

Village cop alleges bias

Plans suit, says promotion denied because he's black

BY VERA CHINESE

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A veteran Southampton Village police officer plans to take legal action against the village and its police department, saying he was denied a promotion and discriminated against because he is black.

Kareem Proctor, who has been on the force since September 2008, filed a notice of claim with the village on June 20 seeking unspecified damages, an investigation into the actions of department officials and a formal apology for constitutional violations and discriminatory treatment.

"For the past two years I have been discriminated against based on my race and color," Proctor, who is being represented by Hempstead attorney Julissa Proano, wrote in the five-page notice.

Proctor, 40, of Flanders, said he joined the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office East End Drug Task Force on Sept. 9, 2015, and was promised by Southampton Village Police Chief Thomas Cummings that he would be promoted to detective after 18 months on that assignment.

Under New York State Civil Service Law, anyone serving in a detective or investigator position for at least 18 months "shall receive a permanent appointment to a detective or investigator position."

The East End Drug Task Force is made up of representatives from various East End law enforcement agencies.

On March 9, 2017, the 18-month anniversary of Proctor's start on the task force, he said he was removed from the task force, one day before the automatic promotion would have been guaranteed.

"Of all seven police officers that were on the task force since I have been employed . . . I was the only officer that was not promoted to a higher rank," he stated in the notice of claim. "The other officers were all Caucasian."

Southampton Village Administrator Russell Kratoville said the village does not comment on pending legal matters. Det. Sgt. Herman Lamison, the department's spokesman, also declined to comment.

Proctor, who Kratoville said was paid \$153,050 in 2018, including overtime, said he is one of three African American employees in a department of

more than 30 people.

Proctor said in the notice that he believed he would receive the promotion and was congratulated by Lamison days before he was removed from the task force. In his claim, Proctor notes that two other white officers, a man and a woman, were promoted to detective in the past two years despite job performance issues. Lamison declined to comment on the accusations.

Proctor stated that he has continued to act professionally and perform his job with "due diligence and dedication."

Neither Proctor nor Proano returned calls seeking comment.

Discrimination lawsuits have been filed against the village police department in the past.

Lamison, who is black, settled a federal discrimination lawsuit against the village in

2007 after alleging in 2005 that he had been passed over for a promotion in part because a village trustee erroneously thought he sold drugs. Lamison was not promoted to detective sergeant until after he filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 2005 and held a news conference with the support of the NAACP, according to the suit, which was settled for \$25,000.

Former Sgt. Christopher Broich, who is white and was fired in 2007 for misconduct, alleged in a 2008 federal reverse discrimination lawsuit that the village at the time rarely promoted anyone who was not of Polish descent and that officials conspired to promote Lamison to secure votes from African Americans in the community. The case was dismissed and Broich lost on appeal.