

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF ARIZONA
TUCSON DIVISION**

GEORGE VICTOR GARCIA, on behalf of
himself and the class of similarly situated
persons;

Plaintiffs,

vs.

CASE NO:

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY; SANTA CRUZ
COUNTY SHERIFF TONY ESTRADA, in
his individual and official capacities; SANTA
CRUZ COUNTY SHERIFF DEPUTIES
DOES 1 THROUGH 50, INCLUSIVE,

JURY TRIAL REQUESTED

Defendants.

**CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES FOR
VIOLATIONS OF CIVIL AND CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS
AND FOR DECLARATORY AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

INTRODUCTION

This is an action for declaratory and injunctive relief, damages, and punitive damages against SANTA CRUZ COUNTY, SANTA CRUZ COUNTY SHERIFF TONY ESTRADA, individually and in his official capacity, and SANTA CRUZ COUNTY SHERIFF DEPUTIES sued under their fictitious names as DOES 1 THROUGH 50, for violations of plaintiff's constitutional rights resulting from application of SANTA CRUZ COUNTY'S and the SHERIFF'S policies, practices, and customs concerning the use of strip searches and visual body cavity searches in SANTA CRUZ COUNTY Jail. Plaintiff, for himself and all those in the class of similarly situated persons, seeks an order declaring illegal defendants' policy of subjecting

detainees in their custody to strip and visual body cavity searches before they are arraigned and without having any reasonable suspicion that the searches will be productive of contraband.

Defendants' strip search and visual body cavity search policies, practices, and customs violate those rights of plaintiff, and all those he represents, that are secured by the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution and entitle plaintiff, and all those similarly situated, to recover damages under the Federal Civil Rights Act (42 U.S.C. § 1983).

Plaintiff alleges against Defendants upon knowledge as to himself and all matters of public record, and upon information and belief as to all other matters, as follows:

**I.
JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

This action is brought pursuant to 42 USC §§ 1983 and 1988, and the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. Jurisdiction is founded upon 28 USC §§ 1331 and 1343(a)(3) and (4) and the aforementioned statutory and constitutional provisions.

Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to 28 USC § 1391(b).

**II.
PARTIES**

1. Plaintiff GEORGE VICTOR GARCIA, and all those similarly situated, are, and at all material times herein, were residents of the state of Arizona who were arrested within the period beginning two (2) years before the filing of this Complaint, and continuing to this date, and who were subjected to strip and/or visual body cavity searches at SANTA CRUZ COUNTY Jail (hereinafter referred to as "SANTA CRUZ COUNTY Jail"), prior to being arraigned and/or without the defendants first having, and recording in writing, a reasonable suspicion that the searches would be productive of contraband or weapons.

2. Defendant SANTA CRUZ COUNTY (hereinafter referred to as "SANTA CRUZ COUNTY") is a body politic and political subdivision of the state of Arizona. SANTA CRUZ COUNTY had an obligation to construct a county jail and to provide for the confinement of prisoners incarcerated under the COUNTY's jurisdiction. SANTA CRUZ COUNTY had an obligation to appropriate funds and otherwise provide the necessary funding to maintain and operate a facility for the incarceration of prisoners under the jurisdiction of the COUNTY.

3. Defendant SANTA CRUZ COUNTY SHERIFF TONY ESTRADA ("SHERIFF ESTRADA") is, and at all material times herein, was a resident of SANTA CRUZ COUNTY and the duly elected SHERIFF of SANTA CRUZ COUNTY with the duty to administer the county jail and provide for the well-being of the prisoners within the county jail. In addition, at all times material hereto, defendant SHERIFF ESTRADA was acting within the scope of his duties as well as under color of law. He is sued in his individual and official capacities.

4. Defendants DOES 1 THROUGH 50, inclusive, are SANTA CRUZ COUNTY SHERIFF DEPUTIES who were sued herein by their fictitious names and are all deputies who, as part of their duties at the SANTA CRUZ COUNTY Jail, subjected plaintiff, and all those he represents, to pre-arraignment strip and/or visual body cavity searches without having, and recording in writing, a reasonable suspicion that the searches would be productive of contraband or weapons.

