

Assault and discrimination trial starts Nov. 4 over guard's claims against private prison operator GEO Group

A lieutenant's harassment escalated until he tried to run down the pregnant black corrections officer, who later lost her baby, according to a lawsuit

SAN BERNARDINO, CALIF., USA, October 29, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Private prison company GEO Group goes on trial Nov. 4 for alleged assault, racial discrimination, sexual harassment and retaliation against an African American corrections officer.

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Attorney Raymond Babaian

The illegal activity started on Ashly Broussard's first day of work, and a lieutenant and others increasingly harassed her and even tried to run her over with a car — causing a miscarriage, according to her lawsuit.

Trial is set for 11 a.m. Monday, Nov. 4, in Dept. S-26 at San Bernardino Superior Court, 247 W. Third St., San Bernardino.

“This is one of the most horrifying cases that I've ever seen

of a company's managers targeting and harassing a female employee,” said [Raymond Babaian](#), founding partner of [Valiant Law](#), who represents the plaintiff. “The racist remarks started on Day One, then included sexual harassment and quickly escalated over the next few months — especially after the victim complained to human resources at GEO Group.”

According to the lawsuit, a black inmate spat on Broussard on her first day of work inside the prison. She immediately told a supervisor, Lieutenant Laurel Withers, who pulled the inmate into an office where Broussard had been directed to write a report about the incident.

“Withers began to aggressively cuss at the detainee and began a pattern of referring to African American detainees as ‘black mother----ers’ and ‘n-----s’,” according to the complaint. Shocked, Broussard shook her head in disbelief. Withers immediately confronted her and demanded to know if she had “a problem,” according to the complaint. Then, after pointing out that the room had no surveillance camera, he encouraged her to take revenge on the prisoner for spitting on her. “What do you want to do about it? I'll turn around,” he said, according to the complaint.

In the following days, other supervisors showed Broussard areas of the prison without cameras where she could assault detainees, the complaint states.

A few weeks later, Withers allegedly exposed himself to her when the two were alone in an area near a bathroom. He continued to make sexually suggestive comments and lewd gestures, and created and maintained a hostile work environment, according to the complaint.

Three months later, Broussard was walking through the prison parking lot when she noticed a car speeding towards her. Afraid for her life, she ran out of the way and found shelter behind parked cars. Withers was driving the speeding car, according to the complaint. A prison

surveillance video of the incident has since disappeared.

Other prison staff also threatened Broussard, calling her a snitch and a rat after she filed a report against Withers, the complaint says.

The harassment, hostile work environment and assault, "had a significant impact on her health and well being during her pregnancy," and she was constantly denied proper rest breaks, the complaint states. One day during her shift, Broussard experienced immense pain, cramping and bleeding. She asked for permission to leave work early to seek urgent medical help; she was not only denied, but forced to work an additional six hours without a break, the complaint states.

When Broussard finally got to a doctor, she learned she had suffered a miscarriage. When she took leave following the miscarriage, GEO fired her.

Broussard is suing Geo Group and Withers for assault, sexual assault, sexual harassment, discrimination, creating a hostile work environment and retaliation, among other causes.

"Ashly suffered greatly through a continuous onslaught of harassment, discrimination, and threats, including a very real attempt to cause her bodily harm. The GEO Group and its managers bear responsibility for the loss of her unborn child. She hopes this trial will help bring an end to these kinds of illegal treatment of women prison guards, and show that no agency is exempt from the law," Babaian said.

The case number is CIVDS1722295.

Valiant Law of Ontario, Calif., represents various individuals and entities in all aspects of employment claims, including harassment and discrimination, and wage and hour class actions in state and federal courts, with more than a decade of legal practice in Southern California, including the Inland Empire, Los Angeles, Orange County, Riverside, San Diego County, as well as Las Vegas

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