to show up at Plaintiff's place of employment. Plaintiff's safety, as well

² Incidentally, the book which has been the Defendants' propaganda campaign candy-stick was written by well-qualified and respected pediatric medical professionals, and certainly does not contain erotica or pornography.

as the safety of her colleagues and the children whom they are bound to protect, are in immediate danger of irreparable harm because of Defendants' ongoing actions.

III. INJUNCTIVE RELIEF

50. La. C.C.P. Art. 3601 provides for issuance of a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction "in cases where irreparable injury, loss, or damage may otherwise result to the applicant[.]" La. C.C.P. Art. 3603 contains the basis for granting an ex parte temporary restraining order: "[a] temporary restraining order shall be granted without notice when: (1) it clearly appears from specific facts shown by verified petition or supporting affidavit that immediate and irreparable injury, loss, or damage will result to the applicant before the adverse party or his attorney can be heard in opposition, and (2) the applicant's attorney certifies to the court in writing the efforts which have been made to give the notice or the reasons supporting his claim that notice should not be required."

51. Plaintiff respectfully requests that this Court enter an immediate order, without hearing, prohibiting Defendants from making any mention of Plaintiff Amanda Jones on social media, including, but not limited to, Facebook, and from contacting Plaintiff in any way, including by social media and including making contact with or tagging Plaintiff through her Facebook page the Livingston or from contacting her through the Louisiana Association of School Librarians Facebook page; and prohibiting Defendants from contacting Plaintiff's employer or coming within one hundred (100) yards of her place of employment; or of coming within one hundred (100) yards of the Plaintiff's person; or from contacting Plaintiff's employer. and also ordering Defendants to remove any and all references to Plaintiff Amanda Jones on any and all of their social media accounts, including but not limited to Facebook and Twitter, whether it be their personal account or operated under another name or business name, including Citizens for a New Louisiana and Bayou State of Mind.

52. Plaintiff asserts that, without this Court's entrance of an immediate order as requested herein, she is in immediate danger of irreparable harm, as Defendants' harassment and defamation is ongoing and continuous. Petitioner has no other remedy available to her.

53. La. C.C.P. Art. 3610 provides in pertinent part, that "[a] temporary restraining order or preliminary injunction shall not issue unless the applicant furnishes security in the amount fixed by the court, except where security is dispensed with by law. The security shall

indemnify the person wrongfully restrained or enjoined for the payment of costs incurred and damages sustained.”

54. Because the Defendants will not incur any economic damages as a result of a temporary anti-harassment order from this Court, Plaintiff respectfully requests that bond be waived.

55. Plaintiff further requests that this Court set a hearing and that, at hearing, the Court grant a preliminary injunction, enjoining Defendants from engaging in continued harassment and defamation, pending trial of this cause; and that this Court order Defendants to remove any and all statements and references to Plaintiff which they have previously published, and to diligently attempt to remove any and all references or statements to Plaintiff which they have previously published and which have been re-published by any third party; and that Defendants issue an apology and retraction statement to Plaintiff on all social media platforms and any other website or media to which it has published defamatory and/or harassing statements or references to Plaintiff; and that, after trial, the Court grant Plaintiff a permanent injunction against Defendants.

56. Plaintiff requests a trial by jury, and prays for damages.

IV. CONCLUSION AND PRAYER

WHEREFORE, PLAINTIFF PRAYS that this Court enter a Temporary Order, without notice, restraining Defendants as hereinabove described, and that this Court set a hearing on Plaintiff’s request for preliminary injunctive relief, and grant Plaintiff’s request for injunctive relief against Defendants, pending trial of this cause by jury; and that, after due proceedings be had, there be judgment in favor of Plaintiff and against Defendants, for

- a. Permanent Injunction, enjoining Defendants from harassing and defaming Plaintiff;
- b. Compensatory damages, including damages for emotional distress;
- c. Punitive Damages;
- d. Attorney’s fees and court costs;
- e. Any and all other relief to which Plaintiff may be deemed entitled, whether in equity or under law.

Date: August 9, 2022.

Respectfully Submitted By:



Ellyn J. Clevenger (#32395)



ATTORNEY FOR PLAINTIFF,
AMANDA JONES

CERTIFICATION OF COUNSEL

I, Ellyn J. Clevenger, Counsel of Record for Plaintiff, Amanda Jones, do hereby certify that all statements of fact set forth hereinabove, as related to social media postings and statements made by the parties, are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.



