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

Bukowski, Diane
Michigan Citizen
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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.

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

Bukowski, Diane
Michigan Citizen
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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."

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