

RACE BIAS SUIT AGAINST AIRLINE POISED FOR TAKE OFF AS BOTH SIDES ADOPT TOUGH STAND



United Continental Holdings, the largest airline in the world, stands accused of racial discrimination, following a lawsuit on Tuesday. Twenty-four African-American pilots and supervisors of the airline have filed a lawsuit that the airline discriminates against the minority employees and offers them fewer promotions compared to their white counterparts. The suit, filed in U.S. District Court in San Francisco, contends that all the 24 employees who have filed the lawsuit, have been working for the airline for almost a decade and a half, yet they have been denied the promotions that they lawfully merited because of their race. Plaintiff Capt. Fred Robinson in a prepared statement said, "The company's employment policies involve uncontrolled subjective criteria that are applied in an arbitrary manner, further promoting racial biases and stereotypes to the detriment of many extremely qualified management candidates." In a statement, Terry Haynie, a United Pilot said, "We have endured a habitual, longstanding pattern of discriminatory behavior at the hands of United Air Lines." In a statement, the airline's parent company, United Continental Holdings Corp., denied the charges and said it will contest the suit. The airline issued a statement saying, "United does not tolerate harassment or discrimination of any kind. We believe this lawsuit is without merit and will vigorously defend ourselves." The suit alleges that the airline maintains double standards for the promotion of its employees – one for minorities and one for non-minorities. The suit further contends that non-minorities are unfairly provided more opportunities for growth, which entitles them to higher pays and better benefits. Nearly all black employees are in non-managerial positions. The lawsuit goes on to allege that those minorities, who do manage to get promotions to manager level, are subject to biased and prejudiced practices that ensure that further development is ruled out. Some Blacks are promoted to maintain the mask of diversity. Such employees who hold managerial positions are treated differently than their white counterparts. They are excluded from "informal" emails and social gatherings where operating procedures, managerial issues and corporate advancement opportunities are discussed. Some of the plaintiffs are also claiming that they are being passed over for promotions and special assignments, and are being punished for their role in the 2010 federal equal employment racial discrimination case against United. The lawsuit has asked for an undisclosed sum in punitive damages and legal fees and urges the airlines to desist from adopting such discriminatory practices. "The struggle for inclusion at United Airlines is a long-standing issue that many have tried to address over a long period of time," said plaintiff Capt. Leon Miller, also in a prepared statement.

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