

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

CASE NO.: 0:18cv60404

Matthew Ceballo, individually
and on behalf of all others similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

v.

COMPLAINT – CLASS ACTION

M.G. Credit, Inc.,

Defendants.

**CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT SEEKING
INJUNCTIVE RELIEF AND STATUTORY DAMAGES**

JURY DEMAND

On behalf of the putative class, Plaintiff Mathew Ceballo (“Plaintiff”), seeks redress for the unlawful conduct of Defendant, M.G. Credit, Inc. (“Defendant”), *to wit*, violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1692 *et seq.*, the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (“FDCPA”). Simply put, Defendant has dispatched thousands unlawful collection letters to Florida consumers, whereby each such letter contains identical violations § 1692g(a) of the FDCPA.

INTRODUCTION

1. The FDCPA “is a consumer protection statute that ‘imposes open-ended prohibitions on, *inter alia*, false, deceptive, or unfair” debt-collection practices. Crawford v. LVNV Funding, LLC, 758 F.3d 1254, 1257 (11th Cir. 2014) (*quoting Jerman v. Carlisle, McNellie, Rini, Kramer & Ulrich LPA*, 559 U.S. 573, 587 (2010)).

2. “Congress enacted the FDCPA after noting abundant evidence of the use of abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection practices by many debt collectors.” Brown v. Card Serv. Ctr., 464 F.3d 450 (3rd Cir. 2006) (internal quotations omitted); *see, e.g., Id.* at 453 (quoting 15 U.S.C. §1692(a)) (“Abusive debt collection practices contribute to the number of personal bankruptcies, to marital instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual privacy.”).

3. As set forth in more detail below, Defendant has dispatched thousands of unlawful collection letters to consumers in an attempt to collect a debt, and in each such letter, Defendant has failed to clearly and adequately disclose the name of the creditor to whom the debt is owed, in violation of § 1692g(a)(2). Accordingly, Plaintiff, on behalf of the putative class, seeks statutory damages under the FDCPA.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

4. This Court has jurisdiction for all counts under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331, 1337, 1367 and 15 U.S.C. § 1692k.

5. Jurisdiction of this Court arises under 15 U.S.C. §1692k(d), 28 U.S.C §1331, and 28 U.S.C §1337.

6. Venue in this District is proper because Plaintiff resides here, Defendant transacts business here, and the complained of conduct occurred within the venue.

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

7. Plaintiff is entitled to, and hereby respectfully demands, a trial by jury on all counts alleged and on any issues so triable. *See Sibley v. Fulton DeKalb Collection Service*, 677 F.2d 830 (11th Cir.1982) (wherein the Eleventh Circuit held that, “a plaintiff, upon timely demand, is entitled to a trial by jury in a claim for damages under the FDCPA.”).

PARTIES

8. Plaintiff is a natural person, and a citizen of the State of Florida, residing in Miami, Florida.

9. Plaintiff is a “consumer” within the meaning of the FDCPA. *See* 15 U.S.C §1692a.

10. Defendant is a Florida law firm, with its principal place of business located in Austin, Texas.

11. Defendant engages in interstate commerce by regularly using telephone and mail in a business whose principal purpose is the collection of debts.

12. At all times material hereto, Defendant was acting as a debt collector in respect to the collection of Plaintiff’s debts.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

13. The debt at issue (the “Consumer Debt”) is a financial obligation Plaintiff incurred primarily for personal, family, or household purposes.

14. The Consumer Debt is a “debt” governed by the FDCPA and FCCPA. *See* 15 U.S.C §1692a(5).

15. On a date better known by Defendant, Defendant began attempting collect the Consumer Debts from Plaintiff.

16. On or about January 16, 2018, Defendant sent a collection letter to Plaintiff (the “Collection Letter”) in an attempt to collect the Consumer Debt. A copy of the Collection Letter is attached hereto as Exhibit “A.”

17. The Collection Letter was Defendant’s first and/or initial communication with Plaintiff in connection with the Consumer Debt.

18. Nowhere in the Collection Letter does it state who the current creditor of the debt is as Defendant is required to clearly and effectively disclose pursuant to 15 U.S.C §1692g(a)(2) of the FDCPA.

19. Any potential *bona fide* error defense which relies upon Defendant's mistaken interpretation of the legal duties imposed upon them by the FDCPA would fail as a matter of law.

