

**FORM 13  
APPELLANT'S INITIAL BRIEF**

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
In The Court of Appeals

APPEAL FROM SPARTANBURG COUNTY  
Court of Common Pleas

R. Keith Kelly, Judge

Appellate Case No.: 2017-001009

**RECEIVED**  
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SC Court of Appeals

Caitlyn Langham,

v.

Appellant,

Officer Russell Porter,  
City of Spartanburg Police Department, and WALMART, Inc.,

Respondents.

AND

Caitlyn Langham,

v.

Appellant,

WALMART, Inc.,

Respondent.

**APPELLANT'S INITIAL BRIEF**



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## STATEMENT OF ISSUES ON APPEAL

- I. **WHETHER THE TRIAL COURT ERRED IN GRANTING SUMMARY JUDGMENT IN FAVOR OF RESPONDENTS.**
- II. **WHETHER THE APPELLANT'S CAUSES OF ACTION WERE PRECLUDED BY STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS.**
- III. **WHETHER RESPONDENT CITY OF SPARTANBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT IS ENTITLED TO QUALIFIED IMMUNITY.**
- IV. **WHETHER RESPONDENTS ARE LIABLE FOR ASSAULT AND BATTERY, MALICIOUS PROSECUTION, AND VIOLATION OF 42 U.S.C. §1983.**

## STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On December 24, 2013, Appellant was shopping for some groceries at Dorman Center WARMART in Spartanburg, when she decided to get some personal items. She set all the merchandise in her cart, and went to the checkout line. Realizing that she did not bring enough money for all the items she picked, she placed the personal items on the rack beside the cashier where the lip gloss and chips were situated.

As Appellant was reaching the cashier, Respondent Officer Porter approached her from behind and grabbed her left arm. Since she had a birth control implant, she told Respondent Porter that he was hurting her. Respondent Porter, taking her action as a form of resistance, threw her on the ground, handcuffed her and took her into the office. While in the office, Appellant was subjected to a physical search. It was only then that Respondent Officer Porter explained to her that she was being accused of shoplifting, and presented to her the personal items (mascara, powder) which she had placed on the rack only moments before. The police, whom Respondent WARMART called to respond to the incident, arrived and took Appellant in Spartanburg County Jail, where she was booked and arraigned. She was eventually released. The shoplifting charges went to trial, where Appellant was found not guilty.

Appellant was accused, assaulted, forcefully arrested and detained against her will, and without warrant, by Respondent Officer Russel Porter. As a result of these wrongful acts, Appellant sustained physical injuries and mental. By reason of Respondent Porter's grossly negligent conduct, Appellant was deprived of her. Despite having no probable cause, Respondents pursued a criminal case against Appellant, which resulted in her acquittal by the Spartanburg Municipal Court on September 17, 2014.

On April 8, 2016, Appellant filed a Complaint against Respondents Officer Russel Porter, the City of Spartanburg, the Spartanburg Police Department and WALMART Stores Inc. alleging defamation, false arrest, false imprisonment; assault and battery, malicious prosecution and violation of 42 U.S.C. §1983.

On May 16, 2016, Respondent WALMART filed its Answer and moved to dismiss alleging that the Complaint is barred by statute of limitations and lack of cause of action.

On November 15, 2016, the trial court granted Respondent's Partial Motion to Dismiss on the causes of action for defamation, false imprisonment, and violation of § 1983, leaving the cause of action for assault and battery pending at the trial court.

On November 21, 2016, Appellant moved to reconsider the Order, dated November 15, 2016, which the court denied in its Order, dated March 22, 2017.

On December 8, 2016, Respondents Porter, City of Spartanburg and Spartanburg Police Department moved for summary judgment, which the court granted in its Order, dated March 23, 2017.

On April 18, 2017, Appellant appealed the Orders, dated March 22, 2017 and March 23, 2017.

On May 15, 2017, Respondent WALMART moved for Summary Judgment on the causes of action for assault and battery. The court granted summary judgment in favor of Respondent WALMART on July 14, 2017.

Appellant moved to reconsider the July 14, 2017 Order, which the Court denied in its Order, dated October 3, 2017. Appellant appealed the aforementioned Orders, which were the subject matter of Appellate Case No. 2017-002160.

Appellant moved to consolidate the two Appellate Cases on October 24, 2017, which this Honorable Court granted in its Order, dated November 29, 2017.

### **STANDARD OF REVIEW**

When reviewing a grant of summary judgment, an appellate court applies the same standard used by the trial court. *Lanham v. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of S.C., Inc.*, 349 S.C. 356, 361, 563 S.E.2d 331, 333 (2002); *David v. McLeod Regional Medical Center*, 367 S.C. 242, 247, 626 S.E.2d 1 2 (2006). Summary judgment is appropriate when there is no genuine issue as to any material fact, and the moving party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. Rule 56 (c ), SCRC. The appellate court must view the facts in the light most favorable to the non-moving party below. *Id.* If the slightest doubt exists as to whether there are genuine issues of material fact or whether the moving party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law, the summary judgment must be reversed.

