

# Suit alleges racism within the Easton Police Department

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing October 9, 2020

 Latest in a series of posts in the wake of the George Floyd murder 

*Gadfly just keeping an eye on what's happening around us involving police and racism in the post-GeorgeFloyd period. He is not suggesting that there is racism within the Bethlehem Police Department, but **he has suggested** that this is the appropriate time for more of a review of department practices and policies than has occurred in this time of inflicted concern over police/community relations.*

*Selections from Rudy Miller, "Easton cop called Michelle Obama 'black chimp,' another kept racial-profiling log, suit filed by fellow cop says." [lehighvalleylive.com](http://lehighvalleylive.com), October 8, 2020.*

A former Easton police lieutenant called Michelle Obama a "black chimp" online and a sergeant kept a photo log of Black individuals for the purpose of racial profiling, according to a lawsuit filed by a Black Easton police officer.

The lawsuit says [George] Lockett endured "over a decade of unfair, abusive, and sometimes threatening behavior" from police supervisors. He was the only Black city officer during most of his tenure starting in 2006, the lawsuit says.

"As in all internal matters the city takes any complaint seriously," Campos said. "The city has thoroughly investigated Officer Lockett's complaints and denies any allegations."

"The City of Easton ... takes any and all complaints of mistreatment, bias and discrimination seriously and have acted swiftly and decisively when such conduct has occurred. So too were Officer Lockett's various complaints, which he believed to be true, taken seriously and thoroughly examined by the city both internally and through an outside investigation, and were shown to be unfounded," MacMain said in an email.

The lawsuit says [Tom] Smith made the online comment about Michelle Obama in 2015. He also called a Black Nebraska state senator a “scrawny little monkey” in an online comment that same year, the suit says.

The lawsuit says Smith was apparently not disciplined. Easton Mayor Sal Panto Jr. allegedly told the crowd at a public forum on racial profiling that Smith had been fired. He made the comment at Greater Shiloh Church in 2016, the lawsuit says. Smith actually retired and is collecting a pension, the lawsuit says.

The suit says [Stephen] Homoki kept a “patrol photo log” of mostly Black individuals, many of whom had never been arrested. The book served no legitimate purpose since the department has a separate log of booking photos, according to the lawsuit.

The lawsuit says Homoki told others, “Bottom line: if he’s Black, stop him and take his picture.” The lawsuit says a supervisor investigated the photo log and found no issue with it.

Lockett also took issue with comments made by Captain Matthew Lohenitz. According to the lawsuit, Lohenitz asked a Latino officer watching TV, “Can you understand that or do you need subtitles?” He also allegedly asked an officer listening to rap to “turn down the jungle music.”

“Racial and discriminatory language and conduct is offensive to Easton officials and is not tolerated. But, it is equally offensive to make false allegations of discriminatory language and conduct as it unfair to those falsely accused. The city will vigorously defend this lawsuit,” [David] MacMain said.

**The Bethlehem Gadfly**