Jerman v. Carlisle, McNellie, Rini, Kramer & Ulrich, L.P.A., 130 S.Ct. 1605 (2010).

CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS

20. This action is brought on behalf of the following class:

(i) all persons in the United States (ii) who received a letter (iii) between February 24, 2017 and February 23, 2018 (iv) from Defendant (v) in an attempt to collect a debt incurred for personal, family, or household purposes, (vi) of which Defendant failed to properly disclose the name of the creditor to whom the debt is owed pursuant to 15 U.S.C §1692g(a)(2).

21. Plaintiff alleges on information and belief that the class is so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable because Defendant has dispatched thousands of identical dunning letters to members of the class attempting to collect consumer debts.

A. EXISTENCE AND PREDOMINANCE OF COMMON QUESTIONS OF LAW & FACT

22. Common questions of law and fact exist to the class and predominate over any issues involving only individual class members.

23. With respect to the class:

(a) The *factual issues common* to the class is whether members received a collection letter from Defendant, in an attempt to collect a consumer debt, within the class period; and

- (b) The *principal legal issue* of the Class is whether Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. 1692g(a)(2) by failing to clearly, adequately, and effectively name of the creditor to whom the debt is owed.

24. Excluded from the Class is Defendant's agents and employees, Plaintiff's attorneys and their employees, the Judge to whom this action is assigned, and any member of the Judge's staff and immediate family.

B. TYPICALITY

25. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of each class member and are based on the same facts and legal theories.

C. ADEQUACY

26. Plaintiff is an adequate representative for the Class.

27. Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Class.

28. Plaintiff has retained counsel experienced in handling actions involving unlawful practices under the FDCPA and consumer-based class actions. Neither Plaintiff nor Plaintiff's counsel have any interests which might cause them to not vigorously pursue this action.

D. PREDOMINANCE AND SUPERIORITY

29. Certification of the classes under Rule 23(b)(3) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure is also appropriate in that:

- (a) The questions of law or fact common to the members of the class predominate over any questions affecting an individual member.
- (b) A class action is superior to other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the controversy.

30. Certification of a classes under Rule 23(b)(2) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure is also appropriate, in that, Defendant has acted on grounds generally applicable to the class thereby making appropriate declaratory relief with respect to the class as a whole. Plaintiff requests certification of a hybrid class under Rule 23(b)(3) for monetary damages and to Rule 23(b)(2) for injunctive and equitable relief.

COUNT I.
VIOLATION OF 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a)(2)

31. Defendant violated §1692g(a)(2) of the FDCPA by failing to send Plaintiff a written notice that, in light of the least sophisticated consumer standard, sufficiently advises of name of the creditor to whom the Consumer Debt is owed, in that, the Collection Letter fails to identify any entity as being the “creditor.” *See Pardo v. Allied Interstate, L.L.C.*, 2015 WL 5607646 (S.D. Ind. Sept. 21, 2015) (where collection letter’s body referred to “Resurgent Capital Services LP” as Allied Interstate’s “Client,” and offered no explanation of the relationship between LVNV and Resurgent Capital or why/how Resurgent Capital was involved with debt, consumer stated valid §1692g(a)(2) claim).

32. Here, in the Collection Letter, Defendant fails to clearly identify any entity as the creditor of the debt. Instead, Defendant merely claims that the Collection Letter is “Re[garding]: Karate America World HQTRS.”

33. Courts have consistently held that “[m]erely including the current creditor's name in a debt collection letter, without more, is insufficient to satisfy 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a)(2).” *McGinty v. Professional Claims Bureau, Inc.*, Case No. 15-cv-4356 (SJF) (ARL), 2016 WL 6069180, at *4 (E.D.N.Y. Oct. 17, 2016); *see also*, *Suellen v. Mercantile Adjustment Bureau, LLC*, Case No. 12-cv-00916 NC, 2012 WL 2849651, at *6 (N.D. Cal. June 12, 2012) (observing