Furthermore, determining the proper interpretation of a statute is a question of law, and this Court reviews questions of law de novo. *Catawba Indian Tribe v. State*, 372 S.C. 519, 524, 642 S.E.2d 751, 753 (2007).

## ARGUMENTS

### I.

#### THE TRIAL COURT ERRED IN GRANTING SUMMARY JUDGMENT IN FAVOR OF RESPONDENTS.

**A. No Probable or Reasonable Cause Exists for the Warrantless Arrest and the Illegal Search and Seizure of Appellant**

Respondents claimed that Appellant's causes of action are barred by the existence of probable cause.

South Carolina passed the Merchant's Defense Statute or S.C. Code Ann. §16-13-140, which became the standard of probable cause in shoplifting cases. In fact, Respondent WALMART relied on the same provision as its defense. The provision states:

*"In any action brought by reason of having been delayed by a merchant or merchant's employee or agent on or near the premises of a mercantile establishment for the purpose of investigation concerning the ownership of any merchandise, it shall be a defense to such if: (1) the person was delayed in a reasonable manner for a reasonable time to permit such investigation, and (2) reasonable cause existed to believe that the person delayed had committed the crime of shoplifting."*

Reasonable cause in §16-13-140 is akin or in fact the same as probable cause.

Probable cause for a warrantless arrest exists when the circumstances within the arresting officer's knowledge are sufficient to lead a reasonable person to believe that a crime had been committed by the person being arrested. *Jones v. City of Columbia*, 301 S.C. 62, 65, 389 S.E.2d.662, 663 (1990). In determining probable cause, only those facts and circumstances that were or should have been known to the Respondent at the time the Appellant was stopped should be considered.

Probable cause involves the existence of such facts or circumstances as would excite the belief of a reasonable mind—acting on facts known to him—that the person arrested had

committed the crime of shoplifting. To establish probable cause, we must look at Respondent WALMART's existing policy in addressing shoplifting incidents.

Ronnee Miller, an Assistant Manager at Respondent WALMART on the day of the alleged incident, discussed the company policy on shoplifting. In her deposition, Ronnee explained that Respondent WALMART has an existing procedure to abide by in cases of shoplifting incident namely: (1) selection, (2) concealment, (3) continued possession, and (4) last point of entry.

*Q: Can you tell me what the procedure for WALMART is when you have an alleged shoplifting?*

*A: As an AP associate, you have to have the--the four elements. Once you get all four elements and they pass the last point of sale, which is them going out the door, you then approach and take them into the office. From there you collect the items, obtain the receipt. And then from there, if police need to be contacted, we you get them involved. If not, we take our information, key it in the system and go from there.*

*Q: All right. Well, I'm not going to lie to you a bit. I didn't get a single thing of that, so if we could go slowly for me.*

*A: Okay.*

*Q: The four elements, what are the four elements?*

*A: You have to get selection.*

*Q: Selection meaning?*

*A: Them picking up the items.*

*Q: Yes, ma'am.*

*A: Concealing it.*

*Q: And that means that they've concealed it in some way?*

*A: Uh-huh.*

*Q: And what does "concealed" mean to you?*

*A: To me would be placing it in your pocket, placing it in your purse, putting the item on. If it's a hat, taking the tag off and placing the item on head, on your head. That would be concealing it.*

*Q: And the third?*

*A: Continued possession.*

*Q: And that would mean what specifically?*

*A: As you're watching them, they -- like if they're shopping now, after they already got the item, do they still have it on them; that you're just verifying that they didn't take it out of their purse or put the item down.*

*Q: So it's maintaining it in the area that it's been concealed in?*

*A: Uh-huh.*

*Q: Is that "yes"?*

A: Yes, sir.  
Q: Thank you. And the fourth element?  
A: Last point of sale  
Q: All right. And that means what?  
  
A: Walking out the front door, passing all registers.  
Q: So once that occurs --  
A: Uh-huh.  
Q: -- is that when you approach the individual?  
A: Yes, sir.  
Q: And passing all registers, meaning, the last opportunity to pay for it?  
A: Yes, sir.  
Q: Do you let them get out of the building, or is it just past the register?  
A: Past the register.  
Q: Take me from that, that point, please.  
A: From that point, we then do the approach, identify ourselves. I'll ask them to come into the -- the substation."

(Ronnee Miller Dep., 11-13, January 18, 2017).

Miller testified she cannot recall having seen the Appellant select or pick out an item, conceal, nor carry it out of the store nor pass the check our counter or cashier. (Miller Dep., 38: 22-25; 39: 1-6, *Id.*). It should be noted that Miller had the wealth of camera angles, and the related video recordings, at her disposal. Miller testified that there were fifty (50) cameras within the store.

