

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND
FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

JANNEY MARIN *p/k/a*
"CHIQUIS"

CASE NO.:

JURY TRIAL DEMAND

Plaintiff,

v.

JUAN RIVERA SAAVEDRA

Defendant.

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Janney Marin *p/k/a* "Chiquis" ("Chiquis") files this Complaint against defendant Juan Rivera Saavedra ("Defendant").

INTRODUCTION

"Jealousy is never good – it is always accompanied by hate."

- *Abeja Reina*¹

1. These lyrics from "*Abeja Reina*" – the musical work that lies at the center of this dispute – prophetically predict the motive for Defendant's disgraceful conduct: jealousy.

2. Chiquis is a Latin Grammy award-winning artist whose songs garner millions of streams on the most popular music platforms. Defendant – Chiquis' uncle – has embarked on a smear campaign in which he has recklessly and falsely accused Chiquis of the very worst sins that can be levied against an artist, including that Chiquis has falsely claimed the work of others as her own; refused to bestow credit; and prevented her co-writer from being paid.

3. Given her public notoriety, Chiquis has long been the subject of scandalous, scurrilous and baseless attacks. While other members of the Rivera family have made negative

¹ *Abeja Reina* translates to English as "Queen Bee."

comments about Chiquis in the past, Chiquis bit her tongue in the name of family.

4. However, this time Defendant has gone too far, maliciously defaming Chiquis and causing significant damage to her professional reputation. Defendant's actions have regrettably left Chiquis with no option but to defend herself and make clear that she will not tolerate malicious attacks from those who seek to aggrandize themselves at her expense.

PARTIES, JURISDICTION AND VENUE

5. Plaintiff Janney Marin *p/k/a* "Chiquis" is a renowned recording artist and multi-faceted entertainer. Chiquis resides in Los Angeles, California.

6. Defendant Juan Rivera Saavedra is a producer, singer and TV personality, who resides in Riverside, California.

7. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant purposefully availed himself of this Court's jurisdiction by traveling to Telemundo Studios in Miami, Florida to launch a parade of lies against Chiquis. Specifically, Defendant appeared in person in Miami to be interviewed on several of Telemundo's national network television shows, including *La Mesa Caliente*, *Hoy Dia*, and *En Casa Con Telemundo* (collectively, the "Shows"), wherein he published defamatory statements against Chiquis. Defendant's defamatory statements were not only broadcast on national television, they were also streamed and replicated on Telemundo's social media, website and mobile application, which were accessible to Florida residents. Defendant has also defamed Chiquis on YouTube and his social media channels, which were widely replicated on traditional (TV and print) and digital media alike, and accessible to Florida residents (as well as other states throughout the United States). As of the filing of this complaint, the videos containing Defendant's defamatory statements remain available to Florida residents to access online at any time.

8. The amount in controversy far exceeds the Court's jurisdictional threshold of \$50,000.00 exclusive of interest, costs, and attorneys' fees as, while to be determined at trial, Chiquis' damages exceed one million dollars (U.S. \$1,000,000.00).

9. This Court also has personal jurisdiction over Defendant pursuant to Florida Statutes § 48.193, as many of the defamatory statements were published in the State of Florida.

10. Venue is proper in this Court because the causes of action accrued, in whole or in part, in Miami-Dade County, Florida.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

A. Chiquis' First Rises to Fame as a Pioneer of Hispanic Reality TV Shows, Before Launching Her Music Career.

11. Both Chiquis and Defendant are members of the Rivera family – one of the most prominent families in the Regional Mexican music genre.

12. Chiquis initially captured the hearts of audiences in 2010 when she appeared on the reality television show *Jenni Rivera Presents: Chiquis & Raq-C*. The show featured Chiquis' involvement in the life and business dealings of her now late mother, Dolores "Jenni" Rivera, who was – and remains – one of the top Regional Mexican artists of all time. Chiquis subsequently appeared in several spin-off television shows such as *I Love Jenni* and *Chiquis n' Control*.

