



HOTEL MANAGER VIOLATES EMPLOYEES' CIVIL RIGHTS IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE



Best Western hotels in the Washington cities of Tacoma and Federal Way have agreed to pay \$365,000 and other relief to settle a harassment suit. The action was brought against hotel groups Pacific Hospitality and Seasons Hotel by the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission). According to the lawsuit, the general manager of both the Best Western Tacoma Dome and the Best Western Evergreen Inn (formerly La Quinta Federal Way) systematically harassed and belittled women. The suit claims that female employees were the target of racial slurs and disparaging remarks based on sex and race, as well as yelling and physical intimidation. His discriminatory behavior also allegedly included throwing a stapler at a woman's head and referring to a pregnant employee as a "welfare mother" and suggesting that she have an abortion. Five former employees claimed that they were fired by the general manager only after they revealed their pregnancies. The lawsuit also entails allegations that the religious beliefs of employees were openly mocked. According to the EEOC, the general manager said to an employee, who told him that her religion did not allow abortions, that God was not part of her life and should not be an influence in deciding to keep the pregnancy. Another abortion was allegedly suggested because that particular pregnant worker already had a child – with the general manager adding that she was her own God and that her destiny were her own. Yet another employee was told that she was "weak-minded" when she said that she was a Christian; this woman believed that, as the general manager was aware that she was religious, his religion-based comments were intended to irk her. The man's reputed actions violate four points of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, since the discrimination was due to sex, race, pregnancy and religion. The EEOC first attempted a pre-litigation settlement, followed by a suit filed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington. The hotel groups signed a consent decree, agreeing to pay \$365,000 to 11 victims. The hotels will be monitored by the EEOC for four years to ensure compliance with the terms of the agreement, including the immediate dismissal of the general manager, re-employment of two of the employees discriminated and significant changes to company policies. There will also be training conducted, the creation of an HR department



and easier and more effective ways for employees to submit complaints.

EEOC San Francisco District Office Regional Attorney William R. Tamayo said, "The women in this case were trying to support their families." Tamayo added that female workers were subjected to threats, intimidation and demeaned for their gender, race or religious beliefs and that "federal law protects employees from this type of degrading mistreatment." "The harassment by the general manager in this case was shockingly hateful and affected the women who worked under him in very real and damaging ways," said EEOC San Francisco District Director Michael Baldonado. "It's unfortunate that it took a federal lawsuit to spur this solution."

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