5. At all material times mentioned herein, each of the defendants was acting under the color of law, to wit, under color of statutes, ordinances, regulations, policies, customs and usages of the state of Arizona, SANTA CRUZ COUNTY, and/or the SANTA CRUZ COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT.

6. Defendant SHERIFF ESTRADA was responsible for the screening, hiring, training, monitoring, supervision, and disciplining of subordinate employees of the SANTA CRUZ COUNTY Jail and was the authority empowering the SANTA CRUZ COUNTY DEPUTIES to incarcerate prisoners under the jurisdiction of SANTA CRUZ COUNTY.

7. Defendant SHERIFF ESTRADA was responsible for administering the jail facilities and for making, overseeing, and implementing the policies, practices, and customs challenged herein relating to the operation of the SANTA CRUZ COUNTY Jail.

8. Defendant SHERIFF ESTRADA, in his individual and official capacities, maintained or permitted an official policy or custom of causing or permitting the occurrence of the types of wrongs complained of herein, which wrongs damaged plaintiff and all those similarly situated as alleged herein.

9. Class action plaintiffs are those similarly situated who, during the period beginning two (2) years before the filing of this Complaint, and continuing to this date, were subjected by defendants to pre-arraignment strip and/or visual body cavity searches without defendants having, and recording in writing, a reasonable suspicion that the searches would be productive of contraband or weapons.

III. FACTS

10. During the two (2) years preceding the filing of this Complaint, plaintiff GEORGE VICTOR GARCIA (hereinafter referred to as "Plaintiff") was arrested on multiple occasions for minor offenses such as drinking in public, shoplifting, or disorderly conduct following which arrests he was transported to SANTA CRUZ COUNTY Jail where, prior to appearance before a judge for arraignment and without there being any reasonable suspicion that

he was concealing contraband, plaintiff, pursuant to policies, practices, and procedures of defendants, and each of them, was subjected to a visual body cavity search (strip search) in violation of the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. Plaintiff was coerced, forced, and compelled to disrobe for the strip searches in areas that could be observed by persons who were not participating in the search and who included members of the opposite sex.

11. On each occasion, plaintiff was required to remove all of his clothes, lift his genitals, bend over to expose his anus for inspection, individually, and in groups of other detainees.

12. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereupon alleges, that defendants routinely follow their policy, practice, and custom of subjecting pre-arraignment detainees, including plaintiff, and all those he represents, to strip and visual body cavity searches without first having, and recording in writing, a reasonable suspicion that the searches will be productive of contraband or weapons; and that such searches are generally conducted both in groups and in areas where the searches can be and are observed by persons not participating in the searches, including guards of the sex opposite to those who are being searched.

13. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereupon alleges, that defendants have the ability to identify all such similarly situated plaintiffs, specifically those who, while in defendants' custody at the SANTA CRUZ COUNTY Jail within two (2) years prior to the filing of this Complaint, were subjected to strip searches and/or visual body cavity searches prior to arraignment without defendants first having, and recording, a reasonable suspicion that the

searches would be productive of contraband or weapons.

14. Defendant SANTA CRUZ COUNTY and SHERIFF ESTRADA are personally responsible for the promulgation and continuation of the strip search policy, practice, and custom pursuant to which plaintiff, and those he represents, were subjected to strip searches.

15. As a result of being subjected to the strip searches complained of herein, plaintiff, and each of the persons similarly situated, suffered physical, mental, and emotional distress, invasion of privacy, and violation of due process of law and federal statutory and constitutional rights, and are entitled to recover damages according to proof.

