



Brenda Mazriegos after a 2009 incident at The Palms Nightclub in Stamford. Contributed photo. NOTE: This photo was used in both the Stamford and Norwalk papers.

Couple sues Stamford police in alleged assault

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STAMFORD-- A Bridgeport attorney representing two Norwalk couples filed a lawsuit Tuesday against the City of Stamford and the Stamford Police Department claiming his clients were brutalized by a rogue officer in June 2009.

Attorney Antonio Ponvert III, of Koskoff, Koskoff & Bieder, said he is seeking "millions" in damages for the owners of The Palms Nightclub on West Park Place.

Brenda Mazariegos, a co-owner of the club, was attempting to pull into the parking lot of The Palms during an Alive@Five concert two years ago when she was stopped by Officer Greg Zach.

The lawsuit claims Zach ordered Mazariegos out of the car, repeatedly punched her in the face with a closed fist, then locked her in the back of a police cruiser in sweltering heat while she bled from her injuries.

Mazariegos and her husband, Feliciano, along with Nelson Solis and his wife, Sandra, are also named

as plaintiffs in the lawsuit, which was filed Tuesday morning at Stamford Superior Court.

"This vicious assault was perpetrated against longtime community residents, upstanding citizens, business owners in our community," Ponvert said. "They were totally innocent people who were brutalized by a Stamford Police officer plainly untrained and unsupervised and who never should have been allowed on the force. Officer Zach should have been fired on the spot and charged with criminal assault. Instead, the department put him back on the streets, armed and in uniform, where he can assault and falsely arrest other law-abiding community residents. It's an outrage."

Zach served 18 months of departmental probation for punching Mazariegos, who was charged with assault on a public safety officer, second-degree breach of peace, interfering with a police officer and operating a motor vehicle without a license.

Those charges were nolle in April 2011.

Michael Larobina, the attorney representing the City of Stamford, did not immediately return a call Tuesday seeking comment. Messages were also left with Stamford Police Chief Robert Nivakoff.

Woman at center of 2009 police brutality complaint sues city, police officer

Jeff Morganteen, Staff Writer

Stamford Advocate

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STAMFORD -- A Norwalk woman whose allegations of police brutality sparked scrutiny of civilian complaint policies at the [Stamford Police Department](#) filed a lawsuit on Tuesday against the city and the officer who punched her two years ago.

Brenda Mazriegos, 42, is suing the city and Stamford police Officer [Gregory Zach](#) in state [Superior Court](#) in Stamford for several civil offenses. Her lawyers say Zach assaulted Mazriegos on June 25 and then falsely arrested her on charges that she attacked him and resisted arrest.

Prosecutors dropped criminal charges against Mazriegos this April. She still lost money paying for bail and a defense attorney, said her attorney, [Antonio Ponvert](#), of the [Bridgeport firm Koskoff, Koskoff & Beider](#). Among the dropped charges was the felony offense of assaulting a police officer.

"What our clients want is justice and accountability and to do whatever is necessary through the civil justice system to ensure that the Stamford Police Department properly trains its officers and doesn't allow rogue cops to wander the streets beating up innocent citizens," Ponvert said Tuesday.

Ponvert said he is seeking a substantial amount in damages from the city.

"Whatever amount is necessary to make sure the people in charge take notice," he said.

Mazriegos' husband, Feliciano, and their two friends, Sandra and [Nelson Solis](#), are also listed as defendants. The lawsuit alleges Greg pushed Sandra and Nelson Solis during the altercation.

The incident began on June 25, 2009, when Mazriegos and [Sandra Solis](#) were trying park in the Palms parking lot. Zach, who was working an extra duty job before an Alive@Five concert, refused to let them park.

He eventually let them through. Nelson and Feliciano owned the nightclub and Mazriegos and Sandra worked there.

As they tried to park, Zach demanded to see Mazriegos' driver's license, which she didn't have. He ordered her from the car, grabbed her arms and pushed her into the car and told her she was under arrest.

According to the recently filed lawsuit, Zach pushed Nelson onto the cement in front of a passing truck, which stopped before hitting him. The officer then pushed Sandra onto the cement before punching Mazriegos. The lawsuit alleges Zach "pummeled" Mazriegos after she fell onto the ground.

Zach handcuffed Mazriegos and left her in the back of a police cruiser. Her lawsuit alleges Mazriegos was bleeding from her nose and mouth and "had a hematoma on her forehead the size of an orange."

She underwent medical treatment at [Stamford Hospital](#) while accompanied by two police officers, and then was processed and fingerprinted at police headquarters. She was charged with breach of peace, interfering with an officer and assault on a police officer.

Zach was placed on administrative leave a month after the allegations of police brutality surfaced. Stamford Police Chief [Robert Nivakoff](#), who took control of the department last January, suspended Zach without pay for about two months last April. Zach was required to meet certain, undisclosed provisions before returning to a patrol unit.

On Tuesday, Nivakoff referred questions about the lawsuit to City Attorney [Michael Larobina](#), who was unavailable for comment.

The allegations over Zach's use of excessive force last summer brought the police department's civilian complaint process under scrutiny in a report published in *The Advocate*. In follow-up articles, records showed Zach, a veteran of the [U.S. Marines](#) who served in Iraq, had four civilian complaints lodged against him in 2007 and that he had been denied a job at the [Greenwich Police Department](#) in 2005 because of his background check.

A lawyer who represented Zach directly following the 2009 incident claimed Mazriegos clawed and scratched Zach in the parking lot.