1 2 3 4 5 6 7	JOHN L. BURRIS, Esq. State Bar #69888 BENJAMIN NISENBAUM, Esq. /State Bar #222 LAW OFFICES OF JOHN L. BURRIS Airport Corporate Centre 7677 Oak port Street, Suite 1120 Oakland, California 94621 Telephone: (510) 839-5200 Facsimile: (510) 839-3882 Attorneys for Plaintiff HUNG LAM									
8	UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT									
9	FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA									
10										
11	HUNG LAM, individually, through his next	Case No.								
12	friend, KATHY LAM,	COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES FOR								
13	Plaintiff,	VIOLATION OF CIVIL RIGHTS. JURY TRIAL DEMANDED								
14	vs.									
15	CITY OF SAN JOSE, a municipal corporation;									
16	LARRY ESQUIVEL, in his capacity as Chief of Police for the CITY OF SAN JOSE; Officer									
17	DONDI WEST, individually and in her official position as a San Jose Police officer, and DOES									
18	1-25, inclusive,									
19	Defendants.									
20										
21	INTROL	DUCTION								
22										
23	1. This case arises from the unlawful shooting of HUNG LAM, a 36 year old Vietnamese									
24	national lawfully residing in the United States, by San Jose Police Department Officer DONDI									
25	WEST in the City of San Jose . At the time of the shooting, Mr. LAM was outside in the front of his									
26	residence in San Jose. Mr. LAM was suicidal, and he was holding his cell phone and a knife in his									
27	hands and was otherwise isolated in the front of hi	is residence in San Jose. He pressed the knife into								
28	The same was outer wise isolated in the Holl of the	as resistance in sum vosc. He prossed the kine into								

his abdomen, threatening only to hurt himself. Mr. LAM was no threat to anyone, except potentially himself. Minutes before the shooting, Mr. LAM was speaking with a neighbor who was seeking to calm him down and who did not feel threatened by Mr. LAM, when Officer DONDI WEST inexplicably shot Mr. LAM in the back causing Mr. LAM's form of paraplegia. Mr. LAM who was once a vibrant dancer has been rendered a permanent disabled paraplegic.

## **JURISDICTION**

2. This action arises under Title 42 of the United States Code, Section 1983. Title 28 of the United States Code, Sections 1331 and 1343 confers jurisdiction upon this Court. The unlawful acts and practices alleged herein occurred in the City of San Jose, California, which is within this judicial district.

#### **PARTIES**

- 3. Plaintiff herein mentioned, HUNG LAM, was at all times and remains a legal resident of the United States residing in the City of San Jose. He has been rendered a paraplegic by the instant shooting.
- 4. Defendant CITY OF SAN JOSE ("CITY") is a municipal corporation, duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of California. The City operates under its authority the SAN JOSE Police Department.
- 5. Defendant LARRY ESQUIVEL ("ESQUIVEL") was at all times mentioned herein was the police chief of the City of San Jose. He is being sued in his official capacity as Chief of Police.
- 6. Defendant DONDI WEST ("WEST") was at all times mentioned herein a police officer with the City of San Jose. She is being sued in both her individual and official capacity.
- 7. Plaintiff is ignorant of the true names and capacities of Defendants DOES 1 through 25, inclusive, and therefore sues these defendants by such fictitious names. Plaintiff is informed and

believes and thereon alleges that each Defendant so named is responsible in some manner for the injuries and damages sustained by Plaintiff as set forth herein. Plaintiff will amend his complaint to state the names and capacities of DOES 1-25, inclusive, when they have been ascertained.

- 8. Plaintiffs have requested documents and records pertaining to the subject-incident from Defendant CITY, pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. Defendant CITY has not provided any of the requested information.
- 9. In engaging in the conduct described herein, Defendants acted under the color of law and in the course and scope of their employment with the City of San Jose. In engaging in the conduct described herein, Defendant police officers exceeded the authority vested in them as police officers under the United States and California Constitutions and as police officers employed by Defendant City of San Jose.
- 10. For State law causes of action related to Federal claims, Plaintiff is required to comply with an administrative claim requirement under California law. Plaintiff has filed the required administrative claim with Defendant City of San Jose, in compliance with California law requirements. Plaintiff incorporates state law causes of action into this Complaint.

## STATEMENT OF FACTS

11. On January 3, 2014, a call was placed to the San Jose Police Department reporting that a person was having a mental breakdown at a residence on Cape Horn Drive in San Jose. The call pertained to Plaintiff HUNG LAM, who was suicidal and in possession of a knife that he was threatening to use against himself. Mr. LAM had not threatened anyone, and the caller reported to police only that Mr. LAM could hurt himself. There was no indication that anyone other than Mr. LAM was in danger.

