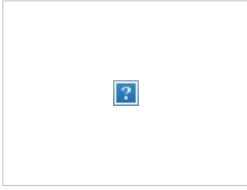


COMPANY TO PAY NEARLY A MILLION DOLLARS IN DISCRIMINATION SETTLEMENT



A cleaning company has been taken to the cleaners. They will be paying 450,000 dollars to settle a racial discrimination and retaliation lawsuit. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) filed a suit against Matrix, LLC, a company that specializes in professional cleaning and janitorial services and operates in areas throughout New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia. The EEOC filed the lawsuit on behalf of 15 former employees. Matrix will pay nearly a million dollars and will also be providing substantial relief. According to EEOC's allegations, officials at the company informed a supervisor, who is white, that she was not to hire additional African American cleaners to handle tasks at a client's site in Concordville, PA. The supervisor apparently disregarded the notice and hired workers based on their qualifications. Allegedly, when Matrix learned that some of the new hires were black cleaners, the supervisor's employment was terminated, an act which the EEOC deemed retaliation, as the



woman was opposed to what can unmistakably be classified as racial discrimination. The EEOC filed a civil action in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, claiming that Matrix' discrimination was aggravated by the company's poor treatment of its black employees. The cleaners who were African American were allegedly told to sit in the back of the cafeteria during their breaks and were subsequently prohibited from using the cafeteria in any capacity while on break. The EEOC's lawsuit states that Matrix later terminated every employee at the Pennsylvania site and hired new workers, none of whom were black, as the cleaning crew. Both the reputed retaliation and racial discrimination would be a direct violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was passed to protect employees against discrimination based on race, age or religious beliefs and to prohibit an employer retaliating against a worker for charging, opposing or complaining about discrimination. The suit was filed after EEOC initially tried to reach a pre-litigation settlement by conciliation. A three-year consent decree, which is a legal maneuver to sidestep litigation, was approved. In an effort to prevent further racial discrimination or retaliation, the consent decree will require Matrix to train supervisors and managers about discrimination and retaliation, post a remedial notice, and report to the EEOC with regard to any complaints of discrimination or retaliation at the Pennsylvania site. Spencer H. Lewis, District Director of the EEOC's Philadelphia District Office, stated in an EEOC press release, "We commend the company for its agreement to carry out the significant equitable relief provided in the consent decree, including providing expansive annual training, which will benefit all company employees." EEOC's regional attorney, Debra M. Lawrence, also commented: "We appreciate Matrix' cooperation and diligence throughout the negotiation process to resolve this case quickly without engaging in protracted and costly litigation."