

State of South Carolina )  
 )  
County of Greenville )

Circuit Court  
2022CP235459

**RECEIVED**

**Jun 29 2023**

**SC Court of Appeals**

Christopher Jones )  
 )  
 vs. )  
 )  
Elvis Paulino )

Transcript of Record

January 9, 2023  
Greenville, South Carolina

B E F O R E:

The Honorable Letitia H. Verdin, Judge.

A P P E A R A N C E S:

CHRISTOPHER JONES  
Pro se Plaintiff

(No appearance)  
Pro se Defendant

Also Present: Marcia De La Cruz

Selena King  
Transcriber



1 THE COURT: Okay. Christopher Jones v. Elvis Paulino.

2 MR. JONES: Good morning, Judge.

3 THE COURT: Good morning.

4 MR. JONES: (Indiscernible). I'm sorry.

5 THE COURT: That's okay. That's okay. And I am betting  
6 nearly 100 percent that the folks down at the front thought  
7 that you're an attorney.

8 MR. JONES: They did.

9 THE COURT: And so they let you bring your cell phone in,  
10 which is all good. That's no problem. Don't worry about it.

11 MR. JONES: Transcripts are on there. I'm sorry.

12 THE COURT: I just want to make sure it's off. That's  
13 all.

14 MR. JONES: It's to play transcript excerpts. I have  
15 that for you today.

16 THE COURT: Oh, you'll be playing the transcript --

17 MR. JONES: The excerpt.

18 THE COURT: Of the excerpt. Okay. The excerpts of the  
19 transcript. Okay.

20 MR. JONES: Is that okay, Your Honor?

21 THE COURT: Yeah. It looks like you may have that on  
22 some sort of flash drive.

23 MR. JONES: Leave that with you. Yes, ma'am.

24 THE COURT: Oh, okay. Okay. Okay. Very well. Okay.  
25 So this is 2022CP235459, Christopher Jones v. Elvis Paulino.

1           And Mr. Jones, I'm going to get started with you. Yes,  
2 sir.

3           MR. JONES: All right. Thank you, Judge.

4           THE COURT: And just so I've said it, I'll give you about  
5 five minutes. Sir, give you about five minutes. And then  
6 come back and give you just a couple of minutes, and that'll  
7 give me a couple of minutes for any questions I might have.  
8 Okay? If we even need that long. Okay? Yes, sir.

9           MR. JONES: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am, Your Honor, after  
10 the previous hearing, I went to the clerk to check where I  
11 could make sure everyone was served properly.

12          THE COURT: Oh, yeah.

13          MR. JONES: So and that is the case. Everyone was served  
14 properly, and Ms. De La Cruz is here on behalf of the towing  
15 company. On July 22nd, Your Honor, of 2022, I had three cars  
16 towed from a property that I recently experienced foreclosure  
17 at. At one point, I was a contractor, so I had multiple  
18 properties.

19          This particular property, I lived at. And some business  
20 associates bought the house out of foreclosure and contracted  
21 it back to me. Okay? So that part was established.

22          During the negotiations to contract the house back to me,  
23 I moved out of the property, and three cars were left there,  
24 along with some items from a grocery mart that I had owned and  
25 all that. At any rate, the car was towed -- these three cars

1 were towed by 24/7 Towing -- Anytime Towing owned by Mr.  
2 Paulino.

3 I filed suit because -- not because he towed the cars,  
4 but because of the rate he charged. When I called a few --  
5 four days later to claim the cars, I was told that the price  
6 was \$600 per car. As you can imagine, I went nuts on that.  
7 Didn't understand why. He said because he damaged his truck  
8 towing the car.

9 And so we went around and around for a while, and Mr.  
10 Paulino would not budge on the \$600 per car to go from 213  
11 Barker Road to Wade Hampton Boulevard where his shop is. I  
12 measured for it to be 20 miles and the time before we went to  
13 court.

14 We took this to court on October the 4th for Judge Bingel  
15 in Taylors. He heard the case and decided to dismiss the case  
16 without prejudice because I had no proven ownership of the  
17 property. I was not the registered owner, I'm sorry, of the  
18 cars. And that was his only reason.

19 And we have on transcript, my complaint is full of one  
20 claim, and that was excessive fees. I didn't have any claims  
21 about the tow was illegal or anything like that. We stayed  
22 within four walls of the complaint, talking about said fees.  
23 And when I questioned Mr. Paulino, he admitted that he was  
24 charging \$600, and he tried to explain why, that he damaged a  
25 truck.