13. In December of 2012, Chiquis' mother was tragically killed in an airplane crash near Monterrey, Mexico. Fulfilling a promise that she made to her mother, Chiquis launched her music career. In 2014, Chiquis co-wrote and released her first single, *Paloma Blanca* (White Dove), which she dedicated to her late mother.

14. Over the past decade, Chiquis has perfected her sound, blending pop with "banda" (a form of traditional Mexican music), becoming one of the top female artists in the Regional Mexican genre. Her singles have reached No. #1 on both the Billboard Regional Mexican charts

and iTunes/Apple Music, and garnered millions of streams.

15. She has released five studio albums and a live album – for which she has won two Latin Grammys, two *Lo Nuestro* Awards, and received a Grammy nomination – and presently has 431,552 monthly listeners on Spotify.

16. Beyond music, Chiquis has authored a *New York Times* Best Seller; starred and produced several television shows; released a line of beauty products; and graced the cover of major Latin magazines.

B. Chiquis Releases *Abeja Reina*, Her Fourth Studio Album.

17. In May of 2022, Chiquis released her fourth album, *Abeja Reina* (“Queen Bee”), featuring a title track of the same name (*i.e.*, *Abeja Reina*) (hereinafter, the “Song”).

18. Chiquis co-authored the Song’s lyrics and composition with composer Robert “Bobby” Castro (“Castro”).

19. A comparison of the first writing demo proposed to Chiquis and the final version of the Song released to the public confirms Chiquis’ critical contributions to the authorship of the composition.

20. Moreover, on Castro’s TikTok account, Castro posted a video of himself with Chiquis on the set of the filming of the Song’s music video. In the caption, Castro refers to Chiquis as his “co-author/writer”²:

² <https://www.tiktok.com/@bobbycastleroofficial/vidco/7102824667882278190>



21. WhatsApp messages between Chiquis’ representatives and Castro further confirm Chiquis and Castro’s co-authorship of the Song’s composition.

22. Based on their respective contributions to the Song – and consistent with her practice of granting generous songwriting splits – Chiquis and Castro agreed to a writer/publisher split of: seventy-five percent (75%) to Castro, and twenty-five percent (25%) to Chiquis. The parties’ agreement was memorialized in a WhatsApp message exchanged between Chiquis’ representative and Castro:



23. Castro has ties with both Chiquis and Defendant. Castro is purportedly signed to LINEA Global Publishing (“Linea”), a music publishing company partly owned by Defendant, which administers Castro’s publishing rights.

24. Upon the *Abeja Reina* album release, Chiquis expressed the significance of her involvement in penning the lyrics to the Song – a *corrido*³ about herself:

There aren’t many women that sing *corridos*. My mom was one of the first, and I always felt a calling to sing them as well. I have been wanting to create a song like this for a long time, and thus I knew that I would have to take part in writing it, so that certain things would be clearly stated.⁴

C. Defendant Admitted that He Did Not Compose the Song.

25. Defendant did not write or otherwise personally contribute to the Song’s composition.

26. In his tireless pursuit to have the spotlight shine on him, Defendant participated in multiple videos and on-camera interviews in which he confirmed the undeniable: he was not a writer or author of the Song.

27. By way of example, on June 28, 2022, approximately a month after the Song’s release, Defendant posted a lengthy video on his YouTube Channel titled, “*Que Pienso de Abeja Reina?*” (“What do I think about the Queen Bee Song?”) (“Video”).⁵

28. The forty-minute “look-at-me” Video captures the Defendant unsolicited musings about the Song and his responses to audience questions.

29. Throughout the self-aggrandizing Video, Defendant made numerous statements

³ A “corrido” is a traditional Mexican song style, which tells the stories of enigmatic characters, typically anti-heros, with the accompaniment of a tuba, a guitar and a toloche.

⁴ <https://music.apple.com/cc/album/abeja-reina/1621405066>

⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_jq9H6a0j2I&t=1696s&ab_channel=JuanRivera

(and concessions) regarding the Song's composition, as well as his relationship with Castro, Chiquis, and other Rivera family members.

