

podcast 2 -17 minutes Whitpain Discrimination Cases (1)

Transcribed by [TurboScribe.ai](#). [Go Unlimited](#) to remove this message.

Welcome to the Deep Dive. Today, we're taking a close look at Whitpain Township in Pennsylvania, specifically the publicly available information around allegations of misconduct and, well, discrimination. Yeah, we've gathered quite a bit from different places.

There's the state's official court system website, another site called Crooked Whitpain Township, PA Bluebell, various court documents from civil rights cases, news articles too, and even a Reddit forum, our Whitpain Township. Right. So our goal here is really to synthesize all that.

We want to understand the key allegations, what legal actions have been taken, and, you know, how the community seems to be reacting. Exactly. Trying to piece together a clearer picture from all these different threads of information.

Okay, let's maybe start with that Crooked Whitpain website. It seems pretty central. Its main claim seems to be that the township government hasn't acted when it should have, and this has harmed people, raises questions about neglect, maybe even discrimination.

That's the core argument. Yes. And it's not vague either.

It lists specific groups, specific people they say are victims. Like? Well, there's the case of Dante Perez Jones, a black veteran. The site claims his death is unsolved, wasn't investigated properly.

Then there's mention of a black family, victims of a home invasion where, again, the allegation is that known suspects weren't charged or questioned effectively. So multiple instances potentially pointing towards, well, a pattern, if true. Potentially, yes.

If these varied cases hold up, it could suggest something systemic. And the site details other cases, too, doesn't it? It does. It mentions Scott Testa and Holda Dick.

They're a mixed race couple. Their situation involves claims of discrimination and retaliation. Then there's alleged abuse involving a handicapped child and his father, legal actions supposedly designed to keep black people out of the township, and even a discrimination suit from a former black police officer, Jamil Vann.

That's quite a range of serious allegations. It is. And the website doesn't shy away from naming names either, specific township officials, police leadership.

Who's specific? Scott Badami, the chair of the township supervisors, is named. Also supervisors, Kimberly Koch, Jeff Campolongo, Joyce Keller, Sarah Silvarian. Then there's the township manager, Eric Traub, police chief Ken Lawson, detective Tom Wittig, and officers Brian Sweisfurth, Travis DeCaro, and Sergeant Ivan Costi.

Quite a list. Wow. Okay.

Let's maybe focus on one of those cases mentioned prominently, the robbery involving Scott Testa and Holda Dick. September 19th, 2024, the site says. Yes, that date.

And they claim the stolen property and damages were over \$30,000. What's the key claim about how that was handled? Well, the really striking part is the claim that the victims, Testa and Dick, identified two people, Brent Bowers and a Dr. Douglas George Casara, MD, as the alleged perpetrators. And they say they have clear video evidence.

Clear video. But the allegation is? The allegation is that despite this, the Whitpain police leadership refused to question them properly or crucially charge them with felony offenses. That's a major point of contention.

And they also claim they can't even get the police report. Right. They say it's been withheld even after they filed open records request, you know, the formal way to ask for government documents with both the township and the Montgomery County DA's office.

Withholding a report after official requests. That definitely raises questions about transparency, doesn't it? It certainly does. And because of all this alleged inaction and lack of transparency, the website says Testa and Dick filed a federal civil rights lawsuit.

Federal court. So they're alleging violations of constitutional rights. Exactly.

That takes it to a different level. And they claim their own investigation, plus work by independent investigators, has uncovered what they call a disturbing and systemic pattern of racial discrimination in the township. The site makes another really serious claim, too, doesn't it? Something about potential payments.

Yes, a very serious one. An allegation that individuals might have been, well, compensated somehow, paid off to ensure Dr. Kacera wasn't charged or questioned. That points towards potential corruption.

OK, so these are the claims on the website. How does this translate into the legal actions we found? You mentioned the Testa lawsuit. Yes, that's formally filed in the Common Pleas Court.

Case number 2024-27-9920. Scott Testa vs. Police Chief Kenneth Lawson and Detective Sergeant Thomas Wittig.

And the lawsuit emphasizes that Testa's partner, Holda Dick, is black. That's central to their case. And the core of the suit is the alleged failure to investigate the burglary properly.

That's a big part of it, yes. But it also brings in context from before the burglary. Oh, like what? The complaint details allege threatening calls and messages from Jeffrey Kacera, that's George Kacera's father, before the break-in.

And these reportedly included racial slurs aimed at Holda Dick. Ah, so they're building a case that there was racial animosity potentially influencing events even before the crime. Precisely.

That context is key to their argument about bias affecting the investigation later on. And the burglary itself? The lawsuit describes masked individuals, suspects looking like Jeffrey Kacera and Brent Bowers, even blood left behind. Yes, all detailed in the filing.

It sounds like there was physical evidence at the scene. But the lawsuit claims the investigation didn't focus on that. It alleges that Detective Wittig seemed more focused on items the tenant, George Kacera, claimed were missing, rather than the burglary reported by Testa, the property owner.

