|  |
| --- |
| Starletta Banks: Mother sues state for racketeering  Article from:  Michigan Quarterly Review  Article date:  July 9, 2005  Author:  Bukowski, Diane  More results for:  ["Starletta Banks"](http://www.highbeam.com/Search.aspx?q=%22Starletta+Banks%22) |

Bukowski, Diane  
Michigan Citizen  
07-09-2005  
She says officials kidnapped her children  
  
DETROIT -- Starletta Banks has not seen her three children, Darius, now 11,  
Danielle, now 7, and Darren, now 5, since the year 2000, but she says she  
is determined to have them come home again to her loving arms.  
  
"It's been devastating," said Banks. "It's been hard holding jobs and  
eating and sleeping. You can't even imagine the Christmases and birthdays  
I've spent. When we get them back, whenever that is, it will be Christmas  
because I've gone on buying presents for them all this time."  
  
Banks says her children were essentially kidnapped by Governor Jennifer  
Granholm, Attorney General Mike Cox, and various judges, administrators and  
doctors to be used as "cash cows" for the benefit of the state's child  
foster care system. That system is largely farmed out to private non-profit  
agencies who receive federal funds for each child. She says the alleged  
kidnappers have profited because they sit on the boards of agencies in that  
system.  
  
On June 6, Banks filed suit in U.S. District Court under federal  
racketeering and civil rights statutes, demanding her children's return,  
and calling for an immediate investigation by the U.S. Department of  
Justice into the alleged misuse of federal funds by the State of Michigan  
in hers and thousands of other foster care cases.  
  
"I'm going to fight them with everything I've got, until my children are  
returned to me, and I want other families to join me," said Banks, who, so  
far, is representing herself in the case. Banks resides with her mother and  
father Barbara and Leo Banks, who are supporting her suit. The suit was  
inspired by a similar action in Los Angeles County that opened an  
investigation into 30,000 foster care cases there.  
  
"Plaintiff was severely damaged and her family destroyed by the kidnap  
under color of law of her three children," reads Banks' complaint.  
"Defendants used the Michigan state foster care system as a 'child for  
profit' machine, with eighty percent of their caseload contracted out to  
private agencies who are paid federal monies by the case... Defendants sat  
on the boards of agencies that received federal monies for the 'care and  
custody' of children, while actively participating in, or making judicial  
decisions on cases involving child custody or termination of parental  
rights including plaintiff's case."  
  
Banks' parental rights to her children were terminated by Wayne County  
Juvenile Court Judge Patricia Campbell in October, 2000, after a series of  
events that began two years earlier when Banks took Danielle, then an  
infant, to Henry Ford Hospital after she fell out of bed. (See "Attorney  
General Seeks to Take Children," Michigan Citizen Mar. 12-18, 2000.)  
  
The baby sustained a skull fracture, but the hospital contended at the time  
that other X-rays showed evidence of old rib fractures. Subsequent studies,  
however, showed no such old fractures. The family now believes that  
Danielle's X-rays were initially mixed up with those of another infant.  
  
At the time, the court took temporary custody of Banks' two children. Her  
third child was born later and also taken based solely on the accident with  
Danielle. The children were assigned to Orchard's Children's Services,  
where workers eventually recommended that they be returned to Banks after  
she successfully completed a parenting course at Black Family Development.  
  
The workers said the children had been traumatized by their removal from  
their mother, repeatedly cried and asked for her, and were scared of being  
left alone.  
  
However, after an Orchard's worker withdrew the recommendation for return,  
Campbell terminated Banks' rights, despite the fact that no charges of  
abuse or neglect had ever been brought against her. Banks' parents were  
later appointed as guardians, but that status was terminated in 2001 and  
the children were returned to foster care.  
  
Banks appealed to the Michigan Court of Appeals, which ruled against her in  
July of 2002. The State Supreme Court has since refused to hear the case.  
  
Banks contends that numerous state officials who participated in the  
termination of her parental rights also are members of non-profits  
connected with the foster care system, creating a blatant conflict of  
interest. They are cited as individual defendants in her case.  
  
They include appeals court judge Kathleen Jansen, one of the three judges  
who denied her appeal, who sits on the Macomb County Child Abuse Neglect  
Information Council, and Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth Weaver, who chairs  
the "Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice and Family Independence  
Agency."  
  
Although she was not the attending physician, Dr. Annamaria Church  
testified against Banks on behalf of Henry Ford Hospital. Besides heading  
the pediatric residency program at the DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand  
Rapids, she is also involved with the state's non-profit Children's Trust  
Fund, which doles out $70 million annually in funding to various non-profit  
child welfare agencies including foster care programs.  
  
"My lawsuit showed every foster care case was tainted because officials in  
Los Angeles County failed to disclose their conflicts of interest," said  
Dr. Shirley Moore, National Director of Legislative Affairs for the  
American Family Rights Association.  
  
