



In this Monday, June 10, 2019, file photo, Joshua Love, 36, holds a photograph of himself taken at about the time he says he was sexually abused at St. Francis of Assisi School by two Franciscan friars, Brother Paul A. West and the late Brother Donald Lucas, in Greenwood, Miss. Love and his cousin La Jarvis Love have accused West, once a Franciscan friar and fourth-grade teacher, of molesting them while they were elementary-school students. West has been extradited from his home state of Wisconsin to Mississippi. (AP File/Wong Maye-E)

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September 3, 2020

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A former Catholic brother has been extradited from his home state of Wisconsin to Mississippi, where he faces sexual battery charges in a case involving two impoverished Black boys who say they were pressured as men into accepting paltry payouts to settle their abuse claims.

The men have accused Paul A. West, once a Franciscan Friar and fourth-grade teacher, of molesting them in Mississippi, Wisconsin and New York while they were elementary school students.

West, 60, did not contest his extradition at a hearing in Outagamie County, Wisconsin on Aug. 17. He arrived at the Leflore County Jail in Greenwood, Mississippi, earlier this week following an investigation by the Mississippi attorney general's public integrity division. West also has been charged with second-degree sexual assault of a child in Wisconsin.

The men making the allegations, La Jarvis Love and Joshua Love, both 37, are cousins who grew up together and encountered West in the 1990s, when he was a teacher and later the principal at the St. Francis of Assisi School in Greenwood, Mississippi. Three years ago, the cousins reported that West sexually assaulted them on school grounds and on road trips, including one to a New York summer camp established by the Franciscans, a Roman Catholic religious order.

As The Associated Press first reported, nearly two years ago La Jarvis Love and Joshua Love each agreed to settle their claims for \$15,000 — far less than most clergy abuse victims receive. A third man, Joshua's younger brother, Raphael, also alleged West sexually abused him and reported the abuse to church authorities in 1998, after which West returned to Wisconsin. Raphael Love rejected a settlement similar to those signed by his brother and cousin.

In November, La Jarvis Love and Joshua Love filed a lawsuit in federal district court in New York, claiming the Franciscans pressured them into signing low-ball settlements

that required their silence about their allegations. At the time they signed the settlements, they were not represented by an attorney.

"They felt they could treat us that way because we're poor and we're Black," Joshua Love told the AP.

American bishops pledged in 2002 that, when settling clergy sex abuse claims, they would stop using nondisclosure agreements because they may contribute to clergy abuse cover-ups. However, religious orders such as the Franciscans are not bound by the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, which contains the provision on nondisclosure agreements.

On Wednesday, La Jarvis Love said he was pleased to learn West was in custody, adding that the experience of stepping forward to identify West had taught him courage. "It's crazy that you can learn something from someone you hate," he said. "It took a lot of courage to come forth because you never know how people are going to take this kind of thing."



In this Sunday, June 9, 2019, file photo, La Jarvis Love poses for a portrait in his home in Senatobia, Miss. Love says he was sexually abused by a Franciscan friar at a Catholic grade school in Greenwood. Love and his cousin Joshua Love have accused Paul A. West, once a Franciscan friar and fourth-grade teacher, of molesting them while they were elementary school students. West has been extradited from his home state of Wisconsin to Mississippi, where he faces sexual battery charges in a case involving two impoverished Black boys who say they were pressured as men into accepting paltry payouts to settle their abuse claims. (AP File/Wong Maye-E)

Mark Belenchia, the Mississippi coordinator of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, lashed out at the Jackson Diocese and the Franciscan order for failing to take more decisive action against West in 1998, after the first abuse allegation, and for offering La Jarvis Love and Joshua Love low-ball settlements with nondisclosure clauses after they reported their abuse.

"They were harmed as children and they were harmed as adults," Belenchia said of the Love cousins. "The Diocese of Jackson and the Franciscan order ought to be ashamed of their performance."

A Wisconsin attorney who represented West at his extradition hearing did not return calls.

Fr. James Gannon, the leader of a Wisconsin-based group of Franciscan Friars, negotiated the settlements. Last summer, he denied that racism or the Loves' poverty were factors in the amount of money offered or the confidentiality agreements. "Absolutely not," he told the AP. On Wednesday, he did not return a call seeking comment on West's arrest.

In 2006, the Catholic Diocese of Jackson, which includes Greenwood, settled lawsuits covering 19 victims — 17 of whom were white - for \$5 million. That average payout of \$263,000 for each survivor is 17 times that offered to each of the Loves. Payments in more recent settlements nationally have ranged far higher.

Gannon also attempted to negotiate a similar agreement with Raphael Love, Joshua Love's younger brother, who is serving two life sentences in a Tennessee prison for a double homicide he committed as a juvenile. Raphael Love refused Gannon's offer because, he said, the amount was not enough to hire a criminal attorney willing to

argue that he deserves a new trial.

The Franciscan Friars, based in Wisconsin, have been traveling in their trademark brown robes and sandals to serve the poor among the Mississippi Delta's Black citizenry since the early 1950s. Like other Catholic religious orders, Franciscans are subject to the authority of the bishop overseeing the diocese in which they work, but they report to their leaders in the U.S. and at the Vatican.

Last year, when the Jackson diocese released a list of priests and brothers credibly accused of child sex abuse, West and a second Franciscan brother, Donald Lucas, were among them. Joshua Love alleges he was also sexually abused by Lucas, who was found dead at St. Francis Church in 1999, in an apparent suicide.

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