IV. CLASS CLAIMS

16. The strip and visual body cavity searches to which plaintiff, and all those similarly situated, were subjected were performed pursuant to policies, practices, and customs of defendants SANTA CRUZ COUNTY, SHERIFF ESTRADA, and SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES sued herein by the fictitious names 1 through 50. The searches complained of herein were performed without regard to the nature of the alleged offenses for which plaintiff, and all those similarly situated, had been arrested, without regard to whether or not plaintiff, and all those he represents, were eligible for cite and release, without regard to whether or not plaintiff, and those similarly situated, were eligible for and/or were released on his or her own recognizance, or on bail. Furthermore, the searches complained of herein were performed without defendants having a reasonable belief that the plaintiff, or any of those similarly situated, so searched possessed weapons or contraband, and those facts being articulated and recorded in a supervisor-approved document. And the searches complained of herein were performed without defendants taking reasonable precautions to make certain that plaintiff, and each of those similarly situated, were

not observed by others not involved in the search.

17. Plaintiff brings this action on his own behalf and on behalf of all persons similarly situated pursuant to Rule 23, Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

18. The class of plaintiffs is defined to include all persons arrested on charges not involving violence, drugs or weapons who, in the period from and including two (2) years prior to the filing of this Complaint, and continuing until this matter is adjudicated and the practices complained of herein cease, were arrested and subjected to a pre-arraignment strip and/or visual body cavity search at the SANTA CRUZ COUNTY Jail without defendants first having, and recording in writing, a reasonable suspicion that the searches would be productive of contraband or weapons.

19. In accordance with Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 23(a), the members of the class are so numerous that joinder of all members is impractical. Plaintiff does not know the exact number of class members. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereupon alleges, that there are more than 10 persons per day who are arrested by defendants and/or are in the custody of defendants who are and have been subjected to the searches complained of herein as a result of defendants' policy, practice, and custom relating to said searches.

20. In accordance with Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 23(a), plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereupon alleges, that there are many questions of fact common to the class including, but not limited to: (1) whether defendants routinely subject all persons arrested to visual body cavity searches prior to arraignment if they intend such persons to be housed in the SANTA CRUZ COUNTY Jail; (2) whether persons are subjected to strip and/or visual body cavity searches prior to arraignment without there being any reasonable suspicion,

based on specific or articulable facts, to believe any particular arrestee has concealed drugs, weapons, and/or contraband in bodily cavities which could be detected by means of a strip and/or visual body cavity search; (3) whether the strip and/or visual body cavity searches are conducted in an area of privacy so that the searches cannot be observed by persons not participating in the searches; (4) whether the strip and/or visual body cavity searches are performed in groups; and (5) whether the strip and/or visual body cavity searches are reasonably related to defendants' penological interest to maintain the security of the jail and whether or not there are less intrusive methods for protecting any such interest.

21. In accordance with Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 23(a), plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereupon alleges, that there are many questions of law common to the class including, but not limited to: (1) whether defendants may perform strip and/or visual body cavity searches on persons prior to their arraignment without reasonable suspicion, based on specific or articulable facts, to believe any particular prearraignment detainee has concealed drugs, weapons and/or contraband which would likely be discovered by a strip and/or visual body cavity search; (2) whether defendants may perform strip and/or visual body cavity searches on persons without first reasonably relating the strip search of the subject to defendants' penological interest to maintain the security of the jail and determining if there is a less intrusive method to protect that interest; (3) whether strip and/or visual body cavity searches may be conducted in areas where the search can be observed by persons not participating in the search without violating plaintiffs' Federal constitutional and statutory rights; (4) whether or not defendants' may strip search persons in groups in accordance with the Federal constitution; and (5) whether or not defendants have immunity or qualified immunity defenses to plaintiff's

claims.

