

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

NELSON ESPINAL,

Plaintiff,

-against-

MIDLAND CREDIT MANAGEMENT,
INC.,

Defendant.

CIVIL ACTION

**COMPLAINT
AND
DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

Plaintiff NELSON ESPINAL (hereinafter, “Plaintiff”), a New York resident, brings this complaint by and through his attorneys, Daniel Cohen, PLLC, against Defendant MIDLAND CREDIT MANAGEMENT, INC. (hereinafter “Defendant”), pursuant to Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, based upon information and belief of Plaintiff’s counsel, except for allegations specifically pertaining to Plaintiff, which are based upon Plaintiff’s personal knowledge.

INTRODUCTION/PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

1. Congress enacted the FDCPA in 1977 in response to the “abundant evidence of the use of abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection practices by many debt collectors.” 15 U.S.C. § 1692(a). At that time, Congress was concerned that “abusive debt collection practices contribute to the number of personal bankruptcies, to material instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual privacy.” *Id.* Congress concluded that “existing laws . . . [we]re inadequate to protect consumers,” and that “the effective collection of debts” does not require “misrepresentation or other abusive debt collection practices.” 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692(b) & (c).
2. Congress explained that the purpose of the Act was not only to eliminate abusive debt collection practices, but also to “insure that those debt collectors who refrain from using

abusive debt collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged.” *Id.* § 1692(e). After determining that the existing consumer protection laws were inadequate, *id.* § 1692(b), Congress gave consumers a private cause of action against debt collectors who fail to comply with the Act. *Id.* § 1692k.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

3. The Court has jurisdiction over this action under § 1692 *et seq.* and 28 U.S.C. § 2201. If applicable, the Court also has pendent jurisdiction over the state law claims in this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a).
4. Venue is proper in this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(2).

NATURE OF THE ACTION

5. Plaintiff brings this action seeking redress for Defendant’s actions of using an unfair and unconscionable means to collect a debt.
6. Defendant's actions violated § 1692 *et seq.* of Title 15 of the United States Code, commonly referred to as the Fair Debt Collections Practices Act (“FDCPA”) which prohibits debt collectors from engaging in abusive, deceptive and unfair practices.
7. Plaintiff is seeking damages, and declaratory and injunctive relief.

PARTIES

8. Plaintiff is a natural person and a resident of the State of New York, and is a “Consumer” as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692(a)(3).
9. Defendant is a collection agency with its principal office located in San Diego, California.
10. Defendant is a company that uses the mail, telephone, and facsimile and regularly engages in business the principal purpose of which is to attempt to collect debts alleged to be due another.
11. Defendant is a “debt collector,” as defined under the FDCPA under 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(6).

ALLEGATIONS OF FACT

12. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered “1” through “11” herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
13. Defendant collects and attempts to collect debts incurred or alleged to have been incurred for personal, family or household purposes on behalf of creditors using the United States Postal Services, telephone and Internet.
14. Upon information and belief, within the last year Defendant commenced efforts to collect an alleged consumer “debt” as defined by 15 U.S.C. 1692a(5), when it mailed a Collection Letter to Plaintiff seeking to collect on an unpaid account allegedly owed to Midland Funding LLC.
15. On or around December 20, 2017, Defendant sent Plaintiff a collection letter (hereinafter, the “Letter”). *See Exhibit A.*
16. The Letter was sent or caused to be sent by persons employed by Defendant as a “debt collector” as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(6).
17. The Letter is a “communication” as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(2).
18. The Letter stated a “**Current Balance**” and purported to offer Plaintiff a settlement opportunity.
19. However, the Letter implied to the least sophisticated consumer that interest was accruing on the unpaid balance, yet it failed to adequately comply with this Court’s binding case law in disclosing same.
20. As set forth in the following Counts Defendant violated the FDCPA.

First Count
15 U.S.C. §1692e et seq.
False or Misleading Representations as to Status of Debt

21. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered “1” through “20” herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
22. Defendant’s debt collection efforts attempted and/or directed towards Plaintiff violated various provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.
23. Pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §1692e, a debt collector is prohibited from using false, deceptive, or misleading representation in connection with the collection of a debt.
24. While § 1692e specifically prohibits certain practices, the list is non-exhaustive, and does not preclude a claim of falsity or deception based on non-enumerated practice.
25. Collection notices are deceptive if they can be reasonably read to have two or more different meanings, one of which is inaccurate.
26. The question of whether a collection letter is deceptive is determined from the perspective of the “least sophisticated consumer.”
27. The Letter can reasonably be read by the least sophisticated consumer to have two or more meanings concerning the actual balance due, one of which must be inaccurate, in violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.
28. By stating a “Current Balance” without further clarification, “Defendant did not meet the minimum standard set out by *Avila*, because the letter does not state when, if ever, the amount owed by the Plaintiff would increase.”¹

¹ *Thomas v. Midland Credit Management, Inc.*, 217CV00523ADSARL, 2017 WL 5714722, at *4 (E.D.N.Y. Nov. 27, 2017), stating that “[h]ere, the Defendant argues that *Avila* is inapplicable because the letter is clear that interest is not accruing. The Court disagrees...while the letter states that interest and fees are zero at the time the letter was sent, it does not state whether interest would accrue at a later date. This is further clouded by the fact that the letter classifies the amount owed as the “current balance,” implying that interest may accrue.

