

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
(TAMPA DIVISION)

ALVA JOHNSON,
*Individually and On Behalf of All Others Similarly
Situated,*

Plaintiff,

vs.

DONALD J. TRUMP,
In his Individual Capacity and
**DONALD J. TRUMP FOR PRESIDENT,
INC.,**

Defendants.

CASE NO. _____

**JURY TRIAL DEMANDED
INJUNCTIVE RELIEF SOUGHT
COLLECTIVE ACTION COMPLAINT**

INTRODUCTION

1. Plaintiff Alva Johnson brings this lawsuit to hold the President of the United States, Defendant Donald J. Trump, accountable for his sexually predatory conduct.

2. On October 7, 2016, *The Washington Post* published an article about an “extremely lewd conversation about women” between Defendant Trump and television host Billy Bush during a 2005 episode of *Access Hollywood*.¹ In a recording of that conversation, Defendant Trump describes his habit of forcibly kissing and groping women without their consent:

Yeah, that’s her. With the gold. I better use some Tic Tacs just in case I start kissing her. You know I’m automatically attracted to beautiful – ***I just start kissing them. It’s like a magnet. Just kiss. I don’t even wait.*** And when you’re a star, they let you do it. You can do anything.

3. This is exactly what Defendant Trump did to Ms. Johnson, a highly accomplished African American woman who served as a senior staffer for his presidential campaign (the

¹ Fahrenthold, David, “Trump recorded having extremely lewd conversation about women in 2005.” *The Washington Post*, 7 July 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-recorded-having-extremely-lewd-conversation-about-women-in-2005/2016/10/07/3b9cc776-8cb4-11e6-bf8a-3d26847cced4_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.e47a7453221b.

“Campaign”). Ms. Johnson was an integral part of the Campaign’s success and was repeatedly recognized for her contributions. She was the Campaign’s Director of Outreach and Coalitions for the state of Alabama, and because of her success, was chosen to serve as a member of the exclusive National Strike Team and as Operations Administrative Director for the battleground state of Florida during the general election.² To Defendant Trump, however, Ms. Johnson was nothing more than a sexual object he felt entitled to dominate and humiliate. Like he has done with so many other women, Defendant Trump violated norms of decency and privacy by kissing Ms. Johnson on the lips without her consent in the middle of a Florida work event and in front of numerous other Campaign officials.

4. While forcible kissing is a serious violation of bodily autonomy that can cause victims to experience feelings of physical alarm, fear, shame, guilt, and helplessness.³ These feelings can be exacerbated when the predator is a boss or other authority figure. And when the predator happens to be one of the most powerful men in the world, the experience can be downright terrifying.

5. In the moment that Defendant Trump forcibly kissed her, Ms. Johnson, a highly successful and widely respected Campaign staffer, felt reduced to just another object of Defendant Trump’s unwanted sexual attention. Ms. Johnson brings this lawsuit against Defendant Trump for that humiliating violation, which amounts to common law battery, and seeks assistance from the Court to put a stop to his predatory conduct.

6. Not only did Ms. Johnson endure forcible kissing by her boss, she experienced race and gender discrimination as one of the few females and one of only a handful of African American people on the Campaign payroll. Ms. Johnson was paid less than white employees, including both staff

² Trump 2016 General Election Campaign Organization, Florida, <http://www.p2016.org/trump/trumpgenfl.html> (last visited Feb. 21, 2019).

³ See Margolin, L., Miller, M., & Moran, P. B. (1989). “When a kiss is not just a kiss: Relating violations of consent in kissing to rape myth acceptance.” *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 20 (5-6), 231-243. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00287721>; Clark-Flory, Tracy. “A Forced Kiss is Never ‘Just a Kiss.’” *Vocativ*, 13 Oct. 2016, <https://www.vocativ.com/367496/donald-trump-forced-kiss/index.html>.

FACTS

14. Defendant Trump has a long history of harassing and assaulting women, including forcibly kissing them on the mouth without their consent. He does so intentionally—just as he admitted on the *Access Hollywood* tape. Since the *Access Hollywood* tape became public, dozens of women have come forward with complaints that Defendant Trump forcibly kissed, groped, and/or harassed them—disturbing allegations that span nearly four decades.

