



# CONNECTICUT POST

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## School Officials Sued for Discrimination

MONROE - A lawyer for a black family has sued four school officials for \$1 million, accusing them of racial discrimination.

The suit, filed on behalf of Gerald Isaac Jr. by Elisabeth Seieroe Mauer, a Ridgefield lawyer, claims that Sue Ebdon, principal at Stepney Elementary School, enforced school district policies more harshly in the case of the boy - an 8-year-old third-grader at the time of the alleged discrimination - than in regard to white children.

In addition to the boy, his father, the Rev. Gerald Isaac Sr., is a plaintiff in the lawsuit.

The defendants, in addition to Ebdon, are Colleen Girard, principal of Chalk Hill School; Norman Michaud, the former superintendent of schools; and Alan Beitman, who is now the superintendent.

A marshal served the suit on Beitman during Monday night's Board of Education meeting.

The suit describes a number of alleged acts of racial discrimination, and seeks a mandatory injunction ordering the district to remove all disciplinary documentation regarding Gerald Isaac Jr. from its files. It also demands the alleged discriminatory conduct end.

The suit claims Ebdon falsely reported to the state Department of Children and Families in April 2004 and in June 2004 that she suspected Isaac Sr. of child abuse, causing the DCF to remove the boy from the custody of his father and mother for four days until the charges were determined by the agency to be unfounded both times.

The suit also claims Ebdon falsely reported to Monroe police in June 2004 that she feared for her life when Isaac Sr. came to school to pick up his son, which led to his arrest and shackling in his son's presence on charges of disturbing the peace. The charge was later nolle.

The suit claims Girard has enforced rules at the middle school more harshly against Gerald Isaac Jr. than for white children, and failed to protect him from bullying and harassment, even after being informed repeatedly that white youngsters had assaulted him and taunted him with racial epithets and slurs.

The suit claims Girard's selective enforcement of rules and falsification of disciplinary records led to Beitman attempting to have the boy evaluated for special education services without basis.

Michaud had knowingly authorized the alleged violations, the lawsuit contends.

School officials referred all questions to the district's attorney, Stephen Sedor in Bridgeport. Debbie Dutches, chairwoman of the Board of Education, also referred questions to Sedor.

Sedor said he could not comment on the litigation specifically, but said in general he expects the school district to prevail in the case.

Isaac could not be reached for comment, but Maurer, his lawyer, said it is difficult to quantify some of the damages sought through the suit.

"How do you quantify the worth of a son seeing his father shackled in front of him?" Maurer said.

The statewide National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is supporting the family in this case, said Greg Johnson, president of the Valley chapter of the organization.

"It's in the attorney's hands, but we will be supporting this family," he said.