

**NOTICE OF CLAIM AGAINST THE COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA**

**Submitted to:** COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA  
CLERK OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
105 EAST ANAPAMU STREET, SUITE 407  
SANTA BARBARA, CA 93101

**Claimant's Name** Raul Vasquez

**Claimant's Address/Phone** c/o JANEAN ACEVEDO DANIELS  
**Send Official Notice and** Law Office of Janean Acevedo Daniels  
**Other Correspondence to:** 1160 Via del Rey  
Goleta, CA 93117  
phone: (805) 284-4428  
fax: (805) 456-2050  
janean@jadanielslaw.com

**Date, place and circumstances of the occurrence giving rise to the claim asserted:**

The County of Santa Barbara ("County") has previously been advised by Claimant and his counsel of the specific acts and omissions by the County that have caused Claimant's injury and damage in sufficient detail for the County to be aware of the facts and circumstances underlying Claimant's claims; the identity of the County employees and representatives who have caused Claimant's injury and damage; the identity of witnesses; and how such injury and damage was caused.

A summary of this information is nonetheless provided as follows:

Claimant Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office ("SBSO"/"the Department") Deputy Raul Vasquez, a native Spanish-speaker of Mexican nationality and ancestry, has over 28 years of experience in law enforcement and over 20 years of service with the County. Claimant was a Senior Deputy in a special duty assignment before being retaliated against and demoted for reporting unlawful discrimination, harassment, and retaliation by his supervisors and the Department in violation of California's Fair Employment and Housing Act, Government Code Section 12900 *et seq.* ("FEHA"), and/or for reporting what he reasonably believed to be unsafe and unhealthy working conditions for himself and other employees, and other violations of law, in violation of California Labor Code Section 1102.5 and the California Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1973, Labor Code Section 6300 *et seq.*, all to his harm, injury, loss and damage.

From May 2021 through the present, Claimant has been subjected to a continuing course of unlawful discrimination and hostile work environment harassment by his supervisor, SBSO Sergeant Matt Fenske, based on his Mexican national origin and ancestry in violation of California's Fair Employment and Housing Act ("FEHA"), and to retaliation for opposing and reporting unlawful discrimination and harassment in violation of FEHA. Fenske's mere presence in Claimant's workspace and/or proximity to Claimant creates a continuing hostile and

intimidating work environment that has caused Claimant physical and mental injury, and interfered with his ability to perform his job.

Fenske's discriminatory and harassing actions include, but are not limited to:

- subjecting Claimant to false accusations of wrongdoing and unwarranted and unsupportable criticism of his performance throughout the time he has supervised him.
- in May 2021, less than two months after being assigned to the Civil Unit, informing Claimant that he was going to be "rotated" from his assignment in the SBSO Santa Barbara Civil Office (which is close to his home and family) to the Santa Maria office (a one-hour plus drive each way from the Santa Barbara office) initially for three to six months, then subsequently for a year, without valid reason. This directive violated Claimant's due process rights and the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding between the County and the Santa Barbara County Deputy Sheriffs' Association ("DSA"), and was later overturned by the Department after Claimant complained to command staff and the DSA about the transfer.
- on January 27, 2022, giving Claimant an unwarranted and unsupportable negative Employee Performance Report ("EPR") and issuing him six unwarranted and unsupportable performance writeups to be placed in his Work Evaluation and Review ("WEAR") file, all on the same day.
- on June 28, 2022, again informing Claimant that he was going to be transferred to the Santa Maria Office—this time, "indefinitely"—based on the pretext that the transfer was designed to address the "wellness" of Claimant's colleague, Deputy Anthony Deleo, when Deputy Deleo in fact did not request any such transfer and strongly opposed it, and in blatant disregard of Claimant's health and well-being.
- on July 22, 2022, giving Claimant an unwarranted and unsupportable "Special EPR" and an additional WEAR file writeup which involved the same issues complained of in the Special EPR (in contravention of the purpose and goals of WEAR documentation and in violation of WEAR guidelines), and placing him on a 90-day Performance Improvement Plan ("PIP") which required Claimant to have close, frequent contact and interaction with Fenske.
- on December 1, 2022, unlawfully and improperly directing Claimant to surreptitiously record all telephonic communications he had with property owners/landlords and/or their agents (who are often attorneys) in connection with the service of eviction notices in violation of governing law and Department policy, thereby subjecting Claimant to the Hobson's choice of either disobeying his supervisor's order and being disciplined (or even terminated) for insubordination, or exposing himself to serious potential criminal and civil liability and placing his continuing employment and professional career at risk.

