

Meek Mill Loses Suit Over Philly Police Stop

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Philadelphia rapper Meek Mill lost his civil-rights case against city police Thursday over a 10-hour traffic stop that he called racially motivated.

Mill, who was trying to catch a flight to Atlanta to launch his debut album, was instead handcuffed and detained on Halloween night 2012 with his entourage: an Atlantic Records executive, an off-duty police officer and his cousin.

"They ain't from where I'm from," Mill said softly of the jury after they reached their decision. "I (don't) really expect them to understand what I go through."

Mill, whose real name is Robert Williams, grew up in gritty North Philadelphia, where the stop occurred.

"I respect their decision, though," he said.

Mill, 26, was on probation at the time from a 2008 drug and gun case. The debut album released that day, "Dreams & Nightmares," would climb to No. 2 on the Billboard albums chart, according

to trial memos.

A lead officer on the stop, Andre Boyer, was under investigation and later fired for lying to Internal Affairs about another traffic stop. Boyer had racked up more civilian complaints than any other city officer, Mill's lawsuit said.

Police said they stopped the vehicle over its darkly tinted windows and smelled raw marijuana, but no drugs were found and no charges filed.

"I just feel like he did me wrong," Mill said of Boyer.

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Defense lawyer Dennis Cogan called the claimed smell "a pretext" frequently used by rogue police to search a vehicle.

The mostly white jury, in an unusual note read aloud after the verdict, said both sides share blame over the encounter.

"Although we voted unanimously that Mr. Williams' Fourth Amendment rights were not violated, we feel strongly both the plaintiff and defendant were in the wrong and made mistakes," jurors wrote in a note read aloud after the verdict.

Lawyers for the city said Boyer was not the only officer involved in the stop.

"Any reasonable officer faced with those circumstances would have conducted an investigation," Amanda Shoffel, a deputy city solicitor, said in closing arguments earlier in the afternoon.

Mill was seeking about \$400,000 in lost income, and additional damages for emotional distress.

He had refused to let police search the vehicle, but they obtained a search warrant as the group waited in custody at the police station. One officer involved in the stop testified that he drove the Range Rover to another location even before police got a search warrant.

Mill worried that police would plant drugs in the vehicle during the search, Cogan said.

"In neighborhoods like where I come from, four black males in a car . . . we're always being asked to be searched," Mill testified Monday. "All I was doing that night was going to work and doing what I had to do."

Mill had sued both the city and several individual officers, accusing them of false imprisonment and conspiracy. The jury, without elaborating, said the defendant officers, Boyer and Officer Alvin Outlaw, had not violated his Fourth Amendment rights.

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