that courts have held that “[m]erely naming the creditor without identifying it as the current creditor” is not sufficient for purposes of section 1692g(a)(2)); Sparkman v. Zwicker & Assocs., P.C., 374 F. Supp. 2d 293, 300-01 (E.D.N.Y. 2005) (holding that a debt collector violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692g where “[t]he name of the creditor . . . appear[ed] in the subject line of the Collection Letter, but [was] not identified as a creditor”); Dix v. Natl. Credit Sys., Inc., 2:16-CV-3257-HRH, 2017 WL 4865259, at *2 (D. Ariz. Oct. 27, 2017) (“[a]ll defendant did was name the current creditor. Defendant did nothing to identify Metro on 19th as the current creditor. Thus, plaintiff is entitled to summary judgment on his section 1692g(a)(2) claim”); Datiz v. International Recovery Associates, Inc., Case No. 15-CV-3549 (ADS) (AKT), 2016 WL 4148330 (E.D.N.Y. Aug. 4, 2016) (because collection letter “did not make it *explicit* that [the hospital] was the current creditor to whom the plaintiff owed a debt” summary judgement was granted in favor of Plaintiff’s §1692g(a)(2) claim).

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, individually and on behalf of the Class, request that the Court enter an order certifying the described Class and judgment in favor of Plaintiff and Class and against Defendant for:

- (1) Statutory damages, as provided under 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(2)(B);
- (2) Attorney’s fees, litigation expenses and costs of the instant suit, as provided under 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(3); and
- (3) Such other or further relief as the Court deems proper.

DATED: February 24, 2018

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ Jibrael S. Hindi

JIBRAEL S. HINDI, ESQ.

Florida Bar No.: 118259

E-mail: jibrael@jibraellaw.com

THE LAW OFFICES OF JIBRAEL S. HINDI

110 SE 6th Street, Suite 1744

Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301

Phone: 954-907-1136

Fax: 855-529-9540

COUNSEL FOR PLAINTIFF

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.) NOTICE: Attorneys MUST Indicate All Re-filed Cases Below.

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS Mathew Ceballo, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated. DEFENDANTS M.G. Credit, Inc.

(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff BROWARD (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES) County of Residence of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)

(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number) The Law Office of Jibrael S. Hindi, PLLC, 610 SE 6th St., Suite 1744 Fort Lauderdale FL, 33301. (954)628-5793. NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED. Attorneys (If Known)

(d) Check County Where Action Arose: MIAMI-DADE MONROE BROWARD PALM BEACH MARTIN ST. LUCIE INDIAN RIVER OKEECHOBEE HIGHLANDS

II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only) III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)

Grid for Basis of Jurisdiction and Citizenship of Principal Parties with checkboxes for U.S. Government Plaintiff/Defendant, Federal Question, Diversity, Citizen of This State/Another State/Foreign Country, and PTF/DEF boxes for various categories.

IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

Large grid for Nature of Suit with categories: CONTRACT, REAL PROPERTY, CIVIL RIGHTS, TORTS, PRISONER PETITIONS, FORFEITURE/PENALTY, LABOR, IMMIGRATION, BANKRUPTCY, SOCIAL SECURITY, FEDERAL TAX SUITS, and OTHER STATUTES.

V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in One Box Only) 1 Original Proceeding 2 Removed from State Court 3 Re-filed (See VI below) 4 Reinstated or Reopened 5 Transferred from another district (specify) 6 Multidistrict Litigation 7 Appeal to District Judge from Magistrate Judgment 8 Remanded from Appellate Court

VI. RELATED/ RE-FILED CASE(S) (See instructions): a) Re-filed Case YES NO b) Related Cases YES NO JUDGE DOCKET NUMBER

VII. CAUSE OF ACTION 15 U.S.C. & 1692, et seq. LENGTH OF TRIAL via days estimated (for both sides to try entire case) Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing and Write a Brief Statement of Cause (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity):

VIII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT: CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER F.R.C.P. 23 DEMAND \$ CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint: JURY DEMAND: YES No

ABOVE INFORMATION IS TRUE & CORRECT TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD

DATE February 24, 2018

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY RECEIPT # AMOUNT IFP JUDGE MAG JUDGE

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTORNEYS COMPLETING CIVIL COVER SHEET FORM JS 44

Authority For Civil Cover Sheet

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replaces nor supplements the filings and service of pleading or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. Consequently, a civil cover sheet is submitted to the Clerk of Court for each civil complaint filed. The attorney filing a case should complete the form as follows:

I. (a) Plaintiffs-Defendants. Enter names (last, first, middle initial) of plaintiff and defendant. If the plaintiff or defendant is a government agency, use only the full name or standard abbreviations. If the plaintiff or defendant is an official within a government agency, identify first the agency and then the official, giving both name and title.