- creating a continuing hostile and intimidating work environment that has caused Claimant physical and mental injury, and interfered with his ability to perform his job.

Although Claimant first complained to SBSO command staff about Fenske's adverse and harassing actions and asked that Fenske be removed from the Civil Unit in June 2021, February 2022, during a July 5, 2022 meeting with then Commander (now retired) Rob Plastino and DSA union President Sergeant Neil Gowing (and in a follow up July 5, 2022 email to them), in a July 22, 2022 Supplemental Grievance Claims memo to Commander Plastino, HR Manager Melissa Macias, Sergeant Gowing, and County Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Employment Opportunity Manager Henry Ventura, during a July 25, 2022 meeting with Mr. Ventura, and on various other occasions prior to and following his forced leave of absence from work due to the discriminatory, hostile, and injurious work environment to which he has been subjected, SBSO and the County have failed to adequately investigate, or take effective remedial action to address or protect Claimant from Fenske's continuing unlawful, degrading, and harmful conduct. Instead, SBSO and the County expected and required Claimant to continue to report directly to and engage on a daily basis with his harasser--including requiring Claimant to have increased and more frequent contact with Fenske to satisfy the requirements of his unwarranted PIP--all to his continuing harm, humiliation, and injury.

Effective April 17, 2023, SBSO Lieutenant John Maxwell ordered that Claimant and his colleague, Special Duty Deputy Anthony Deleo, be involuntarily and indefinitely transferred from their specialty assignment in the Civil Unit to Court Services, South County, where they were directed to serve as bailiffs.

The Department's involuntary transfer order came shortly after Claimant retained counsel to protect his rights and complained to the County of Santa Barbara and the SBSO about unlawful discrimination and harassment by the Department and Claimant's supervisor, Fenske, and shortly after Claimant declined the Department's "suggestion" that he voluntarily transfer to Court Services in order to avoid contact with Fenske, who created the hostile, intimidating, unsafe, and unhealthy work environment for him.

The SBSO's involuntary transfer order was unlawful, discriminatory, and retaliatory. It is unlawful to transfer an employee who complains of hostile work environment harassment or discrimination to a less desirable or less prestigious work assignment to protect them from harassment or discrimination or as a "solution" to a hostile work environment situation. Effective action to address workplace harassment or discrimination, including changes in work assignments, duties, or schedules, must be directed to the individual perpetrating the unlawful treatment, not to the complaining employee, unless the complaining employee **voluntarily agrees** to any such changes. The Department included Deleo in the involuntary transfer order in an effort to cover its discriminatory and retaliatory animus and actions towards Claimant, who was the actual target of the order.

On March 27, 2024, the Department removed Claimant's Civil Office workspace and work privileges and directed him to promptly remove his personal belongings therefrom. Claimant

submitted a written grievance dated April 8, 2024 to the Department regarding the SBSO's adverse action.

Effective April 29, 2024, the Department transferred Special Duty Deputy Anthony Deleo from the SBSO South County Courts Unit back to the Civil Unit, thereby ending the temporary duty ("TDY") assignment that Dep. Deleo and Claimant had been in for the last year ***only for Dep. Deleo, and not for Claimant***, a more senior deputy. By so doing, the Department allowed Claimant's less-senior colleague (both in length of employment and in length of assignment to the unit) Deleo, to return to an assignment in the Civil Unit, but denied Claimant the same opportunity to return to his prior position, thereby engaging in further disparate and retaliatory treatment against Claimant.

