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PRESS RELEASE

Suit filed: *Robert Pattison vs. City of Detroit et. al.*
Wayne County Circuit Court, Michigan
Civil Action # 18-000250-CD
Honorable Edward J. Ewell, Jr.

On January 4, 2018, Robert Pattison filed a civil action against Governmental Defendants who illegally cast him as a racist for what was, in reality, an innocuous act. As a result of Defendants portraying him in a false light, and because of the permanency of the internet, Mr. Pattison faces a lifetime of undeserved scorn and ridicule.

The simple question presented in Mr. Pattison's case is "Do private citizens have the right to be free from governmental judgment and international scorn without trial or a right to be heard?" To date, Mr. Pattison has not enjoyed that right and it is hoped that this case will provide him an opportunity to be fairly heard.

Mr. Pattison is an EMS worker who wished to work in the Detroit Fire Department. He successfully completed Academy training and was assigned to Station 55 with guidance that it was customary to bring a gift of food to one's new workplace as an introduction. On September 30, 2017, while off duty, Mr. Pattison brought a large watermelon to his new station because it was a healthy and inexpensive way to bring a gift of food to a large station. There was absolutely no ill intent or racial overtone to Mr. Pattison's off duty gift of food.

Suddenly, Mr. Pattison was sucked into an modern day Inquisition which inexorably marched to find a false equivalency between the racist ideology of white supremacists and an innocent gift of food as an introduction to a new workplace.

Defendants falsely claimed a "thorough investigation," terminated Mr. Pattison's employment and very publically judged him to have engaged in "Unsatisfactory Work Behavior - Offensive conduct of a discriminatory nature." This was nonsense as eleven of Mr. Pattison's Academy peers issued supportive letters acquitting him of ill intention, no one claimed first-hand knowledge of evil intent and Mr. Pattison was not working when he gave the gift. To compound this injustice, Defendants then proclaimed to the world that Mr. Pattison was, in their official judgment, a racist provocateur, implying he

was cut from the same cloth as the Charlottesville Virginia crowd that had nauseated the country several months earlier. Defendants condemnation of Mr. Pattison ignored overwhelming exculpatory evidence.

Sadly, evidence will show that Defendants' treatment of Mr. Pattison's off duty conduct was quite different from Defendants' treatment of other off-duty employees whose offensiveness is beyond question or justification.

This Country was born of the idea that government must not be destructive to the inherent and inalienable right to "the preservation of life, and liberty and the pursuit of happiness". Yet, Defendants' stripped these rights from Mr. Pattison, forever condemning him to internet hell as the Watermelon racist for simply following instructions to bring a gift of food as an introduction to your new fire station.

Once this Country was born, the right to freedom of speech was the First Amendment among the Bill of Rights in the Constitution. In his case, Mr. Pattison asserts that no one can be lawfully terminated, not even from "at will" employment, for an off duty expression of gifting. To conclude otherwise will unleash an ice age of thought and interaction that will destroy the very society born for the preservation of liberty. If people cannot interact in a civil fashion without fear of financial and social destruction, then a functioning society is not possible.

Liberty has come slowly to many of us. Liberty came out of civil war to black men, then begrudgingly to women, to subsequent immigrant groups and lately to the LGBTQ community. All of these quests for true equality remain incomplete. The fact that the journey to true equality is painful and slow is not an excuse to forego that journey. Likewise, the painfulness of the journey is not an excuse to persecute persons who look like those of past generations who were themselves persecutors.

Robert Pattison knew that the Detroit Fire Department was predominantly black. He embraced that community of public servants and was liked by his Cadet peers. He is saddened that his innocent gift was wrongly interpreted. It is hoped that his case will result in his equal protection under the law and his return to serving the citizens of the City of Detroit.