Respondent Porter did not personally observe Appellant approach any merchandise, select nor conceal the same. In fact, he testified in a prior criminal case that he accosted Appellant upon the prodding of a WALMART employee, who allegedly saw her carrying personal items suspiciously. (Russell Porter Trial Tr., 19:11-25; 20:1-8). Respondent Porter did not personally witness Appellant intentionally attempt to leave the building without paying for the items, as in fact he arrested her while she was in line to pay for the items she had chosen. The following responses s by Respondent Porter are revealing:

"Q: Well, where did you—where did you see her take something?

- A: **I didn't see her take anything. The things were in her bag. I don't have to see her take anything?**
- Q: You—you go grab people and start going through their purse with—
- A: No. As soon as I walked up to her I looked into her bag, and the items were in her bag.
- Q: And you knew that was stolen because why?
- A: Because she immediately tried to—tried to leave. She tried to turn and walk away from me." (Emphasis supplied)

(Porter, Trial Testimony. 14: 1-9, September 17, 2014)

- Q: The bottom line is you did not see her put anything in that purse, did you?
- A: **I don't have to see her put it in. That's not—that's not a part of the statute I have to see her put it in. She needs (ph) possession of it. I don't have to see her put it in.**
- Q: **She hadn't gotten through the line, had she?**
- A: **No, she had not.**
- Q: **Okay. So, you're essentially assuming that she wasn't going to pay for something?**
- A: **By her actions she did not intend to pay, and she didn't have the money. She didn't have the \$74.16 in her purse when we checked her.**
- Q: And that's why she took—she took stuff from her cart and put it to the side—“ (Emphasis supplied)

(Porter Trial Testimony. 15: 17-25; 16:1-6).

- Q: So we don't—we don't have any video?
- A: No.
- Q: We don't have the alleged witnesses?
- A: No witnesses.
- Q: Well, people—
- A: (Inaudible) witness?
- Q: --that actually saw what happened. Right? That's how you learned of it. Right?
- A: Saw?
- Q: I mean you don't just go up to people and attack them and say, You stole this. Right?
- A: No, huh-uh.
- Q: **Okay. Well, there were people that gave you that hint. Right?**
- A: **Right.**
- Q: Where are they?
- A: I don't know.
- Q: Do you have anybody here from WALMART to say that you can't – the video was not good, you couldn't see it, or you just didn't get it? Right?
- A: There was no video, sir. I went in the LP office, asked the LP guy. Is this area covered? No this area is not covered. There's nothing— (Emphasis supplied).

(Porter Trial Testimony, 19:11-25; 20: 1-8).

The unlawful arrest and subsequent detention by Appellant was based on a suspicion of an alleged eyewitness, a Kelyn Eber, who was conveniently missing or was no longer in its employ. Respondent WALMART had a chance to substantiate its shoplifting charges by submitting the surveillance video on the day of the incident, but it has consistently denied its existence. This is in contradiction to Ronnee's testimony that the store has fifty (50) cameras inside. (Ronnee Miller Depo., 16: 7-12). Ms. Langham allegedly took the items out of her purse in the checkout line. The thought that there was no surveillance near the register is patently absurd.

Respondent WALMART had an obligation to preserve the video since they had arrested the Appellant. It did not present a single video because it would have negated the claim of shoplifting. More importantly, the video of the register would have shown Respondent Porter's violent manhandling of Appellant.

Respondent Porter, as a member of Respondent Spartanburg Police Department, is covered by S.C. Code Ann. § 17-13-30. This provision empowers an officer to arrest a person without a warrant for any crime committed in his view, which the courts have extended to include crimes freshly committed. *State v. Martin*, 268 S.E.2d 105 (1980), *State v. Clark*, 287 S.E.2d 143 (1981). In this case, Respondent Porter admittedly did not personally witness Appellant select, conceal, continuously possess or pass the last point of entry. As such, Porter illegally arrested Appellant.

“The party seeking summary judgment has the burden of clearly establishing the absence of a genuine issue of material fact.” *McNair v. Rainsford*, 330 S.C. 332, 342, 499 S.E.2d 488, 493 (Ct. App. 1998) (citing *Baughman v. Am. Tel. & Tel. Co.*, 306 S.C. 101, 410 S.E.2d 537

(1991); Standard Fire Ins. Co. v. Marine Contracting & Towing Co., 301 S.C. 418, 392 S.E.2d 460 (1990)). “In determining whether any triable issues of fact exist, the evidence and all inferences which can be reasonably drawn therefrom must be viewed in the light most favorable to the nonmoving party.” Lanham v. Blue Cross & Blue Shield of South Carolina, Inc., 349 S.C. 356, 361-62, 563 S.E.2d 331, 333 (2002) (citing Summer v. Carpenter, 328 S.C. 36, 492 S.E.2d 55 (1997)); Strother v. Lexington County Recreation Commission, 332 S.C. 54, 61, 504 S.E.2d 117, 121 (1998).

