

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION**

RICKEY HENDERSON,)
Plaintiff,) Case No. 1:19-cv-00129
v.) (Jury Demand)
CITY OF CHICAGO, et al.) Judge Hon. Lindsay C. Jenkins
Defendants.)

**DEFENDANT MICHAEL SPAARGAREN'S ANSWER AND
AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES TO PLAINTIFF'S COMPLAINT**

Defendant Michael Spaargaren (“Defendant”), by his undersigned attorneys, answers Plaintiff’s Complaint as follows:

1. This is a civil action arising under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The jurisdiction of this Court is invoked pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1343 and 1337.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits this action includes claims that purport to be based on 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and that this Court has jurisdiction over federal and state law claims. Defendant Spaargaren denies any liability to Plaintiff for any and all claims asserted in this action and remaining allegations in this paragraph.

I. Parties

2. Plaintiff Rickey Henderson is a resident of the Northern District of Illinois.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth as to the allegations in this paragraph.

3. Defendant City of Chicago is an Illinois municipal corporation.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits the allegations in this paragraph.

4. Defendants Ronald Watts, Brian Bolton, Miguel Cabrales, Darryl Edwards, Robert Gonzalez, Alvin Jones, Manuel Leano, Kallatt Mohammed, Douglas Nichols Jr., Calvin

Ridgell, Elsworth Smith Jr., Michael Spaargaren, and Gerome Summers Jr. (the “individual officer defendants”) were at all relevant times acting under color of their offices as Chicago police officers. Plaintiff sues the individual officer defendants in their individual capacities.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits Ronald Watts, Brian Bolton, Miguel Cabrales, Darryl Edwards, Robert Gonzalez, Alvin Jones, Manuel Leano, Kallatt Mohammed, Douglas Nichols Jr., Calvin Ridgell, Elsworth Smith Jr., Michael Spaargaren, and Gerome Summers Jr. are police officers or were former police officers employed by the City of Chicago. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

5. Defendant Philip Cline was at all relevant times Superintendent of the Chicago Police Department. Plaintiff sues Cline in his individual capacity.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits Philip Cline was a Superintendent of the Chicago Police Department. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining the allegations in this paragraph.

6. Defendant Debra Kirby was at all relevant times the Assistant Deputy Superintendent of the Chicago Police Department, acting as head of the Chicago Police Department Internal Affairs Division. Plaintiff sues Kirby in her individual capacity.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

II. Overview

7. Plaintiff Henderson is one of many victims of the criminal enterprise run by convicted felon and former Chicago Police Sergeant Ronald Watts and his tactical team at the Ida B. Wells Homes in the 2000’s.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in any criminal activity or participated in a criminal enterprise. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

8. As of the date of filing, fifty individuals who were framed by the Watts Gang have had their convictions vacated by the Circuit Court of Cook County.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he framed anyone as he understands that term. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

9. Several of these other victims of the Watts Gang are currently prosecuting federal lawsuits. Pursuant to an order of the Court's Executive Committee dated July 12, 2018, these cases have been coordinated for pretrial proceedings with the lead case *Baker v. City of Chicago*, 16-cv-8940.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in any criminal activity or other alleged misconduct. Upon information and belief, Defendant Spaargaren admits that various individuals have filed federal civil lawsuits against various current and former Chicago police officers and that those cases have been coordinated for pretrial proceedings. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

10. The Executive Committee's Order states that additional cases, such as this one, filed with similar claims and the same defendants shall be part of these coordinated pretrial proceedings.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits the allegations in this paragraph.