In response to Moore's actions, as well as an American Civil Liberties  
Union lawsuit and an expose by the Los Angeles Daily News, a judge ordered  
a review of foster care placements in that county.  
  
"Up to half of the 75,000 children in the systems and adoptive homes were  
needlessly placed in a system that is often more dangerous than their own  
homes because the county receives $30,000 to $150,000 in state and federal  
revenues for each placement," wrote the Daily News.  
  
Moore said the situation in Michigan is far worse, because officials at all  
levels up to the state are involved, and there is no recourse here except  
federal court.  
  
Press representatives for Governor Granholm and the state's Human Services  
Department would not comment on Banks' action due to the pending  
litigation, and the attorney general's representative would not comment due  
to "attorney-client privilege." An attorney for Dr. Annamaria Church had  
not returned a call for comment by press time.  
  
Article copyright Michigan Citizen.  
V.XXV

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Granholm steals babies, protesters say  Article from:  Michigan Quarterly Review  Article date:  August 10, 2002  Author:  Bukowski, Diane  More results for:  ["Starletta Banks"](http://www.highbeam.com/Search.aspx?q=%22Starletta+Banks%22) |

Bukowski, Diane  
Michigan Citizen  
08-10-2002  
Carrying signs reading, "F.I.A.: Families in Agony," a small but passionate  
band of protesters has dogged gubernatorial candidate Jennifer Granholm's  
steps in Detroit.  
  
In torrential rains outside the Channel 7 candidates' debate in Southfield  
July 21, and again outside the Northwest Activities Center July 23,  
Starletta Banks, her mother Barbara Banks, friends and organizers of Unity  
for Parents and Children demanded the return of Starletta's three small  
children, taken by Granholm's representatives in the attorney general's  
office in 1999.  
  
"In the year 2000 alone, 27,000 children across Michigan were taken from  
their families," said Karon Hamilton, state-wide chair of Unity for Parents  
and Children. "That's way up from the two years of 1997 and 1998, when  
30,000 were taken."  
  
She said a national movement of families is underway, who say state social  
work agencies like Michigan's Family Independence Agency (FIA) are unjustly  
pursuing child abuse charges in order to obtain federal bonuses for  
adoption of children in foster care.  
  
In August, that movement will come to Michigan with the traveling "Quilt of  
Tears," listing the names of children who have been taken.  
  
Starletta's children, Darius Banks, now 8, and Danielle and Darren Austin,  
now 4 and 2 respectively, were taken into foster care after Starletta took  
Danielle to Henry Ford Hospital when she fell out of her mother's bed.  
  
Medical personnel at the hospital claimed Danielle's X-rays showed evidence  
of old healing fractures, but X-rays taken shortly thereafter at Children's  
Hospital and St. John's Macomb Hospital have shown no such fractures.  
  
Despite the recommendations of all social workers and psychiatrists  
involved, that the children be returned, Wayne County Circuit Court Judge  
Patricia Campbell terminated Starletta's parental rights in 2000. Her  
actions were predicated on the recommendation of the attorney general's  
representative, Richard Karoub.  
  
"I appealed to Jennifer Granholm in writing in 1999," said Starletta, "and  
I personally spoke with her outside the UPN 50 offices where she was  
speaking February 7, 2001. I gave her the newspaper articles from the  
Michigan Citizen and other documentation. She promised to help, but she has  
not. Many families have lost their precious children to this type of  
corruption that she has allowed to go on."  
  
Starletta lost a court battle earlier this month after her court-appointed  
attorney failed to show up for oral arguments in front of the appellate  
court, but she has since filed a well-researched letter-perfect motion for  
re-hearing, citing numerous legal precedents.  
  
"I work midnights, and I get no sleep," said Starletta," because every  
morning at 7 a.m. I am doing my paperwork, because I have to get my babies  
back."  
  
Family friend Irwin Johnson, picketing with the Banks family, said, "In  
Detroit and across the nation, it boils down to a racial issue. How can  
Black kids be over 50 percent of the foster care system, but make up only  
20 percent of the population?"  
  
Leaving the Northwest Activities Center, Attorney General Granholm would  
not get out of her car or talk to Starletta and the protesters. The media  
spokesperson from Attorney General Granholm's office, Genna Gent, said, "I  
can tell you that the Attorney General immediately turned those documents  
over to our Children and Youth Services Division and asked them to look  
into it right away. However, both the trial court and the appellate court  
have already ruled on the case, and the Attorney General cannot overturn  
court rulings. Because there is a request for a re-hearing, she cannot  
comment further. But she does take such concerns of constituents very  
seriously."  
  
Article copyright Michigan Citizen.  
V.XXI