

'Real Housewives of O.C.' Star Slapped with Suit

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LOS ANGELES (CN) - Gretchen Rossi, a cast member of "The Real Housewives of Orange County" has been accused of libel and slander by a man who claims he dated her during taping of the show while she was engaged to another man. Jay Photoglou says in his lawsuit that Rossi has "embarked in what is nothing short of an obsessive and delusional crusade to destroy Photoglou, his reputation and livelihood," according to the lawsuit filed in Superior Court. "Unfortunately, this reality star needs a 'reality check,'" the lawsuit states.

Photoglou says in his lawsuit that he "wishes to continue to set the record straight regarding his intimate relationship" with Rossi, and says Rossi launched the defamation campaign "in an effort to hide the fact that she was dating Photoglou while professing to the public that she was engaged to another man."

The other man is Jeffrey Beitzel, who died in September 2008.

On the show, Rossi was "portrayed as the caregiver and fiancée to Jeffrey Beitzel," when "in 'reality,' Rossi was intimately involved with Photoglou the entire time the show filmed Rossi's first season," the lawsuit states.

Photoglou says once the secret relationship was exposed, Rossi denied it and began spreading "vile and vicious lies" about Photoglou in multiple public forums, online blogs, the show, television interviews and areas where Photoglou conducts business.

He says Rossi even went as far as to file a police report and a failed temporary restraining order against him that he says was filled with lies and false accusations.

Photoglou says Rossi stated on the show and in numerous television interviews and on various blogs that Photoglou lied about their relationship, stalked her, stole from her, searched through her things, threatened her and made sexual advances toward her.

"By using her fame and influence to reach millions of people, Rossi has achieved her goal of destroying Photoglou's personal and business reputations," the lawsuit states.

A month after Beitzel's death in 2008, Photoglou says he and Rossi had each others' names tattooed on their fingers. A month later, he says he moved into her home.

Photoglou seeks damages for libel and slander.

He is represented by Bryan Freedman with Freedman Taitelman.