DISMISS PLAINTIFFS' FIRST AMENDED ADVERSARY COMPLAINT; MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES

LAW OFFICE OF MARCUS GOMEZ 12749 Norwalk Blvd., Suite 204-A. Norwalk California 90650 562-929.2309 telephone | 562.864.5459 facsimile

¢	ase 2:09-ap-01135-SB Doc 44 Filed 02/24/10 Entered 02/24/10 18:38:38 Desc Main Document Page 2 of 14		
1 2	claiming any legal or equitable right, title, estate, lien, or interest in the property described in the complaint adverse to Plaintiff's title thereto; and Does 1-150,		
3	inclusive,		
5	Defendants.		
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7	The Plaintiffs, Raymond Vargas, John P Pringle Chapter 7 Bankruptcy Trustee of Raymond		
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9	Vargas hereby oppose the motion of Defendant MERS, Inc. to dismiss Plaintiffs' First Amended		
10	adversary complaint. In the alternative, Plaintiffs request that leave be granted to amend the		
11	complaint. Plaintiffs' counsel has associated co-counsel and will be requesting leave to further		
12	amend the complaint even if the court denies Defendant's motion.		
13	I. INTRODUCTION		
14	The Plaintiffs, Raymond Vargas, John P Pringle Chapter 7 Bankruptcy Trustee of Raymond		
15	Vargas come to this court seeking relief from the egregious conduct of defendants which, inter alia,		
16 17	could cause an 85 year old widower and veteran who served during war to lose his home. Plaintiffs		
18	hereby oppose the motion of Defendant MERS, Inc. ("MERS") to dismiss Plaintiff's First Amended		
19	Adversary Complaint.		
20	II. STATEMENT OF MATERIAL FACTS		
21	This matter involves the real property located 13055 Destino Lane, Cerritos, California		
22	90703.		
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24	2. Plaintiff Raymond Vargas occupies the premises as his primary residence, and family home.		
25	Plaintiff Vargas has occupied the premises for many years.		
26	3. Plaintiff is the victim of fraudulent behavior on the part of various entities involved in the		
27	real estate industry		

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- 4. On or about October 3, 2006, Defendants defrauded Plaintiff Vargas by purporting to have Plaintiff Vargas enter into two (2) home loans, the first for \$630,000, and a second loan for \$115,000.
- 5. At the time of the purported loans Plaintiff Vargas was an 81 year old widower living on a fixed retirement income.
- 6. MERS claims to be a beneficiary to a deed of trust and entitled to foreclose on Plaintiffs property.
- 7. On December 28, 2007, acting as trustee Recontrust Company recorded in the Los Angeles Recorder's Office a Notice of Default. Recontrust recorded said Notice of Default on behalf of MERS.
- 8. The Notice of Default states that Countrywide Home Loans, Inc. ("Countrywide") is the party to contact with regard to stopping a foreclosure or paying amounts allegedly owed.
- 9. Countrywide is a complete stranger to Plaintiffs. Countrywide evidently asserts some sort of interest in the subject property.
- 10. MERS states that a promissory note is a negotiable instrument governed by Article of the Uniform Commercial Code. MERS's Memo of Points and Authorities ("MPA") at page 2 lines 14-16. Further, MERS claims that after a note is sold to a MERS member, MERS acts as the nominee for the new beneficial owner of the note, and there is no need to assign the Deed of Trust. MPA at page 3, lines 10-17.
- 11. It is presently unknown whether or not Recontrust became trustee of record in compliance with California law.
 - 12. It is presently unknown whether or not Countrywide is an assignee of the obligation.