12. Shortly thereafter, Defendant San Jose Police officer, DONDI WEST arrived on the scene in front of Mr. LAM's residence. Mr. LAM's next-door neighbors, who are a retired married couple, observed all events as they occurred. One of the neighboring retired married couple witnesses, the wife, is a retired deputy sheriff, trained in the use of force and in responding to subjects who may be suicidal. Plaintiff alleges that all peace officers in the State of California, and nationwide, are required to be trained in the use of force and in responding to potentially suicidal subjects to minimize the risk of harm to the suicidal subject.

- 13. Mr. LAM had a kitchen knife in his hand and was threatening to hurt himself. He had a cellular phone in his other hand and he was talking with the female neighbor who was seeking to calm him down. When Defendant officer WEST arrived on-scene, she knew she was responding to a potentially suicidal subject in Mr. LAM and that "best practices" training dictates that an officer is suppose to attempt to "de-escalate" the situation.
- 14. Immediately, Defendant officer WEST escalated the situation by running toward Mr. LAM shouting commands, such as drop the knife and get on the ground at Mr. LAM who was still talking with the female neighbor and not facing the officer.
- 15. Defendant officer WEST without speaking with the witness continued running toward Mr. LAM yelling and screaming. Defendant officer WEST knew or should have known that her conduct of yelling and screaming at a potentially suicidal person was contrary to the "best practices" because training dictates that an officer is suppose to "de-escalate" not "escalate" the situation by their conduct.
- 16. Mr. LAM was not threatening to anyone but himself yet Defendant Officer West charged him when she was within 10 to 15 feet and Mr. LAM's back was to her. Defendant Officer West discharged her weapon twice hitting Mr. LAM once in the lower back, once in the back. Mr. LAM

did not approach the officer nor did he seek to run. In fact, when his back was to the officer, he dropped his phone and pointed the knife at his own stomach. This is when Defendant Officer WEST discharged her weapon. Another San Jose Police officer arrived on the scene but that officer did not discharge his weapon. Mr. LAM never threatened any officer or neighbor physically or verbally.

- 17. Paramedics arrived on the scene and transported Mr. LAM to Regional Medical Center in San Jose. Mr. LAM's life was saved by the ensuing surgery, which repaired some of the damage caused by the gunshot wounds to his back. The bullet struck Mr. LAM's aorta, lungs, and kidney. The gunshot wounds also caused paraplegia, the permanent loss of mobility in Mr. LAM's legs.
- 18. Even though no reasonable officer would have perceived Mr. LAM as posing a threat to anyone other than himself, Mr. LAM was unconscionably, maliciously criminally charged with assaulting an officer. That patently false criminal charge was subsequently dismissed as of this filing.
- 19. As a result of the shooting, Mr. LAM is a paraplegic, unable to work, and any psychiatric, mental or psychological condition, or state of mind leading to acting out in a suicidal manner has been extraordinarily aggravated by the wrongful conduct of Defendant Officer WEST.
- 20. Plaintiff alleges on information and belief that defendant Officer WEST is responsible for creating any circumstance that, regardless of how flawed her reasoning was, in her own mind may have wrongfully justified shooting Mr. LAM. She was never in danger, acted inconsistently with being in danger prior to shooting Mr. LAM, and witnesses confirm that she provoked and caused the shooting, not Mr. LAM. To that end, Defendant Officer WEST's conduct exhibited fundamental and Unconstitutional training by Defendant CITY and ESQUIVEL in the use of force and responding to suicidal subjects, and/or Unconstitutional policies by Defendant CITY and ESQUIVEL in the use of force and responding to suicidal subjects.