(b) County of Residence. For each civil case filed, except U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county where the first listed plaintiff resides at the time of filing. In U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county in which the first listed defendant resides at the time of filing. (NOTE: In land condemnation cases, the county of residence of the "defendant" is the location of the tract of land involved.)

(c) Attorneys. Enter the firm name, address, telephone number, and attorney of record. If there are several attorneys, list them on an attachment, noting in this section "(see attachment)".

II. Jurisdiction. The basis of jurisdiction is set forth under Rule 8(a), F.R.C.P., which requires that jurisdictions be shown in pleadings. Place an "X" in one of the boxes. If there is more than one basis of jurisdiction, precedence is given in the order shown below.

United States plaintiff. (1) Jurisdiction based on 28 U.S.C. 1345 and 1348. Suits by agencies and officers of the United States are included here.

United States defendant. (2) When the plaintiff is suing the United States, its officers or agencies, place an "X" in this box.

Federal question. (3) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1331, where jurisdiction arises under the Constitution of the United States, an amendment to the Constitution, an act of Congress or a treaty of the United States. In cases where the U.S. is a party, the U.S. plaintiff or defendant code takes precedence, and box 1 or 2 should be marked.

Diversity of citizenship. (4) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1332, where parties are citizens of different states. When Box 4 is checked, the citizenship of the different parties must be checked. (See Section III below; federal question actions take precedence over diversity cases.)

III. Residence (citizenship) of Principal Parties. This section of the JS 44 is to be completed if diversity of citizenship was indicated above. Mark this section for each principal party.

IV. Nature of Suit. Place an "X" in the appropriate box. If the nature of suit cannot be determined, be sure the cause of action, in Section VI below, is sufficient to enable the deputy clerk or the statistical clerks in the Administrative Office to determine the nature of suit. If the cause fits more than one nature of suit, select the most definitive.

V. Origin. Place an "X" in one of the seven boxes.

Original Proceedings. (1) Cases which originate in the United States district courts.

Removed from State Court. (2) Proceedings initiated in state courts may be removed to the district courts under Title 28 U.S.C., Section 1441. When the petition for removal is granted, check this box.

Refiled (3) Attach copy of Order for Dismissal of Previous case. Also complete VI.

Reinstated or Reopened. (4) Check this box for cases reinstated or reopened in the district court. Use the reopening date as the filing date.

Transferred from Another District. (5) For cases transferred under Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1404(a). Do not use this for within district transfers or multidistrict litigation transfers.

Multidistrict Litigation. (6) Check this box when a multidistrict case is transferred into the district under authority of Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1407. When this box is checked, do not check (5) above.

Appeal to District Judge from Magistrate Judgment. (7) Check this box for an appeal from a magistrate judge's decision.

Remanded from Appellate Court. (8) Check this box if remanded from Appellate Court.

VI. Related/Refiled Cases. This section of the JS 44 is used to reference related pending cases or re-filed cases. Insert the docket numbers and the corresponding judges name for such cases.

VII. Cause of Action. Report the civil statute directly related to the cause of action and give a brief description of the cause. **Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity.**

Example: U.S. Civil Statute: 47 USC 553

Brief Description: Unauthorized reception of cable service

VIII. Requested in Complaint. Class Action. Place an "X" in this box if you are filing a class action under Rule 23, F.R.Cv.P.

Demand. In this space enter the dollar amount (in thousands of dollars) being demanded or indicate other demand such as a preliminary injunction.

Jury Demand. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether or not a jury is being demanded.

Date and Attorney Signature. Date and sign the civil cover sheet.

AO 440 (Rev. 06/12) Summons in a Civil Action

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Southern District of Florida

Mathew Ceballo, individually
and on behalf of all others similarly situated

Plaintiff(s)

v.

M.G. Credit, Inc.,

Defendant(s)

Civil Action No. 0:18cv60404

SUMMONS IN A CIVIL ACTION

To: (Defendant's name and address) M.G. Credit, Inc.,
MARGUERITE GILLIAM (Registered Agent)
5115 SAN JUAN AVE
JACKSONVILLE, FL 32210

A lawsuit has been filed against you.

