



HAMDEN CT

HUMAN RESOURCES/CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

August 2, 2023

DRAFT

INVESTIGATION REPORT

Harassment Complaint Summaries & Conclusions on Behalf of Ms. Sallie Lowry

INTRODUCTION

This investigation examines three separate claims of workplace harassment, which each allege characteristics distinctive to a hostile work environment, workplace retaliation, and discrimination under Title VII. The explored claims were provided by the testimony of Ms. Sallie Lowry, Recreation Supervisor & Acting Administrative Assistant, and are supported Recreation Department staff members within Hamden Government Center.

WITNESSES

Ms. Nicole Brown Johnson, Recreation Supervisor
Mr. Salvatore McClain, Part-Time/Temporary Recreation Staff
Ms. Gail Jenkins, Camp Extreme Director
Ms. Laura Van Aken, Quinnipiac Fellowship Intern

ADDITIONAL STAFF NAMED IN THIS REPORT

Ms. Sallie Lowry, Recreation Supervisor & Acting Administrative Assistant
Ms. Chona Edgeworth, Payroll Administrator
Mr. Jared Galarza, Payroll Clerk
Mr. Rick Galarza, Deputy Finance Director
Ms. Brigitte Cogswell, Director of Human Resources/Civil Service
Mayor Lauren Garrett

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I. SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT FILED: BEHAVIORAL DISRESPECT & TONE OF VOICE

On the afternoon of June 23, 2023, a harassment complaint was filed by Ms. Lowry, Recreation Supervisor & Acting Administrative Assistant, against her Department Head, Ms. Bivens, Director of Arts, Culture, Wellness, & Recreation. Ms. Lowry stated that the harassment towards her by Ms. Bivens has come to mark a pattern of behavior, leading to her subsequent filing of this formal complaint for one particular instance within the Recreation Department's office:

On the afternoon of June 23, 2023, Ms. Lowry was at her desk working toward a deadline to complete the Department's payroll, but Ms. Bivens approached with a separate task. Ms. Lowry stated her schedule of tasks for the day, but Ms. Bivens persisted that Ms. Lowry prioritize her inquiry instead. Ms. Lowry stated that she was patient and calm as she reiterated her workload for the day to Ms. Bivens, but Ms. Bivens continued to push. Ms. Lowry stated that she repeated herself three times until she was met with a disrespectful tone from Ms. Bivens. Ms. Lowry stated that she felt harassed and micromanaged, and that she had not been properly trained or supported leading up to this incident. Ms. Lowry stated that she has also been training Mr. McClain, Part-Time/Temporary Recreation Staff, and Ms. Nicole Brown Johnson, Recreation Supervisor, and that Ms. Lowry has continued to be responsible for working both positions, as Recreation Supervisor and Acting Administrative Assistant, via stipend and Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

Additionally, Ms. Lowry has noticed that since receiving her promotion to Recreation Supervisor, the tone of voice that Ms. Bivens uses to speak with her differs from the tone that is used to speak with Ms. Brown Johnson, Ms. Lowry's counterpart in the Department. Ms. Lowry went on to say that some of the tasks Ms. Bivens assigns to Ms. Brown Johnson are, in actuality, part of Ms. Lowry's MOA and consequent stipend as Acting Administrative Assistant until the position is filled.

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DESIRED OUTCOME

Ms. Lowry stated that her quality of work has suffered resulting from what she perceives to be a hostile work environment and a continued culture of disrespect. Her desired outcome was to see the Administrative Assistant's position filled, and for all disrespect and harassment from Ms. Bivens towards her to cease.

FINDINGS

At the minimum, three witnesses testified that the tone used by Ms. Bivens toward Ms. Lowry was hostile on the afternoon of June 23, 2023. The fourth witness testified that the tone used toward Ms. Lowry from Ms. Bivens is often disrespectful in nature.

INTERVIEWS

Ms. Jenkins

In her intake interview on June 27th, Ms. Jenkins stated that "the tone was what caught my attention" and that Ms. Bivens persisted while Ms. Lowry requested that she "wait a minute." When told to wait, Ms. Bivens was "snappy" and unprofessional toward Ms. Lowry, and did not allow Ms. Lowry the time she asked for. Ms. Jenkins also stated that it was upsetting to hear the demand, while Ms. Lowry maintained an even tone and never raised her voice. Ms. Jenkins indicated that Ms. Lowry handled the situation well overall.

Ms. Jenkins added to the record that Ms. Lowry has not been asked or told to attend certain meetings, and that Ms. Lowry has been excluded from invitations to meetings that may be relevant to her position. Ms. Jenkins learned of this after she inquired with Ms. Lowry, on days when Ms. Lowry was still in the office while the other staff or Ms. Brown Johnson, attended meetings with Ms. Bivens.

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Ms. Brown Johnson

On June 29th, Ms. Brown Johnson was interviewed. Ms. Brown Johnson was visibly nervous for her intake interview, and expressed to me that her anxiety was rooted in the fear of retaliation from her supervisor, Ms. Bivens. I assured her that she is protected from retaliation by the Human Resources Department and that retaliation is illegal, but Ms. Brown Johnson was still quite afraid to speak.

