



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 28, 2021

Chicago Mayor Sued Over Refusal to See White Reporters

The Daily Caller News Foundation (DCNF) has partnered with nonprofit watchdog group Judicial Watch to sue Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot (D) after the mayor refused an interview with DCNF reporter Thomas Catenacci, who is white. Lightfoot recently made headlines after announcing that she would only grant interviews to “black and brown” reporters and is now being sued for discrimination and for violating Catenacci’s First and Fourteenth Amendment-protected rights.

Fox News reported in mid-May that Chicago journalists were [claiming](#) that Lightfoot was deciding who would be granted interviews based on the reporter’s race, accusations that Lightfoot later [confirmed](#). Lightfoot defended her remarkably discriminatory actions by pointing to what she contends is the “overwhelming whiteness and maleness” of the press.



AP Images

“In looking at the absence of diversity across the City Hall press corps and other newsrooms, sadly it does not appear that many of the media institutions in Chicago have caught on and truly have not embraced this moment,” Lightfoot wrote in a two-page letter to the media. “I have been struck since my first day on the campaign trail back in 2018 by the overwhelming whiteness and maleness of Chicago media outlets, editorial boards, the political press corps, and yes, the City Hall press corps specifically.”

“If I as the black woman mayor, the first-ever, don’t challenge us, the collective us, to do better, to really make sure that in every institution it reflects the diversity, nuance, and texture, then shame on me,” she continued.

“This isn’t my job. It shouldn’t be,” she added. “I don’t have time for it. But as with so many festering problems, it has only gotten worse with time. So here I am, like so many other Black women before me, having to call your attention to this problem.”

No, it certainly is not Lightfoot’s job to rage against “whiteness and maleness,” especially when her city is overwhelmed with crime and skyrocketing murder rates committed by and against “black and brown” individuals. Lightfoot’s constituents should be infuriated that the mayor has made the race of the press corps a priority when the city has become nearly unlivable for many people of color under her watch.

Lightfoot also took to Twitter to defend her policy.

“Diversity and inclusion is imperative across all institutions including media. In order to progress we must change,” she tweeted. “This is exactly why I’m being intentional about prioritizing media requests from POC reporters on the occasion of the two-year anniversary of my inauguration as mayor of this



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great city.”

According to the DCNF lawsuit, Catenacci made several attempts to interview Lightfoot on Chicago’s efforts to vaccinate its citizens and other COVID-related topics following the mayor’s May 19 letter, but the mayor never responded.

“On May 20, 2021, Plaintiff Catenacci requested, by email, a one-on-one interview with Mayor Lightfoot,” reads the lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division. “Plaintiff Catenacci sent a follow-up email on May 21, 2021. He also sent a third email on May 24, 2021.”

“As of the date of this Complaint, Mayor Lightfoot’s office has not responded to Plaintiff Catenacci’s request nor has Mayor Lightfoot agreed to an interview with Plaintiff Catenacci,” the suit continues.

The lawsuit states that Lightfoot “is aware that Catenacci is ‘not a journalist of color’” and deliberately failed to respond to Catenacci’s requests as a result.

“Failing to respond in a timely manner” to the interview requests is akin to denial, the lawsuit contends.

“It’s absurd that an elected official believes she can discriminate on the basis of race,” DCNF Editor-in-Chief Ethan Barton said. “Mayor Lightfoot’s decision is clearly blocking press freedom through racial discrimination.”

Lightfoot’s policy has prompted criticism from all sides. Critics [took](#) to Twitter, with some noting that Lightfoot’s policy is likely meant to distract from her failure to address the city’s crime problem.

“Lori Lightfoot presided over an enormous increase in homicides, almost all of them in African American or Latino communities, and she’s hoping these PR stunts get liberal America to give her a pass for failing to save people’s lives,” journalist Zaid Jilani pointed out.

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, a Pulitzer Prize finalist and contributing writer for the *New Yorker* magazine and the *New York Times*, made similar observations on Twitter, the *Daily Mail* reported.

“Such astonishing mastery of deflection and distraction ... always hiding from her disastrous record of boldly upholding the status quo in Chicago,” Taylor, who also is a professor at Princeton University, tweeted.

A *Chicago Tribune* journalist turned down a scheduled interview with the mayor in protest of the policy, *The Hill* [reported](#).

“I am a Latino reporter @chicagotribune whose interview request was granted for today,” tweeted the *Tribune*’s City Hall reporter Gregory Pratt.

“However, I asked the mayor’s office to lift its condition on others and when they said no, we respectfully canceled. Politicians don’t get to choose who covers them,” Pratt added.

Carol Marin, co-director of the Center for Journalism Integrity and Excellence at DePaul University in Chicago, also criticized the policy.

“It’s a very good lesson for our journalism students to learn,” [Marin tweeted](#). “Public officials don’t get to pick their reporters. And reporters need to stand up for fellow reporters.”

Catenacci contends all journalists and Americans are affected by the mayor’s discriminatory actions and have a vested interest in the lawsuit.

“Every journalist and every person who consumes the news should be concerned by Mayor Lightfoot’s



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actions,” he said in the news release. “This affects everyone. I look forward to holding the mayor accountable.”



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