Within 21 days after service of this summons on you (not counting the day you received it) — or 60 days if you are the United States or a United States agency, or an officer or employee of the United States described in Fed. R. Civ. P. 12 (a)(2) or (3) — you must serve on the plaintiff an answer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. The answer or motion must be served on the plaintiff or plaintiff's attorney, whose name and address are: The Law Offices of Jibrael S. Hindi, PLLC. 110 SE 6th St., Suite 1744, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301. Phone: (844)542-7235 Email: jibrael@jibraellaw.com Fax: (855)529-9540

If you fail to respond, judgment by default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint. You also must file your answer or motion with the court.

CLERK OF COURT

Date: _____

Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

Civil Action No. 0:18cv60404

PROOF OF SERVICE

(This section should not be filed with the court unless required by Fed. R. Civ. P. 4 (l))

This summons for *(name of individual and title, if any)* _____
was received by me on *(date)* _____ .

I personally served the summons on the individual at *(place)* _____
_____ on *(date)* _____ ; or

I left the summons at the individual's residence or usual place of abode with *(name)* _____
_____, a person of suitable age and discretion who resides there,
on *(date)* _____ , and mailed a copy to the individual's last known address; or

I served the summons on *(name of individual)* _____ , who is
designated by law to accept service of process on behalf of *(name of organization)* _____
_____ on *(date)* _____ ; or

I returned the summons unexecuted because _____ ; or

Other *(specify)*:

My fees are \$ _____ for travel and \$ _____ for services, for a total of \$ _____ 0.00 _____ .

I declare under penalty of perjury that this information is true.

Date: _____

Server's signature

Printed name and title

Server's address

Additional information regarding attempted service, etc:

Print

Save As...

Reset

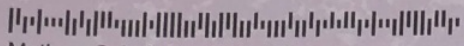
PO Box 61899
Jacksonville, FL 32236-1899



P.O. Box 61899, Jacksonville, FL 32236
Phone #800-387-6503
904-387-6503



January 16, 2018



Mathew Ceballo
835 OLIVER TREE
GREENACRES, FL 33413-3055

Re: **KARATE AMERICA WORLD HQTRS**
Account #: ▶ 901753
Current Balance: ▶ \$3,336.00

Past Due Balance

Re: **KARATE AMERICA WORLD HQTRS**
Account #: ▶ 901753
Current Balance: ▶ \$3,336.00

Your account has been assigned to this agency for collection.

Please mail your remittance to our office so this claim may be cleared and released for you.

Protect your credit by making payment in full.

This communication is from a debt collector and is an attempt to collect a debt. Any information obtained will be used for that purpose.

Unless you notify this office within 30 days after receiving this notice that you dispute the validity of this debt or any portion thereof, this office will assume this debt is valid. If you notify this office in writing within 30 days from receiving this notice, this office will obtain verification of the debt or obtain a copy of a judgment and mail you a copy of such judgment or verification. If you request this office in writing within 30 days after receiving this notice, this office will provide you with the name and address of the original creditor, if different from the current creditor.

Sincerely,
J. Wood
M.G. Credit

PAYMENT OPTIONS

Payments By Phone

Please Call 800-387-6503
904-387-6503
Visa, MasterCard
Debit Card
Check-By-Phone

Payments By Internet

www.mgcredit.com
Visa, MasterCard, Debit Card
and Check (ACH) accepted

Payments By Mail

Visa, MasterCard
Check
(You can use the return envelope provided and the bottom portion of this notice for your convenience.)



▼ Detach Bottom Portion And Return With Payment ▼

Mathew Ceballo
835 OLIVER TREE
GREENACRES, FL 33413-3055

Re: **KARATE AMERICA WORLD HQTRS**
Account #: ▶ 901753
Current Balance: ▶ \$3,336.00

▼ SEND ALL PAYMENTS TO ▼

M.G. Credit
P.O. BOX 61899
Jacksonville, FL 32236-1899

IF YOU WISH TO PAY BY VISA OR MASTERCARD FILL IN THE INFORMATION BELOW	
CARD HOLDER NAME	
<input type="checkbox"/>	CARD NUMBER
	CVV CODE
SIGNATURE	
<input type="checkbox"/>	AMOUNT
	EXP. DATE

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: [Consumer Alleges M.G. Credit Sent Thousands of Collection Letters that Failed to Disclose Creditors](#)
