

Transgender Employee Sues Christian-Owned Apparel Company Forever 21, Claims Bosses Mocked Transition

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Alexia Daskalakis is suing Forever 21, Christian-owned apparel company, for discrimination

Forever 21, a Christian-owned apparel company, is being sued by a transgender employee who claims she was unlawfully discriminated against by management after transitioning to a woman, then abruptly fired.

Alexia Daskalakis, 22, formerly known as Anthony, filed a lawsuit against the billion-dollar company in Brooklyn federal court on Wednesday and is seeking unspecified monetary damages.

"This is a lawsuit where our client is alleging that she was discriminated against on account of her status as being transgender," Daskalakis' lawyer, David Gottlieb of Wigdor LLP, told The Christian Post on Thursday.

In court documents, the Brooklyn native, who was employed by the company for four years, claims managers at the Brooklyn store began treating her with "increasing contempt" in January 2014 when she informed them that she was transitioning from male to female. She also claims that she was fired in Jan. this year without reason after she complained about the alleged mistreatment.

"You used to be a hard worker when you were a guy, but not anymore," Daskalakis quoted one of her managers as saying.

The former Visual Merchandiser, who says she had a good performance history with the company, says that she told her managers that she was beginning hormone treatments as part of her transition and that the alleged mistreatment became worse when she "began dressing in a more traditionally feminine manner, such as wearing more form-fitting clothing and applying more traditionally feminine makeup."

According to Gottlieb, his client received no support in the form of counseling or otherwise from her bosses after informing them of her life-changing transition. Instead, Daskalakis' former supervisor, Patrick Walmsley, told her to simply "make sure it [didn't] affect [her] work," the complaint alleges.

Walmsley allegedly began humiliating Daskalakis in front of fellow staff members. She claims that at one point, she was harshly criticized by Walmsley for wearing shorts paired with a crop-top because he deemed it to be "offensive."

"You're still a male, so you need to abide by the male dress code," Walmsley was quoted as saying. He allegedly called her "disgusting" and ordered her to cover-up despite allowing other female employees to dress the same way.

Daskalakis, who was promoted from her role as sales associate prior to the transition, claims that in addition to allegedly being called vicious names, her work performance was unfairly criticized.

"I said, 'I haven't changed anything. Your perspective has changed,'" she said.

Another manager is accused of calling Daskalakis a "hot mess."

Despite forwarding complaints to Human Resources, Daskalakis says she was ignored and eventually fired in Jan. without any explanation. Bosses told her to contact HR regarding her termination, who are yet to return her calls.

"I was devastated. You put all your hard work into working for one company, and they respond by being ruthless," [she told the Daily News](#). "It hurt."

Forever 21 was founded in 1984 by the Chang family, Do Won and Jin Sook Chang, who are devout Christians. Their commitment to faith is reflected on the bottom of the company's trademark yellow shopping bags, which has "John 3:16," printed on them in reference to the bible verse that reads: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

The Los Angeles-based company employs about 30,000 people and makes over \$3 billion annually.

The Christian Post contacted Forever 21 for comment but the company did not respond by press time.