

Former ‘Hamilton’ Cast Member Files Discrimination Complaint Against Show

[nytimes.com/2021/10/13/theater/hamilton-dressing-room-eeoc-complaint.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/13/theater/hamilton-dressing-room-eeoc-complaint.html)

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A former “Hamilton” cast member filed a federal workplace complaint against the show on Wednesday, alleging that the show had retaliated and refused to renew a contract after the actor had requested a gender-neutral dressing room.

In the complaint, filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, lawyers for the former cast member, Suni Reid (who prefers the pronouns they/them), said they were sidelined and eventually let go in September after requesting a gender-neutral space at the Pantages Theater in Los Angeles where “Hamilton” was playing.

In the 28-page complaint, Reid, a Black, nonbinary performer who has performed with the New York, Chicago and Los Angeles productions of “Hamilton” since 2017, outlined several other instances of discrimination and harassment by cast members and management over the years, including episodes in which Reid said they were physically threatened or intentionally and repeatedly misgendered.

The complaint said Reid eventually intends to pursue legal claims in federal court. Filing a charge of discrimination and retaliation with the E.E.O.C. is a precursor to filing such a lawsuit.

“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.”

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“We look forward to upholding Reid’s rights and hope this is a wake-up call for the theater industry about the systemic inequities that persist even at its greatest heights,” the statement continued.

In its own statement, “Hamilton” said Wednesday that Reid had been “a valued cast member” for years and said the show had “offered them a contract to return to ‘Hamilton’ with terms responsive to their requests.”

“We deny the allegations in the Charge,” the show said. “We have not discriminated or retaliated against Suni.” During the shutdown, it added, “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.”

Reid has performed in the ensemble as well as in roles such as Aaron Burr, George Washington, Hercules Mulligan/James Madison, and Marquis de Lafayette/Thomas Jefferson, according to the complaint.

It comes as Broadway and touring shows are working to find their footing following a lengthy pandemic-related shutdown. Earlier this summer, as several shows like “Hamilton” were preparing to restart, some of the most powerful players on Broadway signed a pact pledging to strengthen the industry’s diversity practices.

But Reid’s complaint paints a picture of a toxic workplace environment at “Hamilton” that stretched from coast to coast.

Reid was cast in the Broadway production of the show in 2017 and met hostility from the start, according to the complaint. Reid eventually requested a transfer from the Broadway production and started with the Chicago company of “Hamilton” in March 2019, according to the complaint, and came out publicly as transgender and gender-nonconforming. They were constantly misgendered by co-workers, “at times in a pointedly hostile or callous manner,” according to the complaint.

By 2020, Reid had begun rehearsals for the Los Angeles company, but never was able to join the Los Angeles cast in performance because of the shutdown, the complaint said.

In May, Reid was presented with a contract renewal for “Hamilton.” Around that time, they asked their agent, Michele Largé, to request a gender-neutral dressing room at Pantages that Reid and others could use. “Hamilton” officials then raised concerns about posts Reid had published on social media describing racial equity issues on the show, according to the complaint.

The show would eventually agree to set up gender-neutral dressing spaces in every “Hamilton” theater. But in the fall, after Reid’s lawyers informed the show that they had legal claims of discrimination, the show told Reid’s lawyers that it was “no longer open” to having Reid perform in “Hamilton,” and that “renewal of their contract was no longer an option,” the complaint said.