

Top Recruiter Major Lindsey & Africa Hit by Racial Bias Suit

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IP Law



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- Suit alleges MLA retaliated against recruit over reporting alleged bias
- Recruit also sued former law firm Troutman over discrimination

Major Lindsey & Africa, one of the country's most prolific legal recruiting firms, is facing claims that a Black, female associate was "blackballed" by the firm in a complaint filed Tuesday in a Maryland District Court.

The complaint alleges that once Gita Sankano sued her former employer, law firm Troutman Pepper Hamilton Sanders, MLA lied about availability of open positions and cut off its relationship with Sankano.

Managing directors Randi Lewis and Andy Ufberg and head of associate practice group Eliza Stoker are named in the suit. The complaint says Lewis also warned Sankano against suing Troutman Pepper: "If you file this lawsuit, I can't place you again. You will never find a job."

Sankano sued Troutman Pepper in January, alleging racial discrimination and retaliation by firing her when she complained about the bias.

"Rather than let its clients choose from amongst the most qualified candidates, MLA makes the unlawful decision for them that minorities who speak out against discrimination are undeserving of employment," Tuesday's complaint reads.

Wigdor partner Michael Willemin, who is representing Sankano in both lawsuits, said in a statement, “Anyone with common sense knows that the fear of retaliation is one of the major reasons that acts of discrimination and harassment are underreported and continue to persist in the workplace and society at large ... No law firm or company should want to work with an organization that operates like MLA did in this instance.”

Major Lindsay & Africa is taking Sakano’s allegations extremely seriously, a spokesperson said.

“In our communications both internally and to Ms. Sankano, our aim was to offer our best professional advice and to convey a basic principle of our industry: that law firms may be wary of hiring someone who is suing another law firm. For this reason, we intend to defend this matter vigorously,” the spokesperson said.

Wigdor has also sued Goldman Sachs Group Inc over gender bias and alleged sexual harassment at Fox News, among other cases. Littler Mendelson represents Troutman.

The case is [Sankano v. Major, Lindsey & Africa, LLC et al](#), No. 8:24-cv-00951, complaint filed 4/2/2024. The underlying case is [Sankano v. Troutman Pepper Hamilton Sanders LLP](#), D.D.C., No. 1:24-cv-00142, complaint filed 1/17/24.

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