

# Investigative reporter Gretchen Hammond exposes alleged massive elder abuse & Exploitation Ring michigan probate court

*massive elder abuse exposed*

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GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND EXPOSES

ALLEGED MASSIVE [ELDER ABUSE](#) AND EXPLOITATION RING IN MIGHIGAN PROBATE COURTS

The guardianship system isn't new; in fact, it's rooted in medieval English law. Every US state still uses some form of the system, which, at its best, is designed to protect citizens who are no longer able to protect themselves by declaring them wards of the state. We know, of course, that the system is rarely at its best, with increasing reports of abuse cropping up nationwide, prompting Congressional calls for reform.

But the level of controversy over how guardianship cases are handled in one Detroit-area probate courtroom has reached such heights, the story reads more like Orwellian fiction than it does a model of the American experience.

An unsettling number of accusations have been leveraged against the court, citing abuse, neglect, robbery, and exploitation, often in cases that arguably didn't merit guardianship in the first place. In as little as a year, "incapacitated wards" are stripped of the entirety of their savings and possessions and rendered completely reliant upon social services and benefits such as Medicaid. Even high-profile families, including the estates of Rosa Parks and Aretha Franklin, have been drawn into the quagmire.

Award-winning investigative journalist [Gretchen Rachel Hammond](#) spent the past 13 months independently investigating a systemic problem at the Oakland County Probate Court, which has allegedly been shielded by the highest levels of Michigan government for the past 30-some years. With the help of a forensic accountant, three Wayne State University Journalism School researchers, and thousands of corroborating documents, she has published a first-of-its-kind exploration into the court system, its four judges, four guardians, and the stories behind more than 2,200 wards.

Background:

In July 2018, Hammond engaged in a freelance, self-funded investigation to determine if alleged abuses at the Oakland County Probate Court were systemic.

Discoveries include the forced separation of families and isolation of the vulnerable; fraudulent petitions for guardianship by Adult Protective Services investigators; massive overbilling; the



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investigative reporter gretchen Rachel hammond



since march 12th 2019  
Michigan attorney general  
knew this story was  
happening, Attorney  
general Dana Nessel  
announcement today of the  
firing of 4 public  
administrators has been a  
long time coming”  
*Gretchen Rachel Hammond*

forced removal of individuals from their homes and the  
placement of them in nursing facilities or unlicensed group  
homes with subhuman living conditions; real estate fraud;  
and missing assets that number in the millions of dollars.

The investigation met with constant challenges, including  
threats and harassment by Oakland County Sheriff’s  
officers. A surreal March 12, 2019 four-hour meeting  
between Hammond's team and Michigan Attorney General  
Dana Nessel's staff led to a new line of inquiry and  
discoveries of campaign ties between Nessel, Whitmer and  
Oakland County Probate Court Chief Judge Kathleen Ryan  
and her family.

## Biography

Gretchen Rachel Hammond is an award-winning freelance investigative journalist based out of Chicago. Her work has won or been nominated for four successive Chicago Press Club awards, been recognized by the National Association of Lesbian and Gay Journalists (NLGJA), and covered topics such as criminal justice, abuse at ICE detention facilities, and alleged discrimination on the part of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services leading to the unnecessary separation of children from their parents.

GRETCHEN IS AVAIL FOR INTERVIEW AND THE FULL5 PART SERIES IS AVAIL

CONTACT: ROGER NEAL @ NEAL PR  
323-366-2796

ROGER NEAL  
NEAL PR  
+1 323-366-2796  
[email us here](#)

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