11. The Watts Gang of officers engaged in robbery and extortion, used excessive force, planted evidence, fabricated evidence, and manufactured false charges.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in robbery and extortion, used excessive force, planted evidence, fabricated evidence, or manufactured false charges. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

12. High ranking officials within the Chicago Police Department were aware of the Watts Gang's criminal enterprise but failed to take any action to stop it.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in any criminal activity or other alleged misconduct. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

13. The Chicago Police Department's official policies or customs of failing to discipline, supervise, and control its officers, as well as its a "code of silence," were a proximate cause of the Watts Gang's criminal enterprise.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he participated in a criminal enterprise and denies he experienced, participated in, or observed a "code of silence," as he understands this phrase to mean. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

14. On four separate occasions, Watts Gang officers arrested Henderson without probable cause, fabricated evidence against him, and framed him for a drug offense for which he was imprisoned for a total of more than four years.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he arrested Plaintiff without probable cause, fabricated evidence against him, framed him for drug offenses, or otherwise engaged in any misconduct. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

15. Based on the powerful evidence that has become known about the Watts Gang's nearly decade-long criminal enterprise, the Circuit Court of Cook County has vacated all four of plaintiff's convictions and granted him four Certificates of Innocence.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits the Circuit Court of Cook County vacated four (4) of Plaintiff's convictions and that Plaintiff received certificates of innocence. Defendant Spaargaren denies he participated in a criminal enterprise. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

16. Henderson brings this lawsuit to secure a remedy for his illegal incarceration, which was caused by: the Watts Gang officers, the failure of high-ranking officials within the Chicago Police Department to stop the Watts Gang, the code of silence within the Chicago Police

Department, and the Chicago Police Department's defective discipline policy.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he caused Plaintiff to be illegally incarcerated, denies he experienced, participated in, or observed a "code of silence," as he understands this phrase to mean, and denies Plaintiff is entitled to money damages or any other relief whatsoever. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

III. The First False Arrest and Illegal Prosecution of Plaintiff

17. On June 25, 2002, plaintiff was arrested by defendants Bolton, Gonzalez, and Watts (the "June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers") in front of a building at the Ida B. Wells Homes.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

18. At the time of plaintiff's arrest:

- (a) None of the June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers had a warrant authorizing the arrest of plaintiff;
- (b) None of the June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers believed that a warrant had been issued authorizing the arrest of plaintiff;
- (c) None of the June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers had observed plaintiff commit any offense; and
- (d) None of the June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers had received information from any source that plaintiff had committed an offense.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

19. After arresting plaintiff, the June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers conspired, confederated, and agreed to fabricate a false story in an attempt to justify the unlawful arrest, to cover-up their wrongdoing, and to cause plaintiff to be wrongfully detained and prosecuted.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

20. The false story fabricated by the June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers included their

false claim that they saw plaintiff selling drugs from a bag and that when they approached him, he attempted to place the bag in his mouth.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

21. The acts of the June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers in furtherance of their scheme to frame plaintiff included the following:

- (a) One or more of the June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers prepared police reports containing the false story, and each of the other June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers failed to intervene to prevent the violation of plaintiff's rights;
- (b) One or more of the June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers attested to the false story through the official police reports, and each of the other June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers failed to intervene to prevent the violation of plaintiff's rights;
- (c) Defendant Watts formally approved one or more of the official police reports, knowing that the story set out therein was false; and
- (d) One or more of the June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers communicated the false story to prosecutors, and each of the other June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers failed to intervene to prevent the violation of plaintiff's rights.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

22. The wrongful acts of the June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers were performed with knowledge that the acts would cause plaintiff to be wrongfully held in custody and falsely prosecuted for an offense that had never occurred.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

23. Plaintiff was charged with a drug offense because of the wrongful acts of the June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren, on information and belief, admits that Plaintiff pleaded guilty to a drug offense on June 25, 2002. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

24. Plaintiff knew that proving that the June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers had concocted the charges against him would not be possible.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

25. Accordingly, even though he was innocent, plaintiff pleaded guilty to a drug offense on September 11, 2002, and received a sentence of three years imprisonment.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

26. Plaintiff was deprived of liberty during his incarceration because of the above-described wrongful acts of the June 25, 2002 Arresting Officers.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

27. Plaintiff was continuously in custody from his arrest on June 25, 2002 until he was released on parole (“mandatory supervised release”) from the Illinois Department of Corrections on June 23, 2003.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