That shift in focus is questioned in the suit. So what was the outcome, according to the lawsuit, regarding charges? The suit claims Brent Bowers ended up only being charged with minor offenses, disorderly conduct and harassment, and Jeffrey Kacera, not charged at all. Which, given the initial description of a burglary with masked intruders and threats, seems, well, potentially disproportionate.

That's certainly the argument the plaintiffs are making. And they go further, alleging the police then turned their investigation towards Testa and Dick themselves. Investigating the victims.

That's the claim. They allege this was retaliation, because Testa and Dick kept pushing for a proper investigation of the burglary. And they tie it to discrimination based on their mixed-race relationship.

So that leads to the specific counts in the lawsuit. Yes. First Amendment retaliation for speaking out and pursuing the investigation and violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, arguing they were treated differently due to race.

That 14th Amendment guarantees equal protection under the law, right? Correct. And they also mention another related legal action, an equity complaint filed by Whitpane Township against Testa, trying to stop him from renting his properties. They claim that is also retaliatory.

Wow. And Testa is demanding a jury trial for his suit. Yes, he is.

It's clear they intend to see this through. OK, so that's a complex picture just from the Testa case. But we found other legal actions mentioning racial bias in Whitpane too, like Riccobono versus Whitpane Township.

That one was different, wasn't it? Not police interaction, but a roller rink. Yeah, kind of fascinating, right? Riccobono, who is white, wanted to build an indoor roller skating rink. The allegation in his federal lawsuit was that the township denied his application because of race.

The claim was they denied it specifically to stop Black people from coming into the area to use the rink. So again, an allegation of racial discrimination influencing township decisions, just in a

different context, zoning or permits. And this was also a federal civil rights case? Yes, U.S. District Court.

Riccobono claimed violations under federal civil rights laws, specifically 42 U.S.C. Sections 1983 and 1985. He alleged a conspiracy to deny his rights and equal protection under the 14th Amendment. Arguing the township used its official power to discriminate.

Essentially, yes, acting under color of state law to deprive him of property rights and equal protection, driven by an intent to exclude Black patrons. And importantly, the federal court found his constitutional claims were substantial enough to even hear the case in federal court. So the court saw merit in the constitutional question being raised.

Did Riccobono win the whole federal case? Not entirely. While the court agreed there was a basis for federal jurisdiction because of the constitutional claims, some specific parts of his complaint, particularly around the conspiracy element, were dismissed. Maybe procedural reasons, maybe not enough evidence for those specific points.

But he did eventually get his project approved. Yes, but through the state court system. He won appeals at the state level and overturned the township's denial of the building permit.

So the federal case didn't give him everything, but it still highlights these ongoing themes of alleged racial discrimination and challenges to local government actions under civil rights law. Exactly. It adds another layer, suggesting these concerns weren't just isolated to one incident or one family.

And there was another civil rights case too, Nero v. Whitpain Township, filed more recently. Yes, December 2023. Again, in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, Michael Nero is the plaintiff.

Defendants are Whitpain Township officers Anthony Garstin, Justin Gannon, and Chief Kenneth Lawson again. We don't have the full details of that complaint, do we? No, the available information is limited on the specifics. But the fact that it is another federal civil rights case filed against the township and specific officers relatively recently, well, that underscores that these legal challenges based on civil rights concerns are ongoing.

It shows continued legal scrutiny. It certainly suggests a pattern of legal action being taken, naming similar parties. It does.

And separate from these civil rights suits, there was also that settlement involving the Whitpain Police Department and a former employee. Right, from July 2024. Employee number 10461.

Details weren't released. No, settlements like that often have confidentiality clauses. But the township manager was quoted saying they generally prefer settlements in personnel matters over going through litigation.

Which implies there was some kind of dispute or issue there, serious enough to potentially lead

to litigation if not settled. Exactly. It hints at past personnel issues within the department, even if we don't know the specifics.

The lack of public detail leaves you wondering what the underlying problem might have been. OK, let's shift gears a bit and look at that Reddit forum, Our Whitpain Township. It seems like a pretty lively place for discussion on these topics.

Oh, absolutely. It's become, well, a real hub for some very strong opinions and very direct accusations, particularly around the crooked Whitpain allegations and the Testa case. There's one user, Norda3, who seems quite prominent.

Extremely vocal, yes. Norda3 makes some really forceful claims directly against township officials, the police and even the Montgomery County D.A., Kevin Steele, about how the Testa robbery was handled. What kind of specific claims are they making? Really serious stuff.

Allegations of bribery claiming Dr. Kassara's father paid someone off to protect his son. Claims that the decision to only charge Brent Bowers with minor offenses was corrupt. Wow.

Yeah. And Norda3 disputes the idea that the D.A.'s office was even properly consulted, calling it a lie. They also framed the township's lawsuit against Testa as retaliation and even accused officials of trying to manufacture evidence against the victims.

These are very direct accusations in a public space. That sounds incredibly charged. Is anyone defending the police or officials on there? There are mentions, yeah.