ELLYN J. CLEVINGER

Please Issue Service to:

CITIZENS FOR A NEW LOUISIANA,
Through its Registered Agent



Lafayette, Louisiana 70503

Michael Lunsford
Director



Ryan Thames



21ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
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AMANDA JONES, PLAINTIFF

VERSUS

CITIZENS FOR A NEW LOUISIANA;
MICHAEL LUNSFORD; AND
RYAN THAMES,
DEFENDANTS

AFFIDAVIT OF AMANDA JONES
VERIFYING HER PETITION FOR INJUNCTIVE RELIEF

STATE OF LOUISIANA

PARISH OF LIVINGSTON

Before me, the undersigned Notary Public, duly commissioned in the State and Parish above mentioned, came and appeared the following affiant, whose identity has been verified in accordance with applicable law:

AMANDA JONES

Who, upon being duly sworn, did depose and state as follows:

I am the Plaintiff in the above-captioned suit, and in the Petition for Injunctive Relief. I have reviewed the Petition and all of the factual allegations related to the ongoing harassment by Citizens for a New Louisiana; Michael Lunsford; and Ryan Thames. All of these factual allegations are true and correct: Defendants have harassed me continuously since July 19, 2022, continuing to do so as of the time of filing of the petition with this Court. They have accused me of despicable criminal acts. Their comments have caused many people to express hatred, some even threatening violence against me. Defendants have told these people where I work, at [REDACTED] Middle School, and have also threatened to show up there. Defendants have repeatedly contacted my employer demanding disclosure of my private, personal information. I am concerned for my safety, and for the safety of my colleagues and students. I am respectfully requesting that this Court enter an immediate injunction, without notice and without bond, as requested in my petition. [REDACTED]

AMANDA JONES

DONE AND SIGNED BEFORE ME, NOTARY, this 9th Day of August, 2022.

[REDACTED]
ELLYN CLEVINGER (BAR ROLL NUMBER 32395)

21ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
IN AND FOR THE PARISH OF LIVINGSTON
STATE OF LOUISIANA

CAUSE NO. _____ DIVISION _____

AMANDA JONES, PLAINTIFF

VERSUS

**CITIZENS FOR A NEW LOUISIANA;
MICHAEL LUNSFORD; AND
RYAN THAMES, DEFENDANTS**

TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER AND NOTICE OF HEARING

The Court, having considered the verified Petition for Injunctive Relief brought before the Court by Plaintiff Amanda Jones, and considering the governing law, finds as follows. It clearly appears from specific facts shown in the verified Petition that immediate and irreparable injury, loss, or damage will result to the Petitioner before the adverse parties or their attorneys can be heard in opposition, in accordance with the provisions of La. C.C.P. Art. 3601, *et seq.* Accordingly, the Court enters judgment as follows:

IT IS ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED that Defendants, Citizens for a New Louisiana; Michael Lunsford; Ryan Thames; or any of their agents or assigns, be and hereby are prohibited from making or publishing any further statements regarding Plaintiff, Amanda Jones, including making any mention of Plaintiff Amanda Jones on any social media platform, such as Facebook, Twitter, or any other such website; and from contacting Plaintiff in any way, including, but not limited to, by or through any social media, and including making contact with or tagging Plaintiff through the Louisiana Association of School Librarians Facebook page.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED that Defendants, Citizens for a New Louisiana; Michael Lunsford; and Ryan Thames; or any of their agents or assigns, are prohibited from coming within one hundred (100) yards of Plaintiff's place of employment, namely: [REDACTED]; or from coming within one hundred (100) yards of Plaintiff's person; or from contacting Plaintiff's employer.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, ADJUDGED, AND DECREED that, in context of the factual allegations herein and the likelihood that Defendants will not suffer any economic harm during the pendency of this Temporary Order, bond is hereby WAIVED.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED that Plaintiffs and counsel shall appear on the _____ Day of _____, 2022, at _____.m. and show cause why, if any they have or can, that:

- a. A preliminary injunction should not issue, continuing the same relief contained in this Temporary Order; and further ordering Defendants to remove any and all statements and references to Plaintiff which they have previously published, and to diligently attempt to remove any and all references or statements to Plaintiff which they have previously published and which have been re-published by any third party; and that Defendants issue an apology and retraction statement to Plaintiff on all social media platforms and any other website or media to which it has published defamatory and/or harassing statements or references to Plaintiff;
- e. Plaintiff, Amanda Jones, should not be accorded any and all relief available to her, whether by law or in equity.


DONE AND SIGNED this _____ Day of _____, 2021, at _____ .m., in _____, Louisiana.

JUDGE, 21ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT

Respectfully submitted, by:



Ellyn J. Clevenger
Louisiana Bar Roll Number 32395


ATTORNEY FOR PLAINTIFF,
AMANDA JONES