IV. The Second False Arrest and Illegal Prosecution of Plaintiff

28. On August 27, 2003, plaintiff was arrested by defendants Bolton, Edwards, Jones, Mohammed, Ridgell, Spaargaren, Summers Jr., and Watts (the “August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers”) behind a building at the Ida B. Wells Homes.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits Plaintiff was arrested on August 27, 2003. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

29. At the time of plaintiff’s arrest:

- (a) None of the August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers had a warrant authorizing the arrest of plaintiff;
- (b) None of the August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers believed that a warrant had

been issued authorizing the arrest of plaintiff;

- (c) None of the August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers had observed plaintiff commit any offense; and
- (d) None of the August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers had received information from any source that plaintiff had committed any offense.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits he did not have a warrant authorizing the arrest of Plaintiff. Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in any misconduct relating to the August 27, 2003 arrest of Plaintiff. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

30. After arresting plaintiff, the August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers conspired, confederated, and agreed to fabricate a false story in an attempt to justify the unlawful arrest, to cover-up their wrongdoing, and to cause plaintiff to be wrongfully detained and prosecuted.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he conspired, confederated, and agreed to fabricate a false story in an attempt to justify the alleged unlawful arrest, to cover-up their alleged wrongdoing, and to cause plaintiff to be wrongfully detained and prosecuted. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

31. The false story fabricated by the August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers included their false claim that they saw plaintiff drop a bag containing drugs and run away.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he fabricated a false claim. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

32. The acts of the August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers in furtherance of their scheme to frame plaintiff included the following:

- (a) One or more of the August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers prepared police reports containing the false story, and each of the other August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers failed to intervene to prevent the violation of plaintiff's rights;

- (b) One or more of the August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers attested to the false story through the official police reports, and each of the other August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers failed to intervene to prevent the violation of plaintiff's rights;
- (c) Defendant Watts formally approved one or more of the official police reports, knowing that the story set out therein was false; and
- (d) One or more of the August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers communicated the false story to prosecutors, and each of the other August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers failed to intervene to prevent the violation of plaintiff's rights.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he prepared false police reports, denies he attested to a false story through the official police reports, and denies he communicated a false story to prosecutors and other August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers. Defendant Spaargaren further denies he failed to intervene in a violation of plaintiff's rights. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

33. The wrongful acts of the August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers were performed with knowledge that the acts would cause plaintiff to be wrongfully held in custody and falsely prosecuted for an offense that had never occurred.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he committed any wrongful acts and caused Plaintiff to be wrongfully held in custody and falsely prosecuted. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

34. Plaintiff was charged with a drug offense because of the wrongful acts of the August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits that Plaintiff was charged with a drug offense. Defendant Spaargaren denies he committed any wrongful acts. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

35. Plaintiff knew that proving that the August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers had concocted the charges against him would not be possible.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he falsified or otherwise “concocted” the charges against Plaintiff. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph

36. Accordingly, even though he was innocent, plaintiff pleaded guilty to a drug offense on December 8, 2003, and received a sentence of 18 months imprisonment.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren, on information and belief, admits Plaintiff pleaded guilty to a drug offense. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

37. Plaintiff was deprived of liberty during his incarceration because of the above-described wrongful acts of the August 27, 2003 Arresting Officers.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he deprived Plaintiff of his liberty or engaged in the above-described wrongful acts. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

38. Plaintiff was continuously in custody from his arrest on August 27, 2003 until he was released on parole (“mandatory supervised release”) from the Illinois Department of Corrections on May 6, 2004.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

V. The Third False Arrest and Illegal Prosecution of Plaintiff

39. On March 12, 2005, plaintiff was arrested by defendants Bolton, Cabrales, Gonzalez, Leano, Nichols, and Watts (the “March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers”) in a common area of a building at the Ida B. Wells Homes.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits that Plaintiff was arrested on March 12, 2005. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

40. At the time of plaintiff's arrest:

- (a) None of the March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers had a warrant authorizing the arrest of plaintiff;
- (b) None of the March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers believed that a warrant had been issued authorizing the arrest of plaintiff;
- (c) None of the March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers had observed plaintiff commit any offense; and
- (d) None of the March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers had received information from any source that plaintiff had committed an offense.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

