

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS**

JANE DOE,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	
vs.)	Case No. 18-CV-380-SMY-SCW
)	
ST. CLAIR COUNTY, ST. CLAIR COUNTY SHERIFF RICHARD WATSON, and ROBERT SNEED,)	
)	
Defendants.)	

MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

YANDLE, District Judge:

Plaintiff filed suit against Defendants St. Clair County, St. Clair County Sheriff Richard Watson, and Deputy Sheriff Robert Sneed, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleging violations of her constitutional rights. Specifically, Plaintiff alleges that Sneed sexually assaulted her on two separate occasions and the other Defendants failed to protect her from the assaults. Due to the sensitive nature of Plaintiff's allegations, she moves to proceed with this lawsuit utilizing a pseudonym (Doc. 10). For the following reasons, the motion is **GRANTED**.

As a general matter, litigating under a pseudonym is antithetical to our public judicial system. *Doe v. City of Chicago*, 360 F.3d 667, 669-670 (7th Cir. 2004). However, the presumption that a party's name is public information can be rebutted by showing that the harm of identification outweighs the harm of anonymity. *Id.* The court has an independent duty to determine whether exceptional circumstances justify such a departure from the normal method of proceeding in federal courts – even if there is no opposition. *Doe v. Blue Cross & Blue Shield*

United of Wisconsin, 112 F.3d 869, 872 (7th Cir. 1997). A pseudonym may be used when necessary to protect the privacy of rape victims and other particularly vulnerable parties. *Id.*

Here, the highly sensitive, personal nature of the alleged harm in this case outweighs the public interest in requiring Plaintiff to disclose her identity. The alleged sexual assaults were perpetuated by a law enforcement officer defendant who is currently facing criminal charges as a result of the alleged assaults. Thus far, Plaintiff has not been identified by the media in the related criminal prosecution. Plaintiff lives in fear of retaliation and has legitimate fears of humiliation for bringing this lawsuit. The Court finds that revealing Plaintiff's name will potentially expose her to the risk of retaliation by members of the public.

For the reasons stated, the Court finds that Plaintiff has carried her burden and shown that the harm of identifying her outweighs the harm of anonymity. Accordingly, Plaintiff's motion is granted. The court and all litigants shall continue to use the pseudonym Jane Doe for Plaintiff in all pleadings and other filings.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

DATED: February 26, 2018

s/ Staci M. Yandle
STACI M. YANDLE
United States District Judge