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Black NY policewoman arrested by white officers says she was victim of racial bias

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Attorney Fred Brewington describes how Nassau County Police Officer Dolores Sharpe, right, was charged with resisting arrest during a confrontation with two fellow white officers from her department, during a news conference in Hempstead, N.Y. on Thursday, Dec. 5, 2013. Sharpe has been suspended without pay and is due in court in January to answer the arrest charge. Brewington is demanding the charges be dropped and that she be immediately reinstated. (AP Photo/Frank Eltman)



Nassau County Police Officer Dolores Sharpe appears at a news conference Thursday, Dec. 5, 2013 in Hempstead, N.Y. Sharpe claims she was falsely charged with resisting arrest during a confrontation with two fellow white officers from her department. She has been suspended without pay and is due in court in January to answer the arrest charge. Her attorney is demanding the charges be dropped and that she be immediately reinstated. (AP Photo/Frank Eltman)

HEMPSTEAD, New York — A black police officer claimed Thursday that she was improperly charged with resisting arrest and harassment by two white officers from her own department last week in suburban New York.

The 19-year veteran of the Nassau County Police Department said she immediately identified herself as a fellow officer during an initial confrontation Nov. 29 with a uniformed officer while she was off-duty and shopping in West Hempstead. She said she was targeted because she is black.

"I have been wrongfully charged and falsely arrested, requiring me to defend against allegations that are based on prejudice coming from my own police force," Officer Dolores Sharpe said during a press conference at her attorney's Long Island office. She declined to take questions from reporters.

A spokeswoman said Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano was "prohibited from commenting on an ongoing investigation." A police department spokesman also declined comment, citing an ongoing internal affairs investigation. Inspector Kenneth Lack, the department spokesman, said he was unable to even discuss basic details about the officer's arrest.

A telephone message for the president of the Patrolman's Benevolent Association was not immediately returned.

The allegations are the latest in a series of public relations headaches for the department just east of New York City. In July, a former deputy police commissioner was sentenced to 60 days in jail and community service after being convicted of official misconduct. William Flanagan was accused of pulling strings to help the son of a wealthy department benefactor suspected in a school burglary; he is appealing the conviction.

Last month, a 27-year-old woman filed a federal lawsuit claiming a Nassau officer sexually abused her while she was in the back seat of his patrol car after being arrested on drunken driving charges. Another officer is awaiting trial on charges of having sexual encounters with women while on duty.

Sharpe's attorney claims the off-duty officer was shopping for weather stripping at a "dollar store" last Friday afternoon when a uniformed officer confronted her in a parking lot. Attorney Fred Brewington said the officer began verbally berating the woman, saying that where she parked had blocked his view of something he was watching for an undisclosed investigation.

The attorney claimed the officer was "using all types of curse words and making comments to her that I can't repeat."

The woman eventually went into the store and when she returned she was again confronted by the uniformed cop. After what Brewington described as continued screaming at Sharpe by the officer, Sharpe eventually left the parking lot, but was pulled over by him about two blocks away. That is where she was taken into custody and brought to a precinct house and later given a summons charging her with resisting arrest.

Court documents obtained by The Associated Press also show Sharpe was charged with harassment for allegedly attempting to strike a second officer with the chain from her police badge. Brewington said the additional charge was not unexpected.

She is due in court Jan. 9.

She said she was informed while being arrested that she was immediately suspended without pay. Sharpe is assigned to an office that screens prospective police applicants.

"I have been terribly disappointed by the Nassau County Police Department, to whom I have dedicated two decades of my work life," Sharpe told reporters.

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