

# CAPE COD TIMES

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## NEWS

# 2 face charges from Community of Jesus incident

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ORLEANS — A pretrial hearing is scheduled for Thursday on disorderly conduct charges brought against a woman researching the Community of Jesus and a man who alleges he was abused by the religious community in Orleans as a child.

Ruth Marshall, a 55-year-old professor at the University of Toronto, and Matthew E. Whyte, a 52-year-old Canadian writer who once lived in the community, went to the community June 23 and tried to interview members in the bookstore.

Marshall told police that she had permission to be there from one of the community's sisters and was hoping to put flowers at a memorial stone, according to the Orleans police report.

They also had been to the community two days before, they said.

Whyte told police that he is a journalist who grew up in the Community of Jesus and he and Marshall wanted to interview members to show everyone "how crazy they really are," the report states.

The Community of Jesus has been accused in the past of being a cult, and former community members going back decades have alleged they were mentally and physically abused. As a child, Whyte said, members shoved his head into the floor and forced him to eat his own vomit, according to the report.

After being told the memorial stone was on private property, Marshall and Whyte went to the community's church and were told by members that they could take pictures, the two wrote in a statement to the Times. They were later asked to stop, and at that time, Whyte put away his cellphone, they wrote.

Marshall and Whyte then went to the community's bookstore, where they began to interview members and record the conversations, according to the police report.

"The interview was about their negative feelings toward the community, and Marshall and Whyte were asked by the members not to record anything and stated they were not participating in the interview," the report states.

Whyte said he did not go to the community intending to interview people but he wanted to convey to members what had happened to him while he was there as a child.

Christopher Kanaga, an attorney for the church, reported the incident to police and asked the pair to leave.

Based on written statements from members of the community — who, as police described it, were alarmed by the interviews and the disturbance at the bookstore — police requested a magistrate hearing for Marshall and Whyte on a charge of disorderly conduct.

On Oct. 22, Orleans District Clerk Magistrate Marion Broidrick found probable cause to go forward with a complaint, and the two were arraigned the same day.

Marshall told the Times the members' statements were full of lies and that the community wanted to stop her research into the nexus between religion and politics.

"They obviously don't want me to look into their affairs," she said. "I'm a mom with three kids. I just can't sit here and say nothing."

Whyte said he worried that abuses he alleges happened to him are still happening in the community now.

"My concern is for the children that are in there," he said.

They both contended that the conversations in the gift shop did not rise to criminal charges.

Church attorney Jeffrey Robbins said it was sad that a religious community would be subject to people coming from far away deliberately to cause a disturbance.

"Many of us worship in our respective places of worship, and we all expect and hope those places would be treated with respect and dignity," he said. "This community works so hard to provide a wonderful space to the Orleans community and the Barnstable County community at large."

He dismissed Whyte's allegations against the community.

"This is the sort of garbage that has been peddled unsuccessfully every once in a while," he said.

The community is reflecting on whether to bring a civil suit. Marshall said she was concerned that the case could affect her prospects of ever researching in the U.S. again.

In an ongoing class-action lawsuit in Canada, the plaintiffs are seeking \$200 million in damages for alleged mental and physical suffering from when they attended a private school in Ontario that had ties to the Community of Jesus. Whyte also attended that school.

The church also has denied those allegations

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