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1 The fact that Bryan Cave, LLP has filed a request for notice in this matter indicates that there are 2 other parties interested in the obligation in this matter, perhaps Bank of America, formerly known 3 as Countrywide. 4 13. It is completely unclear whether (1) MERS has the legal right to enforce payment, (2) 5 whether MERS can conduct a non-judicial foreclosure, and (3) whether MERS complied with 6 California law in conducting such foreclosure. 7 14. This court previously denied MERS's motion for relief from the automatic stay. 8 9 III. **LEGAL STANDARD** 10 15. If the Plaintiff is entitled to some form of legal remedy, the motion to dismiss must be 11 denied. Conley v. Gibson, 355 U.S. 41, 45-46 (1957), 78 S. Ct. 99, 102; <u>DeLa Cruz v. Tormey</u> (582) 12 F. 2d 45, 48 (9th Cir. 1978). 13 16. "The motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim is viewed with disfavor and is rarely 14 granted." Gilligan v. Jamco Develop. Corp., 108 F. 3d 246, 249 (9th Cir. 1997). 15 16 17. Dismissals are "especially disfavored in cases where the complaint sets forth a novel 17 legal theory that can best be assessed after factual development." Baker v. Cuomo, 58 F. 3d 814, 18 818-819 (2nd Cir. 1995). 19 18. The test is whether the facts as alleged, support any valid claim entitling plaintiff to 20 relief... not necessarily the one intended by plaintiff. Thus, a complaint should not be dismissed 21 because plaintiff erroneously relies on the wrong legal theory if the facts alleged support any valid 22 theory. Haddock v. Board of Dental Examiners of Calif., 777 F. 2d 462, 464 (9th Cir. 1985). 23 24 19. The complaint must be construed on the assumption that all of its allegations are true... 25 even if doubtful, and a well pleaded complaint may proceed even if a recovery is very remote and 26 unlikely. Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 127 S. Ct. 1955, 1965 (2007).

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IV. **ARGUMENT**

A. Plaintiff is entitled to Relief For MER's Wrongful Foreclosure

- 20. Although MERS makes a strong argument that it does not need to have an interest in the subject property to have standing to conduct a non-judicial foreclosure, and there is recent case law which mistakenly support MERS's position, this area of the law has was settled over a hundred years ago.
- 21. Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 17 requires that one asserting an action must be a real party in interest. MERS is not.
- 22. A party seeking relief "must assert his own legal rights and interests, and cannot rest his claim to relief on the legal rights, or interests of third parties." Valley Forge Christian College v. Ams. United for Separation of Church and State, 454 U.S. 464, 476 (1982) citing Warth v. Seldin, 422 U.S. 490, 501 (1975). This standing requirement is "an essential and unchanging part of the case-or-controversy requirement of Article III." Lujan v. Defenders of Wildlife, 502 U.S. 555, 560 (1992).
- 23. Cal. Civ. Code § 2924 (a) states that where a mortgage secures the performance of an obligation, a power of sale is conferred by the Legislature only "after breach of the obligation..." The obligation is the Note.
- 24. A promissory note is a negotiable instrument. (Cal. Comm. Code § 3104). The California Legislature enacted Cal. Comm. Code § 3301, which states that a "Person entitled to enforce" an instrument means (a) the **holder** of the instrument, (b) a **nonholder in possession** of the instrument who has the rights of a holder, or (c) person not in possession of the instrument who is entitled to enforce the instrument Pursuant to Section 3309 or subdivision (d) of Section 3418. Without the Note, Defendant lacks standing to enforce it, or anything else related to it.

25. Case law, also cited by Defendant, makes clear that one must be a party to the obligation. "[T]he language of the statute is expressly applicable only as between parties to a contract. Id.; Moeller v. Lien, 25 Cal. App. 4th 822, 834. (emphasis supplied). In fact, Moeller relied upon Homestead Savings v. Darmiento, 230 Cal. App. 3d 424, 432-433. Id., Moeller at 25 Cal. App. 4th 834. Further review reveals that the court in Homestead explained that "Section 2924 et seq. is part of a comprehensive scheme designed to protect debtors from abusive practices that had been associated with powers of sale in deeds of trust. The Legislature began the 'comprehensive scheme' in 1917 and has continued to establish 'certain minimum standards for conducting nonjudicial foreclosures by placing restrictions on the creditors' exercise of the power of sale in order to protect the trustor/debtor against forfeiture." Id., 230 Cal. App. 3d at 433. (Emphasis added).

26. If placing restrictions on creditors' exercise of the power of sale was the intent, it must follow that a 'minimum standard' would require a stranger to the note to first prove, as a precondition to the exercise of a power of sale, that it can enforce it. This was important then, which was well before the emergence of the "securitization" of mortgages and of international investment funds. In 1917, the California legislature may not have foreseen the emergence of international investment funds and a global market for securitized mortgages, but the court was fearful of fraud and abuse, and later held that the statute expressly applies to parties to a contract.

Moeller, 25 Cal. App. 4th, at 834.

27. Moreover, it was recently held that section 2924 is comprehensive but not exhaustive. California Golf, LLC v. Cooper (2008) 163 Cal. App. 4th 1053. California courts allow additional remedies to pursue misconduct arising out of non-judicial foreclosure sales when not inconsistent with the policies behind the statues. Id. California Golf, LLC 163 Cal. App. 4th at 1069-1070.