Someone, reportedly Detective Tom Wittig himself, apparently tried to post a defense in one thread. How did that go over? It seems like it was met with more accusations from others, ranging from incompetence to It really shows the polarization and, frankly, the deep mistrust some people in that online community feel towards the authorities involved. We also saw a post mentioning a state senator, Maria Collette, and some alleged connection to the crooked Whitpane group.

Yes. That was interesting. It suggests these local issues might be bubbling up and connecting with wider state-level politics.

The post seemed critical of her alleged involvement, hinting at maybe a more complex political dimension to all this. And overall, the Reddit forum seems like a place where people are pushing for answers. Definitely.

You see repeated calls for the township to be more transparent, to actually address these allegations openly. There was even a post looking for a freelance documentary filmmaker to cover the story. Trying to get broader attention, it sounds like.

Exactly. An effort to bring more public awareness to what they see happening. And the alleged victims, Testa and Dick, are using the platform too.

Yes. Links to YouTube interviews with them have been shared there. So they're using it as a way to get their side of the story out directly.

And you mentioned a user called Conflicted joining. Yeah. That user specifically mentioned how divisive the issue is and said they wanted open discussion.

It kind of highlights the tension and the strong community interest, even among those who might not have already taken a side. OK. Moving slightly away from the direct allegations, let's touch on that Montgomery County anti-discrimination proclamation from June 2024.

Given all the discrimination claims we've discussed, that seems noteworthy. It is noteworthy. Yeah.

It shows the county, at least publicly, stating a commitment against bigotry. It denounces prejudice against residents and visitors. And it mentions support for the state-level Fairness Act.

Yes. House Bill 300 and Senate Bill 150, which aim to add protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity to state anti-discrimination law. So the county is signaling support for broader protections.

But a county proclamation doesn't automatically change laws in individual townships like Whitpain, does it? No. That's a key point. The county commissioners themselves admitted they don't have the power to create county-wide anti-discrimination ordinances that would bind the townships.

It's more of a statement of values. Still, one commissioner mentioned attending an event in Whitpain. Right.

Commissioner McKeeja mentioned being at a Pride flag-raising ceremony in Whitpain township. Which, you know, suggests these issues of inclusion and discrimination are recognized as relevant within the township itself. And the proclamation does remind people they can file complaints with the state.

Yes. With the Pennsylvania Human Rights Commission. It points people towards an existing formal channel if they believe they face discrimination.

OK, finally, let's look at those SMS text messages. They seem to involve Scott Testa and someone else specifically mentioning Detective Wittig again. Yes, these were quite striking.

The document we saw shows a text exchange. Scott Testa sends a message identifying himself. And the response is pretty blunt.

Very blunt. The recipient replies, I just saw your email. They're corrupt.

Just straight out. And it gets more specific after that. Oh, yes.

The recipient then texts, The cops are corrupt and the detective was corrupt. They even went into my phone and deleted pictures. That's a huge accusation, deleting evidence from someone's phone.

Absolutely. And they single out Wittig. Directly.

The message says, Wittig was the scumbag who endorsed cop hurting me to my face. Endorsed hurting someone. And then they describe an incident.

Yeah, a really disturbing one. The text reads, The cop came in and beat the shit out of me in the location, redacted after detaining my son in a wheelchair, and made up full stories that I hit him and that he was intimidated by me. That's incredibly serious.

Alleging assault by police, false reporting, and involving a child in a wheelchair, with Wittig allegedly endorsing it. It's a very heavy set of accusations. Absolutely.

The sender, who seems to be test of base on the context, replies with apologies, saying he'd heard about it. So while it's just one side of a text exchange from an unverified source in the document, if accurate, these messages add another disturbing layer to the allegations against Detective Wittig and the police department, suggesting potential abuse of power and misconduct. So wrapping this all up, it's clear we've navigated through, well, a really complex web here.

Allegations, lawsuits, community reactions, all swirling around with Payne Township. Absolutely. You know, synthesizing all this public information really brings several key themes into focus.

There are these persistent, serious accusations of police misconduct. There are repeated claims of racial discrimination popping up in different contexts, policing, zoning interactions. There are hints or outright allegations in some sources of potential corruption.

And running through it all is this sense, at least from the sources we looked at, of a community or at least a vocal part of it really demanding more accountability and transparency from their local government and police. Exactly. That demand for answers seems strong.

And it's important we stress again, this deep dive was based entirely on synthesizing publicly available information from these various sources, court records, websites, news, online forums. Right. We're looking at what's out there in the public domain.

And taken together, it certainly raises significant questions about local governance, justice and accountability in Whit Payne Township. It really makes you think about the challenges involved in ensuring fairness and accountability at that local level, doesn't it? Given everything we've discussed, the range of allegations, the different sources pointing in similar directions, you might ask yourself, what does all this suggest about the systems in place for addressing these kinds of serious concerns? And maybe more importantly, what further questions does this raise

for you about how the situation in Whit Payne Township might play out?

Transcribed by [TurboScribe.ai](#). [Go Unlimited](#) to remove this message.