## **DAMAGES**

- 21. The shooting of Plaintiff HUNG LAM described herein was brutal, malicious, and done without any just provocation or cause, proximately causing Plaintiff's injuries and resulting damages.
- 22. As a proximate result of defendants' conduct, plaintiff HUNG LAM suffered pain and physical injuries, including paralysis, nerve damage, paraplegia, and soft tissue injuries. Plaintiff HUNG LAM suffered and continues to suffer lost wages and aggravation of pre-existing suicidal conditions. As a further proximate result of defendants' conduct, plaintiff suffered severe and extreme emotional distress, fear, terror, anxiety, humiliation, and loss of his sense of security, dignity, and pride. Plaintiff was further damaged by having criminal charges maliciously filed against him, and having to defend those malicious criminal charges until they were dismissed.
- 23. Plaintiff HUNG LAM was assaulted, battered, and shot without any just provocation or cause, by Defendant Officer WEST. Plaintiff HUNG LAM's physical injuries include, but are not limited to the following: Paraplegia from the waist down, rendered unable to work, aggravation of pre-existing suicidal conditions, and was mentally and emotionally injured and damaged as a proximate result of this incident.
- 24. Plaintiff HUNG LAM will require in-home visits from a nurse, and daily physical therapy to achieve as much physical recovery as possible from the debilitating injuries.
- 25. The conduct of Defendant Officer WEST was malicious, wanton, and oppressive. Plaintiff are therefore entitled to an award of punitive damages against Defendant Officer WEST.
- 26. Plaintiff found it necessary to engage the services of private counsel to vindicate his rights under the law. Plaintiff is therefore entitled to an award of all attorneys' fees incurred in relation to this action for violation of his civil rights.

## **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

(42 U.S.C. Section 1983) (Against Defendants **WEST**, and DOES 1-10)

- 27. Plaintiff hereby re-alleges and incorporates by reference herein paragraphs 1 through 26 of this Complaint.
- 28. In doing the acts complained of herein, Defendant WEST and DOES 1 through 10, inclusive, and/or each of them, acted under color of law to deprive Plaintiff of certain constitutionally protected rights, including, but not limited to:
  - a. The right to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures, as guaranteed by the
     Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution;
  - b. The right to be free from malicious prosecution by police officers, as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for relief as hereinafter set forth.

## SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

(42 U.S.C. section 1983)

(Against Defendants CITY, ESQUIVEL and DOES 11-25)

- 29. Plaintiff hereby re-alleges and incorporates by reference herein paragraphs 1 through 28 of this Complaint.
- 30. Plaintiff alleges that high ranking City of San Jose officials, including high ranking police supervisors, such as Defendant LARRY ESQUIVEL, DOES 11 through 25, and/or each of them, knew and/or reasonably should have known, that Defendant Officer WEST, and other SAN JOSE Police Department officers, were untrained in, or trained below the standard of care, in the use of force and responding to subjects who appear suicidal, act in a suicidal manner, and/or who manifest

symptoms of suicidality, all in violation of Plaintiffs rights under the 4<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the United States Constitution.

31. Said rights are substantive guarantees under the Fourth and/or Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for relief as hereinafter set forth.

## **FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

(Assault and Battery)
(Against Defendants **WEST**, and DOES 1-10)

- 32. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference herein paragraphs 1 through 31 of this Complaint.
- 33. Defendants WEST, and DOES 1-10, inclusive, placed Plaintiff in immediate fear of death and severe bodily harm by shooting, attacking and battering him without any just provocation or cause.
  - 34. These defendants' conduct was neither privileged nor justified under statute or common law.
- 35. As a proximate result of defendants' conduct, Plaintiff suffered damages as hereinafter set forth.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for relief as hereinafter set forth.

#### FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION

(Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress) (Against Defendants **WEST**, amd DOES 1-10)

- 36. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference herein paragraphs 1 through 35 of this Complaint.
- 37. The conduct of Defendants WEST, and DOES 1 through 10, inclusive, as set forth herein, was extreme and outrageous and beyond the scope of conduct which should be tolerated by citizens in a democratic and civilized society. Defendants committed these extreme and outrageous acts with the

12 13

14 15

16

17 18

19

20

21 22

23

24

25 26

27 28 intent to inflict severe mental and emotional distress upon Plaintiff.

38. As a proximate result of Defendants' willful, intentional and malicious conduct, plaintiff HUNG LAM suffered severe and extreme mental and emotional distress. Therefore, Plaintiff is entitled to an award of punitive damages as against said defendants. Plaintiff has suffered damages as hereinafter set forth.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for relief as hereinafter set forth.

#### SIXTH CAUSE OF ACTION

(Violation of Civil Code Section 52.1) (Against Defendants **WEST**, and DOES 1-10)

- 39. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference herein paragraphs 1 through 38 of this Complaint.
- 40. The conduct of Defendants WEST, and DOES 1 through 10, inclusive, as described herein, acting in the course and scope of their employment for Defendant CITY, violated California Civil Code Section 52.1, in that they interfered with Plaintiff HUNG LAM's exercise and enjoyment of his civil rights, through use of wrongful and excessive force, and failure to make any proper or reasonable arrest of said Plaintiff.
- 41. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants' violation of Civil Code Section 52.1, Plaintiff suffered violation of his constitutional rights, and suffered damages as set forth herein.
- 42. Since this conduct occurred in the course and scope of their employment, Defendant CITY is therefore liable to Plaintiff pursuant to respondeat superior.
- 43. Plaintiff is entitled to injunctive relief and an award of his reasonable attorney's fees pursuant to Civil Code Section 52.1(h).