Ms. Brown Johnson could only say that she heard arguing (not shouting) on the afternoon of June 23, 2023, but that the tone *was* elevated. Ms. Brown Johnson confirmed that the staff that day comprised of herself, Mr. McClain, Ms. Lowry, Ms. Bivens, and Ms. Jenkins. Ms. Brown Johnson clarified for me that the assignment in question was whether or not a camp list was updated. Ms. Brown Johnson stated that she could not answer yet, because she and Ms. Lowry both work on updating camp lists. Ms. Brown did not indicate that the task was time-sensitive.

Mr. McClain

On June 30th, Mr. McClain was interviewed. Mr. McClain supplied me with two recommendations: leadership training for Ms. Bivens, and that I speak with Ms. Van Aken, the Quinnipiac Fellowship Intern, who was not previously named as a witness by Ms. Lowry. Mr. McClain, like Ms. Brown Johnson, was extremely anxious and afraid to be interviewed. He, too, stated that he was very fearful of what would be *inevitable* retaliation. Mr. McClain expressed grave concern for the future of his employment with the Town.

Mr. McClain stated that there is an air of unpredictability when speaking to their supervisor, Ms. Bivens, who may “flip” personas. Due to this aspect of the workplace, there is constant tension within the Department, weighing heavily on internal culture. Mr. McClain added that his work often comes home with him, because the expectation has been that he answer calls from Ms. Bivens at any hour of

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the day or night¹. Mr. McClain concluded that overall, that he has tried to keep to himself, but can confirm that the alleged tone used by Ms. Bivens toward Ms. Lowry on June 23rd was elevated and disrespectful. In fact, Mr. McClain expressed that on multiple occasions, he had to excuse himself from meetings because of Ms. Bivens' tone of voice and foul language, which thusly creates a toxic work environment he did not want to be a part of. Mr. McClain has also experienced and witnessed Karen talking over citizens and employees, while also not allowing them the room to respond. This has diminished productivity and promulgates discomfort in the workplace.

Ms. Van Aken

Ms. Van Aken is a student in Quinnipiac University's College of Arts & Sciences Fellowship Program with the Town of Hamden, from June 5, 2023 to August 4, 2023.

I interviewed Ms. Van Aken following my interview with Mr. McClain on June 30th. Ms. Van Aken stated that she was not around during the moment of alleged harassment but provided more insight into the workplace culture.

Since her assignment in the Recreation Department, she has witnessed backlash for offering to help any of the other employees. Ms. Van Aken termed this as follows: "I always help [Mr. McClain], but [Ms. Bivens] 'catches' me." Ms. Van Aken noticed that Mr. McClain "gets in trouble" for accepting her help on work tasks. Ms. Van Aken said that Ms. Lowry and Mr. McClain have both returned to her

¹ This information was flagged by the Human Resources Officer, who researched that Mr. McClain has been working over 35 hours for practically one year. After speaking with Mr. McClain further regarding his hours of work, it was found that Mr. McClain was promised by Ms. Bivens he would be receiving a full-time position with benefits, but instead his records were changed to read 19.5 hours plus a stipend, which equates to 35 hours every week without actually having a full-time position with benefits. He feels that this is an abuse of his labor.

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numerous times to apologize for her not being able to help, because they were reprimanded by Ms. Bivens; "Having me to help has created more tension," said Ms. Van Aken.

Ms. Van Aken also stated that she had asked for work specifically, but her only task assigned the day of our intake interview was to send a text for Ms. Bivens that morning. Ms. Van Aken stated, "I don't feel like I'm being treated fairly, like all the other Fellows," and that she planned to speak with the Director of the Fellowship Program to possibly request a department transfer.

Additionally, Ms. Van Aken has not been included in meetings, similar to Ms. Lowry. She stated that for one meeting, "[Mr. McClain] had to come grab me himself," because "no one was going to involve me otherwise."

One particular incident that weighed on Ms. Van Aken was when Mr. McClain was working out the details for the Hamden fireworks display, to be held the night of June 30th. Ms. Van Aken stated that there was an overage of food trucks registered for the event, so they were working out the logistics of where each truck would be parked. Mr. McClain was drawing Ms. Van Aken a map of the park, when Ms. Van Aken stated that, "[Ms. Bivens] assumed we left her out. She snapped and pulled [Mr. McClain] away into her office. She resolved it without me, so I am not sure if the work got done. I would have appreciated the experience." Several times during this iteration, Ms. Van Aken stated that the conversation between herself and Mr. McClain was simply innocent, and Ms. Van Aken was confused by the backlash received.

Some of Ms. Van Aken's concluding remarks were that: "We're a great team – the four of us get along well. I'm learning so much from them, but not from [Ms. Bivens], and I wish it was her. I'm so grateful to the three of them, and I wouldn't have gotten anywhere without [Mr. McClain]. I know it's a front

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when [Ms. Bivens] is sweet to me...I don't know her much as a boss – which I should. She doesn't realize I'm making myself at home without her.”

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II. SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT FILED: PAYROLL

On Friday, July 7th, Ms. Bivens sought Mayor Garrett to implement disciplinary action against Ms. Lowry for making a(n) error(s) within the summer camp's payroll. The conflict was presented in-person to the Director of Human Resources, Brigitte Cogswell, by Mayor Lauren Garrett and by Ms. Bivens, simultaneously on Friday afternoon (June 7th). It was claimed that 70+ members of camp staff were unpaid as of that day, Friday, July 7th. It was inferred that this problem was caused by Ms. Lowry, who processes the Department's payroll.

