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LLAME EN INGLÉS POR FAVOR

Man Gets Settlement In Sexual Harrassment Case

by Melissa Lou

When most people hear about a case of sexual harassment, they immediately think, "That is awful for her." Very rarely does the thought that the victim might possibly be a he protrude in our minds, much less that the harasser may be a she. However, according to Joseph Longo it is happening.

Longo just wrapped up a case in which his client D.F., a married factory worker and father of three, sued Unilever for just such a case. The parties settled in court for an undisclosed sum.

According to Longo, D.F. was fired in Nov. of 2001, after a female co-worker accused him of using foul language in front of her; the truth of the matter, he asserts, is that the female co-worker - an unidentified Latina - had groped and harassed D.F. and his pleas for help had been ignored by management.

"He was working for Unilever for over 10 years and he was a good worker; anytime Unilever asked him to work overtime, he would," Longo said. "Several months before all this happened, a woman was transferred to his department. She would shake her breasts in front of him and bend

down directly in front of him and touch the floor then wiggle her posterior. She would touch him, would get on a table and spread her legs in front of him; he was outraged about this and was extremely nervous, she would come up from behind and start fondling his privates. He said 'stop,' (but) a couple days later she would come up and fondle him again."

According to Longo, the power struggle between his client and the woman escalated and turned into an alleged case of battery.

"He would say 'Stop, I am a married man'; she kept doing this," he said. "He reported it to his supervisor, who didn't do anything; this is a couple times a week for like 10 months. He complained to his foreman, his foreman complained to his supervisor, then he complained to another manager, who didn't do anything; a different manager didn't do anything. They laughed at him."

Longo said his client even got so far as to report her to the police for the battery but later, for fear of being fired, decided to drop the report and never went through with the paperwork.

Eventually, he said, the woman accused D.F. of using foul language

in front of her, perhaps in retaliation because D.F. had recently reported her to a supervisor.

"You have to remember when IIR manager called this man into his office and said, 'You are being accused of sexual harassment,' he was shocked: 'Now you are accusing me of using dirty words? I don't understand this,'" Longo said.

Unilever fired D.F. on Nov. 9, 2001, after he was suspended for allegedly talking to his union steward about the sexual harassment charges. The woman was not suspended or fired, despite repeated reports to numerous supervisors that she was harassing D.F.

"While he is in there [with the Human Resources representative] the talk throughout the entire plant was that she had filed a sexual harassment suit and Unilever was firing him. She is the only one who knew of the charge and it is all over the plant while he is still in the office - even though there was nobody else who could have started the talk she was not suspended. He, who had a lawful right to speak to his union steward, was fired," Longo said.

Longo took the case for D.F., who now works at another factory (making less than he did at Unilever), and took the company to trial this year, on the third day of trial, the company settled.

"It means the parties resolved their differences," explained Longo. "And the plaintiff no longer needs the jury to come back and say 'Unilever, you did wrong.' Unilever wants language in the agreement saying they deny liability. I think they knew the jury was going to hit them; it looks better for them settle. They can always say, 'We denied fault,' and deny all his allegations. They saw the writing on the wall."

Neither Unilever nor the attorneys for the company returned our phone calls as of the filing of this report. ■

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