30. Defendant admitted, for example, that he did not author the Song, stating: "***I do not like to receive credit where it does not pertain to me.*** The Song was composed by my friend Bobby Castro." (See Video at 4:17) (emphasis added).

31. In addition to admitting that he is not entitled to receive credit for the Song's composition, Defendant:

- Commented that Jenni Rivera (Chiquis' mother and his sister) resonated with her audience, because fans could relate to her lyrics and feel her emotions. (See *id.* at 5:47).
- Credited the Song's success to Chiquis' ability to convey true emotion (as Jenni did). (*Id.*).
- Stated that he had a good conversation with Chiquis about the Song; that they were able to resolve his initial "gripe" that Linea was not credited in the original label credit; and that the matter of the credits was resolved because Chiquis agreed to be "fair." (*Id.* at 12:57).
- Noted that Linea is responsible for collecting royalties from the Song given that Linea is Castro's publisher, but that he was not collecting any direct royalties from the Song given his lack of involvement in the Song's composition. (See *id.* at 27:57).
- Admitted that he has been "selfish, impulsive, possibly rancorous, explosive, and offensive" with certain family members, and that to reconcile the issues with his family would require a level of empathy and understanding that is simply not available at the moment. (See *id.* at 28:30).

D. Defendant Changes His Tune, Falsely Claiming that He Played a Critical Role in the Song's Creation.

32. As the Song gained popularity and positive reviews, Defendant changed his tune. His self-admitted "selfishness" bubbled to the surface, spurring him to embark on a media tour in which he defamed Chiquis by falsely claiming that Chiquis did not write any portion of the Song's lyrics; fraudulently registered herself as a co-writer of the Song; and has precluded Linea from

collecting royalties owed to Castro.

33. Specifically, on November 24, 2023, Defendant posted a second YouTube video, ominously titled, “*The last notice regarding Abeja Reina*” (“Second Video”).⁶

34. In this Second Video made *nearly a year and a half* after the original Video, Defendant falsely claimed to have played a significant role in the Song’s composition; that Chiquis did not author the Song ; that Chiquis recorded the Song without any advance warning; that Chiquis refused to correct the Song’s credits; and that Chiquis had greedily refused to give both Defendant and Castro the credit they deserved.

35. Defendant also lamented that he was being forced to be the “bad Uncle” because Chiquis refused to be honest. Ironically, Defendant implored Chiquis to be “honest with the public,” claiming that she can hide “behind social media, she cannot hide in a courtroom.”

36. Defendants’ false statements had their desired effect. They provided Defendant with his desired “fifteen minutes” of fame, while arousing public sympathy, and falsely painting Chiquis as an artist, who was: (i) entirely dependent on the creative genius of others, and (ii) unwilling to share credit.

37. The Second Video made waves on social media and captured the attention of several entertainment news outlets.

38. Defendant’s demonstrably false statements were regurgitated in a demand letter sent by his counsel to UMG Recordings, Inc. (“UMG”). Specifically, the demand letter falsely claims that Chiquis “did not write any portion of the composition,” “is improperly passing the composition off as though she is a co-writer, when she is not,” “fraudulently registered the composition,” “does not have the right to license the composition,” cannot exploit the Song

⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjaJwObQDZ8&ab_channel=JuanRiviera)

without a license from Linea. (A true and correct copy of the demand letter sent by Larry Castruita is attached hereto as **Exhibit A**).⁷

39. The Demand Letter had the audacity to claim that Defendant “is very supportive of his niece’s career” and, in a poorly-veiled threat, communicated the “... hope[] that this issues [sic] does not interrupt the momentum of Chiquis’ current album push.” (*Id.*).

40. The Demand Letter requested that all exploitation of the Song cease, and that all references to Chiquis as a writer of the Composition be immediately removed.

41. The Demand Letter exposed Defendant’s true motive: to thrust himself in the spotlight while intentionally harming Chiquis and her album’s success.