Ms. Bivens stated to Ms. Cogswell that she had not communicated the issue with Ms. Lowry and did not seek clarification from Ms. Lowry regarding the objective facts of the perceived error. Ms. Bivens also stated to Ms. Cogswell that she will not speak to Ms. Lowry, because Ms. Lowry has an ongoing harassment claim against her. Brigitte advised that any complaints that are being investigated should not hinder daily work and necessary communications.

FINDINGS

There were no errors in the summer camp payroll completed by Ms. Lowry.

Ms. Cogswell researched the claim in coordination with the Deputy Finance Director, Mr. Rick Galarza, the Payroll Administrator, Ms. Chona Edgeworth, and the Payroll Clerk, Mr. Jared Galarza, on Friday, June 7th. When speaking with Ms. Cogswell over the phone, Ms. Edgeworth described Ms. Bivens' behavior as "pushy" when she was questioned separately about the summer camp payroll from Ms. Bivens. Ms. Edgeworth further stated that, "it felt as though she was trying to find something wrong against Ms. Lowry." Ms. Cogswell resolved the issue by informing Mayor Garrett of the Town's

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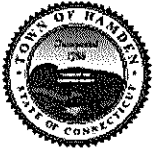


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payroll operations for temporary summer staff. Below are the steps involved in processing summer camp payroll, as verified by Hamden's Payroll Clerk:

Operation of Summer Camp Payroll

1. Camp Staff work a number of hours, and receive their time sheets on the weekday, Friday.
2. Timesheets are completed, and then provided to Miss Ms. Lowry on Monday, following the week worked.
3. Miss Ms. Lowry has one week to process the timesheets received on Monday, into Finance's formatting, and provides the completed payroll to Jared, Payroll Clerk, on Thursday of the week after that.
4. Camp staff are therefore not paid that same Thursday, but on Thursday in 2 weeks.
5. Anything earned that is below five hours of work is unpaid until camp staff work over five hours, at which time, the five or below hours are added as a lump sum onto the next larger check.
6. Summer camp started for most the last week in June. The first few days of the weeks worked are reserved for orientation and camp set-up, which is normally below five hours of work.
7. Therefore, it can be summarized that summer camp pay is delayed two weeks from time-sheet completion.
8. Summer camp payroll operates on this basis because it is unpredictable (unlike salaried workers) what the hours of work will actually be. Finance does not condone predicting the hours of pay and advises waiting until the actuals are received.

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III. SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT FILED: IDENTITY

While this investigation was being processed by Human Resources, Ms. Lowry added to the scope of her complaint, in that her supervisor, Ms. Bivens, no longer refers to her as her preferred naming convention, "Miss Sallie." Moreover, Ms. Bivens has stopped referring to Ms. Lowry by name at all.

Ms. Lowry stated that Ms. Bivens stopped using her preferred title ("Miss") around the time of her promotion in the past year. After that time, Ms. Bivens was solely referring to Ms. Lowry by her first name. Recently, Ms. Lowry stated that although Ms. Bivens has not referred to her by name, Ms. Bivens continues to utilize first names with the rest of the Department's staff.

The lack of honorific was supported by Mr. McClain in his witness testimony, when he quoted Ms. Bivens stating, "I am no longer going to call her Miss Sallie." He stated that this statement was made on a day that Ms. Lowry "made [Ms. Bivens] mad," and that Ms. Bivens sought to intentionally leave out Ms. Lowry's honorific to address her moving forward, as consequence for angering her. Mr. McClain said that this felt like retaliation, and that he was able to see how Ms. Bivens handles employees or people she is upset with. This abuse of authority is why he was very fearful of retaliation at work. Further, he has witnessed this behavior and treatment towards vendors procured by the Recreation Department and Ms. Bivens.²

² Mr. McClain stated that Ms. Bivens requested for a vendor to work an additional hour at an event for free, and when the vendor refused, she had that person removed from consideration for any future engagements this summer. Additionally, his check was intentionally delayed by Ms. Bivens, on account of him not wanting to work an additional hour for free.

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Moreover, Ms. Bivens previously inquired if and when Ms. Lowry might retire. This is a sensitive topic for Ms. Lowry, who keeps a sign above her desk stating not to ask her about retirement. Ms. Bivens expressed to the Director of Human Resources, that she intended her question as a “joke.”

FINDINGS

Similar to using and having pronouns, a person may have preferred honorifics. It is therefore encouraged to inquire and abide by a person’s preference of prefix and pronoun(s). The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services and The National Institutes of Health’s Sexual & Gender Minority Research Office recognize the connection between pronouns and other naming conventions:

Using a person’s correct pronouns provides gender affirmation, signals mutual respect, and creates a more welcoming and tolerant environment. Being misgendered (i.e., being referred to with incorrect pronouns) can be an extremely hurtful and invalidating experience. Intentional refusal to use someone’s correct pronouns is equivalent to harassment and a violation of one’s civil rights.

An additional layer of distinction is *Black Honorifics*. On March 15, 2019, NPR’s *Code Switch*, a podcast on race and society, tweeted the following, which summaries how conflicts similar in kind have had a long relationship with race:

In the South, white people went to great lengths to avoid honorifics like "Miss," "Mr.," "Mrs.," or "Dr." in reference to Black folks. And no Black person was ever old enough to age out of being called "boy" or "girl" by a white person, no matter how young that white person

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was.