There is no legitimate, non-discriminatory, non-retaliatory reason for the Department to allow Deleo, who is ***not a native Spanish-speaker of Mexican origin***, and who actually ***has less seniority*** with the Department and ***less seniority*** in the Civil Unit, to be allowed to return to a previous, strongly-preferred assignment in the Civil Unit, while requiring Claimant, one of the SBSO's most senior, most experienced, and best trained deputies to remain indefinitely in the less-desirable and less-prestigious Court Services assignment that he has been dutifully fulfilling since April 2023.

Following DeLeo's transfer back to his prior specialty assignment in the Civil Unit, Claimant submitted a written grievance dated April 29, 2024 to the Department regarding the SBSO's favorable action towards Deleo and discriminatory, punitive action towards him, and formally requested that the Department treat him in the same manner as Deleo and allow Claimant to also return to his previous specialty assignment in the Civil Unit, immediately.

By memo dated June 17, 2024, SBSO Sheriff Bill Brown on behalf of the Department responded to Claimant's April 9, 2024 and April 29, 2024 grievances by denying Claimant's request to withdraw and vacate the directive to remove his belongings from, and to allow his continued use of, the Civil Office while assigned to Court Services, and denying his request to return to his previous specialty assignment in the Civil Unit.

On June 11, 2024, SBSO Sergeant Eric Rossler issued Claimant a WEAR file memorandum dated June 4, 2024 in connection with allegations by Senior Deputy Adrien Marquez that Claimant was absent from his assigned post at the Anacapa Division Courthouse building for an extended period of time, during which he purportedly improperly visited his wife's law office across the street. Claimant submitted a written response to the Department regarding the adverse action on or about July 10, 2024.

Prior to and on April 6, 2025, Claimant was assigned to work in the same area as Fenske in connection with the Department's response to the annual Isla Vista Deltopia event, notwithstanding that Claimant has repeatedly reported that Fenske's presence in his work environment creates a hostile, harassing, and unsafe work environment, and has therefore objected to Fenske being present or in proximity to Claimant's work location.

In late March and early April 2025, Claimant reported concerns to Sgt. Rossler about unsafe conditions related to deputies walking inmates across the street as well as the lack of safety of deputies and the public as a result of locked doors in the Anacapa Division Courthouse.

Shortly thereafter, the Department once again denied Claimant's return to his specialty assignment in the Civil Unit (from which he was involuntarily transferred in April 2024) by filling his position and replacing him with a non-Hispanic white employee, Mike McNeil.

Effective on or after April 28, 2025, Claimant was assigned as the Department 8 courtroom deputy and demoted from his Special Deputy position to the position of Deputy by the Department, resulting in the loss of his 5% specialty pay incentive, the loss of his 4-10 schedule, and the loss of his ability to earn overtime pay by working Friday overtime.

On May 1, 2025, Claimant was interrogated and threatened by four Department supervisors (Sgt. Eric Rossler, Sr. Deputy Alex Pecorari, Sr. Deputy Adrien Marquez, and Lt. John Maxwell) regarding an alleged disciplinary issue which could have resulted in punitive action in violation of the Peace Officer's Bill of Rights.

On a continuing basis from June 2024 through the present, Senior Deputy Adrien Marquez has subjected Claimant to hostile, demeaning, disparate, and retaliatory treatment on the basis of his protected classification and protected conduct as described herein. Marquez routinely ignores and avoids eye contact with Claimant, walks the opposite direction if he sees him, and fails to check on Claimant and his working conditions in his assigned courtrooms, causing Claimant to fear that Marquez will not back him up or take other appropriate supportive or protective action towards Claimant in the event of an emergent situation, and creating an unsafe work environment for Claimant.

In a June 11, 2025 memo to the Department, Claimant objected to the above-described adverse actions and to Marquez's offensive treatment, and reiterated his above-described workplace safety concerns. Claimant asked that his involuntary transfer to Department 8 be immediately rescinded and that Marquez cease his wrongful, disparate treatment. In a June 25, 2025 response from Commander Kevin Huddle, the SBSO denied Claimant's request that the Department rescind his permanent assignment to Department 8 and confirmed that the assignment was in fact "indefinite" and will "last for an unspecified period." To Claimant's knowledge, the Department has taken no corrective action with respect to Marquez's ongoing wrongful treatment of Claimant as reported by him.