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for relief, as hereinafter set forth.

///

///

///

## **SEVENTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

(Negligence)
(Against Defendants **WEST**, DOES 1-10)

- 44. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference herein paragraphs 1 through 43 of this complaint, except for any and all allegations of intentional, malicious, extreme, outrageous, wanton, and oppressive conduct by defendants, and any and all allegations requesting punitive damages.
- 45. At all times herein mentioned, Defendants WEST, and DOES 1 through 10, inclusive, were subject to a duty of care to avoid causing unnecessary physical harm and distress to persons through their use of force and making of arrests. The wrongful conduct of Defendants, as set forth herein, did not comply with the standard of care to be exercised by reasonable persons, proximately causing plaintiff to suffer injuries and damages as set forth herein. Pursuant to Government Code Section 815.2(a), Defendant CITY is vicariously liable to Plaintiff for his injuries and damages suffered as alleged herein, incurred as a proximate result of the aforementioned wrongful conduct of Defendants.
- 46. As a proximate result of Defendants' negligent conduct, Plaintiff suffered severe physical injury, severe emotional and mental distress, injury having a traumatic effect on Plaintiff's emotional tranquility, and suffered damages.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for relief as hereinafter set forth.

## **JURY DEMAND**

47. Plaintiff hereby demands a jury trial in this action.

**PRAYER** 1 2 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for relief, as follows: 3 1. For general damages in a sum according to proof; 4 2. For special damages in a sum according to proof; 5 3. For punitive damages in a sum according to proof; 6 7 4. For injunctive relief enjoining Defendant CITY OF SAN JOSE from authorizing, 8 allowing, or ratifying the practice by any peace officer employee of Defendant CITY 9 from using excessive and unreasonable force against persons, pursuant to California 10 Civil Code Section 52.1; Additionally, enacted polices regarding the handling of 11 mentally impaired persons with corresponding training on such polices. 12 13 For violation of California Civil Code Sections 52 and 52.1, statutory damages, and 5. 14 reasonable attorney's fees; 15 6. For violation of California Civil Code Section 52(b), punitive damages against 16 Defendant police officers, \$25,000.00 for each offense and reasonable attorney's fees; 17 7. For reasonable attorney's fees pursuant to 42 U.S.C. Section 1988; 18 19 8. For cost of suit herein incurred; and 20 9. For such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper. 21 22 Dated: February 24, 2014 THE LAW OFFICES OF JOHN L. BURRIS 23 24 /s/ John L. Burris JOHN L. BURRIS, Esq. 25 BENJAMIN NISENBAUM, Esq. Attorneys for Plaintiff 26 **HUNG LAM** 27 28

JS 44 (Rev. 12/12) Cand rev (1/15/13)

