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Jury awards \$64K in jail attack

Ex-officer assaulted him while three others watched, plaintiff says

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A federal jury awarded \$64,000 Friday to a Jackson man in his lawsuit against three former detention officers he said stood by and allowed another officer to punch him in 2005.

Maryland Singleton, 30, of Jackson said he suffered a fractured cheekbone, a fractured jaw bone, a broken nose and other injuries as a result of the Feb. 11, 2005, attack in a holding cell at Jackson Police Department headquarters.

"It's been 5 1/2 long years," Singleton said after the award.

Singleton's attorney, Jeanine Carafello, asked jurors during closing arguments to award Singleton \$514,000 but said they could award more or less.

When asked if he was disappointed the jury didn't award him more, Singleton replied, "no, not really."

City Attorney Pieter Teeuwissen said Singleton didn't deserve money from Tony Collins, Billy Slaughter and Cornelius Johnson. He said the three played no role in the assault.

The city fired Larry Davis as a detention officer after an investigation showed he punched Singleton.

But Davis wasn't a part of Singleton's lawsuit because Singleton said he couldn't locate Davis to serve him with court papers. The statute of limitations has since run out to sue Davis.

U.S. District Judge Henry Wingate dismissed the city as a defendant.

"These defendants may be good fathers, good sons and good husbands, but on Feb. 11, 2005, they weren't good men," Carafello told the jury Friday in closing arguments.

Carafello said the three detention officers had a duty to protect Singleton from excessive force.

Singleton alleges he was attacked a second time in another cell after he had been dragged from the first cell.

But Teeuwissen said there is no evidence to support claims of a second attack.

Anthony Simon, the attorney for one of the former detention officers, said no one condones the use of excessive force and Singleton didn't deserve it. He said the city acted by firing the man who assaulted Singleton.

Simon said the three men sued by Singleton have impeccable credentials and were hard-working individuals.


Simon argued Singleton sees the lawsuit as "his path to receive unearned money."

Singleton should have found Davis and had him in court instead of the three he sued, according to Simon.

Simon said Singleton's own testimony didn't support the allegation that the three men stood by and did nothing. He said Singleton testified one of the officers with Davis told Davis to stop when the alleged second assault occurred.

Singleton was placed in the holding cell after being

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arrested on a charge of driving under the influence. His blood alcohol level was 0.13, which is above the legal limit of 0.08, Simon said.

The detention officers testified Singleton used racial slurs and other coarse language.

"He said ugly words," Carafello said of Singleton. "He had a reason to be mad. No matter what racial slur he used, he didn't deserve this (assault)."

It was unclear late Friday if the former detention officers will appeal the jury award.

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