

## For Immediate Release

September 3, 2009

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### **Jury Awards Chicago Family \$520,000 in Hate Crime Lawsuit Against Neighbor**

**CHICAGO** – The Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Inc. and **Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP** today announced that a jury has awarded a Chicago family of Puerto Rican descent \$520,000 in damages in a hate crime case filed against their neighbor earlier this year.

A six-person jury in Cook County Circuit Court deliberated for just one hour before awarding the Jesse and Alisa Rodriguez family, including their children Caitlyn and Nicholas, \$140,000 in compensatory damages and an additional \$380,000 in punitive damages against their neighbor, Joseph Marrone, for violations of the Illinois Hate Crimes Act and the Illinois Human Rights Act, and for intentional infliction of emotional distress. Both parties live on the 3600 block of North New England Avenue in Chicago. Cook County Circuit Court Judge Susan McDunn presided over the case at trial.

Mr. Marrone engaged in a two-year spree of misconduct, harassment and intimidation against the Rodriguez family because of their Puerto Rican origin, culminating in a June 2008 incident in which he threatened the family at knifepoint. Katten and the Chicago Lawyers’ Committee filed a hate crime lawsuit on behalf of the Rodriguez family in March of this year, alleging that Mr. Marrone had perpetrated a continuing pattern of civil rights violations and torts against the family since 2007, and that these violations were based upon the Rodriguezes’ ethnicity. His actions included shouting numerous racial and ethnic slurs at the entire family, threatening them with physical violence and sexual assault, and expressing an intent to force the Rodriguez family to move out of the neighborhood. In November 2008, Mr. Marrone pled guilty to related criminal assault charges and was sentenced to probation.

The Rodriguez family was represented by Katten attorneys Alexander S. Vesselinovitch and Jennifer R. Goltz, and by Betsy Shuman-Moore of the Chicago Lawyers’ Committee.

“We are pleased with the jury’s decision in this case and in speaking with the Rodriguez family, they have also expressed satisfaction with the outcome and relief that this ordeal has finally come to an end,” Ms. Goltz said. “We are proud to have partnered with the Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law to secure a favorable result for our client and hope that it will serve as a deterrent for others considering engaging in this type of racist and abusive conduct.”

For 35 years, the Chicago Lawyers' Committee, through its 40-plus member law firms, staff and legal team, has provided free legal services to challenge discrimination and other civil rights violations in both the public and private sectors. For further information about the Chicago Lawyers' Committee, contact Clyde Murphy at 312.630.9744 or visit [www.clccrul.org](http://www.clccrul.org).

Katten has a long-term commitment to helping the poor, the powerless and the disenfranchised obtain first-rate representation without charge. Attorneys and other legal professionals give their time, resources and talent to serve individuals and organizations in need, to engage in important national litigation, and to partner with local legal service providers to ensure access to the justice system.

*Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP is a full-service law firm with more than 600 attorneys in locations across the United States and an affiliate in London. The firm's business-savvy professionals provide clients in numerous industries with sophisticated, high-value legal services, with a focus on corporate, financial services, litigation, real estate, commercial finance, intellectual property and trusts and estates. Among our clients are a wide range of public and private companies, including a third of the Fortune 100, as well as a number of government and nonprofit organizations and individuals. For additional information, visit [www.kattenlaw.com](http://www.kattenlaw.com).*

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