28. Two important policies behind the statute are: (1) to protect the debtor from wrongful

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loss of the property, and (2) to ensure that a properly conducted sale is final between the parties. Id. The Court of Appeal in California Golf, LLC, specifically relied upon the California Commercial Code and the law of negotiable instruments to determine the legal rights involving a promissory note.

- 29. Older case law in California reiterates this requirement. See, Shafer v. Bear River & Auburn Water & Mining Co., 4 Cal. 294 (1855) (an action will not lie on the mere recitals in a mortgage of the existence of the debt); Adler v. Newell, 109 Cal. 42 (1895) (A mortgage is a mere incident to the debt, and only the holder of the collateral note has the right to foreclose). (Emphasis added).
- 30. The California Supreme Court reiterates the legislatures adoption of the Uniform Commercial Code, which designed in the first instance to prevent fraud, and wrote "mortgagee's purported assignment of the mortgage without an assignment of the debt which is secured is a legal **nullity**." Kelley v. Upshaw, 39 Cal.2d 179, 192 (1952).
- 31. More recently, the United States District Court for the Northern District of California, held, in Saxon Mortgage Services, Inc. v. Hillery, 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 100056 (N.D. Cal.), that Kelley, supra, 39 Cal.2d at 192 establishes the Restatement under California law. Clearly, the deed alone is a legal nullity.
- 32. Yet, this is exactly the opposite to what MERS argues, i.e., that the Deed of Trust, alone, is enough.
- 33. MERS argument is specious, and any notion that MERS arguably could have standing after an assignment is revealed by its own policies. See, MPA at page 3, lines 14-16. MERS states that "[t]he seller of the note does not and need not assign the Deed of Trust or mortgage because MERS remains the beneficiary or mortgagee as the nominee for the purchaser of the note, who is the lender's successor and assign."

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34. This policy directly contradicts California law. Page two of the Notice of Default presented in this matter as Exhibit A to MERS's Request For Judicial Notice indicates, perhaps, that the note was sold to Countrywide. If Countrywide is the owner of the note, then Countrywide is the only party entitled to enforce it. Regardless, if Countrywide was assigned the beneficial rights under the deed of trust in this matter, California statutory law specifically provides that an assignment must be recorded in order for the power to sell in the deed of trust be recorded.

- 35. California Civil Code section 2932.5 governs the Power of sale under an assigned mortgage, and provides that the power of sale can only vest in a person entitled to money payments.
- 36. Cal. Civ. Code section 2932.5 states that "[w]here a power to sell real property is given to a mortgagee, or other encumbrancer, in an instrument intended to secure the payment of money, the power is part of the security and vests in any person who by assignment becomes entitled to payment of the money secured by the instrument. The power of sale may be exercised by the assignee if the assignment is duly acknowledged and recorded." (Emphasis supplied).
- 37. The beneficial owner of the note is not MERS, and it is not entitled to payment. However, even if MERS was entitled to payment, it somehow claims, that it is still not required to comply with this statute (which is itself, outside of the context of Cal. Civ. Code section 2924), and not record an assignment. However, the deed of trust in this matter provides that Lender has the right to collect monies, and to foreclose. But how can it, if it did first not comply with section 2932.5?
- 38. According to MERS, virtually anyone could claim the rights which MERS claims it has, and foreclose on any property it so chooses, without even an assignment. The court abhors fraud, and it is unlikely this court can buy into MERS position.
 - 39. In Landmark Nat'l Bank v. Kesler, 258 Kan. 528 (2009); 2009 WL 2633640; 2009 Kan.

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LEXIS 834, the Supreme Court of Kansas very recently examined MERS's position as a nominal
beneficiary and determined, at 541, quite succinctly, that MERS has no stake in the matter for
MERS did not lend money, no one is required to pay MERS money, MERS is not owed money,
MERS will not collect money, nor will MERS realize any value of the property through foreclosure
in the event the note is not paid, and thus MERS is not a beneficiary in the legal sense.