E. Telemundo Flies Defendant to Miami, Where Defendant Appears on Three Separate Television Shows to Defame Chiquis.

42. Seeking to capitalize on the buzz created by Defendant’s Second Video, Telemundo invited Defendant in early December 2023 to appear for in-person interviews on the Shows in Miami, Florida.⁸ Notably, Telemundo covered all costs relating to Defendant’s travel, including the flight costs, lodging, per diems, and ground transportation for Defendant, his wife and his publicist.

43. Defendant used the pulpit provided by Telemundo to discuss the alleged rift between him and Chiquis regarding the Song’s composition.

44. During his appearance on the Shows, Defendant made several false statements about Chiquis, attacking her professionalism and reputation over the course of several days.

45. For example, during *La Mesa Caliente* (“Mesa Caliente”), Defendant’s ever-changing narrative about his involvement in the Song morphed to Defendant now being primarily

⁷ The demand letter is erroneously dated December 4, 2022 (as opposed to December 4, 2023).

⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHMrgPhsvls&ab_channel=TelemundoEntretenimiento

responsible for the Song's creative conceit.

46. While Defendant's purported involvement in the Song grew, Chiquis' supposed involvement shrunk. When asked by one of Mesa Caliente's co-host as to Chiquis' participation in the Song, Defendant insolently (and falsely) stated that Chiquis merely "*changed three words*" of the Song's lyrics.

47. During this interview, Defendant further stated that Castro had "not received a single cent" of the royalties owed to him, and that Chiquis was willfully withholding payment to Castro.

48. Defendant's allegations of non-payment prompted Mesa Caliente's co-hosts to inquire as to whether Linea – as Castro's publisher – actually registered the Song's composition copyright such that Linea could collect the royalties on Castro's behalf. The co-host posed this question understanding that the only way for Linea/Castro to receive royalties from the Song is for Linea: (a) to register and claim mechanical royalties for the Song's reproduction in digital and physical formats (*e.g.*, when the Song is downloaded and/or streamed via "on-demand" streaming services); and (b) to register the Song's composition copyright with Castro's corresponding performing rights organization (in this case, BMI) in order to collect royalties for public performances of the Song.

49. Rather than admit that Linea negligently failed to register and claim mechanical royalties or Castro's interest with BMI, Defendant visibly attempted to "skirt" this question. Banking on the fact that the viewing audience might not appreciate the specifics of the music publishing industry, Defendant lied and falsely blamed Chiquis for interfering with payment to Castro and Linea. Defendant also fallaciously stated that he had repeatedly asked Chiquis to

correct her “error” regarding the outstanding royalty payments, but that she refused.⁹

50. That same week, Defendant appeared on the Telemundo Shows, *En Casa Con Telemundo* and *Hoy Dia*, to double down on his attacks.

51. On *En Casa Con Telemundo* (“*En Casa*”), Defendant again falsely declared that Chiquis was responsible for Castro not receiving any payment for the Song’s exploitation.¹⁰ Defendant further stated that until Chiquis corrected this “problem,” she must refrain from exploiting the Song on any platforms or performing the Song in any way.

52. Noting that Castro was present during the making/filming of the *Abeja Reina* music video, the *En Casa* host inquired whether there was actually a disagreement between Castro and Chiquis. Specifically, the host questioned why, despite Castro’s prior support, Defendant was now at odds with Chiquis over the Song. Defendant responded that, at the time of the making of the Song’s music video, Castro was misled into believing that an agreement had been reached with Chiquis, only to later learn that Chiquis had not given Castro any composition credit for the Song in Mexico.

53. When the *En Casa* host pointed out that Chiquis also contributed to the Song’s lyrics/composition, Defendant minimized Chiquis’ contribution, stating that Chiquis only made two revisions to the Song’s lyrics. Specifically, Defendant stated that Chiquis’ contribution was nothing more than changing the word “*Rivera*” to “*guerrera*” (fighter) and the word “*familia*” (family) to “*hermanos*” (siblings).