The weight of what is being said here is that the *person*, beyond the titles we may use to define them, is a composite of the identities they carry. This theory (called Intersectionality) was developed by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, and emphasizes the interconnected nature of social identities, like race and gender identification. Intersectionality recognizes that individuals can experience multiple forms of oppression based on race, gender, class, sexuality, etc. and that these intersecting identities are what shape experiences of discrimination or privilege. Therefore, Ms. Lowry's preferred honorific ("Miss") is not distinctive to her age but is intrinsic to her racial identity. The lasting mark of Jim Crow-era politics on our society today makes it imperative to understand that *any* person is capable of perpetuating oppression or engaging in discriminatory speech or conduct, regardless of that person's own protected identities.

Joseph A. Bailey II, of *Black Voice News*, puts it bluntly: "An important way that White Superiority, White Privilege, White Ethnocentricity, and the Negro-Caste system of African American slavery are fired as cannonballs to Black people is for Europeans to assume, without permission, that they have the right to call Black people by their first names. Naming is a big deal to Black people." For Ms. Lowry, the proper and intentional use of her honorific holds different connotations beyond that of a simplified female address.

This is to say that the names and titles that a person selects for themselves and chooses to share with others must be respected at the very least as a basic form of civility. The words we use, and the English we speak comes encoded with histories of oppression. Beyond self-education, when a preference is communicated to us, it is in our own best interest to honor

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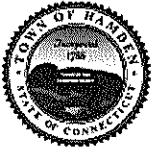


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that person with the respect and dignity that corresponds with the *opportunity* of expressing preference; an opportunity that had not been previously afforded to everyone.

CONCLUSIONS

The following checklist was developed by *InHerSight*, a database created for the career advancement of women, to verify if one may have found themselves within a hostile work environment:

1. There is discrimination or harassment – consistent patterns of behavior, such as offensive remarks, slurs, or jokes targeting a specific individual or group.
2. Employees experience bullying or intimidation – Frequent belittling, verbal abuse, or threats that undermine confidence and wellbeing.
3. Your leaders or managers criticize excessively – Projects or people face unwarranted, constant criticism or micromanagement that obstructs productivity and damages morale.
4. Groups, teams, leaders, or managers isolate or exclude others – The purposeful exclusion or isolation of individuals, preventing them from participating in meetings, discussions, or social events.
5. There are unfair policies and practices – whether formal or informal
6. Employees face retaliation for standing up for themselves – Punitive actions or threats against employees who report discrimination, harassment, or other workplace issues.
7. Sexual harassment.
8. Hostile communication – Colleagues or superiors use aggressive, insulting, or offensive language.
9. Some advance, while others cannot
10. Fear or anxiety are ingrained in the work culture – Prevailing sense of fear, stress, or anxiety among employees due to hostile behavior or toxic work culture.

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Items 1, 3, 4, 6, and 10 from this list are particularly relevant to the scope of this complaint. It is not unreasonable to state that, following the interviews with Ms. Jenkins, Mr. McClain, Ms. Brown Johnson, and Ms. Van Aken, the work environment within the Recreation Department has been hostile, tense, unhealthy, and that it has caused employees to experience considerably heightened anxiety.

The *Federal EEO Investigator's Companion* defines a hostile work environment as “conduct that unreasonably interferes with work performance, adversely affects employment opportunities, or otherwise creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Personal conversations that can be overheard by other employees who consider the conversation offensive can also create a hostile work environment. The focus on any harassment case is on the work environment and whether it is hostile, intimidating, or abusive” (Lytle 20).

What follows will be intervention and coaching to work with Ms. Bivens as a supervisor, to ensure all directives are fair, reasonable, and objective, and that all employees feel safe, protected, respected, and of value.

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@NPRCodeSwitch. "In the South, white people went to great lengths to avoid honorifics like "Miss," Mr.," "Mrs.," or "Dr." in reference to Black folks. And no Black person was ever old enough to age out of being called "boy" or "girl" by a white person, no matter how young that white person was..." Twitter, 15 Mar 2019, 1:39 p.m., <https://twitter.com/NPRCodeSwitch/status/1106610903355715584?lang=en>.

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COMPLAINT INTAKE TESTIMONY OF THE VICTIM

1. The Town of Hamden is an equal opportunity employer with an anti-harassment policy. Therefore, it is the duty of each employee to report instances which they believe may be illegal harassment or retaliation based on all legally protected classes, including race, color, religious creed, age, sex, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, learning disability, physical disability or blindness, present or past history of mental disability, intellectual disability, genetic information, criminal record, military or veteran status, or any other protections under Title VII to their direct supervisor and/or to the Human Resources/Civil Service Department.
2. The Town of Hamden and its supervisory employees have a duty to investigate such reports and to take prompt and effective action to prevent and deter any illegal conduct or condition. For these reasons, it is very important that you provide the Town of Hamden with any and all information pertinent to what has occurred, including the names of witnesses, events, dates, times, places, and what was said.
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Please indicate if you consent to full and honest cooperation with this investigation by signing and dating this form below:

I acknowledge that this information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and recollection.

Signature of Employee: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Sallie Lowry
Sallie Lowry
7.13.2023



HAMDEN CT

HUMAN RESOURCES &
CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

HARASSMENT COMPLAINT INTAKE TESTIMONY OF THE VICTIM

ATTENTION: You are submitting an incident report to the Human Resources & Civil Service Department stating that you have experienced speech, conduct, or behavior that has harassed, disturbed, or has made you uncomfortable on account of or in reference to discriminatory comments based on your race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, retaliation, or other protections under Title VII. Harassment is defined as conduct that unreasonably interferes with work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Please note: you are not required to prove that all incidents are overtly connected to discrimination. Hostile work environment harassment can be committed by anyone, including management officials, coworkers, non-employees, or subordinates.

