

Court Sanctions Firm That Sued Adversary in Discrimination Suit

BY NOELEEN G. WALDER

A BITTER battle involving photographs of a topless woman, charges of sexual discrimination and extortion took a new turn yesterday when a Manhattan judge sanctioned a lawyer for bringing what he called a harassing lawsuit against his adversary.

After attorney Douglas H. Wigdor allegedly refused to return racy images of Sandra Piedrabuena Abrams unless his clients were paid \$2.5 million to settle claims of harassment, Ms. Abrams' lawyer, Ronald M. Green, sued Mr. Wigdor and his firm, calling the demand "nothing short of blackmail."

While Mr. Wigdor might have employed "heavy handed" settlement tactics, Justice Walter B. Tolub in *Abrams v. Pecile*, 110329/09, nonetheless held that Mr. Green's suit against Mr. Wigdor could "only have been brought to harass" Mr. Wigdor's law firm, and found that Mr. Wigdor and Thompson Wigdor & Gilly were entitled to \$1,000 in sanctions as a result of the "frivolous claims."

Mr. Green, of Epstein Becker & Green, vowed in an interview to appeal the ruling.

"My client's been accused of nothing. For her to have to agree to contribute to a \$2.5 million settlement demand to get her photographs back is absurd," he said.

The acrimonious dispute began in December 2008 when Ms. Abrams' husband, Russell, the president of hedge fund Titan Capital, allegedly asked his administrative assistant Danielle Pecile to take two compact discs of photos to Duane Reade for development.

When Ms. Pecile handed back the photographs, some of which depicted Ms. Abrams posing topless on her honeymoon in



Justice Tolub

the Mediterranean and the couple in a bathtub, she claims Mr. Abrams "smirked callously, taking pleasure in my obvious embarrassment and discomfort" and asked if she liked the images.

On April 8, Ms. Pecile resigned from Titan. That same day, she e-mailed Mr. Abrams and told him she had quit because his brother Marc, who worked at the hedge fund, had sexually harassed her.

A flurry of hostile e-mails from Marc Abrams to Ms. Pecile ensued, in which he called her a "dirty pig thief," a "whore" and

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The Manhattan Supreme Court decision appears on page 25.

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