

Black Woman Sues Murray City Over 2018 Arrest, Alleging Racial Bias

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<https://www.kuer.org/post/black-woman-sues-murray-city-over-2018-arrest-alleging-racial-bias>

Donna Miller was heading to nursing school in August 2018, when she was pulled over by Murray Police Officer Jarom Allred for driving an uninsured car, according to a federal lawsuit Miller filed Monday.

Miller said she gave Allred her insurance card and he then accused her of driving under the influence of alcohol. She took a breathalyzer test which came back negative, she added.

"He then came back to me, handcuffed me, put me in the car and took me down to the station," she said. "But while we were driving in the car ... he was being very like, 'If I was you, I would do blah, blah, blah,' trying to, make me mad. And I caught on to that despite that I was nervous and ashamed then and all this. I caught on to what he was trying to do. So I kept quiet after that."

The lawsuit alleges that Allred and Murray City violated Miller's constitutional rights to equal protection under the 14th Amendment. It says the stop was racially motivated, because of a voice recording attorneys obtained where Allred "openly expressed racist stereotypes long associated with black folks ... that they habitually or recreationally use marijuana" despite the fact that there was no evidence that Miller had been using the drug. The lawsuit argues that there was no probable cause to arrest her.

Murray City, however, refutes the lawsuit's allegations. It said in a statement that the police department has reviewed the incident and found that "the officer's actions were consistent with policy, objectively reasonable, and supported by the law."

"The evidence gathered shows Ms. Miller was not targeted for her race but was stopped and cited for driving under the influence based on her driving pattern, statements to the officer, and poor performance on field sobriety tests," the city said in a statement.

Allred did not return a request for comment Monday evening.

Once back at the station, armed officers took Miller into a dark room to measure the size of her pupils and interrogated her about alleged use of marijuana, according to the lawsuit.

"I got more panicked because here I am in a dark room with two white officers with guns and the Sandra Bland stuff had just happened," Miller said, referring to a black woman who was found hanging in a jail cell in Texas in 2015 after being taken into custody following a traffic stop. Bland's death was ruled a suicide. "So all I wanted to do was be able to get home to see my family, or to hear my children's voice."

Officers took Miller's blood and tested it for the presence of eight different drugs, and all the tests came back negative, according to the lawsuit and an attorney for the city.

Miller was then charged with a DUI, but the charges were eventually dropped, for "evidentiary reasons," according to court documents. Miller said she was able to borrow around \$800 to release her car from an impound lot and her license was suspended for several months.

"I was humiliated," Miller said. "I was scared ... From 2018 to now, I am so afraid I can't hear sirens, I couldn't go to the protests because I was afraid of cops."

It also alleges that the incident shows that Murray City doesn't properly train officers, and should not have submitted the charges to city prosecutors due to a lack of evidence.

"On information and belief, Officer Allred's failure to articulate reasonable suspicion or show probable cause to arrest, prosecute and deprive Ms. Miller of her Constitutional rights is part of a custom of policy within MCPD to target black citizens with unsubstantiated claims of drug use," the lawsuit said. The City said in a statement that it "takes seriously any allegations like those made by Ms. Miller and stands firm that her allegations are not true." The city intends to challenge the lawsuit in court.

Read the entire lawsuit here:

Sonja Hutson covers politics for KUER. Follow her on Twitter @SonjaHutson

[Miller v Allred Complaint \(PDF\)](#)

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