

Homeless woman's civil rights violated during severe mauling by West Covina, Calif. K9, federal lawsuit alleges

Officers ordered the helpless woman, her arm crushed in the dog's jaws, to let the animal drag her across the room in an abandoned building

LOS ANGELES, CALIF., USA, June 9, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A homeless woman asleep in an

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DeWitt Lacy, Los Angeles Civil Rights Attorney

abandoned building sustained permanent injuries after West Covina Police set a K9 loose on her, then, with her arm clenched between the dog's jaws, told her she had to let the animal drag her through the building as if she was a training dummy, according to a new federal civil rights lawsuit.

As a result of the officers' misconduct, Lauren Frausto's forearm was crushed, broken and mutilated so severely it caused life-threatening injuries, the lawsuit states. She's undergone four surgeries to piece her shredded arm back together and is left with permanent deformities and loss of function in her left arm and hand.

Frausto also suffers post traumatic stress from the Aug. 24, 2019 attack, which lasted more than three minutes as she begged officers to call off their dog, which pulled her through the room to a doorway where they stood waiting, according to the lawsuit filed Monday in U.S. District Court, Central District of California, in Los Angeles.

“Lauren didn't deserve this. No one should be treated as less than human by law enforcement,” said Los Angeles Civil Rights Attorney [DeWitt Lacy](#), of the John Burris Law Firm. “She posed no threat to the officers at any time, including when they released their dog on her. The officers, acting under the color of law, knew that this use of force was clearly illegal.”

One of those named in the lawsuit is Officer Cody Iside, the handler of Rye, the male three-year-old Belgian Malinois used against Frausto. Neither Iside nor Rye are currently listed on the WCPD's K9 unit webpage, which shows three other K9 teams. A male Malinois

weighs about 65 pounds and has one of the strongest bites among all dogs — about 195 psi of bite pressure, which is more than enough to break bone.

“Nobody wants to blame the dog,” Lacy said. “Often, the dog is but a tool much like a gun or a taser. And when a dog is used inappropriately the results can be catastrophic. I’ve seen multiple similar cases; it’s always emblematic of a policing culture where you pick on the homeless, you pick on people who might have no one to come to their defense.”

Frausto had recently become homeless after splitting up with her significant other. Desperate for a place to sleep, she heard about the abandoned post office in West Covina where the homeless shelter at night. That evening, she went to sleep below a desk in a quiet corner of the building. She was not drinking or doing drugs, Lacy said. “She was causing no trouble and, aside from possible trespass, was committing no crime.”

According to the lawsuit, Frausto was awakened by Rye clenching her left arm in his mouth and started screaming in pain. An officer appeared in a doorway and instead of calling the dog off, he demanded to know what she was doing there. She answered his questions and pleaded for him to get Rye to release her arm.



The K9's mauling caused permanent damage to Frausto's arm and hand, and left her permanently disfigured.

“Instead, the officer told [Frausto] that there was nothing he could do for her, even to the point of answering simple questions about why the dog was attacking her, until Rye dragged her across the floor to him. The officer gave a command and Rye secured its jaw around Plaintiff before slowly dragging her over 40 feet by her already injured arm,” the lawsuit states.

“While [Frausto] was being dragged, she attempted to stay on her knees to minimize the pressure on her injured arm and keep Rye from having access to her neck and stomach. When Rye reached the officer, over three minutes after [Frausto] was initially mauled, he finally commanded the K9 to release [her],” the lawsuit states.

The lawsuit names the City of West Covina and six officers as defendants: Iside, Michael Tuano, Cpl. Stephen McLean, Sgt. Eric Street, Ian Papparro and Christopher Quezada. The officers are also being sued individually.

A copy of the lawsuit, photographs of Frausto’s injuries, and more information is here: <https://bit.ly/2Yi6COK>

Civil rights attorney DeWitt Lacy leads the Los Angeles office of the John Burriss Law Firm. He has

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