1           The judge even went so far as to take money from that.  
2 You damaging your truck was the cost of doing business. You  
3 know, that's why we have insurance. You'll hear this on the  
4 transcript. And so there was time and time again where it was  
5 admitted that he was charging \$600 excessive fees.

6           We laid out framework with *Hadfield v. Gilchrest Towing*,  
7 which is a great case, which is very similar to this case.  
8 The framework that the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals  
9 had laid out, we laid out those same elements. We established  
10 that the fees were excessive. And there was no law -- or no  
11 requirement that I be the registered owner, but the owner of  
12 the properties. And so the judge defaulted to that and said I  
13 could refile.

14           We felt like -- and -- and -- and even when -- at the end  
15 of the case, you'll hear on the transcript, he was  
16 specifically saying I was correct, Mr. Jones is correct, and  
17 he named these elements. And then he -- he cautions Mr.  
18 Paulino to do these things in the future, but I didn't win the  
19 case. And I still don't have the cars.

20           THE COURT: I got you.

21           MR. JONES: Yes, ma'am.

22           THE COURT: Okay. Thank you.

23           MR. JONES: Um-hum.

24           THE COURT: I appreciate that.

25           MR. JONES: Thank you.

1 THE COURT: That's very clear argument. I appreciate  
2 that very much.

3 Yes, ma'am.

4 MS. DE LA CRUZ: We -- I appreciate he gave me a call  
5 because Elvis is out of the country. We never got notified  
6 that we were having --

7 THE COURT: Okay.

8 MS. DE LA CRUZ: -- today's, so -- but I do want to  
9 provide to you what I have as I am the one in the office that  
10 does the paperwork, and we currently -- give me one second.

11 Give me the one paper. Can I give you this paper?

12 THE COURT: Sure. Will you just show it to Mr. Jones  
13 first, please.

14 MS. DE LA CRUZ: I'm looking for the third one.

15 MR. JONES: Yes, ma'am.

16 MS. DE LA CRUZ: Thank you.

17 This was such a rush, I just ran up and grabbed that.

18 I need the third one.

19 THE COURT: Thank you. Okay. Yes, ma'am.

20 MS. DE LA CRUZ: So we submitted all the paperwork, and  
21 we already have ownership of all three cars. We sent letters.  
22 We have to go with what the DMV -- what is showing as the  
23 owner -- registered owners. And we sent all the letter and  
24 did all the whole procedure on the vehicles and submitted to  
25 the court, and we were granted ownership of them.

1 THE COURT: Okay. All right. Thank you very much.

2 Yes, sir. Anything else?

3 MR. JONES: Yes, ma'am. That entire issue about the  
4 ownership, that was after the fact.

5 THE COURT: I got you.

6 MR. JONES: All of that happened after the lawsuit was  
7 filed. There's a host of -- of errors on the part of the  
8 towing company that only started trying to correct 30 days  
9 after the suit was filed --

10 THE COURT: Okay.

11 MR. JONES: -- in an attempt to get in proper standing.  
12 And so when they sent out those letters to the registered  
13 owners, which two of them are my sister, and then the other  
14 had an affidavit for purchase. And so insurance doesn't start  
15 until you register those vehicles, is why I didn't register  
16 those vehicles.

17 But that was never the question. The question was, when  
18 I went back to reclaim the vehicles were the charges  
19 excessive? And nobody argued that the charges were not  
20 excessive. And those are the bases of my complaint. And the  
21 judge should have ruled in my favor, Your Honor.

22 THE COURT: Okay.

23 MR. JONES: Thank you.

24 THE COURT: Thank you. Well, will y'all just give me a  
25 few days on this, and I'll make a decision and issue a

1 decision. Oh, it should be the next few days. Okay?

2 That's okay. I appreciate it so much.

3 MR. JONES: Your Honor, would you like the thumb drive --

4 THE COURT: Sure.

5 MR. JONES: -- or email?

6 THE COURT: That's fine. I can take that thumb drive,  
7 and we can have that returned to you. Yeah.

8 Okay. Thank you so much.

9 MS. DE LA CRUZ: What happens next? I'm sorry.

10 THE COURT: It'll just be a couple of days, and I will --  
11 I'll issue a decision, and it'll get emailed to you.

12 MS. DE LA CRUZ: Okay.

13 THE COURT: Okay? Thank y'all.

14 MS. DE LA CRUZ: Let me make sure you have my email.

15 THE COURT: Okay. Let's check with the clerk's office  
16 here.

17 MR. JONES: I don't think you're going to see me again,  
18 Judge.

19 THE COURT: Okay. Take care. Have a good day.

20 (End of Transcript of Record)

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