

## EX-FBI EMPLOYEE SUES FBI FOR EMPLOYEE JEALOUSY THAT LED TO HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION



Erika Bonilla, a professional singer and former FBI employee in New Mexico has alleged that her former co-workers at FBI field office in Albuquerque, N.M, were "jealous of her appearance and Latin singing career." Bonilla is a professional Latin music singer, has a music album to her credit, the success of which can be determined from the fact that she has signed another recording contract for a second album. Bonilla 38, commenced work at the FBI field office in December 2002. In 2007, she was promoted to becoming an Administrative Specialist, a job "which entailed human resources management, language testing, applicant testing and recruiting matters." She has filed a suit with the U.S. District Court in New Mexico, against the FBI for harassment and discrimination. Bonilla's suit, filed on June 18, names Attorney General Eric Holder and the Department of Justice, which oversees the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The lawsuit states she "was targeted, harassed and retaliated against because she is an attractive Hispanic female with a career in Latin music." "She has performed at various FBIHQ functions," which the "FBI is well aware of, and allows her to work as a singer," the suit continues. Bonilla, in her lawsuit has asked for unspecified damages, back pay, "and other equitable relief" for discrimination on the basis of race and gender. Bonilla, who now lives in California, said that she should be protected from retaliation for protected activity under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. When ABC News sought comment from the FBI, they declined to do so, referring them to the Justice Department. However, Charles Miller, a spokesman for the Department of Justice declined to comment on the ongoing litigation. Monnica Garcia, Bonilla's attorney said, "Ms. Bonilla indicated this harassment included maliciously false rumors, disparate treatment and frivolous complaints that caused her anguish and lost pay. This lawsuit was brought because, despite her repeated complaints to management, the agency failed to address the hostile work environment. Ms. Bonilla hopes this lawsuit will not only compensate her for her damages, but also prevent future acts of discrimination and retaliation." Bonilla claims her co-workers "would not train [her] or work with her in a non-hostile manner, and they also spread malicious gossip in the office" that she "only obtained her position because of her appearance" over another employee. "After obtaining the new position, [Bonilla] was harassed by a handful of employees in the office, who thought that Support Services Technician (SST) Maria Grossetete should have received the position," the suit states. In the lawsuit she also makes serious allegations of how one worker's comments revealed that they were conspiring to get rid of her. The lawsuit mentions how one employee, "made comments about how they needed to 'get rid of Erika'." She states in her lawsuit that she was wrongly accused of sexual proximity with the management to get promotional favors. The lawsuit states that a co-worker, "falsely stated that the reason the position was given to [Bonilla] was because [she] had sexual relations with executive management in the Albuquerque Office." She had made harassment allegations against one co-worker and the subsequent investigations by the FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility found the allegations to be true. However, during the investigation, Bonilla "was inappropriately questioned, in an accusatory fashion, whether she had engaged in sexual relations with members of the executive management in exchange for promotion." Her name was continually maligned and gossip was spread in the office that she owed the government a lot, through unpaid taxes from her earnings from her singing career. Moreover, employees would sift through her personal belongings including her purse and notebook, for any incriminating evidence. In April 2009, she was told that there was a complaint against her about her attendance and punctuality. However, an assessment of her performance showed that there were "no negative remarks whatsoever as to Ms. Bonilla's performance in May 2009," the suit states, and "from 2008 to 2009, her "critical elements" rating got better." On the contrary her 2009 evaluation stated that Bonilla "has developed good rapport with her supervisor, and consistently provides prompt, professional responses to questions and concerns." When she was being investigated for the time and attendance complaint made against her, she says that she was asked to "unfairly required to document every minute of her day for over a year in order to avoid a 10-day suspension, despite the fact that she was never before required to do so by her supervisor." Since this was impossible to do, she failed to do so and earned her suspension without pay for 10 days, resulting in a permanent record suspension. These events left Bonilla alleges that these events left her with no choice but to seek redress with the FBI's Equal Employment Opportunity Affairs, with whom she filed a complaint with FBI's Equal Employment Opportunity Affairs of employment discrimination on Dec. 7, 2009. However, this complaint instead of solving her problems further increased discriminatory behavior against her and several "anonymous" complaints were made to supervisors about her "appearance, time and attendance and work ethic." She said, "She was also discriminated against because she is a Hispanic female who received the position she had over Maria Grossetete, and because several coworkers were jealous of her appearance and Latin singing career," according to the suit, which added that "management" also treated her differently "for these reasons." The lawsuit says, that Bonilla did not suffer quietly and regularly brought harassment issues to the notice of the management. "The Agency knew that Ms. Bonilla was in fact being harassed and retaliated against," the suit states. "The damage was done as to Ms. Bonilla and the agency did nothing to rectify what happened." Not only did her work at the workplace suffer, her singing professional life also suffered as in 2010, "as a result of everything that has occurred," she was "denied the opportunity to perform her music at an Agency event. The harassment caused [her] a great deal of unnecessary stress for years. She also started having high blood pressure, which is a direct result of the work stress." Bonilla "has now relocated to another office in California because of harassment and has since received good ratings at her new location, even obtaining an award," the suit states.