41. After arresting plaintiff, the March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers conspired, confederated, and agreed to fabricate a false story in an attempt to justify the unlawful arrest, to cover-up their wrongdoing, and to cause plaintiff to be wrongfully detained and prosecuted.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

42. The false story fabricated by the March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers included their false claim that they saw plaintiff trying to hide drugs in vent in the hallway of a building at the Ida B. Wells Homes.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

43. The acts of the March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers in furtherance of their scheme to frame plaintiff included the following:

- (a) One or more of the March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers prepared police reports containing the false story, and each of the other March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers failed to intervene to prevent the violation of plaintiff's rights;
- (b) One or more of the March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers attested to the false story through the official police reports, and each of the other March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers failed to intervene to prevent the violation of plaintiff's rights;
- (c) Defendant Watts formally approved one or more of the official police

reports, knowing that the story set out therein was false; and

- (d) One or more of the March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers communicated the false story to prosecutors, and each of the other March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers failed to intervene to prevent the violation of plaintiff's rights.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

44. The wrongful acts of the March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers were performed with knowledge that the acts would cause plaintiff to be wrongfully held in custody and falsely prosecuted for an offense that had never occurred.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

45. Plaintiff was charged with a drug offense because of the wrongful acts of the March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits that Plaintiff was charged with a drug offense. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

46. Plaintiff knew that proving that the March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers had concocted the charges against him would not be possible.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

47. Accordingly, even though he was innocent, plaintiff pleaded guilty to a drug offense on July 28, 2005, and received a sentence of 42 months imprisonment.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits that Plaintiff pleaded guilty to a drug offense. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

48. Plaintiff was deprived of liberty during his incarceration because of the above-described wrongful acts of the March 12, 2005 Arresting Officers.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a

belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

49. Plaintiff was continuously in custody from his arrest on March 12, 2005 until he was released on parole (“mandatory supervised release”) from the Illinois Department of Corrections on June 9, 2006.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

VI. The Fourth False Arrest and Illegal Prosecution of Plaintiff

50. On July 22, 2006, plaintiff was arrested by defendants Gonzalez, Jones, Mohammed, Nichols, Smith and Watts (the “July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers”) in a common area of a building at the Ida B. Wells Homes.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits that Plaintiff was arrested on July 22, 2006. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

51. At the time of plaintiff’s arrest:

- (a) None of the July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers had a warrant authorizing the arrest of plaintiff;
- (b) None of the July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers believed that a warrant had been issued authorizing the arrest of plaintiff;
- (c) None of the July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers had observed plaintiff commit any offense; and
- (d) None of the July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers had received information from any source that plaintiff had committed an offense.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

52. After arresting plaintiff, the July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers conspired, confederated, and agreed to fabricate a false story in an attempt to justify the unlawful arrest, to cover-up their wrongdoing, and to cause plaintiff to be wrongfully detained and prosecuted.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

53. The false story fabricated by the July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers included their false claim that they saw plaintiff trying to hide drugs in a closet in the hallway of a building at the Ida B. Wells Homes.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

54. The acts of the July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers in furtherance of their scheme to frame plaintiff included the following:

- (a) One or more of the July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers prepared police reports containing the false story, and each of the other July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers failed to intervene to prevent the violation of plaintiff's rights;
- (b) One or more of the July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers attested to the false story through the official police reports, and each of the other July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers failed to intervene to prevent the violation of plaintiff's rights;
- (c) Defendant Watts formally approved one or more of the official police reports, knowing that the story set out therein was false; and
- (d) One or more of the July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers communicated the false story to prosecutors, and each of the other July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers failed to intervene to prevent the violation of plaintiff's rights.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

55. The wrongful acts of the July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers were performed with knowledge that the acts would cause plaintiff to be wrongfully held in custody and falsely prosecuted for an offense that had never occurred.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

