

# Santa Monica Pays \$3 Million To Two Women Severely Injured When An Officer Cut Their Hands With A Knife And Scissors

SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA, USA, July 30, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Two women arrested at a 2020 civil rights protest were left with lifelong injuries when a careless Santa Monica police officer stabbed them in their hands with his knife because he didn't know how to release the zip-tie handcuffs.

The city recently settled a civil rights lawsuit for \$3 million in the case, where the officer stabbed through one woman's hand, a wound that required 21 stitches to close.

"These women were peaceful protestors on Ocean Avenue who were trying to leave the area about 6 p.m., but SMPD had closed off all exits and started placing people under arrest," said Marina del Rey, Calif., civil rights attorney [V. James DeSimone](#), who represents Cheyenne Robinson and a second woman plaintiff..



Cheyenne Robinson's wounds required 21 stitches to close and she still suffers from her injuries.

Officers zip-tied Robinson's and the second woman's hands and took them to a chain-link holding cage set up in a hangar at Santa Monica Airport on May 31, 2020. Robinson told officers the zip tie used on her, called a Flex Cuff, was too tight, causing excruciating pain. She was left in it for eight hours. The second woman's initial, comfortable zip tie was removed and replaced with a Flex Cuff, which caused pain immediately. She sought relief from several officers, but they ignored her and left her in the too-tight Flex Cuff for about three hours.

Early the next morning, Santa Monica Custody Officer Juan Cornejo and two officers took a busload of arrestees to an intersection near an underpass, where they would be released. A summary judgement opposition filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court recounts what happened next. Cornejo observed arrestees in "extreme discomfort... [with] discoloration" because "multiple arrestees [had] Flex Cuffs applied too tightly ... for several hours," the brief states. "And he recalls arrestees having visible discoloration in their hands from the overly tight



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*V. James DeSimone, civil rights attorney*

cuffs."

Cornejo assumed the responsibility for removing the arrestees' Flex Cuffs, although he had never been trained on how to remove them or knew that a special tool was required to safely remove them. Instead, he used multiple pairs of SMPD's scissors and had broken all of them during the process of freeing about 100 people. In the process, he stabbed the second woman in the palm of her hand.

When it was Robinson's turn, Cornejo had broken the last pair of scissors and switched to his folding knife, with a three-and-a-half-inch blade, in plain view of SMPD officers, including a sergeant.

Cornejo stabbed Robinson's hand two times in an effort to remove her overly-tight Flex Cuffs, with one wound going entirely through her left hand. "Ms. Robinson had to be transported to the hospital by ambulance where she received 21 stitches," the document states. "Even as Ms. Robinson sat on the curb sobbing with her hand wrapped in gauze, waiting for an ambulance, Defendant Cornejo continued to use his bloody knife to remove the Flex Cuffs of other arrestees."

Both women continue to suffer from scarring, pain, and limited mobility in their hands where the wounds occurred.

Despite months of occupational therapy, nerve damage left Robinson unable to hold things properly, her right hand still sometimes goes completely numb, and she gets shooting pains in her left hand in the exact spot where she was stabbed, DeSimone said. She has been diagnosed with Complex Regional Pain Syndrome.

Under terms of the July 2024 settlement, \$2.75 million went to Robinson and \$250,000 to the second woman.

The city also settled for \$2.3 million a class action lawsuit filed by 368 people accusing the city of wrongly arresting them while breaking up the same May 31, 2020, demonstration over the death of George Floyd, a Black man whose murder by a Minneapolis Police officer on May 25, 2020, triggered national protests and soul-searching about police abuse.

"There is still work to be done, these young women were protesting police brutality, exercising their First Amendment Rights and the Santa Monica Police Department brutalized them," said DeSimone, of [V. James DeSimone Law](#). "The officer responsible for stabbing these women, and those who ignored their pleas during the hours that the blood was being cut off to their hands, have yet to be disciplined."

“Now that the civil case is settled, the city has an opportunity to pursue disciplinary charges. We want Santa Monica to hold them accountable, and they should be trained on the proper procedures for safely using Flex Cuffs, especially on someone who is compliant, and they certainly need to know how to safely remove them - and be supplied with the \$13 cutting tools they should use.”

The now-settled lawsuit, Robinson et al v. City of Santa Monica et al, was filed June 15, 2021 in Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case 21STCV22392. Los Angeles civil rights attorney V. James DeSimone has dedicated his 39-year law career to providing vigorous and ethical representation to achieve justice for those whose civil and constitutional rights are violated. He was assisted on this matter by co-counsel David Olan Law and Landver Law.

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