

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

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JOSUE ROMERO, on behalf of himself and  
all others similarly situated,

Plaintiffs,

v.

BLUE DIAMOND GROWERS,

Defendant.

**CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT  
AND  
DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

-----X  
**INTRODUCTION**

1. Plaintiff JOSUE ROMERO, on behalf of himself and others similarly situated, asserts the following claims against Defendant BLUE DIAMOND GROWERS as follows.
2. Plaintiff is a visually-impaired and legally blind person who requires screen-reading software to read website content using his computer. Plaintiff uses the terms “blind” or “visually-impaired” to refer to all people with visual impairments who meet the legal definition of blindness in that they have a visual acuity with correction of less than or equal to 20 x 200. Some blind people who meet this definition have limited vision. Others have no vision.
3. Based on a 2010 U.S. Census Bureau report, approximately 8.1 million people in the United States are visually impaired, including 2.0 million who are blind, and according to the American Foundation for the Blind’s 2015 report, approximately 400,000 visually impaired persons live in the State of New York.

4. Plaintiff brings this civil rights action against Defendant for its failure to design, construct, maintain, and operate its website to be fully accessible to and independently usable by Plaintiff and other blind or visually-impaired people. Defendant's denial of full and equal access to its website, and therefore denial of its goods and services offered thereby, is a violation of Plaintiff's rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA").
5. Because Defendant's website, [www.bluediamondstore.com](http://www.bluediamondstore.com) (the "Website" or "Defendant's website"), is not equally accessible to blind and visually-impaired consumers, it violates the ADA. Plaintiff seeks a permanent injunction to cause a change in Defendant's corporate policies, practices, and procedures so that Defendant's website will become and remain accessible to blind and visually-impaired consumers.

#### **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

6. This Court has subject-matter jurisdiction over this action under 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and 42 U.S.C. § 12181, as Plaintiff's claims arise under Title III of the ADA, 42 U.S.C. § 12181, *et seq.*, and 28 U.S.C. § 1332.
7. This Court has supplemental jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1367 over Plaintiff's New York State Human Rights Law, N.Y. Exec. Law Article 15, ("NYSHRL") and New York City Human Rights Law, N.Y.C. Admin. Code § 8-101 *et seq.*, ("NYCHRL") claims.
8. Venue is proper in this district under 28 U.S.C. §1391(b)(1) and (2) because Defendant conducts and continues to conduct a substantial and significant amount of business in this District, and a substantial portion of the conduct complained of

herein occurred in this District because Plaintiff attempted to utilize, on a number of occasions, the subject Website within this Judicial District.

9. Defendant is subject to personal jurisdiction in this District. Defendant has been and is committing the acts or omissions alleged herein in the Southern District of New York that caused injury, and violated rights the ADA prescribes to Plaintiff and to other blind and other visually impaired-consumers. A substantial part of the acts and omissions giving rise to Plaintiff's claims occurred in this District: on several separate occasions, Plaintiff has been denied the full use and enjoyment of the facilities, goods and services offered to the general public, on Defendant's Website in New York County. These access barriers that Plaintiff encountered have caused a denial of Plaintiff's full and equal access multiple times in the past, and now deter Plaintiff on a regular basis from accessing the Defendant's Website in the future.
10. This Court is empowered to issue a declaratory judgment under 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201 and 2202.

#### **THE PARTIES**

11. Plaintiff JOSUE ROMERO, at all relevant times, is a resident of Brooklyn, New York. Plaintiff is a blind, visually-impaired handicapped person and a member of member of a protected class of individuals under the ADA, under 42 U.S.C. § 12102(1)-(2), and the regulations implementing the ADA set forth at 28 CFR §§ 36.101 *et seq.*, the NYSHRL and NYCHRL.
12. Defendant is and was at all relevant times a California Corporation doing business in New York.

13. Defendant's Website, and its facilities, goods, and services offered thereupon, is a public accommodation within the definition of Title III of the ADA, 42 U.S.C. § 12181(7).

#### **NATURE OF ACTION**

14. The Internet has become a significant source of information, a portal, and a tool for conducting business, doing everyday activities such as shopping, learning, banking, researching, as well as many other activities for sighted, blind and visually-impaired persons alike.
15. In today's tech-savvy world, blind and visually-impaired people have the ability to access websites using keyboards in conjunction with screen access software that vocalizes the visual information found on a computer screen or displays the content on a refreshable Braille display. This technology is known as screen-reading software. Screen-reading software is currently the only method a blind or visually-impaired person may independently access the internet. Unless websites are designed to be read by screen-reading software, blind and visually-impaired persons are unable to fully access websites, and the information, products, goods and contained thereon.
16. Blind and visually-impaired users of Windows operating system-enabled computers and devices have several screen reading software programs available to them. Some of these programs are available for purchase and other programs are available without the user having to purchase the program separately. Job Access With Speech, otherwise known as "JAWS" is currently the most popular, separately purchased and downloaded screen-reading software program available for a Windows computer.

17. For screen-reading software to function, the information on a website must be capable of being rendered into text. If the website content is not capable of being rendered into text, the blind or visually-impaired user is unable to access the same content available to sighted users.
18. The international website standards organization, the World Wide Web Consortium, known throughout the world as W3C, has published version 2.0 of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (“WCAG 2.1”). WCAG 2.1 are well-established guidelines for making websites accessible to blind and visually-impaired people. These guidelines are universally followed by most large business entities and government agencies to ensure their websites are accessible.
19. Non-compliant websites pose common access barriers to blind and visually-impaired persons. Common barriers encountered by blind and visually impaired persons include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a. A text equivalent for every non-text element is not provided;
  - b. Title frames with text are not provided for identification and navigation;
  - c. Equivalent text is not provided when using scripts;
  - d. Forms with the same information and functionality as for sighted persons are not provided;
  - e. Information about the meaning and structure of content is not conveyed by more than the visual presentation of content;
  - f. Text cannot be resized without assistive technology up to 200% without losing content or functionality;

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