

# Second racism lawsuit to be filed against Florida police

**By K. Chandler**  
*Special to Sentinel-Voice*  
WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (NNPA) - Eleven months after an all-White jury determined that the West Palm Beach Police Department had discriminated against three Black police officers, another discrimination lawsuit against the city is getting set to unfold in circuit court.

William McCray, 37, an eight-year veteran of the force before being fired in 2001 by former chief Ric Bradshaw, is suing for job reinstatement, \$100,000 in punitive damages and \$50,000 in legal fees.

Pursuant to the lawsuit, which is being represented by well-known Attorney Barry Silver, McCray was subjected to numerous false allegations and received more frequent reprimands and harsh disciplinary actions than his fellow White officers on the department.

According to McCray, who has been employed as a deputy sheriff in the road patrol division for two years, the incident that led up to his termination stemmed from a Nov. 10, 2000, altercation with a Haitian-American

driver illegally parked in a fire lane at the 45th Street Flea Market.

The man later filed a complaint against McCray alleging that he had been physically restrained with handcuffs and threatened with deportation back to Haiti. This complaint became the basis for a formal Internal Affairs probe.

During the investigation McCray was accused of lying and was terminated from the department on May 9, 2001, after it was determined that he had exhibited a pattern of misconduct culminating in 15 reprimands and nearly a dozen suspensions during his eight-year tenure as a police officer.

"They, literally, took the word of this traffic violator over me," McCray complained angrily, reflecting on the incident. He also noted that he was troubled by the fact that he never challenged a number of conflicting statements the man made but had referred him to the State Attorney's Office for "possible criminal charges of making a false arrest."

McCray's case has many of the same earmarks as the

discrimination case that was brought by Attorneys Sid Garcia and Stacy Strolla on behalf of five Black West Palm Beach officers in the latter part of 2004.

Presided over by Circuit Judge Diane Lewis, that case, which followed a 1999 EEOC complaint, alleged the officers were denied promotions and premium overtime assignments, as well as subjected to unwarranted internal investigations and disciplinary actions said to be in retaliation for the officers having filed the earlier complaint.

Litigants Calvin Bryant, Richard Pleasant, and Phillip Williams prevailed in their lawsuit, receiving awards in the amount of \$65,000, \$20,000 and \$7,000 respectively.

The discrimination claims of Robert Garrett and Anthony Ellis were found to be unsubstantiated.

The oldest member of the group, Calvin Bryant, a 59-year-old lieutenant on the department, had been fired after 30 years of service and six months before he was due to retire. On Aug. 24, 2004, Judge Lewis turned down a

request by Bryant to be reinstated on the department. She also declined to force the city to pay the former lieutenant \$55,000 in back wages.

For his part, Bradshaw, who was recently elected Palm Beach County Sheriff, stated after the jury's verdict, "The three people who ended up getting this little amount of money are bad cops. I did the right thing."

Reflecting recently on Judge Lewis' decision to refuse to reinstate him, Bryant philosophically noted that Judge Lewis' father,

former retired state senator, Phil Lewis had been, according to public records, "a strong supporter as well as a contributor to Bradshaw's election campaign."

He further expressed, "Obviously, I would tend to think that the apple probably doesn't fall too far from the tree," adding, "The question arises, 'Could there have been a connection?'"

With respect to the upcoming civil suit McCray is waging against the City of West Palm Beach, Attorney Barry Silver said they are

planning to take the case to court as soon as a trial date can be arranged. He added that they have some "explosive testimony" which they plan to bring out in court.

As for McCray, who says he has suffered mightily since he filed the 1999 EEOC complaint, including losing his house, his wife and filing for bankruptcy, all he is seeking is a measure of justice and the opportunity to be finally vindicated of the unfair claims alleged against him.

*K. Chandler writes for the Westside Gazette.*

## Astronaut

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daughters).

Virtually all parents see these careers as desirable for their sons (91 percent) and their daughters (86 percent). And, upon learning that many jobs in these fields do not require advanced degrees beyond a bachelor's, most parents (88 percent) believe these fields present realistic job opportunities for their children. However, almost all parents across the board (88 percent) believe the communities in the target fields need to do a better job telling today's students about these job opportunities.

Parents: bullish, yet biased?

While the survey uncovers parents' overall positive attitudes about their sons' and daughters' abilities to achieve in science in school and beyond, at the same time it re-

veals a subtle gender bias that favors their sons.

This bias is revealed in the strength of their answers to a series of questions. For example, while almost all (91 percent sons; 86 percent daughters) believe these careers are desirable for their children, 65 percent say they are "very desirable" for their boys and significantly fewer, 41 percent, say "very desirable" for their girls.

In addition, while nearly all parents (92 percent sons; 90 percent daughters) are confident their children can succeed in the science and engineering fields, 69 percent are "very confident" about their boys and only 57 percent are "very confident" about their girls.

*Lou Ransom writes for the Pittsburgh Courier.*



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