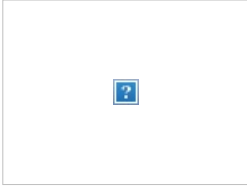


EEOC BRINGS SUIT AGAINST COMPANY FOR RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION AND RETALIATION



A black Rastafarian, working at a company in New York, was fired from his job as a security officer. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), alleging employer retaliation, recently filed a lawsuit against the business. The man had been employed at Grand Central Partnership, Inc. (GCP), a not-for-profit developer of real estate, offices and facilities near the Grand Central Terminal area in New York. EEOC alleges that the security officer's employment was terminated when he complained of threats of violence and racism, an act which would constitute retaliation, which violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The EEOC also claims that GCP violated a consent decree. The EEOC and GCP had settled a lawsuit back in 2009 over the company's treatment of Rastafarian and Caribbean security officers, finalized with a consent decree filed in a federal court. As part of the settlement, the parties agreed that GCP would accommodate the religious practices of Rastafarian security officers and would not retaliate against the Rastafarian workers for participating in the lawsuit. The settlement also ensured that GCP would still be subject to supervision by the federal court. EEOC's new suit claims a revisit of antagonism aimed at Rastafarians working at GCP. Reportedly, a security officer, who was not a Caribbean, threatened to shoot and kill a group of Rastafarian workers. A white security supervisor purportedly did not take the physical threats seriously, leading one Rastafarian security officer to object to the supervisor's behavior and previous acts of discrimination. Likewise, he referred to the supervisor as a racist for using a slur against Rastafarians and threatening to in some way obstruct their paychecks at work. Three months after the Rastafarian security officer complained to the



supervisor and notified EEOC, the company terminated his employment.

In an EEOC press release posted on its website, Elizabeth Grossman, Regional Attorney of EEOC's New York District Office, said, "EEOC is particularly concerned when it obtains a consent decree to stop violations of the law and the employer turns around and ignores the settlement by reverting to the illegal behavior." She further stated that EEOC would "pursue vigorously retaliation claims against employers whose managers would rather not comply with court orders and fire individuals who object to threats based on their religion and bias based on race." Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects employees against retaliation from their superiors when they complain of discrimination based on, in this case, race or religion. EEOC filed the lawsuit in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. It first attempted to reach a voluntary pre-litigation settlement. Michael Ranis, a trial attorney in EEOC's New York District Office, said, "Retaliation against an employee who objects to threats of violence against his co-religionists and then objects to racism will not be tolerated. EEOC's lawsuit should make it clear that an employer may not blame the victim when it loses control of its managers and employees."