In determining probable cause, only those facts and circumstances that were or should have been known to the Respondent at the time the Appellant was stopped should be considered. The determination of whether probable cause exists is ordinarily a jury question; however, it may be decided as a matter of law, when the evidence yields but one conclusion. Law v. S.C. Department of Corrections, 368 S.C. at 441, 629 S.E.2d at 651(2006), as cited in Lynch v. Toys ‘R Us-Delaware, 375 S.C. 604 (2007). In this case, the evidence yields further investigation, especially considering Respondent Officer Russell’s false statement in the Incident Report, claiming to have personally seen Appellant hide some items in her bag. This was belied by his own words in his trial testimony. In fact, a directed verdict would have been apropos given the fact that Respondent Porter did not meet one element out of the four enumerated by Respondent WALMART.

Jurisprudence has long established that even when there is no dispute as to evidentiary facts, but only as to the conclusions or inferences to be drawn from them, summary judgment should be denied. Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment v. South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, et al., 337 S.C. 476, 523 S.E.2d 795 (1999). Had this case

reached the jury, a different conclusion may have been reached as to the existence of probable cause for Appellant's unlawful arrest, assault and battery and subsequent illegal detention.

**B. The Reasonableness of Manner by Which Appellant Was Delayed by Respondent Porter and Respondent Walmart Is An Issue Of Material Fact.**

Respondent WALMART alleged that it has "acted reasonably and in good faith in in the exercise of their legal rights and at no time breached any duty. In essence, Respondent WALMART raised the doctrine of Merchant's Defense under S.C. Code Ann. § 16-13-140.

Under the Merchant's Defense, while Respondent WALMART had the right to stop and delay their customers, such should be done in a reasonable manner and within a reasonable time. Reasonable manner and within reasonable time should be determined by company policies on shoplifting.

It is Appellant's contention that there is nothing reasonable in the manner by which Respondent Officer Porter, delayed and subsequently arrested Appellant, forcefully slammed her on the floor, and illegally searched her purse.

Respondent Porter violated Respondent WALMART's policy on shoplifting. Without observing or witnessing Appellant select an item, conceal or continuously carry the same without paying for it, and walk past the cashier or exit the store, Porter approached her from behind, while she was queueing at the cashier, and arrested her. Respondent Porter had no reason to believe that Appellant had intent to conceal and carry the alleged stolen items since he did not personally see her hide or place any item in her purse. Neither did he have any reason to believe that Appellant had no intention of paying for the merchandise since Appellant was still within Respondent WALMART's premises, and was in the line to pay, and has in fact paid, for the items she had on her cart. (Porter, Trial Testimony, 8:2-25; Langham Deposition, 19-20; 21:2-

25). In short, Respondent Porter stopped the Appellant before she had a chance to pass the check out counter or the cashier that would show intent to take the items without paying for them.

The manner by which Respondent Porter arrested, detained and subsequently searched Appellant was unlawful and illegal. Respondent Porter applied excessive force by slamming Appellant on the floor, which resulted in bruises and injuries on her person. Appellant was never informed of her alleged violation until she was inside the office, and was being searched for other items. Nothing was found on her person, but Respondent Porter presented her with lipstick, powder and other personal items, that she allegedly shoplifted.

Furthermore, there is a genuine issue of material fact as to the appropriateness of Respondent Porter's action in arresting, detaining, and manhandling Appellant. In her deposition, Ronnee stated that police officers are hired by Respondent WALMART to provide security.

*Q: What procedures are law enforcement agents to follow when they're looking for you?*

*Ms. Bagley: Object to the form.*

*A: They—I mean, they—they normally do their job as a police officer and whatever that entails. And then they're —like I said, they're just there for security purposes and just crowd control when hired in.*

*Q: All right. And so correct me if I'm wrong, that the purpose of the law enforcement agent is not to catch shoplifters; it is to maintain calm within the store?*

*A: Yes, sir.*

*Q: So to keep people from stabbing each other for an Xbox?*

*A: Yes sir."*

(Ronnee Miller Dep., 21:23-25; 23:1-15).

The issue of the appropriateness of action and reasonableness of force employed by Respondent Porter goes into the interpretation of the law, specifically S.C. Code Ann. § 16-13-140. Whether Appellant was delayed in a reasonable manner and for a reasonable time to permit investigation, under the circumstances of this case, was an issue for the jury; so also was the

question of whether there was reasonable cause to believe that Appellant committed the crime of shoplifting. *Mains v. K Mart Corp.*, 375 SE2d 311, (SC: Court of Appeals, 1988).

Summary judgment is not appropriate where further inquiry into the facts of the case is desirable to clarify the application of the law. *Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment v. South Carolina Dep't of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, et al.*, 337 S.C. 476, 523 S.E.2d 795.

Appellant asserts that the existence of probable cause and reasonable delay should have been submitted to the jury.