54. Defendant amplified his defamatory attacks on *Hoy Dia*. When questioned as to

⁹ As the owner of a publishing company, Defendant indisputably knew that Chiquis neither had, nor has, any control over Linea’s publishing payments in connection with the exploitation of the Song. If Linea has not collected the publishing payments (on behalf of Castro), it is because Defendant and Linea – as Castro’s publisher – failed to register Castro’s share with BMI.

¹⁰ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSQr3c6O6bQ&ab_channel=EnCasaConTelemundo

the genesis of the dispute between Defendant and Chiquis, Defendant explained that Chiquis and other family members experienced discord in 2018, and that Defendant “decided to write the Song” based on that disagreement. Defendant further stated, falsely, that when Chiquis recorded the Song two years later, she unilaterally decided not to provide him with credit.

55. Defendant continued to perpetuate his victim narrative on *Hoy Dia*. Specifically, he falsely claimed to have reached out to Chiquis and her representatives over 18 months ago, that Chiquis made false promises to correct the issues, but that, to date, Chiquis had failed to do so. Defendant challenged Chiquis to come forward with the truth, asserting that Chiquis was lying and using the love and loyalty of her fans to manipulate this situation, whereas all he wanted was “justice.”

56. Defendant also falsely stated that Chiquis’ legal team had finally reached out to him after 18 months, but requested an additional two months (until February 29, 2024) to respond to Defendant regarding his entitlement to the Song’s composition credits. Defendant questioned: “they want two months for what?” Chiquis’ purported request for more time was, he claimed, a clear act of disrespect, and that Chiquis likely just wanted more time to “enjoy her vacation.”

57. Defendant lauded his patience, asking the *Hoy Dia* host the rhetorical question: “do you think any other composer would have waited silently for 18 months?” Defendant further claimed that he only showed Chiquis grace because she was his niece.

58. Although Defendant only appeared once on *La Mesa Caliente*, *En Casa Con Telemundo* and *Hoy Dia* (for a total of three in-person appearances), his interviews and defamatory statements were extensively re-played for weeks on Telemundo’s TV network, as well as Telemundo’s social media, digital content, website and mobile application.

59. According to Defendant, the purpose of his media tour was to publicly give Chiquis

an ultimatum and warn that if she did not “correct” the issues raised by Defendant, he would proceed to file suit against Chiquis. Defendant’s threats proved hollow, as his threatened “lawsuit” was never filed – because there is no viable claim.

60. Defendant’s defamatory statements were not just limited to the media. Defendant made the same false statements to pertinent music publishers, resulting in a legal hold being placed on the Song’s royalties. Specifically, on March 5, 2024, UMG advised Peer Music that: “we [UMG] are placing 100% of the copyright royalties on legal hold for the song ‘Abeja Reina’ as recorded by Chiquis. The legal hold is due to a dispute between Janney Marin Rivera pka ‘Chiquis’ and Juan Rivera.” (A true and correct copy of UMG’s notification is attached hereto as **Exhibit B**).

61. Defendant knew that statements made by him in the Second Video, the Shows, and to third-parties (including UMG and Peer) are false.

62. Defendant made these statements with actual malice – *e.g.*, with knowledge that his statements were false or with reckless disregard as to whether or not the statements were true.

E. Defendant’s Defamatory Statements Have Harmed Chiquis.

63. Defendant chose to publicly air false statements regarding Chiquis for media attention and in an apparent attempt to acquire undeserved credit. Defendant’s defamatory statements have, as intended, directly and severely hindered Chiquis’ professional business dealings, earnings, and reputation.

64. Defendant has maliciously and intentionally fabricated the most damaging statements that one can make towards an artist, including that the artist is not talented, fails to give credit when due, and deprives collaborating artists of payment.

65. Defendant’s false statements defame Chiquis in an industry where credibility as a

musical artist is paramount in the eyes of fans and critics alike, as well as other artists and industry professionals that Chiquis may want to collaborate with, including songwriters, music producers, television show producers, brands, concert and ticket sales promoters. As someone who is also in the music and entertainment industry, Defendant undoubtedly appreciates the gravity of his defamatory statements and their damaging effects on Chiquis' career and reputation.

