

**SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
COUNTY OF BERNALILLO
STATE OF NEW MEXICO**

CLIFTON WHITE,

Plaintiff,

v.

Case No. _____

GEOFFREY STONE, in his individual capacity;
ERIC BROWN, in his individual capacity;
FLORENCE MULHERON, in her individual capacity;
ELIJAH LANGSTON, in his individual capacity; and
AARON VIGIL, in his individual capacity,

Defendants.

**COMPLAINT FOR VIOLATION OF FIRST, FOURTH,
SIXTH, AND FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT RIGHTS**

INTRODUCTION

This complaint captures the story of just one Black man in America, Clifton White, among millions of Black men whose life circumstances bring them into the criminal legal system. Every instrument of this system worked against Mr. White from the time he was considered an adult at eighteen years of age. For him, like many Black men, there is never making amends for youthful delinquent acts and moving beyond governmental control of his liberty. When Mr. White fully served his sentence, the State illegally kept jurisdiction over him. When Mr. White exercised his rights to air grievances against law enforcement's treatment of People of Color, law enforcement retaliated against him by arresting him. When Mr. White attempted to access his procedural rights to challenge his incarceration, the State denied him his Due Process. When Mr. White pleaded for the State to treat incarcerated people with dignity, high ranking corrections personnel accused him of being "mad because he got violated for protesting" and called him a "Nigg."

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. Jurisdiction and venue are proper pursuant to NMSA, §§ 41-4-1-27, common law, NMSA, § 38-3-1(A) (1988) and Article VI, Section 13 of the New Mexico Constitution. All of the parties reside or do business in New Mexico, and the acts complained of occurred exclusively within the State of New Mexico.

PARTIES

2. Plaintiff Clifton White (Plaintiff White) is a resident of Bernalillo County, New Mexico.

3. Defendant Geoffrey Stone (Defendant Stone) is an individual who was employed by the City of Albuquerque as a law enforcement officer at all times material to the facts alleged herein. Also, at all times material, Defendant Stone was acting under the course and scope of his employment under color of state law.

4. Defendant Eric Brown (Defendant Brown) is an individual who was employed by the City of Albuquerque as a law enforcement officer at all times material to the facts alleged herein. Also, at all times material, Defendant Brown was acting under the course and scope of his employment under color of state law.

5. Defendant Florence Mulheron, (Defendant Mulheron) is an individual who was employed by the State of New Mexico as a hearing officer at all times material to the facts alleged herein. Also, at all times material, Defendant Mulheron was acting under the course and scope of her employment under color of state law.

6. Defendant Elijah Langston (Defendant Langston) is an individual who was employed by the State of New Mexico as a probation and parole officer at all times material to the facts alleged herein. Also, at all times material, Defendant Langston was acting under the course and scope of his employment under color of state law.

7. Defendant Aaron Vigil (Defendant Vigil) is an individual who was employed by the County of Bernalillo as a supervisory corrections officer at all times material to the facts alleged herein. Also, at all times material, Defendant Vigil was acting under the course and scope of his employment under color of state law.

BACKGROUND

A. Mr. White's Underlying Criminal Case and History with the Failing of the Criminal Justice System

1. On or around May 20, 2002, a grand jury indicted Mr. White with two felony charges for conduct occurring on February 22, 2002 and March 4, 2002, when Mr. White had only just turned 18 years old.

2. Instead, on September 6, 2019, Mr. White was erroneously released on parole three years after the expiration date of September 6, 2016.

3. Mr. White spent his entire adult life in the revolving doors of the criminal justice system, without receiving proper treatment and rehabilitation, for a crime that occurred over fifteen years ago, when he was barely old enough to be prosecuted as an adult.

B. Mr. White's Experience with the Criminal Justice System Led Him to Activism

4. Mr. White's experience with discrimination and inequity in the criminal justice system led him to pursue activism to raise public awareness of the conditions in prisons and treatment of inmates and criminal defendants in the justice system in or around 2008.

5. Mr. White began to study prison procedures and organize the community in support of prisoners' rights.

6. Mr. White and his wife became leaders in Millions for Prisoners New Mexico, a local branch of a national organization, whose mission it is to "unite activists, advocates, prisoners, ex-prisoners, their family and friends."

