

Wigdor Files Race Discrimination and Retaliation Complaint Against Top Law Firm McDermott Will & Emery

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Wigdor LLP has filed a complaint on behalf of Ms. Ashley Ogedegbe, alleging that she was subjected to racial discrimination and, ultimately, terminated in retaliation for speaking out. The complaint—filed against one of the largest law firms in the world, McDermott Will & Emery LLP—alleges violations of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Florida Civil Rights Act, and the Illinois Human Rights Act.

As detailed in the complaint below, Ms. Ogedegbe was met with hostility from the moment she joined the Firm. On her first day, when HR failed to welcome her, a Black receptionist gave her an informal office tour and offered a stark warning: “Black women don’t last at the Firm.” That statement, Ms. Ogedegbe alleges, quickly proved prophetic.

The prejudiced environment was inescapable, as Ms. Ogedegbe’s colleagues openly flaunted their discriminatory behavior. At a retreat, when Associates were asked “what do you hide about yourself at work” and “what are you most proud of,” she was horrified to see responses like “white pride,” “white skin,” “white power,” and “Nazism” electronically displayed before all attendees.

Throughout her tenure, Ms. Ogedegbe was allegedly subjected to a pattern of discrimination and exclusion, such as being denied training opportunities, removed from client meetings, and having her work misappropriated by white colleagues. After she began raising concerns about the problematic behavior she’d witnessed, including racially offensive remarks broadcast during a firmwide diversity event, she was met with swift retaliation.

When Ms. Ogedegbe ultimately filed internal complaints and spoke to Human Resources, the Firm launched what she asserts was a sham investigation. As alleged, colleagues later admitted they were afraid to speak openly, and the individuals named in her complaints were subsequently promoted or rewarded. Ms. Ogedegbe, meanwhile, was stripped of key assignments, undermined in reviews, and ultimately terminated. The partners she worked most closely with were not even informed of the decision.

The complaint also details disturbing allegations that the Firm had a longstanding pattern of disproportionately terminating Black female attorneys—something even the firm’s own Diversity Committee acknowledged during internal meetings.

Despite these challenges, Ms. Ogedegbe was recognized with positive performance reviews, financial bonuses, and consistent praise from partners—until she spoke up. She was then terminated.

With McDermott Will & Emery set to merge with Schulte Roth & Zabel on Aug. 1, they are poised to establish a firm with 1,750 attorneys and more than 20 offices worldwide. With such a broad footprint, it

is all the more critical to ensure that discrimination is stripped of any opportunity to flourish.

Statement from Attorney Michael J. Willemin:

“Ms. Ogedegbe’s experience is a stark example of what happens when anti-discrimination policies are performative, and when powerful institutions retaliate instead of reflect and remediate. What she endured—exclusion, appropriation, and ultimately retaliatory termination—is not only unacceptable, it is unlawful. We are committed to holding the firm accountable on her behalf.”

The full Ogedegbe v. McDermott Will & Emery LLP complaint:

Please find the full complaint [here](#).

For any questions:

Please reach out to attorney Michael J. Willemin (mwillemin@wigdorlaw.com) or Director of Marketing Tess Neudeck (tneudeck@wigdorlaw.com).