56. Plaintiff was charged with a drug offense because of the wrongful acts of the July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits that Plaintiff was charged with a drug offense. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of

the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

57. Plaintiff knew that proving that the July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers had concocted the charges against him would not be possible.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

58. Accordingly, even though he was innocent, plaintiff pleaded guilty to a drug offense on August 25, 2006, and received a sentence of four years imprisonment.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren, on information and belief, admits that Plaintiff pleaded guilty to a drug offense on August 25, 2006. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

59. Plaintiff was deprived of liberty during his incarceration because of the above-described wrongful acts of the July 22, 2006 Arresting Officers.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

60. Plaintiff was continuously in custody from his arrest on July 22, 2006 until he was released on parole (“mandatory supervised release”) from the Illinois Department of Corrections on January 18, 2008.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations in this paragraph.

VII. Plaintiff’s Exonerations

61. Plaintiff challenged his convictions after he learned that federal prosecutors and lawyers for other wrongfully convicted individuals had discovered the Watts Gang’s criminal enterprise.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in any criminal activity or participated in a criminal enterprise. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

62. On September 24, 2018, the Circuit Court of Cook County granted the State’s motion to set aside plaintiff’s convictions; immediately thereafter, the Court granted the State’s

request to *nolle prosequi* all four cases.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits, on information and belief, the Court set aside Plaintiff's convictions and granted the State's request to *nolle prosequi* four cases. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

63. On November 2, 2018, the Circuit Court of Cook County granted plaintiff four Certificates of Innocence.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren, on information and belief, admits the Circuit Court of Cook County granted Plaintiff certificates of innocence. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

VIII. Plaintiff's Arrests and Prosecutions Were Part of a Long- Running Pattern Known to High-Ranking Officials within the Chicago Police Department

64. Before the Watts Gang engineered plaintiff's above-described wrongful arrests, detentions, and prosecutions, the Chicago Police Department had received numerous civilian complaints that defendant Watts and the Watts Gang were engaging in robbery, extortion, the use of excessive force, planting evidence, fabricating evidence, and manufacturing false charges against persons at the Ida B. Wells Homes.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he wrongfully arrested, detained, or prosecuted Plaintiff and denies that he engaged in robbery, extortion, the use of excessive force, planted evidence, fabricated evidence, and manufactured false charges against persons at the Ida B. Wells Homes. Defendant Spaargaren admits he was the subject of citizen complaints during the course of his career. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

65. Criminal investigators corroborated these civilian complaints with information they obtained from multiple cooperating witnesses.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in robbery, extortion, the use of

excessive force, planted evidence, fabricated evidence, and manufactured false charges against persons at the Ida B. Wells Homes and, therefore, denies the allegations in this paragraph that are directed against him. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

66. Before the Watts Gang engineered plaintiff's above-described wrongful arrests, detentions, and prosecutions, defendants Cline and Kirby knew about the above-described credible allegations of serious wrongdoing by Watts and the Watts Gang and knew that criminal investigators had corroborated these allegations.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engineered Plaintiff's above-described wrongful arrests, detentions, and prosecutions and therefore denies the allegations in this paragraph as directed against him. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

67. Defendants Cline and Kirby also knew, before the Watts Gang engineered plaintiff's above-described wrongful arrests, detentions, and prosecutions, that, absent intervention by the Chicago Police Department, Watts and his gang would continue to engage in robbery and extortion, use excessive force, plant evidence, fabricate evidence, and manufacture false charges.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engineered Plaintiff's above-described wrongful arrests, detentions, and prosecutions and therefore denies the allegations in this paragraph as directed against him. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

68. The Internal Affairs Division of the Chicago Police knew about the lawlessness of Watts and his gang by 2004.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in lawlessness and therefore denies the allegations in this paragraph as directed against him. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

69. Defendants Cline and Kirby had the power and the opportunity to prevent Watts and his gang from continuing to engage in the above- described wrongdoing.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in the above-described wrongdoing and therefore denies the allegations in this paragraph as directed against him. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