7. In 2019, Mr. White became more heavily involved with the Black Lives Matter movement and began organizing with local activist communities and organizations to develop a local division.

8. In May 2020, the nation and the world were devastated by the news that the Minneapolis Police Department killed George Floyd by holding a knee across his neck while he was lying face-down on the asphalt for eight minutes and forty-six seconds as he begged for his life, over an allegation of a forged \$20 bill. As a result, Mr. White began amplifying his activism and organizing protests in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

9. On May 28, 2020, Mr. White organized a large peaceful protest against racism and police brutality along Central Avenue in Albuquerque. Hundreds of supporters attended the largely peaceful protest. Mr. White was lawfully exercising his First Amendment rights during this protest.

10. By this time, corrections officers at the prisons where he organized protests, as well as Albuquerque Police Department (APD) officers, became aware of Mr. White's activism and exercising of his First Amendment rights to protest.

11. Nonetheless, tensions ran high between protesters and the police, against whom they were protesting. After the protest had concluded, a few rogue individuals damaged property and became unruly, setting off aerial mortars near the intersection of Central Ave. and Wyoming Blvd.

12. Gunshots were also reported near Wisconsin Street NE, behind a crowd of protesters, which Albuquerque Police officers erroneously attributed to a silver Kia Amanti. APD employed its Investigative Support Unit (ISU) and tactical units to conduct a "high-risk" stop, armed with

AR-15s and armored vehicles. The officers commanded all four teenage boys in the vehicle to lie on the ground in the middle of the road and arrested them all.

13. The actions of the police officers in forcing the boys to the ground, in light of the similar manner in which officers in Minneapolis had murdered George Floyd, riled up the remaining protesters.

14. Eventually, the APD officers decided to withdraw from the area and left the Silver Kia with the keys unsecured on top of the vehicle and released the four teenagers away from the vehicle.

15. Defendant Geoffrey Stone, who had arrested one of the teenage boys, identified Mr. White among the crowd of several protesters. In his report, he noted that another officer reported that a “male subject” leaned up against the stopped vehicle, and concluded, without any indication as to the “male subject’s” identity by the other officer, that this male was Clifton White.

16. Mr. White, as an organizer of the protest, made a responsible decision to secure the Kia as he knew it was unsafe and reckless for APD officers to have left the Kia unattended with the keys on the hood. Mr. White also knew that he would be able to obtain information of the owner and ensure its safe return.

17. After the officers, including Defendant Stone, had left the area, APD air support observed the Kia Amanti drive away from the area to the 400 block of Wellesley Blvd. SE, where air support observed the driver exit the vehicle and approach another vehicle. The Kia Amanti was stopped by APD patrol units, and Clifton White was then detained for an unspecified reason. Supposedly, at least one of the officers who detained him was familiar with him from other interactions and identified him.

18. Defendant Stone contacted the owner of the Kia Amanti, seeking for him to press charges against Mr. White. The owner, the same teenage boy whom APD officers detained earlier, declined to press charges for the “theft” of his vehicle that the officers left unsecured at the scene, as heavily suggested by Defendant Stone.

19. Undeterred by the fact that the owner of the Kia Amanti informed Defendant Stone that Mr. White did not steal his vehicle, Defendant Stone sought an arrest warrant for this purpose from the Second Judicial District Attorney’s Office in Bernalillo County.

20. The Second Judicial District Attorney’s Office informed Defendant Stone that there was no probable cause to arrest Mr. White and declined to approve the arrest warrant for Mr. White.

21. Nonetheless, Defendant Stone sought a search warrant of the vehicle the next day. He concluded, without any other evidence, that because the Kia was “very clean and did not have any items inside,” that Mr. White had “tampered with the evidence in the Kia.”

22. At the time of these events, Mr. White was wrongfully on parole because the State kept jurisdiction over him despite it running out of jurisdiction on his sentence in September of 2016. *See Exhibit 1 “Order Discharging Defendant.”*

23. Upon information and belief, his parole officer, Defendant Elijah Langston, was cognizant that Mr. White had been placed back on parole after his jurisdiction had expired.

