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- [Home](#)
- [Our Firm](#)
- [Our Work](#)
  - [Criminal Defense](#)
  - [Federal Criminal Defense](#)
  - [Georgia Criminal Defense](#)
  - [Criminal Appeals](#)
  - [Civil Litigation](#)
  - [Constitutional Rights](#)
  - [Serious Injuries](#)
  - [Whistleblower Claims](#)
- [Results](#)
- [Blog](#)
- [Contact](#)

# Marietta Georgia jury acquits teacher of child molestation

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ON: 03/13/2008

A Cobb County teacher was found “not guilty” of aggravated child molestation earlier this week after a jury trial. The [Atlanta Journal Constitution](#) has the full story.

Apparently, the teacher (Gregory A. Leontovich) was charged because one of his students told authorities that he sodomized her in a restroom at the school where he worked.

According to the teacher’s defense attorney, however, the state’s case fell apart once the jury realized that the girl’s story was impossible – she could not have been alone with him in the restroom because the students are not allowed to go to the restroom without a “buddy.”

Amazingly, the teacher had not even been interviewed by the police before they decided to arrest him. It also looks like neither the police nor the District Attorney’s Office tried to determine whether the girl’s story was credible before Leontovich was arrested, indicted and humiliated. They did not even interview the other teachers at the school until 10 weeks after the alleged incident.

Leontovich went through two years of humiliation, and thousands of dollars in legal fees for his top-notch criminal defense lawyer. He had to resign from his job, and is having difficulty finding work.

Leontovich had been a teacher since 1992. He loved the work, and was respected and admired by his students and the other teachers. In fact, many of them came to court to support him before and during this difficult trial. (Seventy of them showed up at the bond hearing.) But now, even though he was acquitted at trial, he will always have an arrest record and will carry the “scarlet letter” of an aggravated child molestation charge for the rest of his life.

The [AJC's Mike King](#) wrote an excellent editorial about the devastating effects of a false child molestation charge, and how a “not guilty” verdict won't repair the damage done by this allegation.

Our firm has had our fair share of false child molestation cases. In several of these cases, we were able to get the charges dismissed prior to an indictment or trial. In fact, we recently helped a client avoid an indictment for molestation in Cobb County, where Leontovich was charged. Our client, like Leontovich, had been charged and arrested without an adequate investigation. As in so many of these cases, the police just accepted the story and then tried to make all the other facts fit their version of what happened. Fortunately, we were hired before the indictment and had time to develop a strong defense. We convinced the district attorney's office to dismiss the case. We are currently trying to help this client get his arrest record expunged. But the damage done to him and his family as a result of the arrest and initial jail time will take many years to heal, if it ever does.

A couple of years ago, I tried an aggravated child molestation case where the witness had completely made up a story that she was sodomized by our client at knife point. The story was incredible, but there was no one else present to disprove it. It was just our client and the complaining witness, a typical “he said, she said” problem. The district attorney refused to consider our client's innocence, so we went to trial. We won and our client was acquitted of all 6 counts charged against him. But the case was very difficult and expensive, and unnecessary.

There would be far fewer false child molestation allegations if the police did a better job of screening these cases before indictment. A thorough investigation is not too much to ask when you consider how the sentences for these offenses are going through the roof. (Aggravated child molestation now carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years to serve in prison, no parole or probation).

Congratulations to Mr. Leontovich and his Atlanta defense lawyer Barry Hazen for their win in Cobb County. It's a shame he had to go through it, but it does remind us of the importance of a good defense and an impartial jury. I only hope Mr. Leontovich is able to get his life back on track after enduring this unnecessary persecution.

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- [Wolf Blitzer Interviews Page Pate on CNN's Situation Room](#)
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