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Mayor Muriel Bowser

Office of Police Complaints

Office of Police Complaints



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Fiscal Year 2004 Mediation: Discrimination Based on Race

The complaint was filed against a police officer for alleged discrimination based on race. On the morning in question, the police officer was directing traffic past a city block that had been closed off for purposes of a public event. Her police vehicle blocked access to the street.

The entrance to the complainant's office building was also located on that street. As the complainant, who is white, approached the officer's vehicle, he observed that the officer, who is black, let several cars pass into the blocked street, while others were turned away. He observed that one of the individuals that the officer let pass was a black female and that an individual that the officer did not let pass was a white male. At a point where the officer moved her vehicle away from the street in order to let another vehicle pass, the complainant made an attempt to turn his vehicle into the street as well. As the complainant was moving his vehicle, the complainant's and officer's vehicles almost collided. A somewhat heated exchange between the two parties ensued, and the officer did not let the complainant pass. When the complainant filed his complaint, his view was

that the officer's decision to allow entry to some individuals and exclude entry to others was discriminatory.

At the mediation session, the two parties had different recollections about what was said on that day. The complainant recalled that the officer told him, "discrimination does not matter," while the officer recalled that she allowed people to pass into the street only if they made clear that they worked there. As the parties talked, they discovered that the complainant had been angry at the officer because he believed that she intended to hit his vehicle as he tried to pass into the street; while the officer believed that the complainant deliberately tried to hit her vehicle as she attempted to block the street. In reality, the officer had been in the process of moving her vehicle back into a blockade position after she had allowed another vehicle to pass; and the complainant had been in the process of moving his vehicle into the street when he believed that the officer's vehicle had pulled away. Neither party had been aware of the other's actions prior to the point that their vehicles almost came into contact. In response to the complainant's concern, the officer made clear that discrimination in no way plays a role in her job. The complainant thanked her for making that clear, and stated that his concern about discrimination was the reason why he had filed his complaint. Then, the complainant and officer shook hands and declared the issue resolved.

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District News	+
District Initiatives	+
About DC	+
Contact Us	+

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