

Lawsuit claims lawyer's supervisor hit her during witness cross-examination

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A Black lawyer claims in a lawsuit that her white supervisor yelled at her in front of colleagues, belittled her in front of clients, and hit her during an arbitration hearing.

Lawyer Kellie Walker filed the discrimination [suit](#) Tuesday against the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority Bridges and Tunnels, report [Law.com](#), [Law360](#) and the [New York Daily News](#).

Walker has worked for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's office of labor relations since September 2018.

Walker said she was cross-examining a witness at a Feb. 3, 2020, arbitration hearing when Walker's supervising attorney "hurled back his arm and physically hit" her. The supervisor, Victor Muallem, hit Walker's left arm with the back of his hand, leaving a bruise, according to the suit.

It's not the only instance of abuse, the suit said.

At a prior arbitration hearing in January 2020, Muallem interrupted Walker's opening statement and insisted that she include details from a prior case that he had worked on.

"During this incident, Muallem was so enraged that spit flew out of his mouth," the suit said.

When Muallem kept interrupting, the arbitrator called the lawyers out of the room, said Walker was doing a wonderful job, and told Muallem that his interruptions were preventing Walker from doing her best, according to the suit.

Muallem also screamed at Walker so loudly on one day in November 2019 "that the entire office could hear," the suit alleged.

After the February arbitration incident, Walker took a temporary medical leave.

"Since then, Ms. Walker frequently suffers from periods of incessant crying, nightmares, heart palpitations, panic attacks, stress and anxiety," the suit said. "Because of the assault and battery by Muallem, Ms. Walker now is under regular psychiatric care."

Walker reported the incident to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, but the defendants have done nothing, according to the lawsuit. She also suffered retaliation when her work was micromanaged, and she was forced to go into the office to conduct virtual litigation during the COVID-19 pandemic, the suit claimed.

Walker has lupus, an underlying condition that puts her at risk of serious illness if she becomes infected, the suit said.

The suit alleges race and gender discrimination, retaliation, gender-motivated violence, and assault and battery.

Walker is represented by Wigdor partner Jeanne Christensen.

“Kellie Walker deserves justice,” Christensen said in a statement. “The MTA should not be allowed to sit by and do nothing when a white male supervisor is credibly accused of assaulting a Black female employee, not to mention in the presence of multiple witnesses.”