

# Acquitted man sues over prosecution

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**ST. LOUIS** • A man who was acquitted of a murder charge in the 1991 death of a Wentzville teen has filed suit in federal court in St. Louis accusing Lincoln County and several Major Case Squad members of misconduct and civil rights violations.

Michael Dowell, of Ferguson, filed the case Thursday, alleging that officers assigned to the Major Case Squad of Greater St. Louis interrogated him at the scene where the body was found and continued at the Lincoln County Sheriff's Department even after he asked for lawyer, a phone call, a trip to a restroom and to be taken to his cell.

The suit also claims that investigators ignored another potential suspect.

The body of Stephanie Hogland, 18, was found in a ditch along Highway W in Lincoln County on Jan. 7, 1991, about 15 miles from where her car was found with a flat tire the day before.



Dowell

In 2006, a DNA sample Dowell submitted as part of his probation for an unrelated assault case in St. Louis was matched to evidence from Hogland's underwear.

Dowell faced a possible death sentence if convicted, but a Boone County jury acquitted him of the murder charge in 2008. The case was moved there due to extensive publicity.

At trial, prosecutors said Dowell lied to investigators about knowing Hogland.

Dowell's witness, the former medical examiner for Jackson County, testified that he believed that Hogland was not raped and had been killed while fully clothed, the suit says. The DNA was degraded, suggesting that the sam-

ple was several days old at the time of Hogland's death, it says.

Dowell also presented witnesses that said another man, who had been with Hogland the night of the murder, had confessed.

After the acquittal, prosecutors went forward with an aggravated forcible rape charge, but a judge tossed it out, saying essentially that jurors had already decided that Dowell did not rape Hogland. Prosecutors claimed at the trial that Dowell killed Hogland because he raped her.

Last year, the Missouri Court of Appeals upheld the dismissal of the rape charge.

Dowell's suit alleges that the rape charge was filed without probable cause and was an example of malicious prosecution.

A spokesperson for the Lincoln County Sheriff's Department did not immediately return a call Friday seeking comment, nor did representatives of the Major Case Squad.