

Former suburban officer's lawsuit claims false arrest

Acquitted of criminal charges, seeks \$24M

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Photo: Frank Eltman

FILE - In a Dec. 5, 2013 file photo, Nassau County Police Officer Dolores Sharpe appears at a news conference in Hempstead, N.Y. Sharpe, who was acquitted of harassment and resisting-arrest charges stemming from an off-duty encounter with fellow officers on Long Island, announced Wednesday, Nov. 11, 2015, that her lawyer has filed a federal civil rights lawsuit, claiming false arrest and malicious prosecution. (AP Photo/Frank Eltman, File) ORG XMIT: NY1123

Hempstead

A retired suburban New York police officer acquitted of harassment and resisting-arrest charges stemming from an off-duty encounter with fellow officers has filed a federal civil rights lawsuit, claiming false arrest and malicious prosecution.

Dolores Sharpe, 54, was arrested in November 2013 following a confrontation with white uniformed officers while she was shopping in West Hempstead. Sharpe, a Nassau County police officer for 20 years, said she was targeted because she is black.

Sharpe said after a jury acquitted her last April, she hoped she could put the matter behind her, but found it impossible to remain as a police officer and subsequently opted to retire.

"I hoped the police department would have recognized the wrong that was done, and they did not," she told reporters. "They failed me."

Sharpe and her attorney announced Wednesday that they filed a lawsuit seeking \$24 million in damages in U.S. District Court in Central Islip.

"That dollar amount is there to not only satisfy the jurisdictional requirements of the court, but also to make sure that Nassau County understands how important a case like this is," attorney **Frederick Brewington** said. "This complaint stands for many, many other officers, women, officers of color that have been abused in the **Nassau County Police Department** and have been laughed at. Dolores Sharpe has been abused, but she will not be laughed at."

A spokesman for the county attorney declined to comment. The county police union did not respond to an email request for comment. A police spokesman also declined comment.

One of the arresting officers testified at Sharpe's trial that he saw her while investigating a traffic accident in a store parking lot. He said they exchanged words after Sharpe accused him of blocking her from parking with his police car.

At Wednesday's news conference, Brewington played a recording from the officer's cellphone that included an exchange of expletives between Sharpe and the arresting officer. Sharpe also is heard repeatedly asking the officer to summon a supervisor.

"I have thought very long and hard about what I should do, and it became very clear to me that I was not respected or valued by the Nassau County Police Department," she said.