24. Defendant Langston had even approved extending Mr. White’s curfew past 9:00 p.m. to accommodate a job he had and knew that Mr. White was regularly working past his curfew.

25. Mr. White’s probation officer, Defendant Langston, was also aware that Mr. White had contact with Defendant APD officers on May 28, 2020.

26. In fact, Mr. White had met with Defendant Langston on May 31, 2020, after these alleged incidents occurred, and not only did Defendant Langston not inform him of any pending violations, but he indicated that his parole term was going well.

C. Mr. White's Arrest and Detention

27. On June 1, 2020, Defendant Stone, after conspiring with Defendant Langston, requested APD's ISU detectives to "locate and apprehend a wanted fugitive, Clifton White, who had a felony warrant for his arrest for a parole violation."

28. Defendant Stone, of course, is the same officer who attempted to arrest and detail Mr. White after knowing of and observing Mr. White exercising his First Amendment rights on May 28, 2020.

29. It is clearly established that APD officers are not the proper agents to arrest probationers and parolees for probation/parole violations, and "under no circumstances should cooperation between law enforcement officers and probation officers be permitted to make the probation system 'a subterfuge for criminal investigations.'" *State v. Gardner*, 1980-NMCA-122, ¶ 26, 95 N.M. 171, 175, 619 P.2d 847, 851.

30. Based on information and belief, during the times relevant to the incidents described herein, APD was under a directive by the City of Albuquerque and/or the Chief of Police to not make arrests on minor crimes and to issue summonses instead.

31. In the face of this existing law and the directive to not make arrests for suspected minor crimes when a summons would suffice, motivated by Mr. White's speech, based on information and belief, Defendant Stone investigated Mr. White's status on probation and contacted Mr. White's probation officer, Defendant Langston, to understand Mr. White's conditions of probation and to find technical violations and to involve himself in the arrest of Mr. White for

technical violations of probation--outside of the normal course and process by which probation violations are handled.

32. The day after Defendant Stone had attempted and failed to frame Mr. White for at least two crimes that he did not commit – namely, car theft and tampering with evidence – officers tracked down Mr. White at his residence and followed him in an “undercover capacity,” having no reasonable suspicion or probable cause as to any crimes he committed.

33. Defendants APD officers Sergeant Eric Brown, Geoffrey Stone, and other unknown officers then conspired to follow Mr. White into a liquor store in plain clothes, then put on their police vests once he entered the liquor store, and arrested him at the counter for a purported parole violation, having no authority or jurisdiction to do so.

34. Indeed, Defendant Langston had not issued any new violations until after his arrest. However, in his violation report, he inserted violations that had allegedly occurred in January and February 2020 - well beyond the 5-day requirement to notify a parolee of a violation.

35. Due to the illegal actions of Defendants Stone and Brown, Mr. White was then booked into the Bernalillo County Metropolitan Detention Center and placed in solitary confinement in Segregation for fourteen days.

36. On the day that Mr. White was booked into custody, Defendant Deputy Chief Aaron Vigil responded to a question from a fellow officer as to whether he knew anything about Mr. White protesting the death of Vicente Villela, an inmate at Metropolitan Detention Center who died while being restrained by corrections officers, “No[,] But the Girl that protested and her Boyfriend got arrested[.] And her Nigg Boyfriend is still in jail[.] She is claiming it[] was violated because he is black[.] And I would not doubt they will bring up the losers Brandon

killed.” The officer responded, “Yeah I heard about that inmate. He’s mad because he got violated for protesting.”

37. Based on information and belief, Defendant Vigil was in a position of authority at MDC and was involved in the decision to keep Mr. White in segregation for 14 days.

38. Mr. White’s time in segregation was because of Defendant Vigil’s disagreement with Mr. White’s protected speech and support of Black people as indicated by his usage of the N-word in reference to Mr. White’s speech.

39. Mr. White was retaliated against for his speech when Defendant Vigil ensured that Mr. White remain in segregation while his was in MDC.