29. Plaintiff's account was not subject to the accrual of interest, but by stating a "Current Balance," Defendant falsely suggested that immediate payment of the balance would benefit Plaintiff by implying that the Balance would be subject to change, and could be subject to additional interest.
30. In the alternative, Plaintiff's account was accruing contractual interest, but Defendant's communication failed to adequately disclose same in light of *Avila*.
31. The Letter can reasonably be read by the least sophisticated consumer to have two or more meanings concerning the actual balance due, one of which must be inaccurate, in violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.
32. Defendant's conduct constitutes a false, deceptive and misleading means and representation in connection with the collection of the debt, in violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.
33. Defendant's debt collection efforts attempted and/or directed towards Plaintiff violated various provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to § 1692(e).
34. By reason thereof, Defendant is liable to Plaintiff for judgment that Defendant's conduct violated Section 1692e *et seq.* of the FDCPA, actual damages, statutory damages, costs and attorneys' fees.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against Defendant as follows:

- (a) A declaration that Defendant violated the FDCPA;
- (d) Awarding Plaintiff costs of this Action, including reasonable attorneys' fees and expenses;
- (e) Awarding pre-judgment interest and post-judgment interest; and
- (f) Awarding Plaintiff such other and further relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

Respectfully submitted,

By: /s/ Daniel Cohen

Daniel Cohen, Esq.

Daniel Cohen, PLLC

300 Cadman Plaza W, 12th floor

Brooklyn, New York 11201

Phone: (646) 645-8482

Fax: (347) 665-1545

Email: Dan@dccohen.com

Attorneys for Plaintiff

DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY

Pursuant to Rule 38 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Plaintiff hereby requests a trial by jury on all issues so triable.

/s/ Daniel Cohen

Daniel Cohen, Esq.

Dated: Brooklyn, New York
January 12, 2018

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS

NELSON ESPINAL

(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff NASSAU (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)

(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)

DANIEL COHEN PLLC, 300 Cadman Plz W, 12 Fl., Brooklyn, NY 11201, (646) 645-8482

DEFENDANTS

MIDLAND CREDIT MANAGEMENT, INC.

County of Residence of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)

NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.

Attorneys (If Known)

II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff, 2 U.S. Government Defendant, 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party), 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)

III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)

Table with columns for Plaintiff (PTF) and Defendant (DEF) citizenship: Citizen of This State, Citizen of Another State, Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country, Incorporated or Principal Place of Business In This State, Incorporated and Principal Place of Business In Another State, Foreign Nation.

IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

Click here for: Nature of Suit Code Descriptions.

Large table with categories: CONTRACT, REAL PROPERTY, CIVIL RIGHTS, TORTS, PRISONER PETITIONS, FORFEITURE/PENALTY, LABOR, IMMIGRATION, BANKRUPTCY, SOCIAL SECURITY, FEDERAL TAX SUITS, OTHER STATUTES.

V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- 1 Original Proceeding, 2 Removed from State Court, 3 Remanded from Appellate Court, 4 Reinstated or Reopened, 5 Transferred from Another District (specify), 6 Multidistrict Litigation - Transfer, 8 Multidistrict Litigation - Direct File

VI. CAUSE OF ACTION

Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity): 15 USC 1692

Brief description of cause: Defendant violated the FDCPA

VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:

CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P. DEMAND \$

CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint: JURY DEMAND: Yes No

VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY

(See instructions):

JUDGE DOCKET NUMBER

DATE SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD

01/11/2018 /s/ Daniel Cohen

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

RECEIPT # AMOUNT APPLYING IFP JUDGE MAG. JUDGE

CERTIFICATION OF ARBITRATION ELIGIBILITY

Local Arbitration Rule 83.10 provides that with certain exceptions, actions seeking money damages only in an amount not in excess of \$150,000, exclusive of interest and costs, are eligible for compulsory arbitration. The amount of damages is presumed to be below the threshold amount unless a certification to the contrary is filed.

I, DANIEL COHEN, counsel for PLAINTIFF, do hereby certify that the above captioned civil action is ineligible for compulsory arbitration for the following reason(s):

- monetary damages sought are in excess of \$150,000, exclusive of interest and costs,
- the complaint seeks injunctive relief,
- the matter is otherwise ineligible for the following reason Question of law rather than questions of fact predominates

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT - FEDERAL RULES CIVIL PROCEDURE 7.1

Identify any parent corporation and any publicly held corporation that owns 10% or more of its stocks:

NONE

RELATED CASE STATEMENT (Section VIII on the Front of this Form)

Please list all cases that are arguably related pursuant to Division of Business Rule 50.3.1 in Section VIII on the front of this form. Rule 50.3.1 (a) provides that "A civil case is "related" to another civil case for purposes of this guideline when, because of the similarity of facts and legal issues or because the cases arise from the same transactions or events, a substantial saving of judicial resources is likely to result from assigning both cases to the same judge and magistrate judge." Rule 50.3.1 (b) provides that " A civil case shall not be deemed "related" to another civil case merely because the civil case: (A) involves identical legal issues, or (B) involves the same parties." Rule 50.3.1 (c) further provides that "Presumptively, and subject to the power of a judge to determine otherwise pursuant to paragraph (d), civil cases shall not be deemed to be "related" unless both cases are still pending before the court."