Based on the alleged incident of harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and/or a hostile work environment, please answer the following questions to the best of your ability:

Name: Sallie Lowry, Recreation Supervisor

Date of Incident(s): Ongoing & 6/23/23

Department: Recreation

Today's Date: 06/23/2023

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Name of the Accused: Karen Bivens

Relationship with Accused: Supervisor

Location of Incident(s): Office

Please describe the incident(s) that have occurred:

- “Karen persisted on a task while I was working toward a deadline (Payroll). 3x’s. Only speaks to Nicole on tasks that are part of my MOU/JD/stipend. Tone was disrespectful.”
- “Karen suggested Nicole could help, but it’s not something [that can be] share[d].”
- “I’m still training Nicole & Salvatore, when I have received no training myself for working both jobs.”
- “She [Karen] excludes me from communications and will only tell Nicole to relay it to me, which is disrespectful because we’re [Nicole & I are] equal.”



HAMDEN CT

HUMAN RESOURCES & CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

- “The Mayor and Karen went around Town claiming I made errors in the camp Payroll; She [Karen] alleged it to Finance and HR (& others?); the payroll wasn’t wrong (found out later);”
 - None of this issue was communicated to Sallie directly and no conversations occurred between them for clarification.
- “Karen goes to the Mayor to complain about me, more than once.”
- “Karen used to call me ‘Miss Sallie’ like everybody else until Oct/Nov of last year. Then it was just “Sallie” and the last few weeks she doesn’t call me by my name at all; but she will [use names] for everybody else.

Please name any potential witnesses to the incident(s):

Gail Jenkins, Nicole Brown Johnson, Sal (?)

How did you react or respond to this/these situation(s)?

“I patiently told her my schedule of tasks for the day, and she continued to push.”

Do you perceive this incident to be a pattern of behavior from this employee?

“Yes – I have been mistreated disrespectfully on a number of occasions; she pushes the boundary.”

Is it possible to describe the harm you have suffered as a result of this/these incident(s)?

- “Unsafe.”
- “Harassed.”
- “Intimidated.”
- “Bullied.”
- “Discriminated against [age (possibly race?)].”
- “Heightened anxiety level while working.”
- “Quality of work diminishes when these things happen.”
- “I need this to stop and am seeking relief.”
- “Hostile environment where my supervisor and the Mayor are trying to get me fired; but there has never been any disciplinary action on my record for working here.”



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**HUMAN RESOURCES &
CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT**

Is there evidence supporting your claim(s)? If so, please describe or submit a copy of the evidence.

“Stack of paperwork [on my desk].”

What is your desired outcome of the investigation?

- “To stop this repeated behavior.”
- “To see the Administrative Assistant’s position filled.”
 - Sallie is doing both jobs currently.
- “The Recreation Department is different & micromanaged now.”

Signatures:

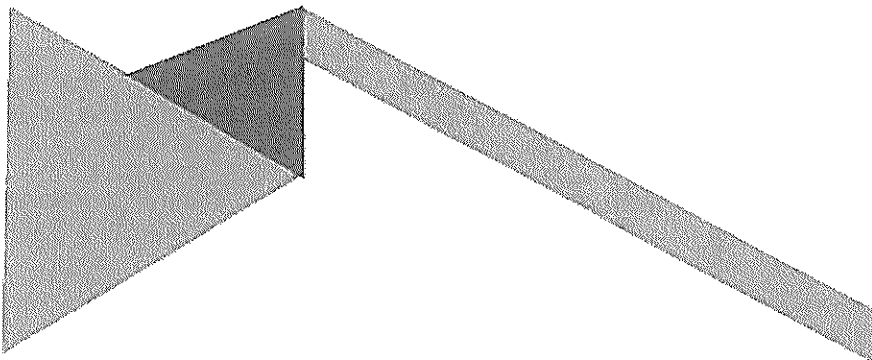
Signature of Employee: 

Name of Employee: Sathie Lowry

Interview Date: 6.23.2023

Investigator's Signature: 

Investigator's Name: Nadia Balassone





HAMDEN CT

HUMAN RESOURCES &
CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

HARASSMENT COMPLAINT INTAKE

WITNESS TESTIMONY

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Please indicate if you consent to full and honest cooperation with this investigation by signing and dating this form below:

I acknowledge that this information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and recollection.

Signature of Employee: _____

Salvatore McClain

Print Name: _____

Salvatore McClain

Date: _____

7/14/23



HAMDEN CT

HUMAN RESOURCES &
CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

HARASSMENT COMPLAINT INTAKE WITNESS TESTIMONY

ATTENTION: An incident report has been submitted to the Human Resources & Civil Service Department which names you as a party, who may have WITNESSED speech, conduct, or behavior that has harassed, disturbed, or made a(n) employee(s) uncomfortable on account of/in reference to discriminatory comments based on race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, retaliation, or other protections under Title VII. Harassment is defined as conduct that unreasonably interferes with work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Please note: the employee is not required to prove that all incidents are overtly connected to discrimination. Hostile work environment harassment can be committed by anyone, including management officials, coworkers, non-employees, or subordinates.