40. Ultimately, Mr. White was transferred to Central New Mexico Correctional Facility (CNMCF) on June 4, 2020.

D. Mr. White’s Unfair Treatment and Retaliation Continued During His Parole Hearing

41. Mr. White’s unfair treatment and retaliation continued while he was incarcerated at CNMCF.

42. Mr. White was only given two days’ notice before his preliminary hearing before Defendant Hearing Officer Florence Mulheron, and was denied presence of counsel at the hearing.

43. Mr. White retained counsel to advise him and represent him in his parole hearing. However, he was delayed or denied access to legal phone calls prior to his hearings in order to provide effective assistance of counsel.

44. Mr. White’s counsel submitted a letter to Defendant Mulheron prior to the preliminary hearing, with attachments supporting Mr. White’s defenses that Mr. White had over-served his sentence and that the violations alleged only constituted technical violations.

45. On June 11, 2020, Defendant Mulheron held a preliminary hearing without permitting Mr. White access to counsel.
46. Defendant Mulheron found probable cause to hold a full evidentiary hearing in front of the New Mexico Probation and Parole Board.
47. Mr. White remained incarcerated at CNMCF while the New Mexico Probation and Parole Board hearing was pending.
48. While the hearing was pending, Mr. White continued to be obstructed by CNMCF from access to counsel.
49. Mr. White's counsel's requests for legal calls continued to be denied or significantly delayed for days, or even weeks, on multiple occasions.
50. Due to COVID-19 restrictions at the facilities, Mr. White's counsel was unable to visit the facility in-person. Thus, legal calls and legal mail were the only modes of communication available to Mr. White to access his counsel during this time.
51. In addition to the denials and delays in legal calls, Mr. White's legal mail was significantly delayed and, upon information and belief, tampered with by corrections officers, with pages missing upon delivery.
52. Mr. White's counsel attempted to contact the New Mexico Probation and Parole Board on multiple occasions to obtain information as to the proceedings for the Parole Hearing, but received no response to any attempts to contact.
53. Mr. White requested and was again denied counsel's presence at the Parole Hearing.
54. Despite Defendant Langston's recent visit with Mr. White prior to his arrest in which no violations had been alleged, Defendant Langston completed a "Parole Violation Scoring Form," in which he labeled Mr. White an "Absconder," determined without evidence that Mr. White had

an “Active Gang Membership,” and scored Mr. White at the highest level of the Austin Risk Score on or around June 4, 2020.

55. On July 20, 2020, Mr. White’s counsel submitted a letter to the New Mexico Probation and Parole Board outlining Mr. White’s defenses, including that Mr. White had over-served his sentence and there were jurisdictional issues with the New Mexico Probation and Parole Board; there were errors and misstatements in Defendant Langston’s risk assessment; the fact that Mr. White’s alleged violations were technical; and the fact that his arrest was pretext for First Amendment retaliation.

56. On July 22, 2020, the New Mexico Probation and Parole Board held an Evidentiary Hearing as to the termination of Mr. White’s parole.

57. Mr. White again argued that the New Mexico Probation and Parole Board lacked jurisdiction over him, and denied the allegations made against him.

58. During the hearing, one of the three members of the New Mexico Probation and Parole Board who were present emphatically stated that the allegations against Mr. White were technical, and that the Board did not remand parolees to incarceration for technical violations.

59. Incarcerating parolees for technical violations during the COVID-19 pandemic is considered particularly inhumane due to the susceptibility of detention facilities to the spread of infectious diseases.

60. Nonetheless, the Parole Board found that Mr. White had violated parole, and sentenced him to the remainder of his illegal parole term, until September 21, 2021.

61. Mr. White remained incarcerated at CNMCF from June 4, 2020, until his transfer to the Guadalupe County Correctional Facility (GCCF) and eventual release on or about October 29, 2020, when counsel for Mr. White filed an Unopposed Motion for Order Discharging Defendant

from Incarceration with the court in his original criminal case based on the errors in calculating Mr. White's parole terms and sentence that he had raised several times to the Parole Board.

CLAIMS UNDER THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

COUNT I-FIRST AMENDMENT CLAIM (RETALIATION FOR FREE SPEECH)

(Defendants Brown and Stone)

62. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the preceding paragraphs as though they were stated fully herein.