## II. APPELLANT'S CAUSES OF ACTION ARE NOT BARRED BY STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS.

### A. The Causes of Action For Violation Of §1983, Assault And Battery And Malicious Prosecution Are Not Barred By Statute Of Limitations

#### On Violation of §1983

Although §1983 provides a cause of action for violations of constitutional and federal statutory rights, it does not describe the applicable statutes of limitations, nor does it detail the accrual and tolling rules. When §1983 does not address important litigation issues, the Supreme Court has often looked to 42 U.S.C. §1988, which specifies that if federal law is “deficient”, state law will apply as long as it is “not inconsistent with the Constitution and the laws of the United States.”

Under §1988, a state’s statute of limitations relating to personal injury is applicable to §1983 litigation. In various cases, the Supreme Court has held that §1983 is best characterized as a tort action for the recovery of damages, and therefore held that the appropriate statute of limitations to be adopted is the state statute applicable to personal injury. *Wilson v. Garcia*, 471 U.S. 261 (1985), *Ownes v Okure*, 448U.S. 245 (1989). (Emphasis supplied).

Under §15-3-535 in relation to §15-3-530 (5), any action for assault, battery, or any injury to the person or rights of another, not arising on contract and not enumerated by law must be initiated within three (3) years after the person knew or by exercises of reasonable diligence, should have known that he had a cause of action.

Since the incident happened on December 24, 2013, Appellant had until December 24, 2016 to file her case. Appellant filed her Complaint on April 8, 2016 for violation of §1983 and assault and battery against Respondents WALMART, Officer Porter, and City Police Department. Appellant filed her case well within the time. The causes of action for violation of §1983 must prevail.

**On Malicious Prosecution**

In *Snider v. Seung Lee*, 584 F.3d 193, 199 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir, 2009), the Court ruled that “A claim founded on a Fourth Amendment seizure that incorporates elements of the analogous common law tort of malicious prosecution” which requires at least “a wrongful seizure and termination in her favor of the proceedings following her seizure.” The statute of limitations for such a claim is three (3) years, but the date of accrual is not until the criminal proceedings end in the Appellant’s favor.

Appellant was acquitted from the previous criminal case by Spartanburg Municipal Court on September 17, 2014. This cause of action must survive.

**On Assault and Battery**

Appellant’s cause of action for assault and battery against Respondent Porter (Sixth Cause of Action) was based on his individual capacity. Firstly, Respondent Porter was performing an act outside the scope of his duty as a police officer. To be specific, he was

performing his job as an employee of Respondent WALMART as he was hired during his off duty.

Secondly, at all relevant times, Respondent WALMART had control and supervision over Respondent Porter's actions during the incident. Respondent Porter approached, stopped, arrested and detained Appellant upon the instruction and/or instigation of Respondent WALMART's employees. (Porter Trial Testimony, 7:4-8; 19:23-25).

Respondent Porter was sued for his tortious conduct in his individual capacity. Respondent WALMART was being sued for tortious conduct, based on *respondeat superior*. This being so, the applicable statute for this cause of action is SC Code Ann §15-3-530(5), which allows three (3) years for the Appellant to bring a personal injury action.

#### **On the Applicability of the South Carolina Tort Claims Act**

Appellant's cause of action against Respondent Porter was based on his individual capacity. Respondent Porter was acting outside the scope of his official duty, performing his duties as Respondent WALMART's employee. This took it out of the scope of the Torts Claims Act.

Assuming *arguendo* that he was performing acts within the scope of his official duty as a police officer, his excessive use of force against the Appellant took his conduct outside of the scope of the Act.

### **III. RESPONDENT CITY OF SPARTANBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT IS NOT ENTITLED TO QUALIFIED IMMUNITY**

Respondent Police averred that Appellant failed to establish that it violated her rights. Qualified immunity is a doctrine that says that in order to sue an officer for a violation of a Constitutional rights, one must show that not only did that officer committed a violation but that

at that time the violation occurred, it has been "clearly established" that the officer's actions were unconstitutional.

Appellant asserted that Respondent Police failed to address the many complaints for excessive use of force against Respondent Porter. It also failed in its duty to train, supervise and discipline Respondent Porter. It also failed to monitor its arrangement with Respondents Porter, and WALMART, that resulted in gross violation of Appellant's Constitutional rights. This policy of indifference by Respondent Police allowed Respondent Porter to act in a manner that, as in Appellant's case, violates the individual's Constitutional rights.

Respondent Police knew or should have known of Respondent Porter's aggressive behavior through the numerous complaints against him, but it has done nothing to investigate, remedy or discipline him. Instead, it continued to hire and retain him despite posing a danger to the public.

Respondent Police knew or should have known that the arrangement between the other Respondents, is on its face, violative of the right to due process and liberty of the Appellant, in particular, and the public in general.

#### IV.

### **RESPONDENTS ARE LIABLE FOR ASSAULT AND BATTERY, MALICIOUS PROSECUTION AND VIOLATION OF 42. U.S.C. §1983**

#### **Assault and Battery**

##### As to Respondent Porter

Appellant asserts that there was no probable cause supporting the arrest and detention of herein Appellant, and as such, Respondent Porter was liable for assault and battery.