Because you have been identified as a witness to an incident of harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and/or a hostile work environment, we ask that you please answer the following questions to the best of your ability:

Witness: Salvatore McClain, Part-time/Temporary Recreation

1. Do you have any recent knowledge or information of an alleged incident of harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and/or a hostile work environment involving a Town of Hamden employee recently?

Yes / No

2. Please identify the accused harasser and the victim of harassment:

Victim: Sallie Lowry

Accused: Karen Bivens

3. Has there been more than one incident?

Yes / No

4. Please describe the date/time/location of the alleged harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or hostile work environment that you witnessed:

- June 23rd inside Recreation & other times.
- Constant tension.



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- “The incident *was* elevated & disrespectful.”
- “I try to keep to myself.”
- “Coming in every day is hard.”
- “It’s very difficult because I know Karen outside of here.”
- “It’s like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde – nice vs. mean on a dime; flip in personality.”
- “Please speak with Laura the intern at QU – she has only been here a short period of time.”
- “I suggest management training.”
- Very fearful of retaliation & the wrath that will come if/when “she finds out we spoke about her [Karen].”
- Visibly nervous to speak.
- “Miss Sallie was never trained in her position.”
- “I witnessed Karen stopped calling her Miss Sallie, because she used to. She stated that she intentionally won’t use the title directly as a sign of disrespect; she stated that she will now not call her “Miss Sallie” after Sallie “made her mad” on a day.”
- “Karen once perceived her office door had been opened by a key while she wasn’t in-office one day. She turned to Sallie to ask her to try her key on Karen’s office door to see if she was the one that unlocked it. Miss Sallie was singled out.”

5. Is the nature of this complaint a pattern within this particular workplace or from this particular employee? Approximately how often have these incidents occurred?

Yes, every day.

6. Have there been any similar types of workplace incidents that you have observed from this person that may make other employees uncomfortable? Please describe.

- “She [Karen] uses foul language in the office, and in meetings it has become so elevated I have had to excuse myself - from the curse words and heated tone.”



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HUMAN RESOURCES & CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

- “I am very uncomfortable when she calls me into her office and shuts the door.” This happens often.
- “She [Karen] intentionally delayed payment to a vendor because they refused to work one additional hour for free; that vendor was removed from all future consideration in our Department per Karen.”

7. What have you observed as the reported harasser’s usual treatment of other employees?

“Very bad. She lies.”

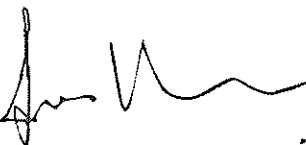
8. How has this reported incident affected your workplace? Has anyone’s work performance been impacted, in your observation?

- “I am passionate about my work, but I must answer her calls at all hours of the day and night; my work has to come home with me.”
- “Karen ‘tries’ to respect identity.”
- “I have been seeking a new position due to my own mental health.”
- “I’ve started taking anxiety medication [from working in the Department].”
- “I am keeping my own log of what happens just in case.”

9. When do you think management should have known or learned of these incidents? What actions were taken previously?

- “Something needs to be done.”
- Was extremely nervous to speak.

Signatures:

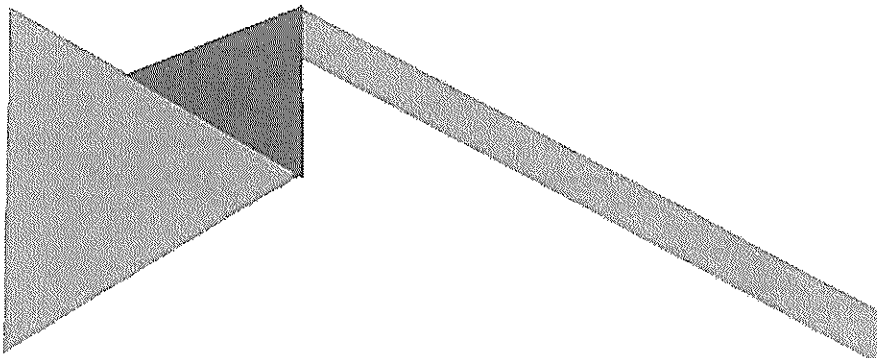
Signature of Employee: 

Name of Employee: Salvatore McChia

Interview Date: 6/30/23

Investigator's Signature: 

Investigator's Name: Nadia Balassone





HAMDEN CT

HUMAN RESOURCES &
CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

HARASSMENT COMPLAINT INTAKE

WITNESS TESTIMONY

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Please indicate if you consent to full and honest cooperation with this investigation by signing and dating this form below:

I acknowledge that this information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and recollection.

Signature of Employee: _____

Gail Jenkins

Print Name: _____

Gail Jenkins

Date: _____

9/14/23



HAMDEN CT

HUMAN RESOURCES &
CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

HARASSMENT COMPLAINT INTAKE WITNESS TESTIMONY

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Because you have been identified as a witness to an incident of harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and/or a hostile work environment, we ask that you please answer the following questions to the best of your ability:

Witness: Gail Jenkins, *Extreme* Camp Director

1. Do you have any recent knowledge or information of an alleged incident of harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and/or a hostile work environment involving a Town of Hamden employee recently?

Yes / No

2. Please identify the accused harasser and the victim of harassment:

Victim: Sallie Lowry

Accused: Karen Bivens

3. Has there been more than one incident?

Yes / No

4. Please describe the date/time/location of the alleged harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or hostile work environment that you witnessed:

- June 23rd incident inside the Recreation Department office.
- "The tone was what caught my attention."