63. Defendants Brown and Stone's actions were motivated by Mr. Whites involvement in protected protest activity. Defendants Brown and Stone were angered by the Black Lives Matter movement and retaliated against Mr. White for his involvement in protected protest activities. These Defendants had no lawful authority to investigate and arrest Mr. White for technical parole violations.

64. These Defendants initiated an investigation and arrest of Mr. White, in retaliation for his involvement in protected protest activity. These Defendants acted intentionally or with deliberate indifference and their actions violated Plaintiff's First Amendment rights.

COUNT II -- FOURTH AMENDMENT CLAIM

(UNREASONABLE SEIZURE)

(Defendants Brown and Stone)

65. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the preceding paragraphs as though they were stated fully herein.

66. Plaintiff had and has a Fourth Amendment right to be free from unreasonable seizures of his person.

67. These Defendants violated Plaintiff's Fourteenth Amendment rights to be free from unreasonable seizures when they detained him without reasonable suspicion that Mr. White had

committed any crime, and to the extent they had any supposed reasonable suspicion pertaining to Plaintiff, these Defendants had no authority to enforce technical parole violations.

68. That seizure was wrongful, unreasonable, and deprived Plaintiff of his Fourth Amendment rights to be free of unreasonable seizures.

COUNT III-FIRST AMENDMENT CLAIM (RETALIATION FOR FREE SPEECH)
(Defendant Vigil)

69. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the preceding paragraphs as though they were stated fully herein.

70. Defendants Vigil's actions were motivated by Mr. White's involvement in protected protest activity. As evidenced by their text exchange, Defendant Vigil was angered by the Black Lives Matter movement and retaliated against Mr. White for his involvement in protected protest activities.

71. Defendant Vigil took these actions against Mr. White, in retaliation for his involvement in protected protest activity. Defendant Vigil acted intentionally or with deliberate indifference and his actions violated Plaintiff's First Amendment rights.

COUNT IV- SIXTH AND FOURTEENTH AMENDMENTS CLAIM
(ACCESS TO THE COURTS AND DUE PROCESS)
(Defendant Mulheron)

72. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the preceding paragraphs as though they were stated fully herein.

73. Plaintiff has and had a liberty in freedom of restraint and accordingly he had constitutionally protected rights to meaningful access to his attorney and a meaningful opportunity to be heard and to defend against allegations against him.

74. Defendant Mulheron violated these rights when she delayed Mr. White's access to his attorney's mail, did not give Mr. White meaningful notice about his parole hearing, and did not allow Mr. White access to any information to defend against the allegations against him.

75. Defendant Mulheron acted intentionally or with deliberate indifference and her actions violated Plaintiff's Due Process and Access to the Courts rights.

COUNT V- FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT CLAIM
(VIOLATION OF PROCEDURAL DUE PROCESS)
(Defendant Langston)

76. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the preceding paragraphs as though they were fully stated herein.

77. Under the Due Process Clause, individuals in this Country have significant liberty interests in freedom of their person and freedom of locomotion. These liberties are protected by the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

78. For matters invoking a liberty such as the right to be free from incarceration, due process is required.

79. To ensure this right for people under the supervision of the State of New Mexico, it has set forth a process for how parole violations can be initiated.

80. Plaintiff had a reasonable expectation that Defendant Langston would adhere to the process for initiating parole violations against him that could lead to his arrest.

81. Defendant Langston, with knowledge of the proper process for initiating parole violations, provided information to Defendants Brown and/or Stone that he knew would lead to the arrest of Plaintiff without adherence to the procedure for parole violations.

82. Plaintiff was arrested due to Defendant Langston acting intentionally or with deliberate indifference to Plaintiff's Due Process rights.

COUNT VI- FOURTH AMENDMENT CLAIM
(UNREASONABLE SEIZURE)
(Defendant Langston)

83. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the preceding paragraphs as though they were fully stated herein.

84. Plaintiff has and had a Fourth Amendment right to be free from unreasonable seizures.

85. Defendant Langston violated this right when he drafted and signed an arrest order after Plaintiff had already been arrested for technical parole violations by Defendants Stone and Brown.