15. Ms. Johnson was not aware of Defendant Trump's long history of predatory conduct towards women when she first connected with the Campaign in late 2015. She joined the Campaign early in the primary season, worked hard, and became a valued Director who was integral to the Campaign's success. But instead of being rewarded for her hard work and accomplishments, Ms. Johnson was subjected to unwanted kissing by her boss and discrimination based on her race and her gender.

16. Ms. Johnson signed up to help a long-shot nominee run a successful campaign. She did not sign up to be paid less than her colleagues because of her race and gender. And she certainly did not sign up to be forcibly kissed in public, then subjected to humiliating comments from her colleagues that caused her to relive the experience. But she experienced all of these things as a senior member of Defendant Trump's Campaign staff.

Ms. Johnson Joins the Trump Presidential Campaign

17. Ms. Johnson initially became interested in joining the Campaign after her stepfather, who has decades of experience in Republican politics, asked her to help prepare a proposal to assist a Republican candidate, Donald J. Trump, with outreach to African Americans.

18. Ms. Johnson, whose background is in event planning and human resources, had never considered working in politics. However, she was intrigued by the possibility of working on the campaign of a relatively unknown political outsider like Defendant Trump.

19. Ms. Johnson voted for Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012. But during President Obama's two terms in office, she saw the African American community in Alabama continue to experience severe economic hardship, and felt that perhaps Defendant Trump, with his background in business, could help invigorate the economy and provide jobs for her community.

20. Ms. Johnson agreed to help with the proposal, and joined her stepfather for a meeting with Chess Bedsole, a family friend and recent addition to the Trump Campaign.

21. At the meeting, Mr. Bedsole remarked that he was impressed with Ms. Johnson's background, and that the Campaign could benefit from her expertise in successfully executing large-scale events.

22. Mr. Bedsole informed Ms. Johnson that, before she could be hired, Defendant Trump needed to meet her in person.

23. On November 21, 2015, at Mr. Bedsole's invitation, Ms. Johnson attended a rally in Birmingham, where she met Defendant Trump for the first time. Because she was a guest of Mr. Bedsole and was considering joining the Campaign as staff, Ms. Johnson was allowed to enter a VIP meet-and-greet area (typically reserved for significant donors), where Defendant Trump was greeting people and shaking hands.

24. Approximately ten other people were in the meet-and-greet area, including Terry Lathan, Chairman of the Alabama Republican Party, and Ed Henry, an Alabama state representative.

25. Ms. Johnson waited until the others had an opportunity to shake hands with Defendant Trump, then walked towards him so that she could introduce herself.

26. As Ms. Johnson approached, Defendant Trump looked her up and down and said, "Oh, beautiful, beautiful, fantastic."

27. Ms. Johnson tried to redirect Defendant Trump's attention by telling him that she was a political outsider, like him, and was coming from the private sector.

BUSH: Whatever you want.

DEFENDANT TRUMP: Grab 'em by the pussy. You can do anything.

77. When Ms. Johnson first learned of the *Access Hollywood* tape, she was instantly transported back to the moment in which Defendant Trump singled her out of all of the people on his staff and forcibly kissed her.

78. She first listened to a recording of the tape while sitting in her car with her partner. As they listened, she felt horrified and sick to her stomach. She told her partner that the conduct Defendant Trump described in the tape was exactly what he had done to her. Her partner agreed.

79. Ms. Johnson began to feel panicked, like she couldn't breathe, as she realized that what Defendant Trump had done to her was not an isolated incident, but part of a pattern of predatory behavior towards women. She remembered how other staffers on the Campaign had treated his improper behavior like a joke and a positive event. She felt disgusted and retraumatized. She knew then that she could not stay with the Campaign.

Ms. Johnson Immediately Leaves the Campaign & Retains An Attorney

80. On October 10, 2016—the first working day after the *Access Hollywood* tape was released—Ms. Johnson called in sick. She still felt terrible, physically and emotionally, and could not sleep.

81. She was deeply disturbed by the fact that Defendant Trump had not only kissed her, but had also openly bragged that he made a regular practice of kissing women without their consent.

82. That day, Ms. Giorno asked Ms. Johnson to use her connections to Defendant Trump's supporters across the country to compile videos of women showing their support for Defendant Trump after the release of the *Access Hollywood* tape. Ms. Johnson felt like she had no choice, as she had not yet formulated a plan for how to officially leave the Campaign. Ms. Johnson expected that the volunteers she called would be as horrified as she was and would not agree to support