



Local News

Macomb County Settles Lawsuit With Black Deputy Over Alleged Racism

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MOUNT CLEMENS (WWJ/AP) - Macomb County has settled a lawsuit by a black sheriff's deputy who says he's been repeatedly harassed because of his race.

Deborah Gordon, the attorney for Raymond Langley, says the lawsuit suddenly was settled Monday in federal court after four days of testimony. She said the deal is confidential.

Langley, who claims he was subjected to hateful pranks by coworkers at the Macomb County sheriff's department, said dispatchers referred to him as "Buckwheat," a black character from the old TV series "Our Gang."

Langley said someone within the department changed his computer screensaver to display what he felt was a racist image, and an Aryan Nation book, with a burning cross on the cover, was found in his patrol car.

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He said a statue of a black-face "lawn jockey" appeared in one of the substations where he worked, and another deputy told him the N-word was not considered offensive.

Langley complained to his bosses, he said, but they failed to take any action.

Gordon said her client has a thick skin, but it all became just too much for him to handle.

"It just got to the point where something had to be done," she said. "The cultural atmosphere of the Macomb County sheriff's department is such that it's just very tough not to take some legal action, even though he did continue working there."

Langley, who worked as a Mount Clemens police officer for 10 years, joined the sheriff's department in 2005. Gordon said the harassment began in 2008.

"He's still a part of the department at this time. I do imagine he'll be moving on though," she added. "He would love to continue in law enforcement."

An attorney for county officials, Tom Paxton, declined to comment on the settlement Wednesday.

WWJ has a call in to the sheriff's office for comment.

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