

Village Sued Over Racial Discrimination Allegations

WOODMERE, Ohio -- Allegations of racial discrimination in the village of Woodmere are now at the center of what could become a landmark case for the nation.

The case involves two police officers who say they were fired because they're white.

The former police chief, who is black, agrees, saying it's a clear-cut case of racial discrimination.

Now a major national case is emerging in the most unlikely of places, reported chief investigator Duane Pohlman.

In Woodmere, high-end stores cater to high income and mostly white customers. But the village of less than 1,000 residents is run by African Americans, under the leadership of Mayor Yolanda Broadie. According to the U.S. Justice Department, Broadie and her village have discriminated against white police officers.

According to complaints filed in federal court, Broadie and her village discriminated against Tim Ellis and Amy Mengay when it fired them from the mostly black force.

Ellis was fired for being discourteous.

"We're not asking for any favorable consideration based on race, just to be treated fairly," said Ellis. Mengay was fired after she was in traffic accidents.

Attorney Avery Friedman has spent a career defending mostly African Americans in civil rights cases. "White people also get pushed around because of what color they are. The law applies to everybody," said Friedman.

The star witness in the case, former Woodmere Police Chief Lamont Lockhart, blew the whistle. Lockhart resigned after he said the mayor retaliated against him. He's now suing in federal court as well.

Pohlman: "Were you explicitly told this was a race issue to keep white people out?"

Lockhart: "No. But it was implied that way."

Pohlman: "By whom?"

Lockhart: "The mayor."

The mayor is saying very little at this time. She and her village have an uphill battle defending against the lawsuits.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission already ruled that the white officers were discriminated against.

The officers are suing to get their jobs back and compensation for all the damages from being fired.

CLEVELAND -- A federal judge has ordered the village of Woodmere to open its doors and files to the Justice Department in a case of alleged racial bias in the village police department.

The order came after Justice Department lawyers claimed that documents were moved in and out of some of the officers' files.

On Monday, Justice Department officials will inspect the offices of Mayor Yolanda Broadie, acting Police Chief Anthony Jordan and the Treasury Department.

The order also requires Woodmere to make a copier available to copy materials.

The predominately black village is accused of discrimination in the firing of two white officers.

WOODMERE -- A lawyer says Woodmere Mayor Yolanda Broadie has been ordered to personally pay \$1.2 million to former black Police Chief Lamont Lockhart, who says he was retaliated against for supporting white officers.

Subodh Chandra says a U.S. District Court jury in Cleveland late Monday ordered Broadie, who is also black, to pay Lockhart the money as punitive damages.

The jury also awarded Lockhart \$800,750 in compensatory damages, to be paid by the village and Broadie.

Chandra, who represents Lockhart, says Broadie retaliated against Lockhart when he tried to protect the white officers from firing.

The village agreed to a settlement in August that paid one of the officers \$125,000 and the other \$31,250.

Messages seeking comment were left for Broadie and the lawyer representing her and the village.

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