22. In accordance with Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 23(a), the claims of the representative plaintiff is typical of the class. Plaintiff was arrested on minor offenses not involving violence, drugs or weapons and was searched, prior to arraignment, without defendants having a reasonable suspicion that a strip or visual body cavity search would produce drugs, weapons or contraband (and without the facts supporting any such suspicion being articulated in a supervisor-approved writing). Representative plaintiff has the same interests and suffered the same type of injuries as did all of the other class members. Plaintiff's claims arose because of defendants' policy, practice, and custom of subjecting arrestees to strip and/or visual body cavity searches before arraignment without having, and recording in writing, a reasonable suspicion that the search would be productive of contraband or weapons. Each class member suffered actual damages as a result of being subjected to a strip and/or visual body cavity search. The actual damages suffered by the representative plaintiff is similar in type and amount to the actual damages suffered by each class member.

23. In accordance with Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 23(a), the representative plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the class interests. Plaintiff's interests are consistent with and not antagonistic to the interests of the class.

24. In accordance with Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 23(b)(1)(A), prosecution of separate actions by individual members of the class would create a risk that inconsistent or varying adjudications with respect to individual members of the class would establish incompatible standards of conduct for the parties opposing the complaint.

25. In accordance with Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 23(b)(1)(B),

prosecution of separate actions by individual members of the class would create a risk of inconsistent adjudications with respect to individual members of the class which would, as a practical matter, substantially impair or impede the interests of the other members of the class to protect their interests.

26. In accordance with Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 23(b)(2), plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereupon alleges, that defendants have acted on grounds generally applicable to the class, thereby making appropriate the final injunctive or declaratory relief with respect to the class as a whole.

27. In accordance with Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 23(b)(3), this class action is superior to other available methods for the fair and equitable adjudication of the controversy between the parties. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereupon alleges, that the interests of members of the class in individually controlling the prosecution of a separate action is low, in that most class members would be unable individually to prosecute any action at all. Plaintiff also is informed and believes, and thereupon alleges, that the amounts at stake for individuals are so small that separate suits would be impracticable. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereupon alleges, that most members of the class will not be able to find counsel to represent them. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereupon alleges, that it is desirable to concentrate all litigation in one forum because all of the claims arise in the same location; i.e., the SANTA CRUZ COUNTY Jail. It will promote judicial efficiency to resolve the common questions of law and fact in one forum, rather than in multiple courts.

28. Plaintiff does not know the identities of all of the class members. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereupon alleges, that the identities of the class members may be

ascertained from records maintained by defendants SANTA CRUZ COUNTY and SHERIFF ESTRADA. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereupon alleges, that defendants' records reflect the identities, including addresses and telephone numbers, of the persons who have been held in custody in the SANTA CRUZ COUNTY Jail. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereupon alleges, that records of, and maintained by defendants reflect who was subject to a strip and/or visual body cavity search, when the search occurred, where the search occurred, whether any reasonable suspicion for the search existed and was recorded in a supervisor-approved writing, whether the search was videotaped, when persons searched were arraigned, and the charges on which such persons were arrested. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereupon alleges, that all of the foregoing information is contained in defendants' computer system and that the information necessary to identify the class members, by last known addresses, and the dates and reasons for their arrests and/or release from custody, is readily available from said computer system.

29. In accordance with Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 23(c)(2)(b), class members must be furnished with the best notice practicable under the circumstances, including individual notice to all members who can be identified through reasonable effort. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereupon alleges, that defendants' computer records contain a last known address for class members. Plaintiff contemplates that individual notice will be given to class members at such last known address by first class mail. Plaintiff contemplates that the notice will inform class members of the following:

- i. The pendency of the class action and the issues common to the class;
- ii. The nature of the action;

- iii. Their right to “opt out” of the action within a given time, in which event they will not be bound by a decision rendered in the class action;
- iv. Their right, if they do not “opt out,” to be represented by their own counsel and to enter an appearance in the case; otherwise they will be represented by the named class plaintiff and the named class plaintiff’s counsel; and
- v. Their right, if they do not “opt out,” to share in any recovery in favor of the class, and conversely to be bound by any judgment on the common issues adverse to the class.

V.
FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION
(Civil Rights Violations Under 42 USC § 1983)

30. Plaintiff incorporates by reference into this cause of action the allegations in each of the preceding paragraphs, as fully as if realleged and set forth herein.

