

MINORITY WORKERS CALL COCA-COLA “A CESSPOOL OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.”



Coca-Cola, the soft drink company, is at the center of yet another racial-abuse controversy, as sixteen of its employees, Black and Hispanic, have filed a lawsuit, alleging that they have been forced to work in conditions that they describe as “a cesspool of racial discrimination.” The lawsuit charges the company of “maintaining racially discriminatory and hostile environments.” According to the suit, the racial discrimination was not only verbal, but that the companies “relegated minorities to less favourable assignments, unfair disciplinary action and retaliation for complaining.” Their lawyers for the plaintiffs, Steven Morelli said, “Coca-Cola circles its wagons and calls (the plaintiffs) ‘nuts’ and ‘ingrates.’ ” The suit further charges that an “endemic culture of racism” runs through the company’s management and supervisors at its New York bottling plants in Elmsford and Maspeth, N.Y. and that its plaintiffs “have suffered from the worst of its ills in terms of biased work assignments and allotment of hours, unfair discipline and retaliation, and a caustic work environment.” Many of the plaintiffs say they were subjected to verbal abuse that was racial and derogatory. Moreover, complaints against the perpetrators went unheeded, nor were they punished. Sondra Walker, one of the plaintiffs, said, that she was called “nappy head and Aunt JaMamma”. She also revealed, that a white colleague was assigned the duty of cleaning out a sewer, objected saying that it was a menial job and would suit a “n***er” more. His highly objectionable and insensitive choice of words did not even fetch a reprimand let alone punishment. One of the plaintiffs, Guillermo Nunez said that he was thrilled when he landed a job with Coca-Cola, “I thought this was a fair and honest company, as American as apple pie,” “I thought I had made it. It was my American Dream.” Coca-Cola issued a statement saying, “Where discrimination is alleged, we conduct a thorough investigation.” It said it appears one of the allegations in the lawsuit refers to an employee who was terminated five years ago, and “other allegations were addressed and resolved even longer ago. Contrary to the allegations in the lawsuit, our investigation has not uncovered a culture of workplace discrimination. In fact, many minority associates have come forward to strongly disavow the allegations of discrimination contained in the lawsuit.” Although the company claims, that they have excellent workplace diversity, they don’t really have a very clean record. Way back in 2000, Coca Cola had to fork out more than \$192 million, to resolve a racial discrimination case. The lawsuit had claimed that there was a hiring prejudice against Black employees and they were paid \$26,000 a year less than white workers.