# Case 5:14-cv-00877 PSGL Pool Page 1 of 1

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as

purpose of initiating the civil do	cket sheet. (SEE INSTRUC!	TIONS ON NEXT PAG	E OF THIS	S FORM.)	9/4, is required for	me use of the C	JIEIR OI COUIT	101 1110	,			
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS				DEFENDANTS								
HUNG LAM, i KATHY LAM	individually, throu	gh his next fr	iend	CITY OF SAN JOSE, et al.								
(b) County of Residence of	of First Listed Plaintiff Sa	anta Clara		County of Residence	of First Listed Defer	ndant						
· ·	CEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CA			(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)								
				NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.								
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, A	Address, and Telephone Numbe	r)		Attorneys (If Known)								
John L. Burris, Esq., Law Offices of John L. Burris 7677 Oakport St, Ste 1120, Oakland, CA 94621 (510) 839-5200												
II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)  III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff												
☐ 1 U.S. Government	3 Federal Question		(For Diversity Cases Only) and One Box for Defendant)  PTF DEF PTF DEF									
Plaintiff	(U.S. Government Not a Party)		(	Citizen of This State								
U.S. Government Defendant				Citizen of Another State 2 2 Incorporated and Principal Place of Business In Another State 5 5								
Citizen or Subject of a 3 3 Foreign Nation 6 6 Foreign Country												
IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only)  CONTRACT TORTS FORFEITURE/PENALTY BANKRUPTCY OTHER STATUTES												
☐ 110 Insurance	PERSONAL INJURY	PERSONAL INJ		☐ 625 Drug Related Seizure	422 Appeal 28 US		375 False Claim					
☐ 120 Marine ☐ 130 Miller Act	☐ 310 Airplane ☐ 315 Airplane Product	☐ 365 Personal Injur Product Liab		of Property 21 USC 881 ☐ 690 Other	423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157	1 ===	400 State Reapp 410 Antitrust	ortionn	nent			
140 Negotiable Instrument	Liability	☐ 367 Health Care/					430 Banks and I	Banking	š			
150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment	320 Assault, Libel & Slander	Pharmaceutic Personal Injur			PROPERTY RIC		450 Commerce 460 Deportation	ı				
☐ 151 Medicare Act ☐ 152 Recovery of Defaulted	330 Federal Employers' Liability	Product Liability			830 Patent 840 Trademark		470 Racketeer In	nfluence				
Student Loans	340 Marine	☐ 368 Asbestos Pers Injury Produc			□ 840 Trademark	Corrupt Org 480 Consumer C		ons				
(Excludes Veterans)  ☐ 153 Recovery of Overpayment	345 Marine Product Liability	Liability PERSONAL PRO	PERTY [	LABOR  710 Fair Labor Standards	SOCIAL SECUR  861 HIA (1395ff)		490 Cable/Sat T		dities/			
of Veteran's Benefits	☐ 350 Motor Vehicle	370 Other Fraud		Act	862 Black Lung (923)		850 Securities/Commodities/ Exchange					
☐ 160 Stockholders' Suits ☐ 190 Other Contract	355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability	☐ 371 Truth in Lending ☐ 380 Other Personal	~ 1-	720 Labor/Management Relations	☐ 863 DIWC/DIWW ☐ 864 SSID Title XV	/I (405(g))	890 Other Statut 891 Agricultural	tory Aci l Acts	nons			
☐ 195 Contract Product Liability ☐ 196 Franchise	360 Other Personal Injury	Property Dam  385 Property Dam		☐ 740 Railway Labor Act ☐ 751 Family and Medical	□ 865 RSI (405(g))		893 Environmer 895 Freedom of					
	362 Personal Injury - Medical Malpractice	Product Liabi	lity	Leave Act			Act	***************************************				
REAL PROPERTY	CIVIL RIGHTS	PRISONER PETIT		☐ 790 Other Labor Litigation☐ 791 Employee Retirement	FEDERAL TAX		<ul><li>896 Arbitration</li><li>899 Administrat</li></ul>	ive Pro	cedure			
210 Land Condemnation	440 Other Civil Rights	Habeas Corpus:		Income Security Act	☐ 870 Taxes (U.S. Pl	aintiff	Act/Review	or App	eal of			
☐ 220 Foreclosure ☐ 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment	441 Voting 442 Employment				or Defendant) □ 871 IRS—Third Party		Agency Decision		c			
240 Torts to Land	443 Housing/	Sentence	acate		26 USC 7609	шту [	950 Constitution State Statute					
☐ 245 Tort Product Liability ☐ 290 All Other Real Property	Accommodations  445 Amer. w/Disabilities	530 General 535 Death Penalty	,	IMMIGRATION								
,	Employment	Other:	Ī	☐ 462 Naturalization Application								
	446 Amer, w/Disabilities Other	☐ 540 Mandamus & ☐ 550 Civil Rights	Other L	☐ 465 Other Immigration Actions								
	448 Education	☐ 555 Prison Condit☐ 560 Civil Detained										
		Conditions of Confinement										
V, ORIGIN (Place an "X" in		1.16										
↑ 1 Original												
	Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity):											
VI. CAUSE OF		(42 U.S.C. Section 1983)										
ACTION	Brief description of cause:											
VII. REQUESTED IN CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION DEMAND \$ Sum according to CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint:									t:			
COMPLAINT:	UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P.			proof  JURY DEMAND:   Yes □ No								
VIII. RELATED CASE(S)												
IF ANY (See instructions): JUDGE DOCKET NUMBER												
IX. DIVISIONAL ASS	IGNMENT (Civil L.)	R. 3-2)			······································							

(Place an "X" in One Box Only)

DATE February 26, 23/4 SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD Box Signature Of ATTORNEY OF RECORD

() EUREKA

() SAN JOSE