**A general description of injury, damage, or loss incurred so far as it may be known at the time of presentation of the claim:**

The Department's and its supervisors' discriminatory and harassing treatment of Claimant, and their retaliation towards him for complaining to SBSO command staff about such unlawful conduct, about his unsafe and unhealthy work environment, and about what he reasonable believes are violations of law and workplace safety requirements, have caused Claimant harm,

loss, humiliation, distress, and pain, including documented physical and mental injury for which he has been forced to seek medical care and treatment and take protected leave time from work. Claimant has sustained lost wages and employment benefits; loss of valuable overtime income; physical and emotional injury, sickness, and distress; humiliation, pain and suffering; harm to his career, employability, and professional and personal reputation and relationships within the SBSO; harm to and disruption of his professional, familial, and other relationships; and attorney's fees and costs.

These injuries have required Claimant to take protected medical/disability and sick leave from work, including a medical/disability leave of absence from work that began on September 3, 2025. Claimant has been forced to use more than \$108,000 in paid sick leave and accrued vacation time as a result of these injuries and resulting need for leave from work.

Additionally, Claimant has lost the opportunity to earn at least \$45,000 or more in overtime pay due to these unlawful actions towards him.

Claimant asserts claims against the County and the SBSO for discrimination and harassment by his supervisors and the Department based on his Mexican nationality and ancestry in violation of California's Fair Employment and Housing Act, Government Code Section 12900 *et seq.* ("FEHA"); for failure to prevent such unlawful discrimination and harassment in violation of FEHA; for retaliation for opposing and reporting unlawful discrimination and harassment in violation of FEHA; for discrimination and retaliation in violation of California Labor Code Section 1102.5; for failing to provide him with a safe and healthful work environment in violation of the California Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1973, Labor Code Section 6300 *et seq.*; and for other, related claims arising from his employment with the County and the SBSO, and for all harm, injuries, damages, and attorney's fees sustained by him in connection therewith.

**Amount of Claim:**

The amount of the claim is estimated to be in excess of the jurisdictional limits of the Superior Court of the State of California.

I have ready the matters and statements made in the above claim and I know the same to be true of my own knowledge. I certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

**Date: October 9, 2025 at Goleta, California**

*/s/ Janean Acevedo Daniels*

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**Janean Acevedo Daniels**  
**Attorney for Claimant Raul Vasquez**

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**PROOF OF SERVICE**

**Raul Vasquez\County of Santa Barbara**

STATE OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA:

I am employed in the County of Santa Barbara, State of California. I am over the age of eighteen (18) years and not a party to the within action; my business address is 1160 Via Del Rey, Goleta, California 93117.

On October 9, 2025, I served the foregoing documents: **GOVERNMENT CLAIM OF RAUL VASQUEZ** - on the interested parties in this action by placing,  the original  a true copy thereof enclosed in a sealed envelope addressed as follows:

(BY UNITED STATES MAIL)

I deposited the sealed envelope with the United States Postal Service, with First Class postage fully prepaid.

I placed the envelope for collection and mailing, following ordinary business practices. I am readily familiar with this law firm's business practice for collecting and processing documents for mailing. On the same day that mail is placed for collection and mailing, it is deposited in the ordinary course of business with the United States Postal Service, in a sealed envelope with postage fully prepaid. I am aware that service made pursuant to *Code of Civil Procedure* § 1013a(3) shall be presumed invalid upon motion of a party served if the postal cancellation date or postage meter date on the envelope is more than one day after the date of deposit for mailing stated herein.

(BY EMAIL) By use of email address [assistant@jadanielslaw.com](mailto:assistant@jadanielslaw.com), I served a copy of the within documents on the listed interested parties at the email address (es) listed herein. The transmission was reported as complete and without error.

(BY OVERNIGHT MAIL) I caused such document to be sent via Federal Express to:

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA  
CLERK OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
105 EAST ANAPAMU STREET, SUITE 407  
SANTA BARBARA, CA 93101

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on October 9, 2025, at Goleta, California.

\_ /s/ Janean Acevedo Daniels \_\_\_\_\_  
Janean Acevedo Daniels