Appellant submits that Respondent Porter undeniably committed assault and battery upon her person. Appellant was cooperating with Respondent Porter when the latter approached

and interrogated her. Without reason, he grabbed Appellant's arm, where she had an injectable contraceptive, with such force that she raised her arm in pain. Respondent Porter took this as a sign of resistance, and forcibly slammed her to the floor. Appellant did not exhibit any violent, nor scandalous behavior prior to, or subsequent to, Respondent Porter manhandling her.

Respondent had no reasonable cause to delay Appellant as he did not see nor observe her select, conceal, possess or take any item beyond the cashier and her register, without paying for it. Appellant was within Respondent WALMART's vicinity, and was in fact approaching the cashier, as she made her way to the front of the line. Respondents did not present any video surveillance, nor witness, to substantiate its claim of shoplifting.

Appellant was delayed in an unreasonable manner. When Respondent Porter took hold of her arm, he already had her in custody. He had no need to slam Appellant to the floor. There is nothing reasonable in the manner which Respondent Officer Porter forcefully seized Appellant, who was significantly smaller and lighter than him, slammed her to the floor, and illegally searched her purse. Respondent Officer Porter used such force that, resulted in bruises and physical injuries to the Appellant. (Exhibits 2-3).

Respondent Porter's arrest sans probable cause, subject him to liability for committing assault and battery upon the person of Appellant.

As to Respondent WALMART.

Appellant submits that Respondent WALMART is liable for the tortious conduct of its employees under the doctrine of *respondeat superior*.

Appellant asserts that, at all times relevant to the incident, Respondent Porter was considered an employee of Respondent WALMART; he was performing acts in furtherance of Respondent WALMART's interest; and WALMART benefitted from his actions. Appellant

reiterates that at the time of the incident, it had control over Respondent Officer Porter.

Respondent WALMART assigned him to man a specific area and gave instructions of whom to approach and apprehend for shoplifting. Respondent WALMART allowed, and/or tolerated Respondent Porter's acts of manhandling and assaulting Appellant. It should be highlighted at this point that none of Respondent WALMART's employees prevented Respondent Porter from exercising excessive force against Appellant. And finally, Respondent WALMART hired and continued to hire Respondent Porter during his off days. Thus, Respondent WALMART is vicariously liable for the tortious acts committed by Respondent Officer Porter against herein Appellant.

### **Malicious Prosecution**

In order to recover in an action for malicious prosecution, Appellant must show (1) the institution or continuation of original judicial proceeding, either civil or criminal; (2) by, or at the instance of, the Respondent; (3) termination of such proceeding in the Appellant's favor; (4) malice in instituting such proceedings; (5) lack of probable cause; and (6) resulting injury or damage. *Parrot v. Plowden Motor Co.*, 246 S.C. 318, 321, 143 S.E.2d 607, 608 (1965); *Eaves v. Broad River Elec. Co-op., Inc.*, 277 S.C. 475, 477, 289 S.E.2d 414, 415 (1982) as cited in *Law v. S.C. Department of Corrections*, 629 S.E.2d 651(2006),

Appellant submits that the elements of malicious prosecution are present. Respondents WALMART and Police instituted the prior criminal action without any cause to believe that a shoplifting had been committed. Its allegations against Appellant were unfounded and frivolous and without probable cause to believe that the action filed will succeed. There was no probable cause for shoplifting because Respondents WALMART and Porter failed to prove the elements of selection, concealment, continued possession and last point of entry. That the criminal action

was even more unfounded because Respondents completely failed to address or present evidence regarding their claim of action. Respondent WALMART did not submit any surveillance video of the alleged incident, nor did it present its employees who allegedly witnessed the shoplifting.

Appellant believed that the prosecution of the previous criminal case was brought for an ulterior motive, for the purpose of attempting to legally harass Appellant and discredit her should she bring action for the tortious conduct perpetrated by Respondents WALMART and Porter. As a result of this malicious prosecution, Plaintiff was obliged to defend herself and expend money and time in her defense.

Finally, Appellant was acquitted by the Spartanburg Municipal Court on September 17, 2004.

### **Violation of 42 U.S.C. §1983**

Appellant reiterates that her cause of action for violation of §1983 is separate and distinct from her cause of action for assault and battery, and unlawful arrest and detention based on *respondeat superior*.

In order to establish a §1983 claim, Appellant must be able to demonstrate a violation or a right secured by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, and that the alleged deprivation was committed by a person acting under color of state law. *West v. Atkins*, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988) and *City of Monterey v. Del Monte Dunes at Monterey Ltd.*, 526 U.S. 687, 707 (1999) as cited in *King Grant-Davis v Shane Fortune, et al.*, 2:15-cv-4211-MD-MGB.