66. Defendant's malicious intent is further evident from the timing of his smear campaign.

67. Defendant began spewing his defamatory statements on Telemundo after Chiquis announced the release of her new album, *Bee Side*, appreciating that the timing would inflict maximum damages and derail the promotion of Chiquis' new album.

68. As a direct result of Defendant's false and defamatory statements, Chiquis was forced to cancel the promotion of her new album, as any interviews would have undoubtedly been riddled with questions focused on Defendant's false accusations.

69. Because Defendant's defamatory statements were "the talk of Latin TV" for weeks, Defendant stymied Chiquis' ability to promote the release of her new album or any of the album's singles.

70. Defendant's defamatory statements needlessly stoked the flames of "Rivera family drama" depriving Chiquis on the benefit of her hard work and robbing her of her ability to promote *Bee Side*.

COUNT I
(Defamation *Per Se*)

71. Plaintiff Chiquis repeats, realleges and incorporates the allegations set forth in the preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

72. Defendant has made false and defamatory statements about Chiquis including that

Chiquis: (i) did not write any portion of the composition; (ii) is improperly passing the composition off as though she is a co-writer; (iii) has failed to properly attribute credit to Castro; (iv) fraudulently registered the composition; and (v) has prevented Castro and Linea from being paid.

73. The false and defamatory statements published by the Defendant about Chiquis constitute defamation *per se*.

74. Defendant published the false and defamatory statements about Chiquis on various media outlets, including on the Defendant's YouTube Channel and on the Telemundo Shows in Miami, Florida.

75. Defendant made his defamatory statements for improper purposes, with knowledge that the statements would be published and disseminated in Miami, Florida, as well as throughout and outside of the United States.

76. Defendant said the defamatory statements with actual malice, as he knew that the statements were false at the time he made them. Defendant intentionally portrayed Chiquis in a negative light knowing that his depiction was false and untrue or with reckless and wanton disregard for the truth.

77. As a direct and proximate result of the Defendant's conduct, Defendant has caused harm to Chiquis, which includes, but is not limited to general and specific damages, as well as special damages in an amount not presently known, but subsequently ascertainable and believed to be no less than one million dollars (U.S. \$1,000,000.00), including damages to Chiquis' professional reputation, standing in the music industry, and lost revenue.

78. Upon information and belief, Chiquis alleges that the Defendant's aforementioned acts were done intentionally or with conscious disregard of Chiquis' rights, and with the intention to vex, injure, or annoy Chiquis, such as to constitute oppression, fraud, malice, or wanton and

reckless disregard for the truth, thus entitling Chiquis to exemplary and punitive damages in an amount appropriate to punish or set an example of Defendant and to deter such conduct in the future, which amount will be proven at trial.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Janney Marin respectfully requests that this Honorable Court enter judgment in her favor against Defendant for:

- A. The general and special damages suffered by her based on Defendant's defamatory statements and tortious conduct in an amount to be established at trial, together with pre- and post-judgment interest at the maximum legal rate;
- B. Compensatory, exemplary and punitive damages in an amount sufficient to punish and deter Defendant, the exact sum of which is to be determined as appropriate;
- C. Reasonable attorneys' fees and costs to the extent permitted by law; and
- D. For such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

Chiquis demands a trial by jury on all claims and issues so triable pursuant to Florida Rule of Civil Procedure 1.430.

Not Official Court Document

Dated: March 18, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

PRYOR CASHMAN LLP

Attorneys for Plaintiff, Chiquis Rivera

255 Alhambra Circle, 8th Floor

Miami, Florida 33134

Telephone: (786) 582-3010

Facsimile: (786) 582-3004

s/ James G. Sammataro

James G. Sammataro

Florida Bar No. 520292

Christine M. Dimitriou

Florida Bar No. 99381

jsammataro@pryorcashman.com

cdimitriou@pryorcashman.com

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