



**Lawyers' Committee for
Civil Rights Under Law**

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PRESS RELEASE

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**CITY OF PORT WENTWORTH, GEORGIA,
SUED FOR ALLEGED RACE DISCRIMINATION**

PORT WENTWORTH, GA – Today, the North Port Wentworth Citizens' Council, Inc. and several African-American residents and property owners sued the City of Port Wentworth, Georgia in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Georgia, alleging that the City has discriminated against them on the basis of race in the provision of municipal services. The lawsuit alleges that the City has systematically discriminated against the African-American communities of Berrien/Saussy Roads and Monteith by refusing to provide those communities with the same municipal services it provides for its white communities, such as public water and sewer and the maintenance of drainage canals and ditches. In addition, the suit alleges that these discriminatory actions are part of a longstanding concerted plan by the City to destroy these African-American communities and displace their residents. As a result of the City's less favorable treatment, the plaintiffs allege that the value of their property has been damaged, their ability to enjoy such property diminished, and their communities stigmatized.

"All we want is to be treated equally and fairly, which the City has refused to do for far too long," stated Georgia Benton, one of the plaintiffs in this lawsuit. Della Steele, another plaintiff, added that "the City left us with no choice but to bring this lawsuit because our requests for equal services have consistently fallen on deaf ears. We cannot afford to be ignored any longer."

The plaintiffs are being represented by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (the "Lawyers' Committee") in Washington, D.C.; the Washington, D.C. office of Dickstein Shapiro Morin & Oshinsky LLP; and Fletcher Farrington, P.C., of Savannah, Georgia. According to Barbara R. Arnwine, Executive Director of the Lawyers' Committee, "securing equal treatment for African-American communities is central to the Lawyers' Committee's mission, especially where it involves a city's refusal to provide such basic services as water and sewer." She further stated that "our mission is not merely to stamp out such unlawful discrimination, but to ensure that African-American communities are given equal access to municipal services and put on the same footing as white communities."

In addition to seeking a declaration that the City's actions are unconstitutional and violate both federal and state civil rights laws, the plaintiffs are also seeking an injunction to secure equal municipal services and prevent further discrimination, among other things. "In addition to correcting the City's past and ongoing discrimination, we hope this lawsuit secures the continued vitality of these historic communities and their participation in the future of Port Wentworth, notwithstanding plans to ignore and eliminate them," said Arnwine.

For a copy of the complaint, please visit www.lawyerscomm.org.