### *As to Respondent WALMART*

Respondent WALMART anchors its arguments of non-applicability of 42 U.S.C. § 1983 in the fact that Respondent WALMART is a private corporation, and as such, may not perform acts under the color of state law. Appellant, however, relies on *Monell (Monell vs. Department*

of *Social Services of City of New York*, 436 U.S. 658, 691 (1978)), the rationale of which has been extended to private businesses. *Iskander*, at 128-29; *Powell*, supra at 506; *Smith v. Brookshire Bros.*, 519 F.2d 93, 94 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1975) (per curiam) as cited in *Rojas v. Alexander's Department Store, Inc.*, 924 F.2d 406 (1990).

In a number of cases, the Court has ruled that if a private person is “jointly engaged” with a state official in an alleged violation, that person acts under the color of state law. *Dennis v. Sparks*, 449 U.S. 24, 27-28, 101 S.Ct. 183, 66 L.Ed.2d 185 (1980). In *El Fundi v. Derochei*, 625 F.2d 195 as cited in *Murray v. WALMART*, 874 F.2d 555, state action is present when private security guards and police officers act in concert to deprive Appellant of his civil rights, particularly when a state statute authorizes a shopkeeper to detain suspected shoplifters. In the *Murray* case, the court has allowed a litigant to recover against WALMART under §1983. The court held that WALMART had acted under color of state law. In the case at bar, numerous facts point to the conclusion that Respondent WALMART acted in concert with the local police.

Firstly, Respondent WALMART hired Respondent Porter, a law enforcement officer, on his off days. Respondent Porter admitted that he was hired by Respondent WALMART for the twelfth time on the day the incident happened. (Porter Depo., 11:15-18). Secondly, it is the practice of Respondent WALMART to work with the police department in prosecuting shoplifters. Respondent Porter and/or WALMART employees had telephoned the police after the unlawful search of the Appellant’s purse and her wrongful arrest, and requested the assistance of other officers for all the detained shoplifters. The police responded by taking Appellant in custody, without an independent investigation as to what transpired.

Thirdly, in the case of *Cruz v. Donnelly*, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals addressed the specific question of when state action is present in detention for shoplifting. *Cruz v. Donnelly*,

727 F.2d (3d Cir. 1984). *Cruz* held that “commercial establishments and their employees will only be held liable under §1983 when: (1) the police have a pre-arranged plan with the store, and (2) under the plan, the police will arrest anyone identified as a shoplifter by the store without independently evaluating the presence of probable cause.” *Id.*

In *Rojas v. Alexander’s Department Store, Inc.*, the court held that a corporation, acting under color of state law, will be held liable under §1983 for its own unconstitutional policies. *Rojas, Id.* It further provides that the proper test is whether there is a policy, custom or action by those who represent official policy that inflicts injury actionable under §1983. Appellant believes that Respondent WALMART’ policy on shoplifting and its arrangement with Respondent Police Department on the arrest, seizure, and detention of suspected shoplifters, without an independent investigation by the local police, is a custom or tradition that violates the Constitutional rights of the Appellant. For this reason, Respondent WALMART is liable under §1983. Respondent WALMART’s liability under the doctrine of *respondeat superior* is discussed in the succeeding section.

*As to Respondens Police Department*

Under the *Monell v. Department of Social Services*, 426 U.S. 658 (1978), a municipal government can be held liable under Section 1983 if a plaintiff can demonstrate that a deprivation of a federal right occurred as a result of the local government’s local officials whose acts may fairly be said to be those of the municipality. Respondents insist that no municipality can be held liable under §1983 on a *respondeat superior* theory. Appellant submits that the Complaint against Respondents City of Spartanburg Police Department is not based on *respondeat superior* but an independent action based on Respondents Police Department’s failure to properly train, supervise, and discipline Respondent Porter.

In her Eight Cause of Action, Appellant alleged that through information and belief, she came to know that Respondent Porter had history of complaints, including excessive use of force. (Appellant Complaint, 12-13, April 8, 2016). Appellant, through her counsel, requested information and details of said previous complaints. Respondent City of Spartanburg Police Department failed to act on said complaints, as Respondent Porter continued to work for the Respondent City of Spartanburg Police Department even after the shoplifting incident.

Appellant also asserted in the same cause of action that Respondents failed to train, supervise, and discipline Respondent Porter. (Complaint, 13:75-76). Their failure to provide remedial actions to the many complaints against Respondent Porter is tantamount to a policy of indifference. This indifference resulted in the deprivation of the rights and liberty of Appellant.

In the case of *City of Canton v. Harris*, 489 U.S. 378, 390 (1989) as cited in *Drayton v. County of Charleston*, Civil Action No. 2:14-cv-3488-RMG-MGB (D.S.C. Jul. 10, 2015), the Court held that the failure to provide proper training may fairly be said to represent a policy for which the city is responsible if it actually causes injury. The physical, emotional and mental injuries sustained by Plaintiff in the hands of Porter's lack proper training has yet to be addressed by Respondent City of Spartanburg Police Department.

Respondent City of Spartanburg Police Department's failure to provide remedial action in response to prior complaints against Respondent Porter is tantamount to condoning Respondent Porter's violation of Appellant's rights against unlawful arrest, unreasonable search and seizure, due process, right to liberty and right against excessive use of force. Appellant asserts that Respondents' inaction is an action, which amounts to a custom or practice of deliberate indifference, and not just mere negligence.

