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Jennings: new police chief, new mayor, still the same old discrimination, selective enforcement, lots of litigation

February 21, 2021 by [tomaswell](#)

The City of Jennings has quietly settled two federal discrimination lawsuits against the city police department while a federal court judge has refused to dismiss a third discrimination lawsuit by yet another former police officer.

So, what, exactly, is going on in Jennings?

For openers, the subject of the first two of those lawsuits, former Police Chief Todd D'Albor who, when the going got tough, got going to nearby New Iberia where currently serves as that city's chief of police.

Former officers Debbie Breaux and Priscilla Goodwin, in separate actions, obtained settlements, confidential, of course, of their complaints. The gist of Breaux's complaint included allegations that D'Albor and Deputy Chief Daniel Semmes:

- Repeatedly refused to send her to a Police Officer Standards and Training (P.O.S.T.) within a year of her employment as a police officer as required by state law;
- Instructed her to write a negative statement about fellow officers;
- Intimidated her in front of co-workers;
- Threatened her with the loss of overtime hours, and
- Reduced her work-hours.

Breaux, now 64, began her career with the JPD in January 1986.

Goodwin, whose age was not provided, began working for JPD in June 1988 and also served on the city's Civil Service Board.

Among Goodwin's claims were:

- D'Albor demonstrated "a pattern of discriminating" against the older and more experienced employees;
- D'Albor, through Semmes, launched an illegal investigation against her;
- The chief paid younger dispatchers with less experience higher salaries and that two other dispatchers with less than a year's experience each were paid the same as Goodwin, who had 28 years' experience.

But the most significant charge that Goodwin was singled out for punishment and harassment because she had voted against a D'Albor proposal while sitting as a member of the civil service board. She did not specify what the specific issue was that she voted against.

"Deputy Chief Semmes has even gone so far as to contact my part-time job in Elton to glean information that employer in order to use same against me in my full-time position at the Jennings Police Department.

BREAUX SETTLEMENT (<https://tomaswell.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/breaux-settlement.pdf>) Download (<https://tomaswell.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/breaux-settlement.pdf>)
PRISCILLA GOODWIN SETTLEMENT (<https://tomaswell.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/priscilla-goodwin-settlement.pdf>) Download (<https://tomaswell.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/priscilla-goodwin-settlement.pdf>)

The Breaux and Goodwin settlements were the culmination of years of problems within the Jennings Police Department and a third former officer, **CHRISTOPHER LEHMAN** (<https://louisianavoice.com/2020/08/12/louisiana-aclu-drops-accusatory-bombshells-on-jeff-davis-calcasieu-sos-jennings-pd-in-letter-to-justice-department/>), has been at the center of the ongoing controversy.

Lehman's pedigree carries considerable weight. He is a retired Navy veteran as well as a retired federal government civilian employee whose problems began when, as a community services coordinator for JPD, began as far back as 2011, giving too much attention to suspicious activity on his street – too much, that is, for someone's comfort zone.

In 2019, he reached another of those "**CONFIDENTIAL SETTLEMENTS**" (<https://tomaswell.files.wordpress.com/2019/01/city-of-jennings-settles-1.pdf>) with the city for wrongful termination. While the details of the settlement were sealed, it is believed to have been in the **SIX-FIGURE RANGE** (<https://louisianavoice.com/2019/01/26/whats-going-on-in-jennings-a-good-cop-who-exposed-drug-deals-is-fired-sues-and-wins-6-figure-out-of-court-settlement/>).

Now, as a result of that lawsuit and subsequent settlement, Lehman has filed yet another lawsuit against current mayor Henry Guinn, who tweeted as recently as Feb. 19:

"We are successful as a city because we're small enough to be nimble, we employee [sic] department heads that take pride in their work, and we're financially capable to implement proactive practices. If you don't believe me study the past 12 months."

Lehman's most recent litigation is based on what he perceives to be violations of the 1st and 14th Amendments that stem from retaliation on the city's part for his win from his initial lawsuit, first filed in 2016.

2-10-2021 LEHMAN VS GUINN MOTION TO DISMISS DENIED
<https://tomaswell.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/2-10-2021-lehman-vs-guinn-motion-to-dismiss->

[denied.pdf](#)) Download (<https://tomaswell.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/2-10-2021-lehman-vs-guinn-motion-to-dismiss-denied.pdf>)

Despite the city's continued refusal to address concerns in Lehman's neighborhood, he claims that demolition and cleanup of a home in a "predominately white" neighborhood was justified by the city because of the negative impact on the value of other real estate in the surrounding area.

The city's defense, if one can actually call it a defense, is that Lehman's case had prescribed, meaning he did not file suit within the legal time limits, under Louisiana law, a year, an argument the court rejected because of a May 2020 email that Guinn sent Lehman which U.S. Magistrate Judge Kathleen Kay wrote constituted "the first notice [Lehman] had of the potential discrimination against him for his 2016 lawsuit against the city."

The series of events in places like Jennings, Welsh, New Iberia, Abbeville and Monroe, among others, tend to demonstrate that the further from Baton Rouge one gets, the more likely small-town administrations, parish councils/police juries, school boards and sheriffs' offices are to test the legal limits of state law and to try and restrict citizens' rights.

This attempt to keep government operating in the darkened corners, out of sight from the public underscores the words in the masthead of this blog:

"It is understandable when a child is afraid of the dark – but unforgivable when a man fears the light."

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