

## LI exec says he was fired for reporting slurs

Updated August 23, 2017 8:11 PM By Carrie Mason-Draffen [carrie.mason-draffen@newsday.com](mailto:carrie.mason-draffen@newsday.com)

newsday.com

A Hicksville manufacturer of power transmission parts and its chief executive are being sued by a former vice president, who alleges he was fired because he complained about abusive behavior by the CEO, including the frequent use of racial epithets against minority employees.

Lawyers for Wayne Martin filed the wrongful-termination lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Central Islip on Monday against Designatronics Inc., its chief executive Robert Kufner and parent company, Dyson, Dyson & Dunn Inc. in Illinois.

The suit, which seeks unspecified damages, said Martin was dismissed for complaints about “unlawful and discriminatory comments regarding black and/or African-American people.”

The lawyer representing the defendants said the claims are groundless.

“The accusations are untrue,” said Gregory S. Lisi, a partner at Forchelli, Curto, Deegan, Schwartz, Mineo & Terrana in Uniondale. “This is just a claim from a disgruntled former employee that has no basis in fact, and we are going to vigorously defend this case.”

Kufner couldn't be reached for comment. Executives at Dyson referred calls to Lisi.

“Mr. Kufner made several racist remarks about Black people and displayed a disturbing level of comfortability with the n-word,” the lawsuit states. It also says he referred to some female workers as “fat slobs” and remarked about the sexual orientation of some employees. Martin and Kufner are both white.

Martin, who joined the company in 2013, frequently reported the behavior to the head of human resources, who said Kufner was “an HR nightmare,” the suit states.

Kufner was fired in April by Designatronics chairman Michael Walsh, who said in a memo after a company review that he “discovered an excessive amount of issues that I cannot tolerate nor overlook,” the lawsuit states.

Kufner's fortunes changed in June, when Robert Dyson of the parent company asked Walsh to resign. In July, Kufner was back in Hicksville as CEO, and within hours fired Martin, the lawsuit says.

“When Mr. Kufner was reinstated as CEO, shortly thereafter, his first order of business was to fire Mr. Martin in retaliation for his complaints,” said David E. Gottlieb, of Wigdor LLP in Manhattan, who represents Martin. “Whistleblower laws prohibit retaliation.”

Designatronics, which a Newsday story said had 190 employees in September, makes small mechanical components and assemblies used in industries that include aerospace, health care and manufacturing.

---

Copyright © 2017 Newsday. All rights reserved.