

Black phlebotomists were targets of racism at UCLA Santa Monica Medical Center

Racist threats were left in the women's lockers; hospital leaders responded by retaliation against the women, lawsuit states

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, March 14, 2023

/EINPresswire.com/ -- Within hours of reporting incidents of harassment and bullying at UCLA Santa Monica Medical Center last spring, two Black women phlebotomists found threatening notes inside their lockers that read "STOP complaining LESBO, N*****," according to a lawsuit filed Friday, March 10, in Los Angeles County Superior Court.



UCLA Santa Monica Medical Center

The notes were among a string of acts of race, disability, and gender-based discrimination, harassment, and retaliation the women endured after they both testified in previous lawsuits alleging discrimination and harassment at the hospital's clinical lab.

“

If this is how employees are being treated for nearly a decade, it raises a question of whether this racism extends to Black and minority patients when they seek medical treatment.”

*V. James DeSimone,
employment and civil rights
attorney*

These prior lawsuits included a [\\$1.6 million jury verdict in August 2019](#) awarded to a Black woman phlebotomist who was the target of persistent racist comments from co-workers and was fired after she complained. Two other similar lawsuits settled out of court.

The lawsuit filed on Friday alleges that, rather than addressing the problems with racial discrimination and harassment in the hospital's clinical lab following the 2019 verdict through April 22, 2022—the day the threatening

notes were left inside the women's lockers — UCLA Health held just a single 90-minute seminar on the topic for lab employees.

The lawsuit further alleges that both women, long time medical professionals, were psychologically devastated by having racial epithets directed at them inside the laboratory. The lawsuit states that the women's supervisors failed to take any immediate action, and four months passed before the UCLA Medical Center administration even bothered to interview them.

To date, no one has been disciplined or dismissed for leaving the notes, said [V. James DeSimone](#), the Marina del Rey, Calif., employment and civil rights attorney representing Cavitt and Essombe.

The lawsuit alleges that the women were not allowed to take paid leave while the threat was being investigated or while they received treatment for anxiety and post-traumatic stress. Instead, according to the lawsuit, the women were forced to return to the lab and continue using the locker room while knowing that the person or people who made the threats had neither been located nor held accountable.

The lawsuit says that in retaliation for reporting hate speech inside the lab, UCLA Health made the women the targets of discipline based on "retroactively created 'counseling memos' for 'unsatisfactory attendance'" from before the April 22, 2022 incident.

This retaliation continued into the current year, with the lawsuit alleging that both women have received "warning letters" in the last two months disciplining them for taking approved family medical leave and staying home when directed to do so by the UCLA Symptom Tracker/COVID screening system.

"UCLA's harassment of and retaliation against these two women has been persistent, insidious, and illegal," DeSimone said. "This unlawful workplace behavior has been going on since at least 2015 and no one has yet been held to account. If this is how employees are being treated for nearly a decade, it raises a question of whether this racism extends to Black and minority patients when they seek medical treatment."

"You cannot overestimate the effect prolonged and sustained discrimination and harassment has on a person," added co-counsel Emily C. Barbour. "This case is not just about how our clients have suffered emotionally, it is also about how our clients have suffered physically from the racism inside the UCLA Medical Center."

When a Los Angeles Superior Court jury ruled that UCLA Supervisors knew or should have known of racial harassment and failed to take action, DeSimone added, "I asked UCLA to look inward and determine how racism was allowed to fester inside of its workplace. Instead, UCLA stuck its head in the sand and issued a tepid denial and, predictably, the racist conduct proliferated."

The lawsuit seeks damages for race, sex, gender and perceived sexual orientation discrimination; retaliation; failure to prevent harassment and retaliation; and other violations of federal and state employment laws.

The lawsuit was filed in Los Angeles Superior Court; Namesha Cavitt and Takesha Essombe v. The Regents of the University of California, Ana Muro, Chanida Anukul et al. 23STCV05390 (L.A. Sup. Court, filed March 10, 2023.)

Los Angeles civil rights attorney V. James DeSimone has dedicated his 35-year law career to providing vigorous and ethical representation to achieve justice for those whose civil and constitutional rights are violated.

Robert Frank
Newsroom Public Relations
206-790-6324
[email us here](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/622152718>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2023 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.