

TPD SUIT DISPATCHED

Radio room whites allege reverse racial discrimination and ugly work conditions

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TRENTON — The complaint detailing a group of white city police dispatchers' allegations of racial discrimination was filed in court yesterday, and its contents lay out a litany of harassment and prejudicial treatment while describing a bitter and hostile working environment.

The suit, citing a "malicious campaign of racial discrimination and intimidation," was filed in Mercer County Civil Court by eight dispatchers and supervisors working in the city's radio room, which handles emergency calls for police and fire communications.

The group contends their boss, Director of Police Communications Irving Bradley, and his assistant, Acting Dispatch Supervisor Talea Woods, both African-American, have pursued a "racialist agenda of targeting white employees."

Also named as defendants in the case are the City of Trenton and the Trenton Police Department.

Police spokesman Detective Sgt. Pedro Medina said Police Director Joe Santiago still wouldn't comment on the case as they have yet to receive a copy. A phone call to Bradley seeking comment went unreturned.

On Tuesday, the group's attorney David Zatuchni detailed the contents of the case for *The Trentonian*, but yesterday a full copy of the complaint was obtained.

The group contends Bradley and Woods have systematically worked to reduce the number of white dispatchers and supervisors by firing them after manufacturing false causes or by harassing them in an effort to make them quit.

"At the very first meeting of supervisors, Defendant Bradley stated to everyone present that Hispanic and black males 'have been held down for too long, but I'll change that,'" the complaint reads, detailing one of many instances where the plaintiffs allege that a hostile and divisive work-

place was created.

Bradley, a former Newark Police official and Santiago associate, started as radio room boss about a year ago.

One of the plaintiffs, Acting Supervisor of Dispatchers Lisa James, a 23-year employee of the radio room, was recently brought up on 72 departmental charges, according to the complaint, which decries those infractions as "bogus and false," instituted solely to "target Ms. James for termination based on her race."

James' portion of the complaint also details a confrontation she had with an African-American trainee under her supervision. James questioned the trainee's unauthorized use of a grievance day for a death in the family, the complaint reads, even though she had no qualifying occurrence.

"Keep your nose out of my f---ing business," the trainee reportedly replied to James, according to the complaint. But when James reported the trainee's actions to Woods, the complaint states the co-defendant told the plaintiff that she didn't believe her and that she needed to accept such behavior from African-American trainees.

After telling Bradley what happened, the complaint states James was subjected to what she felt was a retaliatory shift change for two months, and when she confronted Bradley to ask him if the move was done out of retaliation, the director allegedly kicked her out of his office and said, "You're pissing me off."

The complaint claims another supervisor, John Donahue, has worked in the radio room for 20 years and was never written up for a single formal disciplinary charge. Earlier this year, the complaint reads, he was brought up on 32 separate charges, with the reasons for many of them vaguely described.

Donahue, the complaint says, has had to be hospitalized due to stress-related ailments as a result of the radio room working conditions. Another dispatcher, Scott Yakimo, had to be taken out of

work in an ambulance due to illness brought on by stress, according to the court document, and is out of work on a disability leave.

A number of the plaintiffs are contending they've also been targeted with involuntary shift changes that have caused undue hardships in their personal lives, while requested shift changes were denied them — but given to African-American workers with less seniority. The plaintiffs also allege that in a number of cases they were passed over for promotions and training opportunities in favor of their African-American counterparts with less experience and seniority.

The complaint's language even dredges up some old information about Bradley as background for the case, mentioning his run-in with the law while he was a law-enforcement officer in Newark.

The document states Bradley was appointed Newark police director in 2004 by disgraced Mayor Sharpe James, despite having pleaded guilty to charges of resisting arrest, driving while intoxicated, reckless driving and refusing to take a breathalyzer test in 1998.

The incident leading to those charges is laid out in the complaint. It reads, "Police officers found Bradley drunk behind the wheel of his car, and when they tried to question him, were led by him on a chase to his residence. Defendant Bradley admitted to striking a police officer when they caught up to him in front of his home."

Bradley, in his short time in Trenton, has come under fire. Critics have questioned his adherence to city residency laws, pointed out that he's not qualified for the job according to state regulations and contend that his \$90,000-a-year job is unnecessary, as its duties used to be carried out on a part-time basis by a police lieutenant.

The Rahway native, has been involved in a car accident, where his city-owned undercover police car was totaled in a wreck while he was out driving it for personal errands.

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