HAMDEN CT

HUMAN RESOURCES & CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

- “Karen insisted – Sallie let her know ‘to wait a minute.’” Karen was “snappy back & unprofessional. Sallie asked Karen for time to put it in order, but Karen didn’t allow for that.”
- “Karen’s tone was upsetting and demanding.”
- “Sallie was working on three different things. Her tone was even /she never raised her voice once. She handled it well – better than [I would have].”
- “I do 40 hours in a day – the tone [Karen uses] is different when speaking with Nicole.”
- “They didn’t include Sallie in certain meetings – not asked/not told/not invited.”
- Last week, Karen asked Gail to send the payroll to Karen to review, in addition to sending it to Sallie – “it’s never done like that.”
- “I just really don’t want to lose my job” re: Karen / retaliation.

5. Is the nature of this complaint a pattern within this particular workplace or from this particular employee? Approximately how often have these incidents occurred?

“Yes – often – tense environment.”

6. Have there been any similar types of workplace incidents that you have observed from this person that may make other employees uncomfortable? Please describe.

- “I was uncomfortable - the intensity of the demand & tone of voice toward Sallie.”
- “That she [Karen] excludes Sallie from meetings she should rightfully be in. Karen only brings Nicole and doesn’t communicate with Sallie at all for those meetings.”

7. What have you observed as the reported harasser’s usual treatment of other employees?

“She talks to Nicole differently than Miss Sallie” (also see #6).

8. How has this reported incident affected your workplace? Has anyone’s work performance been impacted, in your observation?



HAMDEN CT

HUMAN RESOURCES & CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

“I’ve seen how the QU student had a difficult time & how others are reprimanded for having her help. Sallie is overworked but manages it well. I have had to duplicate my efforts so that Karen can verify the work instead of working directly with Sallie. “

9. When do you think management should have known or learned of these incidents? What actions were taken previously?

“Sallie’s been dealing with this for a long time, I believe. Not sure what management has done to help.”

Signatures:

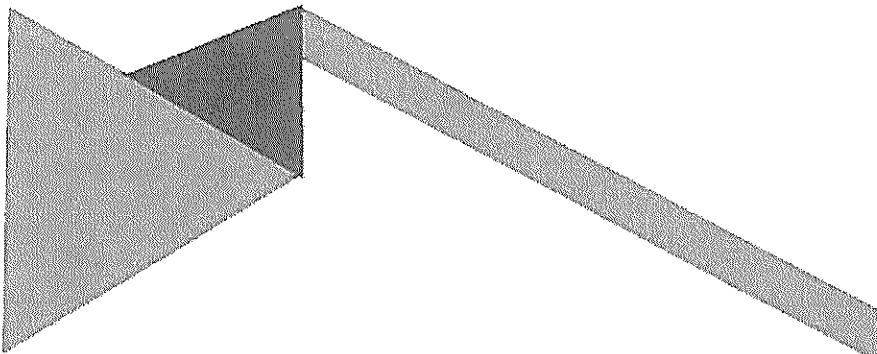
Signature of Employee: Gail Jenkins

Name of Employee: Gail Jenkins

Interview Date: 06/27/2023

Investigator's Signature: Nadia Balassone

Investigator's Name: Nadia Balassone





HAMDEN CT

HUMAN RESOURCES &
CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

HARASSMENT COMPLAINT INTAKE WITNESS TESTIMONY

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I acknowledge that this information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and recollection.

Signature of Employee: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

N. Johnson

Nicole Brown Johnson

07/13/2023



HAMDEN CT
**HUMAN RESOURCES &
CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT**

HARASSMENT COMPLAINT INTAKE
WITNESS TESTIMONY

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Because you have been identified as a witness to an incident of harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and/or a hostile work environment, we ask that you please answer the following questions to the best of your ability:

Witness: Nicole Brown Johnson, Recreation Supervisor

1. Do you have any recent knowledge or information of an alleged incident of harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and/or a hostile work environment involving a Town of Hamden employee recently?

Yes / No

2. Please identify the accused harasser and the victim of harassment:

Victim: Sallie Lowry

Accused: Karen Bivens

3. Has there been more than one incident?

Yes / No

4. Please describe the date/time/location of the alleged harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or hostile work environment that you witnessed:

- "June 23rd inside Recreation."
- "I was in the office."



HAMDEN CT

HUMAN RESOURCES & CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

- “I heard them arguing – not shouting just elevated.”
- Karen asked Nicole if the camp list was updated, but “both of us [Sallie and Nicole] do it” – they both work on camp lists.
- “When Karen talked to me, she just asked [about it].”
- “It was me, Salvatore, Sallie, Karen, Gail, and Laura Van _____ (the intern from QU).”

5. Is the nature of this complaint a pattern within this particular workplace or from this particular employee? Approximately how often have these incidents occurred?

“It’s been tense.”

6. Have there been any similar types of workplace incidents that you have observed from this person that may make other employees uncomfortable? Please describe.

Did not want to speak on this. Wanted involvement kept at the minimum.

7. What have you observed as the reported harasser’s usual treatment of other employees?

“I think Karen talks differently to Sallie.”

8. How has this reported incident affected your workplace? Has anyone’s work performance been impacted, in your observation?

“I try my best to keep to myself and to stay out of the conflicts that come up.”

9. When do you think management should have known or learned of these incidents? What actions were taken previously?

Unsure.

