

# Latino Suffolk County Police Detective Files \$35 Million Lawsuit Against Department Over Alleged Discrimination

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- [f](#)
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- [in](#)
- [r](#)
- [+](#)

YAPHANK, N.Y. (CBSNewYork) — A Latino police detective on Long Island has filed a \$35 million federal civil rights lawsuit against his own department, alleging he was discriminated and retaliated against because of his race.

Det. Sgt. Tulio Serrata, a 23-year veteran of the force, could not hold back his emotions.

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“Suffolk County Police Department cannot continue to discriminate and retaliate. It has to stop, and I say that time should be now,” he said.

The detective sergeant is filing a \$35 million lawsuit against the Suffolk department, alleging his promotions were blocked five times based on his Dominican heritage, not his qualifications, including when the chief’s nephew was hired over him with a huge pay increase.

“I was passed over by individuals who were less qualified than I was,” Serrata said.

“Hiring and promotion go hand-in-hand. If you’re not in the game, you can’t make your way up the ladder,” said Frederick Brewington, Serrata’s attorney.

Serrata, president of the Suffolk Hispanic Society, was called before the Suffolk Legislature, investigating internal police promotions, and since then, he says he has been the victim of retaliation, transferred to a precinct with little chance for overtime and now worries if his colleagues have his back.

“My wife is sitting right here, and she is highly concerned. She wants me to retire,” Serrata said.

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As CBS2’s Jennifer McLogan reports, [Suffolk Police](#) will not comment on the pending litigation, but noted that following outreach and a marketing blitz, more than a quarter of the latest rookie recruits are minorities, the most diverse class in department history.

But it’s the less-qualified white men who are getting promoted, it’s alleged.

“And we’re asking the U.S. Justice Department to come and throw the book at Suffolk County for violating the promise they made,” Brewington said.

A promise made 35 years ago to mandate and oversee racial diversification within the police ranks.

Gerard Gigante, former Chief of Detectives for Suffolk County Police, who was named in the lawsuit, released the following statement:

*“The Suffolk County Police Department has strived to diversify whenever possible in order to more closely represent the community. During my tenure the Detective Division has been the most diversified Division within the Department. As often is the case with individual lawsuits, the specific facts and not accusations will determine the outcome.”*