

Plaintiff Arrest Summaries and Quotes

Class Action Lawsuit Challenging Warrantless Immigration Arrests in North Carolina

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NORTH CAROLINA (FEB. 24, 2026) —

A U.S. citizen sitting in his truck...

On November 15, 2025, four DHS agents stopped Willy Wender Aceituno in a shopping center parking lot in Charlotte, demanded several documents proving his citizenship, checked his REAL ID, and then let him leave. Minutes later, a second group of masked and armed agents surrounded his truck, shattered the window, dragged him out, threw him to the ground, and handcuffed him — ignoring his repeated statements that he is a U.S. citizen and pleas to check his wallet. One bystander, who recorded both stops, told the immigration agents that Aceituno already had his citizenship verified by other agents. Without a warrant or explanation, agents drove Aceituno away in an unmarked vehicle. After confirming, once again, that he was a U.S. citizen with no criminal record, they released him on a street far from his parked car — bloodied, covered in glass, and stranded. The arrest left Aceituno injured, traumatized, and afraid to return to work or move freely in his community. Videos of Aceituno’s arrest were widely circulated across social media and news outlets.

“I am a U.S. citizen, but my papers did not protect me,” said **Aceituno**. “I want to be involved in this case because I don’t want this to happen to anyone else. I want to help protect my Latino family, friends, and neighbors.”

A U.S. citizen performing landscaping work...

On November 15, 2025, CBP agents grabbed Yoshi Cuenca Villamar from behind while he was performing landscaping work on private property, pushed him to the ground, and handcuffed him as his brothers — also U.S. citizens — recorded and told agents they were citizens. Without asking for ID, presenting a warrant, or explaining why Cuenca was being detained, agents placed him in a vehicle, and drove him away. After driving around for 20-30 minutes, agents searched his wallet, questioned the validity of his driver’s license, and threatened to detain his brothers. Agents confirmed he was a U.S. citizen and dropped him on the side of the road, throwing his wallet at him

and leaving him stranded without his phone. The encounter left Cuenca traumatized, with visible wrist injuries and an ongoing fear of being detained again while simply trying to work.

“I have a lot of fear that this will happen to me again. I was essentially kidnapped based only on the color of my skin. That really weighs on me...,” said **Cuenca**. “I think it is important to take action through this case so that the government starts doing their jobs correctly instead of stopping people solely because they look a certain way.”

A man on his way to work...

On November 17, 2025, masked DHS agents in three SUVs boxed in Ruben Arguera Lopez’s car on his way to work in Charlotte, then questioned him about his immigration status. When he exercised his right to remain silent, they ordered him out of the car, handcuffed him, and threatened to take him away if he did not answer. When agents tried to force Arguera Lopez into an SUV without presenting a warrant or explaining the stop, he repeatedly told them he had a U-Visa and work permit. After nearly an hour of questioning, agents finally retrieved his work permit from his wallet, confirmed his status, and released him. The ordeal left Arguera Lopez traumatized, uncomfortable in public, and fearful of being detained again solely because he appears Latino. When he goes on a walk or a run — two pastimes he used to enjoy — he now feels anxious and highly aware of his surroundings.

“This incident left me with a lot of psychological issues because I saw how quickly and easily my liberty can be taken away,” said **Arguera Lopez**. “I believe agents relied only on the color of my skin and my appearance because they did not know who I was or present a warrant.”

Two U.S. citizen brothers driving a car...

On January 5, 2026, ICE agents in an unmarked vehicle turned on police-style lights behind Edwin Godinez and Yair Alexander Napoles as they sat at a red light in Salisbury. After the brothers pulled over and presented their IDs, additional agents arrived and escalated the stop. One agent initially gave the brothers permission to record for their safety, but another agent contradicted that instruction, telling them they were not allowed to record because they were being detained. Agents then reached into the car, attempted to seize the brothers’ phones, and forcibly opened the doors. They pinned Godinez against his seat, knocked out his earrings, punched him in the abdomen, and tried to drag both brothers from the vehicle while threatening to handcuff them. After roughly 15 minutes of force and intimidation — without presenting a warrant, identifying themselves, or explaining the reason for the stop — the original agent returned their IDs and allowed them to leave. Both brothers were left injured and deeply traumatized, and they live with ongoing fear that they will be targeted again. The brothers’ video of the ordeal was widely circulated across social media and news outlets.

“We were simply trying to record the interaction we were given permission to record,” said **Godinez**. “After about 15 minutes of assaulting us and trying to prevent us from recording them, they gave us our IDs back and said we’re free to go.”

“The officer reached [into the car], opened the door, unbuckled my seatbelt, and tried to yank me out,” said **Napoles**. “They knocked my phone loose. At no point did they ask us politely to exit the car, they just started threatening us with cuffs.”

*The **ACLU of North Carolina** dares to create a more perfect union — beyond one person, party, or side. Our mission is to realize this promise of the United States and North Carolina Constitutions for all and expand the reach of their guarantees.*

*For more than 100 years, the **ACLU** has worked in courts, legislatures, and communities to protect the constitutional rights of all people. With a nationwide network of offices and millions of members and supporters, the ACLU takes on the toughest civil liberties fights in pursuit of liberty and justice for all.*

***Democracy Forward** is a national legal organization that advances democracy and social progress through litigation, policy and public education, and regulatory engagement. In towns and cities across America, we provide legal representation and expert counsel to the people and communities who make up the very fabric of American democracy — free of charge.*

***Southern Coalition for Social Justice**, founded in 2007, partners with communities of color and economically disadvantaged communities in the South to defend and advance their political, social, and economic rights through the combination of legal advocacy, research, organizing, and communications.*