



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Press Release

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Casse Community Health Institute Sued by EEOC for Race Harassment and Retaliation

Health Care Provider Fired Black Employee Who Spoke Out Against Race Harassment in the Wake of Racial Justice Protests, Federal Agency Charges

SHREVEPORT, La. – The Council for the Advancement of Social Services and Education, doing business as CASSE Community Health Institute, violated federal law when it subjected a Black employee to a hostile work environment on the basis of her race and fired her after she complained about racially offensive workplace conduct, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in a lawsuit filed on June 15, 2023.

According to the EEOC's lawsuit, in June 2020, a Black employee working at CASSE's clinic in Shreveport, Louisiana complained to CASSE that its dental director made racially offensive comments about racial justice protests associated with the Black Lives Matter movement. The employee alleged that the dental director proposed putting on blackface and going rioting and looting. The employee further complained that the dental director singled her out as the only Black employee in a room full of white coworkers and questioned her whether she attended the protests. After CASSE's chief executive officer learned about the employee's internal

complaint, she immediately placed the employee on unpaid administrative leave and terminated her.

Racially harassing conduct that alters the terms and conditions of the workplace violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race. Title VII also prohibits discharging an employee because of their race or retaliating against any person who complains of or opposes racially offensive conduct in the workplace. The EEOC filed suit in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana (Civil Action No. 5:23-cv-00808) after first trying to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its conciliation process.

“When employers become aware of racially offensive conduct in the workplace, they have a legal obligation to take prompt remedial action aimed at stopping it,” said Rudy Sustaita, regional attorney for the EEOC’s Houston District Office.

Michael Kirkland, director of the EEOC’s New Orleans Field Office, added, “In order to achieve Title VII’s promise of a discrimination-free workplace, workers must be able to safely complain about racial discrimination without fear of reprisal.”

Elizabeth Owen, a senior trial attorney in the EEOC’s New Orleans Field Office, said, “Making racially charged comments -- and singling out Black employees about whether they participate in racial justice protests at a time of well-known racial tensions in the community -- can fundamentally worsen workplace conditions for Black workers.”

For more information on race and color discrimination, please visit

<https://www.eeoc.gov/racecolor-discrimination> (<https://www.eeoc.gov/racecolor-discrimination>). For more information on harassment, please visit **<https://www.eeoc.gov/harassment> (<https://www.eeoc.gov/harassment>)**. For more information on retaliation, please visit **<https://www.eeoc.gov/retaliation> (<https://www.eeoc.gov/retaliation>)**.

The lawsuit was commenced by the EEOC’s New Orleans Field Office, which is part of its Houston District Office, which has jurisdiction over Louisiana and parts of Texas.

The EEOC advances opportunity in the workplace by enforcing federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. More information is available at **www.eeoc.gov (<http://www.eeoc.gov>)**. Stay connected with the latest EEOC news by subscribing to our **[email updates](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts) (<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts>)**

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