The jury should be given an opportunity to determine whether those off officials who have the power to make official policy, or in the alternative, the custom or practice of inaction perpetuated by Respondents, has caused Appellant's deprivation of rights.

Furthermore, Appellant believed that Respondent Police had an arrangement with Respondent WALMART, wherein the former will arrest anyone identified as a shoplifter by latter, without evaluating the presence of probable cause, as what happened in this case. Appellant insist that this set up between Respondents Police and WALMART has become a custom that violates the Constitutional rights of the Appellant. It must be noted here that Respondent Porter continues to be in the employ of the law enforcement agency.

A reading of the S. C. Code Ann. provisions namely, § 23-24-10, §23-24-50 and §23-24-20 (Supp. 1978), shows that a law enforcement officer may perform an off-duty, private work, provided that "the work to be performed is within the officer's jurisdiction and that the officer obtains permission for such work from the agency and governing body by which he is employed." Op. S.C. Atty. Gen., 2014 (March 17, 2014). It further states that the officers "moonlighting" shall retain full law enforcement authority. *Ibid.*

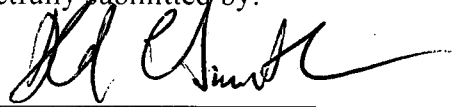
This only proves that there is an arrangement, whether written or otherwise, between private, commercial establishments like Respondent WALMART, employing off-duty officers, and the law enforcement agency. This is all the more highlighted by the fact that Respondent Police did not conduct an independent investigation of the alleged shoplifting incident, and just took Appellant in custody.

The afore-mentioned state statutes combined with the concerted actions of Respondents WALMART, its employees, and the local police department, afford ample evidence of willful, joint activity which supports a claim against Respondents under §1983.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Appellant respectfully prays that the trial court's Orders, dated March 22, 2017, March 23, 2017, July 14, 2017 and October 3, 2017, granting Respondents' respective Motion for Summary Judgment should be reversed, and this cause be remanded for a jury trial on the merits.

Respectfully submitted by:



Anderson, South Carolina  
December 28, 2017

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Attorney for Appellant

**FORM 7**  
**PROOF OF SERVICE**  
**APPELLANT'S INITIAL BRIEF AND DESIGNATION OF MATTER**

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
In The Court of Appeals

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APPEAL FROM SPARTANBURG COUNTY  
Court of Common Pleas

R. Keith Kelly, Judge

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Appellate Case No. 2017-001009

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Caitlyn Langham,

v.

Officer Russell Porter,  
City of Spartanburg Police Department, and WALMART, Inc.,

AND

Caitlyn Langham,

v.

WALMART, Inc.,

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**PROOF OF SERVICE**

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I certify that I have served a copy of Appellant's Initial Brief, Designation of Matter, and Proof of Service for same upon The Honorable Jenny Abbott Kitchings, Clerk of Court South Carolina Court of Appeals, at PO Box 11629, Columbia SC 29211, Ms. Lee Ellen Bagley, Esquire and Ms. Randi Lynn Roberts, Esquire at 3700 Forest Drive, Suite 400, Columbia, SC 29204, and Mr. James D. Jolly Jr., Esquire and Ms. Stacy Todd Coffee, Esquire at 1805 North Blvd., Anderson, SC 29622, by depositing a copy of it in the United States Mail, postage prepaid, on December 28, 2017.

{SIGNATURE TO FOLLOW}

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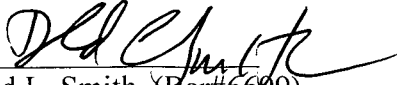
Appellant,

Respondents.

Appellant,

Respondent.

December 28, 2017  
Anderson, South Carolina

  
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**FORM 8**  
**LETTER TO THE APPEALS COURT CLERK**

December 28, 2017

The Honorable Jenny Abbott Kitchings  
Clerk of Court South Carolina Court of Appeals  
Post Office Box 11629  
Columbia SC 29211

**RE: Caitlyn Langham v. Officer Russell Porter, City of Spartanburg Police  
Department and WALMART, Inc. AND Caitlyn Langham v. WALMART,  
Inc.**  
**Appellate Case No.: 2017-001009**

Dear Honorable Kitchings:

Please find enclosed the following materials for filing:

- (1) Appellant's Initial Brief;
- (2) Appellant's Designation of Matter; and
- (3) Proof of Service for same.

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SC Court of Appeals

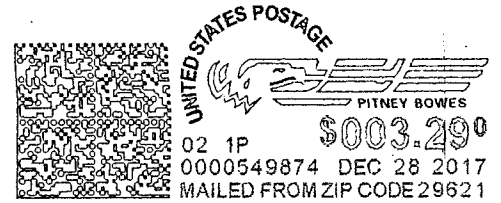
Sincerely,



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