


Lawsuit Filed Against Sheriff, DA, and Other Investigators

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A lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court this week against Brown County Sheriff Bobby Grubbs, District Attorney Micheal Murray, Texas Ranger Nick Hanna, and DPS Lieutenant Robert Bullock alleging that they caused the now adult plaintiff, Natasha Whitley, to suffer during the course of an investigation against a former Brownwood Police Officer.

The lawsuit stems from the investigation into Vincent Ariaz, a former police sergeant who was arrested in July of 2007 for sexual assault of a child and indecency with a child and is currently serving a 27-year prison sentence.

Court documents allege that the defendants used the plaintiff as bait to catch Ariaz in the act of the sexual offense.

“In other words, they knowingly allowed and provided substantial assistance to a fifty-five year old man to abuse a fifteen year old to better their chance at a conviction and make their investigation easier,” court documents state.

The lawsuit outlines the events leading up to the arrest of Ariaz and alleges that Hanna and Bullock delayed the start of an investigation initially after receiving evidence. It further alleges that once the investigation was underway, the defendants let the sexual abuse continue “so that they could catch him in the act of abuse.”

The plaintiff is seeking damages for past and future physical pain and suffering, impairment, mental anguish, and medical expenses.

“Investigators must secure enough evidentiary matter to prosecute before executing an arrest,” said a Brown County official under the condition of anonymity. “There was a lot of complexity to the case. The very investigators who secured the case against Ariaz and helped to end the abuse are now being targeted by the victim in this lawsuit.”

The City of Brownwood settled a similar suit with the victim’s family in February 2010 for \$300,000. The current lawsuit states that the plaintiff asserted claims in court against the City of Brownwood, Virgil Cowin, Learning for Life, and the Boy Scouts of America for their alleged role in the abuse which have been settled.

Ariaz was in charge of the Explorer program which was created to teach Brownwood youth about law enforcement. The lawsuit states that Ariaz used the program to prey on young female teenagers over an extended period of time.



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