

Eddie Long Case Settled Quietly

After vowing to his congregation to fight, Atlanta megachurch pastor Eddie Long has quietly settled the sexual misconduct lawsuits filed against him. 

Four men—all former members of Long's church now in their early 20s—claim the pastor used gifts, trips and money to coerce them into engaging in sex acts with him beginning when they were 17 or 18. Because the men were over the age of consent in Georgia, which is 16, no criminal charges were filed.

"After a series of discussions, all parties involved have decided to resolve the civil cases out of court. This decision was made to bring closure to this matter and to allow us to move forward with the plans God has for this ministry," a statement from Long's church, New Birth Missionary Baptist Church, said.

"As is usually the case when civil lawsuits resolve out of court, we cannot discuss any details regarding the resolution or the resolution process, as they are confidential," the statement said. "This resolution is the most reasonable road for everyone."

The lawsuits claimed Long has "a pattern and practice of singling out a select group of young male church members and using his authority as Bishop over them to ultimately bring them to a point of engaging in a sexual relationship."

The plaintiffs—Maurice Robinson, Jamal Parris, Anthony Flagg and Spencer LeGrande—claimed Long took them on trips to various locations in the U.S. and abroad, shared a room with them and engaged in sexual acts. The men said Long gave them

lavish gifts ranging from cars to college tuition in exchange and that they became paid employees of the church.

Long has steadfastly denied the claims. "I want you to know, I am not a perfect man, but this thing I'm gonna fight," Long told his 25,000-member congregation in September on the first Sunday after the claims went public. "I feel like David against Goliath, but I have five rocks and I haven't thrown one yet."

No settlement terms were disclosed.