

# Momentum Solar sued over appalling allegations of racism

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For one that prides itself in its progressive nature, it is no hidden secret that the solar industry has a diversity issue. Reports of blatant racism and sexism reinforce the lack of diversity in employment statistics.

Again today, the issue of racism is at the forefront of the industry, as six former employees of Momentum Solar have filed a lawsuit against the company, as well as employees Jessica Adams, Adam Murawski and Rajan Silberman arguing “management at the Company’s New York-based warehouse fostered a work environment permeated with vile racism.”

To call the allegations made by the defendants disturbing is an understatement. The plaintiffs allege that defendants Murawski and Silberman repeatedly called black employees the n-word, mocked the accents of Jamaican employees, implied that black people are universally poorer than whites and alluded to the three-fifths compromise when talking about groups that included white and black employees.

On top of the verbal abuse and discrimination, the plaintiffs allege that Momentum pays its Black employees far less than similar-level white employees, gave the less desirable jobs/assignments within the warehouse nearly exclusively to black employees, ostracized these employees and gave them no opportunities for career advancement.

Moreover, the defendants allege that complaints to management only furthered the hostility. According to plaintiff Garreth Murrell, his complaint brought up to Adams against Murawski was met with a meeting. At said meeting, which was recorded, Murawski admitted to using the “n-word” on multiple occasions, an admission that was met without reprimand.

Murrell alleges that after the meeting, he was met with even more intense racism. When he again went to Adams, he asked her:

So, Jess, you’re telling me I’m supposed to be comfortable, right. With you being comfortable with a foreman here calling black people n\*\*\*\*\*s, and that’s comfortable for you. It’s not comfortable for me.

Murrell was fired not long after making this second complaint.

In response, Momentum Solar has denied the allegations as being baseless in both law and fact. the company claims that all six employees were terminated legitimately, with allegations of fighting, poor performance and unacceptable workplace behavior, among others.

The New York warehouse where the defendants employed has a workforce of 40, with just 2 of those 40 people being black.

If this story sounds all too familiar, that's because it is. Less than one year ago, Vivint Solar was sued by former employees over similar allegations, including subjugation to racial slurs including the n-word and the building of a "whites only" fort by management in the workplace.

And, when you consider the results of the U.S. Solar Industry Diversity Study, released nearly simultaneously with the announcement of this lawsuit, and the fact that African-Americans make up less than 8% of the solar industry workforce and nearly zero of its executives, it's clear that the solar industry has a long way to go.