

PRESS RELEASE

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Metropolitan Police settle another stop and search race claim

Brothers Nicholas and Leon Peart were detained in handcuffs and searched outside their home in April 2020. Although the three officers who stopped them say they initially did so under Covid regulations they quickly decided to search them both under the Misuse of Drugs Act. They justified this based on claims to have seen “*drug paraphernalia*” in Nicholas’ car, and because they said the area was “*well known for drug dealing and consumption*”. When the boys’ mother Jacqui queried what was happening, it was suggested to her that her sons might have been associated with “*gangs*”. In fact nothing was found in the search, the family live in a quiet and leafy part of Chingford, and they are devout Christians.

After their complaint to police about these events was rejected, the Pearts brought a case against the Commissioner for assault and false imprisonment, on the basis that the reasons given for the search were false and stereotyped them as black men. The statistical background of course is that as young black men they are 8 times more likely to be stopped and searched than their white counterparts. Even more shockingly - in the early months of lockdown the Met police stopped around a quarter of all black men in London aged between 15 and 24, even though nothing was found in 80% of cases.

Although the police denied liability in their case and have refused to apologise to the brothers, they agreed to settle after it came to light in July 2022 that PC Hefford, the police officer who had identified them for a stop, had been fired for exchanging grossly offensive racist messages with his colleagues.

Nicholas Peart said:

“It was embarrassing to put me in handcuffs in front of my neighbours. Beforehand I had a good view of the police. I always said hi to the local officer. This has diminished my view of the police.”

Leon Peart said:

“I think it was racist and because of my skin colour. There’s no change in the Met. Words are cheap, once we see actions we can start to believe their stories.”

Carolynn Gallwey, solicitor for Leon and Nicholas Peart said:

“Stop and search is an ineffective and wasteful policing tactic that continues to be applied in a profoundly discriminatory manner. Until the Commissioner acknowledges this and commits to change the Met has no hope of winning back the trust of black Londoners”.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

For further information please contact Carolynn Gallwey at
c.gallwey@bhattmurphy.co.uk

Leon and Nicholas Peart were represented by Carolynn Gallwey of Bhatt Murphy.