

# Judge Judy Slams Down Gavel In \$22M Suit Over Syndicated Series’ Profits; Promises To Donate Winnings To Cancer Charity



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COMMENTS













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**EXCLUSIVE:** *Judge Judy* is still on the air, but on Wednesday the long-running successful syndicated series launched a new spinoff – in court.

Just more than two weeks after [Rebel Entertainment Partners](#) filed a \$5 million breach of contract complaint against former Manhattan family court judge Judy Sheindlin and a collection of [CBS](#) entities, the small-screen judicial heavyweight has instigated a big-bucks counteroffensive.

The salvo is a more than \$22 million lawsuit seeking declaratory relief and claiming unlawful/unfair business practices and unjust enrichment, to be precise.

In a deft PR move, Judge Judy already has a plan if she wins the \$4 million her lawyers estimate she personally has lost out in profit participation from successor-in-interest Rebel and talent agent [Richard Lawrence](#). The [Marty Singer](#)-represented Sheindlin promises to give all the cash to “the charity Stand Up To Cancer,” declares the jury trial-seeking complaint filed this morning in Los Angeles Superior Court.

That’s the nice part. The rest of the complaint takes a much harsher tone.

“Defendant Richard Lawrence is an unethical and self-dealing talent agent, and one of the luckiest men in the world.” states the filing, with the prose flourishes the Lavelly & Singer firm typically provide their high-profile clients.

“Lawrence did not package the *Judge Judy* daytime television series and yet, in what is the most absurd, unconscionable and unlawful purported packaging fee arrangement in the history of television, Lawrence and his agency have been paid in excess of Twenty-Two Million Dollars (\$22,000,000) in fees – effectively stealing from the Series’ bona fide profit participants, including Sheindlin,” the filing from Singer, Todd Eagan and Melissa Lerner adds. “Sheindlin demands that Lawrence return his ill-gotten gains for the good of all of the profit participants in the Series.”

“The objective facts are that Lawrence did not represent the talent on the one-star program that is *Judge Judy*; the only people he did represent were two non-writing producers fired during the first season leaving them uncompensated for producer fees, and he has not once set foot on the set of the Series in 24 years,” the new suit continues. (BTW: those “two non-writing producers” are Kaye Switzer and Sandi Spreckman. Remember them, their names will come up later.)

“The harm to Sheindlin and the other profit participants is ongoing and continuing with each new season of the Series, for which Defendants receive the purported packaging fees,” Wednesday’s 13-page filing pronounces. “The fees are deducted from Sheindlin’s share of Adjusted Gross Receipts for the Series continuously for each new season of the Series. Sheindlin’s rights are violated each and every time the fees are deducted from her share of AGR.”

Rebel’s lead attorney hit back like he was in the combative *Judy Judy* courtroom.

“Rebel is entitled to profit participation based on the written agreement with Big Ticket which CBS acquired,” said Bryan Freedman to Deadline this morning. “Judy has no legal standing to prevail on these ridiculous claims and she will not only lose this case but she will be sued for malicious prosecution based on this frivolous action. The case is so weak that even if she was the judge, she would lose it.”

Now, on one level, this all could become moot to some degree in the next year or so anyway. Although all parties will undoubtedly battle over the fine print as it relates to spinoffs and the likes of the Sheindlin-created *Hot Bench*, *Judge Judy* is [closing up shop](#) after its 25th season in 2021. A TV pro now, Sheindlin is already looking for a probable streaming home for her sequel of sorts *Judy Justice*.

Meanwhile, back in the courts, on August 4, the Freedman + Taitelman-represented Rebel sued Sheindlin, CBS Corporation and others for more than \$5 million over the \$95 million sale of the *Judge Judy* library to the then Les Moonves-run company [in 2017](#). At that time, Sheindlin responded: “If Mr. Lawrence can produce a contract, signed by me and Mr. Lawrence on the same page, at any time in history from the beginning of time, I will toast that contract, smear it with cream cheese and eat it on national television.”

Turns out Sheindlin now wants a very different sort of meal – a piece of Lawrence and Rebel themselves.

“It was only by egregious self-dealing violating his fiduciary duties to his clients Switzer and Spreckman – leaving them completely unprotected so that they were exposed to being fired from the Series after only one year – that Lawrence purportedly obtained packaging fees despite not providing any packaging services,” Wednesday’s three-claim complaint reads.

Flashback: [In early 2018](#), *Judge Judy* co-creators Switzer and the trust of the late Spreckman filed their own suit against Sheindlin, CBS and CBS unit Big Ticket TV claiming they were owed \$4.75 million from the nearly \$100 million sale of the show three years ago. That case is still moving through the courts and is set for trial next year, if it isn’t resolved beforehand.

Jumping back to 2016, Rebel filed a previous suit against CBS Studios, CBS Corporation, and producers and CBS TV Studios-owned Big Ticket over profits from the extremely profitable *Judge Judy*. Though her name and more than \$47 million salary was all over the paperwork, Sheindlin was not named as a defendant in that case, [which settled earlier this year](#).

Sheindlin has not formally replied to the latest Rebel suit of August 4, yet clearly today’s new complaint is her way of saying, as she does on her soon-to-end show: “Don’t pee on my leg and tell me it’s raining.”

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