- 40. There is ample support for this reasoning in courts around the country. See, In re Hwang, 396 B.R. 757 (Bankr. C.D. Cal. 2008); In re Hayes, 393 B.R. 259 (Bankr. D. Mass 2008); In re Sheridan, 2009 WL 631355 (Bankr. D. Idaho, Mar. 12, 2009); In re Foreclosure Actions, 2007 WL 4034554 (N.D.Ohio, Nov. 14, 2007); U.S. National Bank v. Ibanez and Wells Fargo Bank, N.A., Trustee v. Larace, 17 LCR 202, 2009 Mass. LCR LEXIS 41 (Mass. 2009).
- 41. The Restatement (3d) of Property (Mortgages) lends further support, at § 5.4, which states that the person holding only the deed of trust will never experience default (thus § 2924 could not be invoked) because only the holder of the note is entitled to payment of the underlying obligation. (Emphasis supplied).
- 42. Claims for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief are proper causes of action even though they are essentially requests for specific remedies.
- 43. Plaintiffs properly state a claim for rescission against MERS. MERS argues that the right for rescission is unavailable to Plaintiff since Plaintiff is in default of the contract. However, Plaintiff attacks the validity of the MERS' standing.
- 44. Plaintiff properly pleads a cause of action for Quiet Title. Defendant objects to a cause of action for Quiet Title based on its claim that the original promissory note does not have to be in possession to initiate non-judicial foreclosure proceedings. However, Plaintiff disputes Defendants argument as states previously. In other aspects the complaint is verified, it includes the legal

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description of the property and its common designation, it includes its title and adverse claims to title as well as a prayer for determination of title.

- 45. Plaintiff properly states a claim against MERS for Libel. MERS claims a litigation privilege. However, where MERS in fact had no standing in instituting foreclosure its conduct results in damages to Plaintiff including negative credit reporting.
- 46. The Restatement (3d) of Property (Mortgages) lends further support, at § 5.4, which states that the person holding only the deed of trust will never experience default (thus § 2924 could not be invoked) because only the holder of the note is entitled to payment of the underlying obligation. (Emphasis supplied).
- 47. Moreover, even if MERS did have the note or there was a proper assignment on file at the county recorder, which apparently there is not, MERS would still be required to comply with Cal. Civ. Code 2934a, which requires, inter alia, that a substitution of trustee is duly recorded. It is unclear from the record in this matter whether or not that task was performed.

B. MERS's Authority Is Not Overwhelming

- 48. MERS presents to this court a handful of cases of which it points to as "clear and overwhelming legal authority." MERS is incorrect.
- 49. The doctrine of stare decisis applies only to decisions of the appellate courts. Trial courts make no binding precedents, but may be relied upon or cited for their persuasive value. Santa Ana Hospital Medical Center v. Belsh, 56 Cal. App. 4th 819, 831 (1997) (citing 9 Witkin, Cal. Procedure (3d ed. 1985 Appeal, section 763, pp 730-731).
- 50. Here, MERS cites only one appellate court case which it asserts it theory, Moeller, supra. First, Moeller does not address the issue of standing or the note. Second, as discussed infra, Moeller does not support MERS, as California Golf, supra, and Homestead, supra, reveal the statute is not exhaustive. All of the other cases are persuasive.

51. However, in reviewing the cases in detail, it is clear the cases are not persuasive. For instance, one of the older cases presented by MERS, and upon which many other trial court opinions flowed is Neal v. Juarez, 2007 WL 2140640 (S.D. Cal.). In Neal, a pro se plaintiff appeared on behalf of the maker of a promissory note, and lost a motion for summary judgment. The court explained, at page 6, that Plaintiff's quiet title claims were a "confusing presentment." Plaintiff contended he was a BFP for value and entitled to set-aside the trustee's sale. The court wrote that the allegation the trustee did not have the original note or had not received it is insufficient to render a foreclosure proceeding invalid. First, the foreclosure had already occurred, and to a bona fide purchaser ("BFP"). In the situation with a bona fide purchaser the foreclosure cannot be undone. BFPs are protected. Id., Moeller 25 Cal. App. 4th 822; Cal. Civ. Code § 2924 (c). This matter is quite different because there are presently no BFPs to protect, and a sale has not occurred.

- 52. Neal almost completely ignores California laws and stands for an incorrect proposition, yet it remains distinguishable. The note in this matter indicates that Freedom Home Mortg. Corp. is the party to the contract. As discussed above, the California Court of Appeals recently held that § 2924 is expressly applicable between parties to the contract. Moreover, Mr. Neal presented an Arkansas case, and only an Arkansas case, to the court concerning his statement 2924 had been violated, and the case had nothing to do with 2924 or California law. Yet, subsequent trial court opinions rely upon it as "authority."
- 53. Several other cases cited by MERS were cases brought by an infamous attorney who was disbarred because he brought numerous cases and did nothing more. The motions to dismiss in those cases were unopposed, and in sports terms, the cases were a "forfeit." For instance, see Putkkuri v. Recontrust Company, 2009 WL 32567 (S.D.Cal.) and Candelo v. NdEX West, LLC, 2008 WL 5382259 (E.D.Cal.).

