



## News Release

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# Childhood Sexual Abuse Case Filed Against Santa Ana Unified School District

***Survivor told by the perpetrator who impregnated her that she would not be believed because of her race***

**Los Angeles, California** – Attorneys from Greenberg Gross and Jeff Anderson & Associates filed a lawsuit against Santa Ana Unified School District on behalf of childhood sexual abuse survivor Tenisha Steen. They recently filed an amended complaint, naming the Santa Ana School District as a defendant. The case was filed under the California Child Victims Act (AB 218) and faults the Santa Ana Unified School District with negligence and negligent supervision, training and retention of Gary Satrappe, the teacher who assaulted, threatened, harassed and sexually abused Ms. Steen.

“The emotional and mental scars of sexual assault never fade,” said Ms. Steen. “Even after so many years, I struggle to deal with the pain and damage done. I wish I could have finished school like my friends. I wish I could have finished my education and had more life experience before becoming a mother so that I could have given my children a better life. And I wish I could form healthy relationships. I have spent decades trying to rebuild the life and joy I lost when I was repeatedly assaulted at the age of 16. By filing this lawsuit, I am taking another step to rebuild my life.”

In 1983, Ms. Steen was a student in Satrappe’s class at Santa Ana Valley High School. As alleged in the complaint, Satrappe used his position of authority to groom Ms. Steen soon after the school year began. Ms. Steen was repeatedly sexually assaulted by Satrappe. As a result of the repeated sexual assaults, Ms. Steen became pregnant.

Ms. Steen alleges that Satrappe threatened her and told her she could be expelled from school if she told others about the assaults and that they could both end up in jail. Satrappe even told Ms. Steen that no one would believe her because of her race and because he, a white man, was a well-respected teacher within the Santa Ana community. Ms. Steen, a pregnant victim of

assault therefore kept silent, fearing that speaking out would lead to bad grades, expulsion from school, or even worse repercussions.

In 1986, Ms. Steen first decided to speak out and filed a civil case against Satrappe. In connection with that case, Satrappe admitted to being the father. The jury found Satrappe liable. Satrappe passed away in 2004. At this time, Ms. Steen is speaking out again to hold the Santa Ana Unified School District accountable.

“When faced with the overwhelming responsibility of a child produced by the assaults, Ms. Steen filed a lawsuit against Gary Satrappe in 1986,” said attorney Deborah Mallgrave of Greenberg Gross. “We now know that Satrappe told Ms. Steen that she would not be believed because of her race. In doing so, Satrappe leveraged his privilege as a white man and the effectiveness of systemic racism in silencing survivors of color in marginalized communities. This lawsuit exposes how Santa Ana Unified School District failed to protect Ms. Steen from sexual predator Gary Satrappe and, in turn, violated her civil rights.”

After the birth of her child Ms. Steen was visited at her home by the principal of Santa Ana Valley High School, Ivan McKinney, and a female staff member. According to the lawsuit, McKinney told Ms. Steen to never speak about what happened with Satrappe or Santa Ana Valley High School and threatened her if she did not remain silent.

“It’s unconscionable to think that Santa Ana school officials are alleged to have not only protected a sexual predator, but would also threaten the survivor to stay silent,” said attorney Mike Reck of Jeff Anderson & Associates. “What Ms. Steen suffered is horrible but the allegation that, despite knowing that Satrappe has sexually abused and impregnated Ms. Steen, officials at Santa Ana Valley High School and Santa Ana Unified School district chose to keep Satrappe as a teacher and put other students at risk, is a public safety nightmare.”

You can find the full complaint [here](#)

### **Greenberg Gross Contacts**

**Deborah Mallgrave:** 949.383.2790 (o)

**Claire-Lise Kutlay:** 213.334.7025 (o)

### **Jeff Anderson & Associates Contacts**

**Mike Reck:** 714.742.6593 (c), 310.357.2425 (o)

**Mike Finnegan:** 612.205.5531 (c), 651.227.9990 (o)