

# Papers: Garden City to pay man who alleged racial profiling

The retired Nassau County correction officer, who said village police officers violated his civil rights at a grocery store, will receive \$150,000.



Retired Correction Officer Ronald Lanier announced filing of his lawsuit in June 2017.  
Photo Credit: Howard Schnapp

**By Stefanie Dazio**

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The Village of Garden City and its police department will pay \$150,000 to a retired Nassau County correction officer who alleged that officers violated his civil rights in 2016 when they racially profiled him, and mistook him for a shoplifter, according to court documents.

The defendants — the village, police department, a police detective lieutenant, sergeant and two officers — did not admit liability, wrongdoing or damages, court documents show. A lawsuit — which claimed Ronald Lanier was assaulted both verbally and physically by police and sought at least \$40 million in damages — was filed in 2017 in the U.S. District Court Eastern District. The judgment was signed Monday.

The defendants will also have to pay for Lanier's attorney fees, which his lawyer, Frederick Brewington, declined to disclose. The two sides must still determine the exact amount.

"This is an enormous win. This is a very positive outcome not only with regard in a monetary outcome but a moral outcome," Brewington said late Monday afternoon.



Andrew Preston, an attorney for the defendants, declined to comment because the litigation is pending.

Lanier accepted the village's offer on April 9, court documents show.

He had accused two white Garden City police officers, George Byrd and John Russell, of racially profiling him at the Western Beef grocery store in Mineola. They were seeking an African American man who had allegedly shoplifted a purse from a village store and ran into the supermarket.

The officers allegedly came up behind Lanier, who is black, as he was shopping, ordered him to put his hands behind his back and threw him to the ground, Lanier has claimed. He has said they whispered in his ear, "You want to be a tough guy?" and then beat him on both sides of his ribs.

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Lanier has said that he complied with their orders and said, "I am on the job" — a phrase that law enforcement officers use to identify themselves to each other — and questioned why he was being detained, saying he had done nothing wrong.

Lanier was walked through the supermarket in handcuffs and put in the back of a police car. He was later released but not charged, and claimed he drove

himself to the hospital for treatment of bruises. The shoplifting suspect was later apprehended in the supermarket.

The Nassau County District Attorney's Office investigated and declined to file charges against Byrd and Russell.

The incident prompted a protest outside Western Beef as well as a news conference with black law enforcement organizations outside the village police department.



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