

# City of Naperville Faces Federal Lawsuit Following Malicious Prosecution of Former Naperville North H.S. Student

*Attorneys Raise Concerns that City Voted No. 1 Best Place to Live Is Not Living Up to Its Reputation*

NAPERVILLE, IL, UNITED STATES, May 22, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Attorneys for Amara Harris, a former Naperville North High School Student who was recently exonerated after being accused of stealing another student's Air Pods in 2019, have filed a [federal lawsuit against the City of Naperville, Illinois](#), and Naperville police officers Juan Leon, and Sgt. Jonathan W. Pope.

On December 4, 2019, Naperville Police Officer Juan Leon charged Ms. Harris with theft under a Naperville ordinance, alleging she stole another student's Air Pods. Despite knowing there was no evidence of theft, the City of Naperville persisted in pursuing unsubstantiated charges against Ms. Harris, and insisted that she pay a fine for a municipal crime she did not commit.

[The matter was heard by a jury in DuPage County Circuit Court](#), during which time the school resource officer, Officer Leon admitted under oath that he issued the citation without any proof of theft and based his actions on personal animus towards Ms. Harris' mother. The lawsuit contends that school resource officer supervisor Sgt. Jonathan W. Pope's failed to adequately train and supervise school resource officers, and that failure supports the City's practice and culture of illegal ticketing, disparately affecting students like Amara Harris.

"These actions reflect a broader pattern of unconstitutional, biased policing, an illegal system of alternative discipline and, in this case, abuse of process and malicious prosecution, as evidenced by the documented history of the Naperville Police Department's improper targeting of students generally, students of color disparately, and other protected groups," said S. Todd Yeary, an



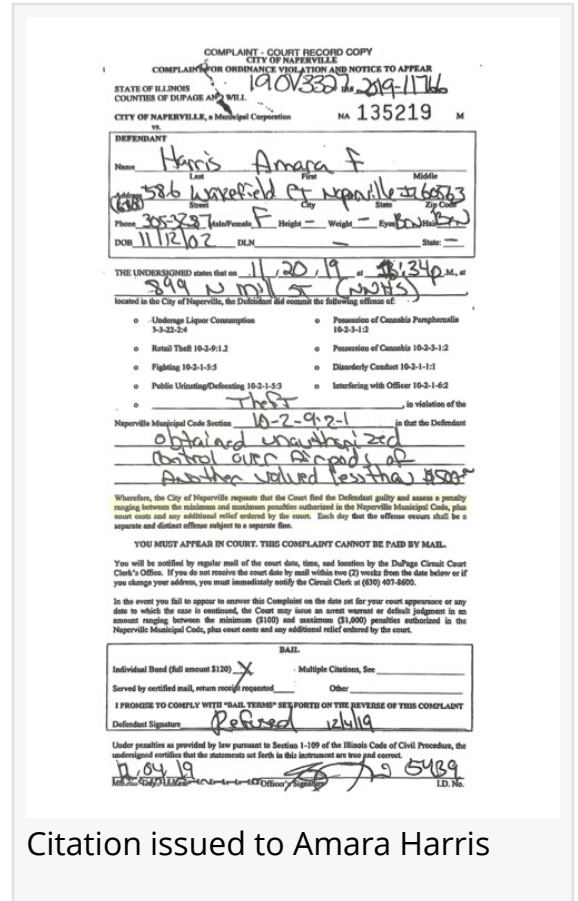
Amara Harris following graduation from Spelman College

attorney representing Amara Harris.

This year, the City of Naperville landed the No. 1 spot on Niche’s list of "2024 Best Cities to Live in America." The Chicago suburb was also listed as the No. 1 “Best City to Raise a Family in America”. According to Juan Thomas, another attorney representing Amara Harris, these rankings contradict what has been happening in the city of Naperville.

“The egregious conduct of the City of Naperville has inflicted economic, emotional, and reputational harm upon Amara Harris. This behavior did not just start with Amara, and it is evident that this has been a pattern and practice over the years,” said Attorney Thomas.

Attorneys for Amara Harris have filed a complaint citing abuse of process, malicious prosecution, and a pattern of constitutional violations and racial discrimination under 42 U.S.C. §1983.



Citation issued to Amara Harris

Throughout this ordeal, Amara has endured significant hardship, yet she has shown remarkable strength and resilience. On Sunday, May 19, 2024, 53 months after being unjustly accused of a crime she did not commit, Amara graduated with honors from Spelman College, earning a degree in International Studies. As Amara Harris seeks justice and closure, her legal team urges

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*Attorney S. Todd Yeary*

the city that has been recognized as the best place to raise a family to live up to its public recognition by correcting the abuses of its school resource officers against students like Amara, whose experiences defy the city’s honor.

“We stand with Ms. Harris in her pursuit of justice and the awarding of damages to end the unchecked unconstitutional conduct of school resource officers and uphold the principles of justice and equality for all,” said Attorney Juan Thomas.

Tanya Wiley-Brown  
WCP Consulting & Communications  
+1 336-345-2628  
[email us here](#)

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