

# A Black Trans "Hamilton" Cast Member Has Filed A Discrimination Complaint Against The Show

 [buzzfeednews.com/article/juliareinstein/suni-reid-hamilton-black-trans-nonbinary-complaint](https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/juliareinstein/suni-reid-hamilton-black-trans-nonbinary-complaint)

When *Hamilton* first opened on Broadway, the musical became nothing short of a sensation, racking up Tony Awards and being widely championed as a celebration of a diverse and progressive America.

But backstage, many involved in the hit show fell far short of those values, a former cast member alleged Wednesday in a federal complaint.

Suni Reid, who is Black, transgender, and nonbinary, said they were subjected to discrimination and harassment during their time in the show, where they played both principal and ensemble roles in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles productions since 2017. After requesting a gender-neutral dressing room, Reid's contract was not renewed, a move they believe was in retaliation for speaking out on the issues they were facing.

"Publicly, Hamilton is a beacon of diversity and appears committed to causes seeking social justice and harmony," Reid's lawyers, Lawrence M. Pearson and Lindsay M. Goldbrum, said in a statement. "Behind the curtain, however, the Company's management will force out a Black, transgender cast member simply because they stood up for themselves and advocated for a more equitable workplace, and therefore called that public image into question."

According to the complaint, which was filed with the Los Angeles office of the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission, Reid was repeatedly misgendered and mocked for their gender presentation during performances of the show. In dressing rooms, male cast members allegedly derided them for wearing dresses, at times calling them "auntie" and "Madea."

In June, while performing in the Los Angeles cast, Reid requested a gender-neutral dressing room be made available. "This request was driven by the bullying and attacks that Mx. Reid had faced in the male dressing rooms at Hamilton in the past, as well as Mx. Reid's knowledge that other cast members would welcome having such a space available as well," the complaint states.

Instead, managers said they would simply section off part of the main dressing room with a sheet or curtain, a solution Reid said would be inadequate.

It was after raising the dressing room issue that Reid said they began to face retaliation. Despite Reid having been given contract renewal paperwork in May, the show's HR rep emailed them in late June saying she'd learned that some of their Instagram posts showed

"continual and consistent disparagement of Hamilton and its leadership team," and suggested Reid therefore "might not want to resume [their] relationship with Hamilton."

In the complaint, Reid denies the characterization of their posts, saying they "were not disparaging of the show, but rather raised issues of discrimination" that they and others faced while working on *Hamilton* and in the theatre industry. Reid replied to the HR rep, reassuring her they did want to remain in the cast and offering to discuss the posts as needed.

"Tragically for Mx. Reid, Hamilton's management would not drop their retaliatory animus and/or fear of Mx. Reid as a supposed threat and squeaky wheel, someone who was willing to raise issues and had dared to question the Company's real commitment to anti-discrimination and employees' legal rights," the complaint states.

As tense discussions with management continued throughout the summer, Reid retained an attorney and began pursuing legal action. Throughout this period, Reid's fellow cast members were largely supportive, they said, and one leading actor gave up his private dressing room in order to turn it into a gender-neutral one.

Cast members also called a meeting with producers to ask about why Reid wasn't at rehearsals. Producers allegedly refused to answer whether it was due to the dressing room issue, saying only "there is more to that story than you know."

In September, managers officially informed Reid that they would not renew their contract.

"Not only was this termination in blatant retaliation for Mx. Reid's legally protected request for a gender-neutral dressing room and protected complaints of discrimination and retaliation," the complaint states, "but furthermore was retaliation for Mx. Reid's legally protected activity in retaining legal counsel and asserting claims of discrimination and retaliation against the Company."

A spokesperson for Hamilton responded to a request for comment from BuzzFeed News denying the allegations that management had discriminated or retaliated against Reid. The spokesperson also said a contract "with terms responsive to their requests" was offered.

"We have treated Suni with the same respect and consideration as all the company members of *Hamilton*," the spokesperson said. "Specifically, we have given Suni direct financial support, paid for their health insurance, and paid for their housing. We wish Suni well in their future endeavors."