31. Defendants’ policies, practices, and customs regarding the strip and visual body cavity searches complained of herein violated plaintiff’s, and all those similarly situated’s, clearly established rights under the Fourth Amendment to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures, violated plaintiff’s, and all those similarly situated’s, clearly established rights to due process and privacy under the Fourteenth Amendment, and directly and proximately damaged plaintiff, and all those similarly situated, as herein alleged, entitling plaintiff, and all class members, to recover damages for said constitutional violations pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

WHEREFORE, plaintiff prays for relief, for himself and for all persons similarly situated, as hereunder appears.

VI.
SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION
(Declaratory and Injunctive Relief)

32. Plaintiff incorporates by reference into his second cause of action the allegations of the preceding paragraphs, as fully as if realleged and set forth herein.

33. Plaintiff, on behalf of himself and the members of the class, seeks a judgment declaring that Defendants must cease the activities described herein and enjoining Defendants from any further strip searches without individualized reasonable suspicion.

34. The constitutional violations alleged herein arise from official policies and practices sanctioned by Defendants. The harm which plaintiff and the members of the class have sustained are clearly traceable to these officially sanctioned policies and procedures.

35. Plaintiff and members of the class do not have a plain, adequate, speedy, or complete remedy at law to address the wrongs alleged in this Complaint, and they will suffer irreparable injury as a result of Defendants' misconduct unless injunctive and declaratory relief is granted. Plaintiff and members of the class are in real and immediate danger of sustaining future, direct injury as a result of Defendants' official policies and practices that are ongoing at the time of this suit.

36. No cognizable burden will be placed on Defendants by requiring that no strip searches be undertaken without individualized reasonable suspicion. The public interest would be greatly enhanced by enforcement of policies and practices which adhere to the requirements of the state and federal Constitutions. Absent injunctive relief, there is no guarantee that the Defendants will cease their illegal policies and practices as alleged herein.

37. By reason of the foregoing, plaintiff and members of the class are entitled to

declaratory and injunctive relief as set forth above.

**VII.
DAMAGES**

38. The above paragraphs are incorporated herein by reference as if fully set forth in this paragraph.

39. As a direct and proximate result of the wrongful and unlawful actions of Defendants, described above, plaintiff and the members of the class were injured and have suffered and continue to suffer damages, including but not limited to distress, anguish, suffering, humiliation, deprivation of constitutional rights, and other incidental, consequential, and special damages.

40. Defendants' acts and omissions, as set forth herein, were malicious, reckless, wanton, oppressive, and/or fraudulent, justifying an award of punitive damages against the individually named defendants including SHERIFF ESTRADA and DOES 1 THROUGH 50 whose real names and identities will be substituted for the fictitious names stated herein as soon as said names are determined, for the purpose of punishment and to deter others from the commission of like offenses.

**VIII.
PRAYER**

WHEREFORE, plaintiff, on behalf of himself and on behalf of the members of the class represented herein, respectfully prays for and demands judgment against the Defendants as follows:

- (a) For judgment against defendants for compensatory damages, special damages, consequential damages and incidental damages under any or all

of the causes of action, in an amount to be determined at the trial of this cause;

- (b) For judgment declaring the rights of the parties;
- (c) For injunctive relief;
- (d) For reasonable attorneys' fees and costs incurred herein;
- (e) For pre-judgment and post-judgment interest in amounts to be determined according to law;
- (f) For an award of punitive and exemplary damages, in an amount to be determined at the trial of this cause; and
- (g) For such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

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JURY TRIAL REQUEST

COMES NOW plaintiff GEORGE VICTOR GARCIA, by and through his counsel, below listed, on his own behalf and on behalf of a class of similarly situated persons, and hereby demands trial by jury pursuant to the terms and conditions of Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 38, in regard to all issues in the above-referenced cause.

DATED: February 25, 2008

Respectfully submitted,

By: __ Electronically Signed 2/25/08
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