



Families of Oakland warehouse fire victims file civil lawsuit

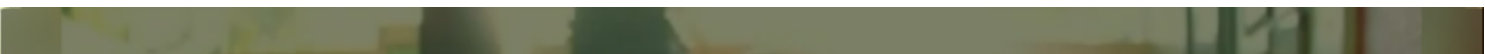


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It appears to be the first wrongful death lawsuit to be filed in connection to the Ghost Ship fire in Oakland. The suit is on behalf of two families of victims and names nine defendants for their negligence.

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OAKLAND (KTVU/BCN) -- Relatives of a young woman who was killed three weeks ago when a fire tore through the Ghost Ship warehouse in the Fruitvale District and killed 36 people have filed a civil lawsuit against the city, alleging that negligence on the part of the city caused the deaths.

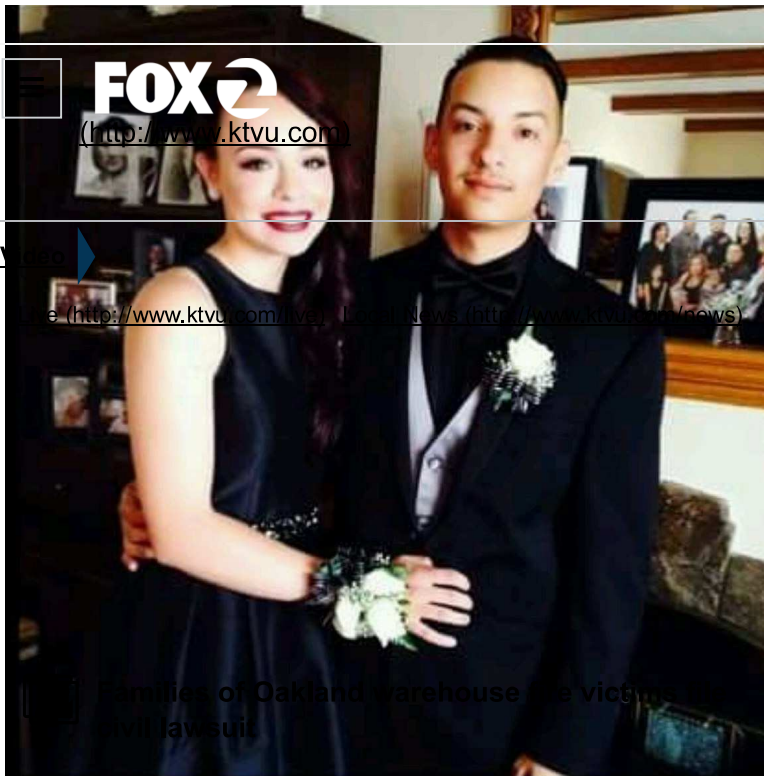
The suit was filed on behalf of relatives of Michela Gregory, 20, who was found embracing her boyfriend, Alex Vega, 22. Relatives have said the two, who worked the nightshift at Duggan's Serra Mortuary in Daly City, had been dating for five years. Michela was a student at San Francisco State.

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The lawsuit also names the parents of Griffin Madden, a 23-year-old UC Berkeley graduate, as plaintiffs. A found [image of Griffin kissing his girlfriend](http://www.ktvu.com/news/222518397-story), (<http://www.ktvu.com/news/222518397-story>) Saya Tomioka, in New York's Time Square had gone viral and received national attention when after the fire, Tomioka put out a call on social media to track down the the photographer responsible for the photograph.



>>>>>To view the lawsuit: [Click here](#)

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(<http://s3.amazonaws.com/media.ktvu.com/images/GregoryLawsuit.pdf>)

"It's just been really hard. They were good kids," said David Gregory, Michela's father. Kimberly Gregory, Michela's mother, was so overcome with emotion that she could barely speak.

Madden's parents were not present for the Friday afternoon news-conference announcement at the Alameda County Courthouse.

The families have retained the San Francisco law firms of Mary Alexander & Associates to handle the legal claim, an official at the law firm told KTVU Friday.

The suit names nine people, including; Chor Ng, the owner of the now infamous warehouse at 1315 31st Avenue in Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood, Derick Ion Almena, the master tenant who ran the Ghost Ship collective and collected rent from other tenants, and his wife Micah Allison.

The suits also name that night's performer, Joel Shanahan, whose stage name is Golden Donna, Jon Hrabko, L.A.-based record label and business--100% Silk. In addition, two men who leased buildings neighboring the Ghost Ship warehouse, Daniel Lopez and Omar Vega, are also named in the suits, which claim the pair provided electricity to the warehouse and bathroom access to event attendees.

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The city of Oakland and County of Alameda are also named in the suits.

Alexander, the attorney, claims all plaintiffs were negligent and created a so-called death trap for the 36 people inside.

The suits claim that Gregory and Madden did not die instantaneously but "were trapped in the inferno" and "suffered from the injuries caused by the fire and smoke for many minutes before dying."

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"(The defendants) caused this place to be such that it did not have the permits for residences," Alexander said. "It didn't have the permits for events and yet they allowed people to live there and these young people to come to an event where there was no fire alarms, no sprinklers, no good egress, no way to exit."

"The owner must know, has to know, has to be responsible and cannot delegate what goes on in the building. He had to know and make sure it was safe and to have this kind of event is just reprehensible," Alexander said.

"Our daughter will never come home. We'll miss her. She was a good kid. Her and Alex loved each other. They just wanted to have a good time and never came home," said Michela's father. "We will never see them again and we just want justice,"

The fire broke out at the two-story warehouse, located at 1305 31st Ave., around 11:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 2 during an underground warehouse party. Officials say 36 people perished in the blaze at the warehouse, which was being used by several people as a live/work space.

It is believed that this lawsuit is the first civil suit filed in connection with the fatal blaze. No criminal charges have been filed so far in the case.

A law firm that includes well-known attorney Tony Serra is now representing Derick Ion Almena. He's been accused of ignoring safety issues. So far the District Attorney has not said if he will face any charges.

KTVU reporter Tara Moriarty contributed to this report.