54. The San Diego Home Solutions, Inc. v. R	ReconTrust Co. case, 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS
99684; 2008 WL 5209972, is not persuasive, either.	The opinion provides no reasoning or analysis
on the issue of standing.	

- 55. The <u>Pantoja v. Countrywide Home Loans, Inc.</u> opinion, like so many others, simply provides no reasoning, but cites to the aforementioned <u>Putkkuri</u>, <u>Candelo</u> and of course, <u>Neal</u> cases.
- 56. The cases MERS relies upon, even if stare decisis, would have to reviewed, for they are not persuasive.
- 57. In conclusion, Plaintiffs have cited cases and law which indisputably provide clear authority that one must first have standing in order to conduct a foreclosure in California, and that standing begins with the promissory note.
- 58. As to Plaintiffs Fifth and Sixth Cause of Action, Plaintiffs have stated a claim for which relief can be granted.

V. CONCLUSION

The court should deny Defendant's Motion. In the alternative, Plaintiffs request that leave be granted to amend the complaint. Plaintiffs' counsel has associated co-counsel and will be requesting leave to amend the complaint even if the court denies Defendant's motion.

Dated: 2/27/10

MARCUS GOMEZ, Attorney for Plaintiffs

In re: Raymond Vargas	CHAPTER: 7
Debtor(s). C.	CASE NUMBER: 2:08-bk-17036-SB Adversary Number: 2:09-ap-01135-SB

NOTE: When using this form to indicate service of a proposed order, **DO NOT** list any person or entity in Category I. Proposed orders do not generate an NEF because only orders that have been entered are placed on the CM/ECF docket.

PROOF OF SERVICE OF DOCUMENT

I am over the age of 18 and not a party to this bankruptcy case or adversary proceeding. My business address is: 12749 Norwalk Blvd., Suite 204A Norwalk, CA 90650

A true and correct copy of the foregoing document described <u>PLAINTIFFS' OPPOSITION TO DEFENDANT MORTGAGE ELECTRONIC REGISTRATION SYSTEMS, INC.'S MOTION TO DISMISS PLAINTIFFS' FIRST AMENDED ADVERSARY COMPLAINT; MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES will be served or was served (a) on the judge in chambers in the form and manner required by LBR 5005-2(d); and (b) in the manner indicated below:</u>

efile@sfblaw.com	ustpregion16.la.ecf@usdoj.gov	meghan.sherrill@bryancave.com
katherine.windler@bryancave.com	resterkin@morganlewis.com	
		☐ Service information continued on attached page

II. SERVED BY U.S. MAIL OR OVERNIGHT MAIL(indicate method for each person or entity served):

On February 24, 2010 I served the following person(s) and/or entity(ies) at the last known address(es) in this bankruptcy case or adversary proceeding by placing a true and correct copy thereof in a sealed envelope in the United States Mail, first class, postage prepaid, and/or with an overnight mail service addressed as follows. Listing the judge here constitutes a declaration that mailing to the judge will be completed no later than 24 hours after the document is filed.

III. SERVED BY PERSONAL DELIVERY, FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION OR EMAIL (indica	ate me	thod for	each r	erson	O
entity served): Pursuant to F.R.Civ.P. 5 and/or controlling LBR, on		rved 1			
person(s) and/or entity(ies) by personal delivery, or (for those who consented in writing facsimile transmission and/or email as follows. Listing the judge here constitutes a declarate the judge will be completed no later than 24 hours after the document is filed.	to suc				

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct.

02/24/10

Elizabeth Arreola

Service information continued on attached page

Service information continued on attached page

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In re: Raymond Vargas		CHAPTER: 7		
		Debtor(s).	CASE NUMBER: 2:08-bk-17036-SB Adversary Number: 2:09-ap-01135-SB	
Date	Type Name		Signature	

ADDITIONAL SERVICE INFORMATION (if needed):

HONORABLE SAMUEL L BUFFORD 255 EAST TEMPLE STREET, SUITE 1582 LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

UNITED STATES TRUSTEE'S OFFICE 725 S. FIGUEROA STREET 16TH FLOOR LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

CHAPTER 7 TRUSTEE JOHN P. PRINGLE ROQUEMORE, PRINGLE & MOORE 6055 EAST WASHINGTON BOULEVARD **SUITE #500** LOS ANGELES, CA 90040

MORTGAGE ELECTRONIC REGISTRATION SYSTEMS, INC. (M.E.R.S.)1818 LIBRARY STREET SUITE 300 RESTON, VA 20190-0000

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