

## **BEATING VICTIMS SETTLE CIVIL RIGHTS SUIT TWO WILL DIVIDE \$740,000 AWARD IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY INCIDENT**

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### **Body**

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**Two** illegal immigrants **beaten** by **Riverside County** sheriff's deputies after a freeway chase **will** split a **\$740,000** settlement, lawyers said Friday.

Alicia Sotero Vasquez and Enrique Funes Flores **will** receive \$370,000 each. The payments **settle** a federal **civil rights** lawsuit filed against the **county** and the deputies on their behalf by several **civil rights** groups.

A state **suit** also **will** be dropped.

The **county** did not admit wrongdoing but the settlement "delivers an unmistakable message that in this country we do not enforce our immigration laws by means of hard batons and racial epithets," said Mark Rosenbaum, legal director of the American **Civil** Liberties Union of Southern California.

"I am pleased that this long ordeal is over, and I hope that no other individual -- citizen or non-citizen -- **will** ever have to endure the brutality and indignity that I suffered," Sotero said in a statement.

The **Riverside County** Sheriff's Department referred calls to John Porter, an attorney who handled the matter for the **county**. He did not immediately return a phone call seeking comment.

However, he told The Press-Enterprise of **Riverside** on Thursday that the settlement "in no way mandates any change in policy or procedure, and there was no promise that we would do it voluntarily."

The beatings occurred April 1, 1996, after sheriff's deputies and California Highway Patrol officers chased a pickup truck carrying 19 illegal immigrants from Temecula to South El Monte.

TV news helicopters videotaped a deputy shoving the woman face-first into the hood of the truck, then grabbing her by the hair and pulling her to the ground, where she was repeatedly clubbed.

The man also was clubbed.

Deputy Tracy Watson, who had been on the job for five years, was fired for his conduct after the pursuit. Deputy Kurt Franklin, a 20-year veteran, was suspended and reassigned.

CHP Officer Jim Byers was reprimanded for using racial epithets during the operation.

The driver of the truck fled but later was captured. Rigoberto Sosa-Padilla, 37, was found guilty of transporting illegal immigrants and in April was sentenced to 37 months in prison.

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Both **beating victims** said they want to return to Mexico, although they remain in Southern California in case they are needed as witnesses in a potential **civil rights** case, Rosenbaum said.

A federal grand jury convened in August to consider the case has called 200 witnesses to testify. But no indictments have been brought.

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