70. Defendants Cline and Kirby deliberately chose to turn a blind eye to the pattern of wrongdoing by Watts and his gang.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in wrongdoing and therefore denies the allegations in this paragraph as directed against him. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

71. As a direct and proximate result of the deliberate indifference of defendants Cline and Kirby, Watts and his gang continued to engage in robbery and extortion, use excessive force, plant evidence, fabricate evidence, and manufacture false charges against persons at the Ida B. Wells Homes, including but not limited to the wrongful arrests, detentions, and prosecutions of plaintiff, as described above.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in robbery, extortion, the use of excessive force, planting evidence, fabricating evidence, and manufacturing false charges against Plaintiff or other persons at the Ida B. Wells Homes or that he wrongfully arrested, detained, or prosecuted Plaintiff as alleged. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

IX. Official Policies and Customs of the Chicago Police Department Were the Moving Force behind the Defendants' Misconduct

72. At all relevant times, the Chicago Police Department maintained official policies and customs that facilitated and condoned the Defendants' misconduct.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in any alleged misconduct and therefore denies the allegations in this paragraph as directed against him. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining

allegations in this paragraph.

A. Failure to Discipline

73. At all relevant times, the Chicago Police Department maintained a policy or custom of failing to discipline, supervise, and control its officers. By maintaining this policy or custom, the City caused its officers to believe that they could engage in misconduct with impunity because their actions would never be thoroughly scrutinized.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies the Chicago Police Department maintained a policy or custom of failing to discipline, supervise, and control its officers and denies that he engaged in any misconduct. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

74. Before plaintiff's arrest, policymakers for the City of Chicago knew that the Chicago Police Department's policies or customs for disciplining, supervising, and controlling its officers were inadequate and caused police misconduct.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

75. Despite their knowledge of the City's failed policies and customs for disciplining, supervising, and controlling its officers, the policymakers failed to take action to remedy these problems.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

76. Before the Watts Gang engineered plaintiff's above-described wrongful arrests, detentions, and prosecutions, the individual officer defendants had been the subject of numerous formal complaints of official misconduct.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits he was the subject of citizen complaints during the course of his career. Defendant Spaargaren denies he wrongfully arrested, detained, or prosecuted Plaintiff, or engaged in official misconduct. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

77. As a direct and proximate result of the Chicago Police Department's inadequate policies or customs for disciplining, supervising, and controlling its officers and the policymakers'

failure to address these problems, Watts and his gang continued to engage in robbery and extortion, use excessive force, plant evidence, fabricate evidence, and manufacture false charges against persons at the Ida B. Wells Homes, including but not limited to the wrongful arrests, detentions, and prosecutions of plaintiff, as described above.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in robbery and extortion, used excessive force, planted evidence, fabricated evidence, or manufactured false charges against persons at the Ida B. Wells Homes, and denies he wrongfully arrested, detained and prosecuted Plaintiff and therefore denies the allegations in this paragraph as directed against him. Defendant Spaargaren lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

B. Code of Silence

78. At all relevant times, the Chicago Police Department maintained a “code of silence” that required police officers to remain silent about police misconduct. An officer who violated the code of silence would be severely penalized by the Department.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he experienced, participated in, or observed a “code of silence,” as he understands this phrase to mean. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

79. At all relevant times, police officers were trained at the Chicago Police Academy not to break the code of silence. Officers were instructed that “Blue is Blue. You stick together. If something occurs on the street that you don’t think is proper, you go with the flow. And after that situation, if you have an issue with that officer or what happened, you can confront them. If you don’t feel comfortable working with them anymore, you can go to the watch commander and request a new partner. But you never break the code of silence.”

