



## Oprah Winfrey Sued by Pastor Over 'Greenleaf' TV Series



Complaint says defendants "didn't even seek to hide the theft"

Tim Kenneally | April 19, 2018 @ 3:40 PM

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Getty Images

Oprah Winfrey might have an ungodly legal situation on her hands.

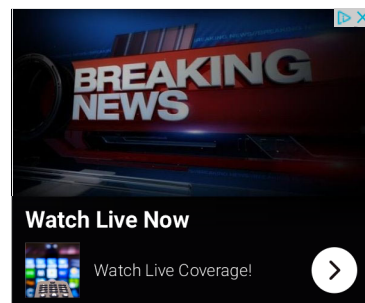
Winfrey is being sued by a pastor and another person who claim that the Oprah Winfrey Network series "Greenleaf" is a ripoff of their idea.

The suit, filed in federal court in California on Thursday by Shannan Lynette Wynn and Pastor Lester Eugene Barrie, starts off with a nod to the sexual harassment scandal that's recently plagued the entertainment industry before moving on to its specific complaint of alleged copyright infringement.

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"Hollywood has been the subject of extreme scrutiny due to revelations of what has been an undisclosed, decades-long history of abuse, sexual harassment and discrimination by those in power," the suit reads. "On a different front, and just as pervasive, has been the flagrant pilfering of the creative; specifically, the victimization of the hard-working, dedicated writers, authors and creators whose toil and artistic works have been stolen, misattributed and exploited by the unscrupulous and untouchable titans and high-status players of the entertainment industry. Creative theft, in Hollywood, has become a cottage industry."



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According to the complaint, the plaintiffs submitted a treatment for a project titled "Justice & Glory" to the defendants, and while Barrie and Wynn were later told that their idea had been rejected, "Years later, Plaintiffs saw their work produced and exploited by Defendants under a different name: 'Greenleaf.'"

The suit doesn't mince words, calling the defendants' actions "blatant" and "arrogant."

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"[T]hey didn't even seek to hide the theft; they used the same character names, and copied verbatim unique and novel storylines, themes, subplots and the overall tone of the show. They even named their antagonist after Plaintiff Pastor Barrie (Pastor Basie in 'Greenleaf')," the suit reads.

"The setting of Defendants' 'Greenleaf' is identical to that of Plaintiffs' 'Justice & Glory.' Both shows are dramas that take place in the South and center around a powerful, African-American family dynasty and their sprawling megachurch," the complaint adds. "The families of both shows live together in a mansion-style home sitting on a large plot of land, have private jets and live an affluent lifestyle. Their lives all center around the mega-church activities and people affiliated with the church in one aspect or another."

"We have not been served with a lawsuit regarding this claim," an OWN spokesperson told TheWrap on Thursday.

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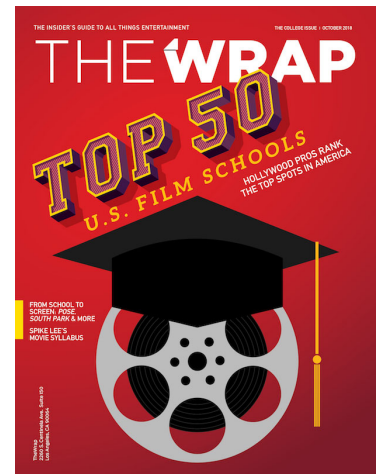
Alleging copyright infringement, breach of implied-in-fact contract and breach of written contract, the suit seeks damages of \$150,000 for each act of infringement, as well as an injunction barring the defendants from infringing on the plaintiffs' copyright.

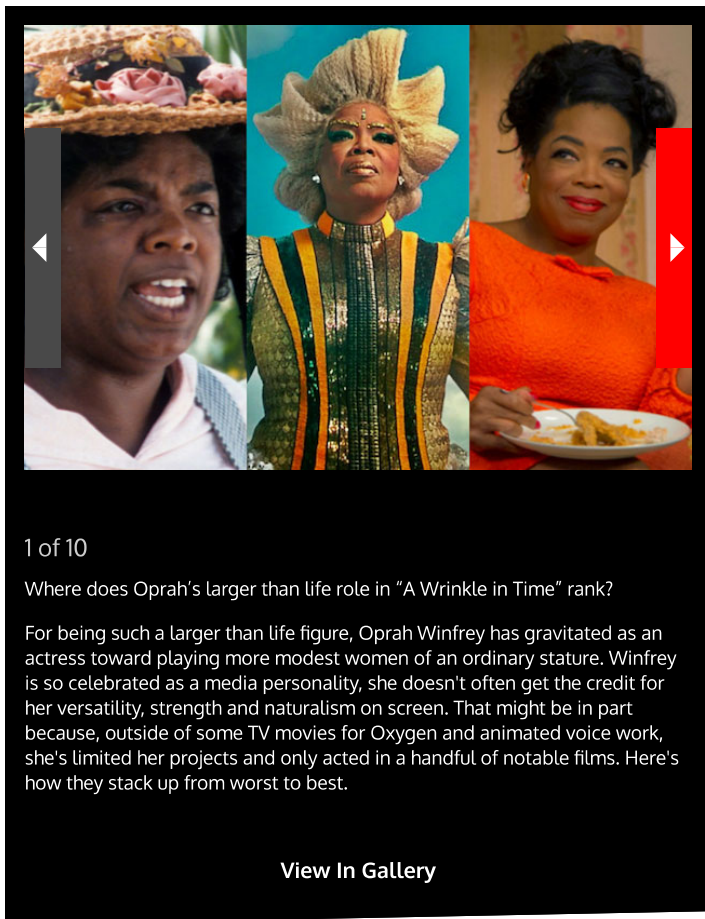
Pamela Chelin contributed to this report.

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Oprah Winfrey's Major Movie Roles Ranked, From 'The Color Purple' to 'A Wrinkle in Time' (Photos)





1 of 10

Where does Oprah's larger than life role in "A Wrinkle in Time" rank?

For being such a larger than life figure, Oprah Winfrey has gravitated as an actress toward playing more modest women of an ordinary stature. Winfrey is so celebrated as a media personality, she doesn't often get the credit for her versatility, strength and naturalism on screen. That might be in part because, outside of some TV movies for Oxygen and animated voice work, she's limited her projects and only acted in a handful of notable films. Here's how they stack up from worst to best.

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