

NEW YORK COURT OF APPEALS

People v. Class

67 N.Y.2d 431 (N.Y. 1986) · Decided May 29, 1986

SUMMARY

The New York Court of Appeals reconsidered its earlier decision in *People v. Class* after the Supreme Court reversed it on federal constitutional grounds. The court held that the nonconsensual entry into the defendant's automobile to determine the vehicle identification number violated the State Constitution. The court reversed the order of the Appellate Division, granted the motion to suppress, vacated the conviction, and dismissed the indictment. The decision was based on the court's previous holding that the State Constitution had been violated, and the respondent failed to demonstrate extraordinary or compelling circumstances to reach a different result.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	New York Court of Appeals
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Chief Judge Wachtler; Judge Meyer; Judge Simons; Judge Kaye; Judge Alexander; Judge Titone; Judge Hancock, Jr.
JURISDICTION	New York
DECIDED	May 29, 1986
DISPOSITION	reversed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Appeal from Appellate Division order after remand from U.S. Supreme Court
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	published
PARTIES	People v. Class

TOPICS

- fourth amendment
- search and seizure
- criminal procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

- criminal procedure
- constitutional law
- evidence

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the New York State Constitution article I, §12 is violated by a nonconsensual vehicle search conducted solely on the basis of a traffic stop, notwithstanding the U.S. Supreme Court's Fourth

Amendment holding.

HOLDINGS

1. The search violated the New York State Constitution article I, §12; therefore the motion to suppress is granted, the conviction is vacated, and the indictment is dismissed.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“the police officer’s nonconsensual entry into [defendant’s] automobile to determine the vehicle identification number violates the Federal and State Constitutions where it is based solely on a stop for a traffic infraction” (433)

“the order of the Appellate Division should be reversed, the motion to suppress granted, the conviction vacated and the indictment dismissed” (433)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

A police officer entered the defendant's automobile without consent to determine the vehicle identification number, relying solely on a stop for a traffic infraction.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The Appellate Division had suppressed evidence based on a State constitutional violation. The U.S. Supreme Court reversed on Federal constitutional grounds, holding no Fourth Amendment violation. The case returned to the New York Court of Appeals for determination under State law.

DISPOSITION

reversed

CASES CITED

- 475 U.S.
- Michigan v. Long, 463 U.S. 1032
- People v. Quarles, 63 N.Y.2d 923
- People v. Ferber, 57 N.Y.2d 256
- People v. Belton, 55 N.Y.2d 49

OPINION

PER CURIAM.

OPINION OF THE COURT Per Curiam. In our earlier opinion in this case, we held that the police *433"officer’s nonconsensual entry into [defendant’s] automobile to determine the vehicle identification number violates the Federal and State Constitutions where it is based solely on a stop for a traffic infraction (US Const, 4th Amdt; NY Const, art I, § 12)” (63 NY2d 491, 493).

The Supreme Court reversed on the Federal Constitution, holding that "the police officer's action does not violate the Fourth Amendment" (475 US —, —, 106 S Ct 960, 963), and the case is now before us again. In support of its own jurisdiction to hear the case, the Supreme Court stated that our decision did not rest on "an independent and adequate state ground" because it lacked the requisite "plain statement" (475 US, at p —, 106 S Ct, at p 964; see, *Michigan v Long*, 463 US 1032, 1041-1042).

At this juncture, in our consideration of the case under State law, we cannot disregard the fact that we held that article I, § 12 of our State Constitution was violated by the search. Although on remand we have in the past, as a matter of State law, followed Supreme Court decisions in several cases (see, e.g., *People v Quarles*, 63 NY2d 923, on remand from *New York v Quarles*, 467 US 649; *People v Ferber*, 57 NY2d 256, on remand from *New York v Ferber*, 458 US 747; cf. *People v Belton*, 55 NY2d 49, on remand from *New York v Belton*, 453 US 454), in none of those cases had we initially and expressly relied on the State Constitution (see, *People v Quarles*, 58 NY2d 664; *People v Ferber*, 52 NY2d 674; *People v Belton*, 50 NY2d 447).

Where, as here, we have already held that the State Constitution has been violated, we should not reach a different result following reversal on Federal constitutional grounds unless respondent demonstrates that there are extraordinary or compelling circumstances. That showing has not been made.

Accordingly, upon reargument, on remand from the Supreme Court of the United States, the order of the Appellate Division should be reversed, the motion to suppress granted, the conviction vacated and the indictment dismissed. Chief Judge Wachtler and Judges Meyer, Simons, Kaye, Alexander, Titone and Hancock, Jr., concur in Per Curiam opinion. Upon reargument, on remand from the Supreme Court of the United States, order reversed, etc.