

**PRESS RELEASE**

Date: May 3, 2021  
Re: Women Sue LAPD for Violent  
Tactics During Traffic Stop of U-Haul  
LAPD Knew Was Not Stolen

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**ADVOCATES SUE LAPD FOR VIOLENT TACTICS DURING TRAFFIC STOP OF  
U-HAUL THE LAPD KNEW WAS NOT STOLEN**

***A Knee in the Neck and a Gun in the Face on Moving Day***

Lawyers from the Civil Rights law firm Hadsell Stormer Renick & Dai sued the Los Angeles Police Department and its officers for using illegal and violent “high risk” tactics during what should be routine traffic stops that are not in any way high risk, and for failing to train LAPD officers not to pull over drivers of formerly stolen vehicles that have since been reported as recovered.

On February 8, 2020, officers from the Los Angeles Police Department pulled over Shibani Balsaver and Sheilanee Sen while these two young women of South Asian descent were driving a rented U-Haul truck to move Ms. Balsaver into her new apartment east of Hollywood. At least 11 LAPD officers surrounded Ms. Balsaver and Ms. Sen while a police helicopter hovered overhead. LAPD officers aimed their weapons at Ms. Balsaver and Ms. Sen and forced them to lie “proned out” face down in the street while large male officers jammed their knees into the women’s back and necks and handcuffed them. The shocking incident was recorded on a bystander’s cell phone.

The officers were following LAPD’s official policy of using so-called “high risk” procedures during traffic stops that are not high risk and involve only non-violent property crimes such as a suspected stolen vehicle. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal declared such policies unconstitutional in 2014, but the LAPD has defied the Court and continues to terrify innocent Angelenos with its unlawful practices.

**Hadsell Stormer Renick & Dai LLP**

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The LAPD officers had pulled over Ms. Balsaver and Ms. Sen in the mistaken belief that their rented U-Haul truck was stolen. In fact, the U-Haul truck had previously been reported as stolen but thereafter was reported as recovered and repeatedly rented out before it was rented by Ms. Balsaver. After finally releasing Ms. Balsaver and Ms. Sen, LAPD Sergeant Jeannette Pelayo explained that the LAPD had failed to train its officers on new computer codes distinguishing formerly stolen vehicles from currently stolen ones.

Shibani Balsaver said, “I was so terrified that my body was shaking. I thought the officers were going to shoot and kill me right then and there. I thought this might be the end.”

Sheilanee Sen said, “I saw the officer pointing his gun at me. I thought he might shoot and kill me. I was panicking. My heart was beating so hard that it felt like it was going to jump out of my chest.”

Attorney Brian Olney stated, “The LAPD is sworn to uphold the law, not break it. The Courts have made it absolutely clear that this behavior is unconstitutional. This truck was not stolen. It is the LAPD’s failure to properly train its officers that created this life-threatening situation.”

“It is no surprise that the LAPD continues to shoot and kill innocent, unarmed people. Their fear based confrontational and gun-oriented tactics repeatedly lead to death and violence. It is a complete and utter failure of leadership and training,” said attorney Dan Stormer.

The lawsuit is filed in the United States District Court for the Central District of California.

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