Signatures:

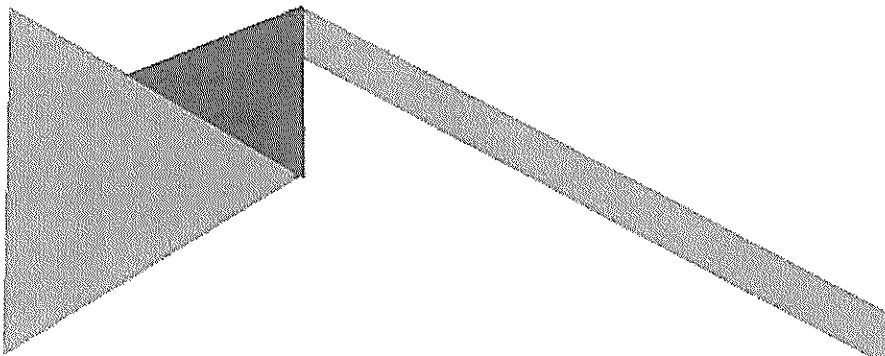
Signature of Employee: *Nicole Brown Johnson*

Name of Employee: Nicole BROWN JOHNSON

Interview Date: 06/29/2023

Investigator's Signature: *Nadia Balassone*

Investigator's Name: Nadia Balassone





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HUMAN RESOURCES &
CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

HARASSMENT COMPLAINT INTAKE WITNESS TESTIMONY

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Please indicate if you consent to full and honest cooperation with this investigation by signing and dating this form below:

I acknowledge that this information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and recollection.

Signature of Employee: _____

Laura Van Aken

Print Name: _____

Laura Van Aken

Date: _____

7/13/23



HAMDEN CT

HUMAN RESOURCES &
CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

HARASSMENT COMPLAINT INTAKE WITNESS TESTIMONY

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Because you have been identified as a witness to an incident of harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and/or a hostile work environment, we ask that you please answer the following questions to the best of your ability:

Witness: Laura Van Aken, QU Fellowship Intern

1. Do you have any recent knowledge or information of an alleged incident of harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and/or a hostile work environment involving a Town of Hamden employee recently?

Yes / No

2. Please identify the accused harasser and the victim of harassment:

Victim: Sallie Lowry & Salvatore McClain

Accused: Karen Bivens

3. Has there been more than one incident?

Yes / No

4. Please describe the date/time/location of the alleged harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or hostile work environment that you witnessed:

- June 23rd, June 30th inside the office.



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HUMAN RESOURCES & CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

- “The Fireworks are tonight & I was helping Salvatore (“Sal”). He took most of the blame; he was drawing a map [of the park]; we were having an innocent conversation, but she [Karen] assumed we left her out – she snapped and pulled him away into her office.”
- “She [Karen] resolved it without me; not sure if the work got done? I would’ve appreciated it as experience.”
- Backlash for helping when I do offer help.
- “I always help Salvatore but she ‘catches’ me. Helping him gets us [all] in trouble.”
- “I haven’t gone to her.”
- “Sallie & Salvatore come back to apologize for not being able to ask for help because she reprimands them after.”
- “I’m just sitting around; I keep asking for work specifically, but today, all she did was have me text someone for her.”
- “I feel safe talking to her only with the light issues, but I don’t feel like I’m being treated fairly like all the other fellows – I’m not invited to meetings. Salvatore came to grab me himself because no one was going to involve me otherwise” – re: staff meeting.
- “Karen retaliates against the employees for teaching me.”
- “We’re a great team – the four of us get along well” [Sallie, Salvatore, Nicole, and Laura]. “I’m learning so much from them, but not from [Karen], and I wish it was her. I’m so grateful for the three of them, I wouldn’t have gotten anywhere without him [Salvatore]”
- “But having me there to help created even more tension.”
- “I know it’s a front when she’s sweet to me.”
- “I don’t know her much as a boss – which I should; she doesn’t realize I’m making myself at home without her.”
- “Having seen the other Fellows, it’s not been fair.”



HAMDEN CT

HUMAN RESOURCES & CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT

- The article [pizza gate] has changed things for the worse – very taboo to mention Vinny now.
 - I am going to QU to ask for a Department Transfer for the rest of the Fellowship program.
 - Fellowship Program runs June 5th or 7th – August 4th.
 - Fellowship Director is Scott McLean, QU College of Arts & Sciences (203) 494-8931
5. Is the nature of this complaint a pattern within this particular workplace or from this particular employee? Approximately how often have these incidents occurred?

Yes

6. Have there been any similar types of workplace incidents that you have observed from this person that may make other employees uncomfortable? Please describe.

“Just tension all around the office.”

7. What have you observed as the reported harasser’s usual treatment of other employees?

“The way she treats Salvatore & Sallie has been difficult.”

8. How has this reported incident affected your workplace? Has anyone’s work performance been impacted, in your observation?

“I haven’t even gotten to participate in any work, because of the way it goes if I help.”

9. When do you think management should have known or learned of these incidents? What actions were taken previously?

Re: QU Fellowship: “Because the program is so short, it might be best to stay, but I *did* tell my Director what was going on. I didn’t know if that was appropriate, but I was hoping to gain more experience (my degree will be in Psychology).”

Re: Hamden: Unsure.

Signatures:

Signature of Employee: Laura Van Aken

Name of Employee: Laura Van Aken

Interview Date: 6/30/23

Investigator's Signature: Nadia Balassone

Investigator's Name: Nadia Balassone