NY-E DIVISION OF BUSINESS RULE 50.1(d)(2)

- 1.) Is the civil action being filed in the Eastern District removed from a New York State Court located in Nassau or Suffolk County? Yes No
- 2.) If you answered "no" above:
 - a) Did the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in Nassau or Suffolk County? Yes No
 - b) Did the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in the Eastern District? Yes No
 - c) If this is a Fair Debt Collection Practice Act case, specify the County in which the offending communication was received: NASSAU COUNTY .

If your answer to question 2 (b) is "No," does the defendant (or a majority of the defendants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau or Suffolk County, or, in an interpleader action, does the claimant (or a majority of the claimants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau or Suffolk County? Yes No

(Note: A corporation shall be considered a resident of the County in which it has the most significant contacts).

BAR ADMISSION

I am currently admitted in the Eastern District of New York and currently a member in good standing of the bar of this court.

Yes No

Are you currently the subject of any disciplinary action (s) in this or any other state or federal court?

Yes (If yes, please explain) No

I certify the accuracy of all information provided above.

Signature: /s/ Daniel Cohen

Civil Action No. _____

PROOF OF SERVICE

(This section should not be filed with the court unless required by Fed. R. Civ. P. 4 (l))

This summons for *(name of individual and title, if any)* _____
was received by me on *(date)* _____ .

I personally served the summons on the individual at *(place)* _____
_____ on *(date)* _____ ; or

I left the summons at the individual's residence or usual place of abode with *(name)* _____
_____, a person of suitable age and discretion who resides there,
on *(date)* _____ , and mailed a copy to the individual's last known address; or

I served the summons on *(name of individual)* _____ , who is
designated by law to accept service of process on behalf of *(name of organization)* _____
_____ on *(date)* _____ ; or

I returned the summons unexecuted because _____ ; or

Other *(specify)*:

My fees are \$ _____ for travel and \$ _____ for services, for a total of \$ _____ 0.00 .

I declare under penalty of perjury that this information is true.

Date: _____

Server's signature

Printed name and title

Server's address

Additional information regarding attempted service, etc:



Midland Credit Management, Inc. 2365 Northside Drive Suite 300 San Diego, CA 92108

Citibank, N.A.

12-20-2017

Original Creditor	Citibank, N.A.
Original Account Number	[REDACTED]
MCM Account Number	[REDACTED]
Current Balance	\$4,160.70
Current Owner	Midland Funding LLC

Nelson Espinal

P34T878 001



You are pre-approved for a 40% discount!
Call (800) 321-3809



Choose The Option That Works For You.

RE Citibank, N.A. Best Buy Credit Card

Dear Nelson,

Congratulations! You have been **pre-approved** for a discount program designed to save you money. Act now to maximize your savings and put this debt behind you by calling (800) 321-3809. Pay online today at www.midlandcreditonline.com.

Option 1: 40% OFF
Payment Due Date: 01-19-2018

You Pay Only
\$2,496.42

Option 2: 20% OFF
First Payment Due Date: 01-19-2018

12 Monthly Payments of Only
\$277.38

Option 3: Monthly Payments As Low As:
† Call today to discuss your options and get more details.

\$50 per month†

If these options don't work for you, call one of our Account Managers to help you set up a payment plan that does.

Sincerely,

Tim Bolin

Tim Bolin, Division Manager

Benefits of Paying!

- Save up to \$1,664.28
- Offer Expiration date: 01-19-2018

CALL US TODAY!
(800) 321-3809

Hours of Operation
Sun-Th: 5am-9pm PT;
Fri-Sat: 5am-4:30pm PT;



(800) 321-3809



midlandcreditonline.com



Midland Credit Management, Inc.
P.O. Box 60578
Los Angeles, CA 90060-0578

PLEASE SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR IMPORTANT DISCLOSURE INFORMATION

MCM Account Number
Current Balance

[REDACTED] 8517
\$4,160.70

Total Enclosed

\$.



Manage Your Account Online
midlandcreditonline.com

Important Payment Information

Make checks payable to:
Midland Credit Management
Enter your MCM Account # on all payments

(800) 321-3809

se habla espanol
(888) 422-5178

Mail Payments to:
Midland Credit Management, Inc.
P.O. Box 60578
Los Angeles, CA 90060-0578

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: [Lawsuit: MCM's Collection Letter Could Mislead Consumers](#)