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he was trained and instructed at the Chicago Police Academy as alleged in this paragraph. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

80. This “code of silence” facilitated, encouraged, and enabled the individual officer

defendants to engage in egregious misconduct for many years, knowing that their fellow officers would cover for them and help conceal their widespread wrongdoing.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in misconduct and denies he experienced, participated in, or observed a “code of silence,” as he understands this phrase to mean. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

81. Consistent with this “code of silence,” the few people within the Chicago Police Department who stood up to Watts and his gang or who attempted to report their misconduct were either ignored or punished, and the Watts Gang was thereby able to engage in misconduct with impunity.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in misconduct and denies he experienced, participated in, or observed a “code of silence,” as he understands this phrase to mean. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

82. Watts and his gang are not the first Chicago police officers whom the City of Chicago allowed to abuse citizens with impunity while the City turned a blind eye.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he abused citizens or otherwise engaged in any misconduct. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

83. One example of this widespread practice is Chicago police officer Jerome Finnigan, who was convicted and sentenced on federal criminal charges in 2011. One of the charges against Finnigan involved his attempt to hire a hitman to kill a police officer whom Finnigan believed would be a witness against him.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

84. Finnigan was part of a group of officers in the Defendant City’s Special Operations Section who carried out robberies, home invasions, unlawful searches and seizures, and other crimes.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which

to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

85. Finnigan and his crew engaged in their misconduct at around the same time that plaintiff was subjected to the abuses described above.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in misconduct, including subjecting Plaintiff to any of the alleged abuses described above. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

86. Finnigan, like the defendants in this case, had been the subject of many formal complaints of misconduct.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

87. Finnigan revealed at his criminal sentencing hearing in 2011, “You know, my bosses knew what I was doing out there, and it went on and on. And this wasn’t the exception to the rule. This was the rule.”

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

88. Defendants Watts and Mohammed were criminally charged in federal court in February 2012 after shaking down a federal informant they believed was a drug dealer.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren admits Watts and Mohammed were criminally charged in 2012. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

89. Defendant Mohammed pleaded guilty in 2012.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren, on information and belief, admits that Mohammed pled guilty to a single count of theft of government funds while he was off-duty. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

90. Defendant Watts pleaded guilty in 2013.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren, on information and belief, admits that Watts pled guilty to a single count of theft of government funds while he was off-duty. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

91. In the case of *Obrycka v. City of Chicago et al.*, No. 07-cv-2372 (N.D. Ill.), a federal jury found that as of February 2007, “the City [of Chicago] had a widespread custom and/or practice of failing to investigate and/or discipline its officers and/or code of silence.”

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in this paragraph.

92. In December 2015, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel acknowledged the continued existence of the code of silence within the Chicago Police Department; Emanuel, speaking in his capacity as Mayor, admitted that the code of silence leads to a culture where extreme acts of abuse are tolerated.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he engaged in misconduct or any acts of abuse against others and denies he experienced, participated in, or observed a “code of silence,” as he understands this phrase to mean. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

93. In April 2016, the City’s Police Accountability Task Force found that the code of silence “is institutionalized and reinforced by CPD rules and policies that are also baked into the labor agreements between the various police unions and the City.”

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he experienced, participated in, or observed a “code of silence,” as he understands this phrase to mean. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

94. In an official government report issued in January 2017, the United States Department of Justice found that “a code of silence exists, and officers and community members know it.”

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he experienced, participated in, or observed a “code of silence,” as he understands this phrase to mean. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

95. The same code of silence in place during the time period at issue in the *Obrycka* case and recognized by the Mayor, the Task Force, and the Department of Justice was also in place when plaintiff suffered the wrongful arrests, detentions, and prosecutions described above.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he experienced, participated in, or observed a “code of silence,” as he understands this phrase to mean, and denies he engaged in misconduct, including subjecting Plaintiff to any wrongful arrest, detention or prosecution. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

96. As a direct and proximate result of the City’s code of silence, Watts and his gang continued to engage in robbery and extortion, use excessive force, plant evidence, fabricate evidence, and manufacture false charges against persons at the Ida B. Wells Homes, including but not limited to the wrongful arrests, detentions, and prosecutions of plaintiff, as described above.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he experienced, participated in, or observed a “code of silence” as he understands that term, denies he engaged in any misconduct, including using excessive force, planting evidence, fabricating evidence, manufacturing false charges against persons at the Ida B. Wells Homes, and denies he wrongfully arrested, detained, or prosecuted Plaintiff. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

X. Claims

97. As a result of the foregoing, all of the defendants caused plaintiff to be deprived of rights secured by the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he caused Plaintiff to be deprived of rights secured by the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient

knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

98. As a supplemental state law claim against defendant City of Chicago only: as a result of the foregoing, plaintiff was subjected to four malicious prosecutions under Illinois law.

