



## Deaf and mentally ill man tasered by Mobile police sues city

By Katherine Sayre

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MOBILE, Ala. -- **Antonio Love**, a deaf and mentally disabled man whom Mobile police forced from a Dollar General restroom **wielding pepper spray and a Taser**, sued Tuesday alleging that officers weren't properly trained and used excessive force to falsely arrest him.

The lawsuit in **Mobile County Circuit Court** seeks unspecified damages from the city of Mobile, police officers involved in the July 24 incident, Dollar General Corp., and a store manager.

In response, city officials said officers acted professionally and didn't know who was inside the restroom.

Dollar General officials couldn't be reached for comment.

Love was feeling sick to his stomach and went to the restroom at the Dollar General on Azalea Road. A store manager, who thought Love was inside too long, called police.

According to the lawsuit, Love couldn't hear police yelling outside the restroom, but he could sense the vibrations from police banging on the door, frightening him.

Police shot pepper spray under the door and forced the door open, striking Love in the head, according to the lawsuit.

Love was then shocked with a Taser three times while lying in a pool of water, "thereby greatly endangering the plaintiff's life by magnifying the electric shock that the Taser delivered," according to the lawsuit.

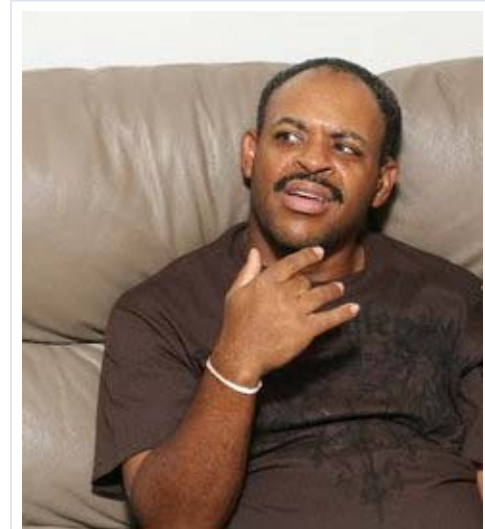
"Why the police were called in the first place is puzzling," said Love's attorney Tommy James in a written statement. "It is also odd that the store manager or police did not simply unlock the door. The type of lock on the door is extremely easy to unlock from the outside."

The city issued a statement Tuesday: "The officers had no way of knowing that the person who barricaded himself in the Dollar Store bathroom and refused to come out for almost an hour was physically challenged. They acted professionally and with restraint based on the information available to them at the time."

A Mobile police internal investigation last year ruled that police were justified in using a Taser and pepper spray to forcibly remove Love because officers at the time did not know he was deaf. However, a lieutenant erred by later trying to send Love to jail.

According to the lawsuit, police learned that Love was deaf after he showed them his card from the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind.

Police arrested him, but a magistrate on duty refused to accept the charges. Officers later dropped Love off in the parking lot of his apartment building but did not talk to his family.



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(File)

Antonio Love, 37, who is deaf and mentally handicapped, talks to reporters at his home July 24, 2009 in Mobile, Ala. about being pepper sprayed and Tasered after police couldn't get him out of a Dollar General bathroom. Love is suing the city, the police officers involved and Dollar General.