86. Defendant Langston provided information in the arrest order that he knew was misleading or false, such as that Plaintiff violated curfew restrictions when he knew that provision had been waived for Plaintiff and that he was time-barred by NMCD policy from including ISP conditions as a violation in an arrest order.

87. The omissions and false statements in the arrest warrant surrounding NMCD policies for parole violations and Defendant Langston's express waiver of Plaintiff's curfew were material in the decision to issue the arrest order.

COUNT VII: FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT CLAIM
42 U.S.C. § 1985 – CONSPIRACY TO VIOLATE CIVIL RIGHTS
(All Defendants)

88. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the preceding paragraphs as though they were stated fully herein.

89. Section 1985(3) of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides a civil remedy for conspiracies to interfere with constitutionally or federally protected rights when motivated by invidiously discriminatory animus.

90. As demonstrated herein, Defendants acted in concert, coordinated, and thereby engaged in a conspiracy against Mr. White.

91. Evidence of the existence of a conspiracy against Mr. White includes but is not limited to communications among Defendants related to Mr. White's arrest, parole, treatment during confinement, and/or coordination evincing unlawful hostility and racial animus towards Mr. White.

92. As demonstrated herein, the Defendants took actions in furtherance of the conspiracy.

93. The actions taken in furtherance of the conspiracy include but are not limited to restraining and/or confining Mr. White without his consent; making racially hostile comments about Mr. White; retaliating against Mr. White for exercising his First Amendment rights by confining and/or restraining Mr. White; and creating inaccurate time figuring sheets for Mr. White.

94. Defendants' conduct was done with the intent to deprive Mr. White of the equal protection of, or equal privileges and immunities under, the law.

95. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants' conduct, Mr. White has suffered substantial damages, including but not limited to injury to his Fourteenth Amendment rights, in an amount to be proven at trial.

Respectfully submitted by:

/s/ **Leon Howard**

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EXHIBIT 1

FILED
2ND JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
Bernalillo County
10/27/2020 9:11 AM
CLERK OF THE COURT
Deana Rael

SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
COUNTY OF BERNALILLO
STATE OF NEW MEXICO

STATE OF NEW MEXICO,
Plaintiff,

vs.

No. **D-202-CR-2002-01530**
D-202-CR-2003-02079

CLIFTON WHITE,
NMCD 60458,
Defendant.

ORDER DISCHARGING DEFENDANT

THIS MATTER having come before the Court by agreement of the Parties, and the Court being duly apprised regarding the legal reasoning underlying the agreement of the Parties relating to the matters addressed herein, and having been persuaded by said reasoning;

THE COURT FINDS that the Defendant is entitled to at least forty-two (42) days of Pre-Sentence Confinement credits (PSC) from at least May 9, 2002, through June 19, 2002, that have never been credited to him, contrary to the requirements of §31-20-12 NMSA 1978, as amended. Additionally, when on December 20, 2012 the Court imposed a five-year period of imprisonment for the Defendant's Fourth Probation Violation in this matter, neither the Parties nor the Court properly accounted for or delineated in the probation revocation order the amount of probation credit that Defendant had already earned toward Count 5 of CR 2003-02079. As a result of these oversights, the New Mexico Corrections Department mistakenly paroled the Defendant on a one-year parole period on Count 8 of CR 2003-02079 starting June 5, 2015, when instead he should have been paroled on a two-year parole period on Count 2 of CR 2002-01530. The Court specifically finds that Defendant discharged all remaining

parole jurisdiction on or about September 6, 2016, and thus was inadvertently erroneously released onto parole on September 16, 2019.

WHEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the Defendant has completed his sentencing obligations in the above-captioned matter and is hereby discharged on these case numbers, and the New Mexico Corrections Department is ordered to release the above-named Defendant forthwith.

SO ORDERED,



THE HON. CINDY LEOS
DISTRICT JUDGE, DIV. IX

APPROVED:



GERARD W. TREICH, JR.
COUNSEL FOR THE STATE

SUBMITTED BY:

Via email, 26 October 2020

GEOFF SCOVIL
COUNSEL FOR DEFENDANT
FOR
A BETTER TOMORROW
EMESE NAGY
NICHOLAS AGUIRRE ZAFIRO
JOSEPH SANCHEZ