ANSWER: Defendant Spaargaren denies he subjected Plaintiff to four malicious prosecutions. Defendant Spaargaren lacks sufficient knowledge or information upon which to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in this paragraph.

AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES

Defendant Spaargaren, without prejudice to his denials and all other statements in his answer and elsewhere, and without assuming the burden of proof as to matters that may not be affirmative defenses, states:

1. Defendant Spaargaren is entitled to qualified immunity because it was not clearly established that the alleged conduct violated Plaintiff's constitutional rights. At all relevant times, a reasonable officer objectively viewing the facts and circumstances then confronting Defendant Spaargaren, could have believed his actions regarding his encounter with Plaintiff to be lawful, in light of clearly established law and the information he possessed.

2. Defendant Spaargaren cannot be held liable for Plaintiff's 42 U.S.C. § 1983 claims unless he individually caused or participated in an alleged constitutional deprivation because individual liability for damages under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 is predicated upon personal responsibility. *See Wolf-Lillie v. Sonquist*, 699 F.2d 864, 869 (7th Cir. 1983).

3. Defendant Spaargaren is absolutely immune for any testimony he may have given in plaintiff's underlying criminal case. *See Briscoe v. LaHue*, 460 U.S. 325 (1983); *Jurgensen v. Haslinger*, 295 Ill. App. 3d 139, 141-42, 692 N.E.2d 347, 349-50 (3d Dist. 1998).

4. Defendant Spaargaren is not liable for the claims alleged under state law because a public employee is not liable for his or her acts or omissions in the execution or enforcement of any law unless such acts or omissions constitute willful and wanton conduct. 745 ILCS 10/2-202.

5. Under the Illinois Tort Immunity Act, Spaargaren is not liable under state law for any injury caused by the act or omission of another person. 745 ILCS 10/2-204.

6. Plaintiff's claims are barred by the applicable statutes of limitations.

7. Plaintiff's claims are barred by the doctrines of *res judicata* and collateral estoppel.

8. To the extent Plaintiff failed to mitigate any of his claimed injuries or damages, including by his voluntary guilty plea, any verdict or judgment obtained by Plaintiff must be reduced by application of the principle a Plaintiff has a duty to mitigate his or her damages.

9. Plaintiff's Complaint fails to state cognizable claims for relief that are plausible on its face.

(a) Plaintiff fails to state a fabricated evidence-based due process claim because the allegedly fabricated evidence was not introduced against him at trial and did not cause his convictions;

(b) Even if otherwise actionable, Plaintiff's guilty plea defeats his fabricated evidence based-due process claim;

(c) To the extent Plaintiff alleges a *Brady*-based due process claim, such claim fails because his allegations establish that no evidence subject to *Brady* was suppressed;

(d) To the extent Plaintiff asserts Fourteenth Amendment due process claims based on any pre-trial deprivation of liberty or attempts a federal malicious prosecution claim, those claims are not actionable as a matter of law;

- (e) To the extent Plaintiff alleges a failure to intervene, such a claim has no basis in the Constitution, and the “Supreme Court has held many times that § 1983 supports only direct, and not vicarious, liability.” *Mwangangi v. Nielsen*, 48 F.4th 816, 834-35 (7th Cir. 2022) (Easterbrook, J. concurring).
- (f) Any derivative failure to intervene or conspiracy claims are not actionable;
- (g) Plaintiff’s Fourth Amendment claim for detention without probable cause is time-barred.

JURY DEMAND

Defendant Spaargaren requests a trial by jury.

Dated: September 20, 2024

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Spaargaren

/s/ James V. Daffada
James V. Daffada
One of his Attorneys

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