

Federal Lawsuit Accuses Tesla of Racial Discrimination

A federal agency on Thursday filed a lawsuit that accuses Tesla of discrimination against Black employees who it said were bombarded with racial epithets, given worse work assignments than white workers and fired when they complained.

Tesla managers were aware of the discrimination and verbal abuse, the lawsuit filed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission argues, but failed to do enough to stop it. The agency said it had sued after trying unsuccessfully to work out a plan with Tesla to address the discrimination.

The lawsuit is the latest to accuse Tesla of pervasive racism at its factory in Fremont, Calif., near San Francisco. This year, a jury awarded about \$3.2 million to a Black man who had accused the carmaker of ignoring racial abuse he faced while working as a contractor at the factory.

A group of about 240 Black men and women who have worked at Tesla since 2016 have asked a judge to grant them class action status to pursue claims of racial discrimination, which included being routinely addressed as “slave,” “you people” and much worse.

California’s Department of Fair Employment and Housing, which is now called the Civil Rights Department, the state’s agency responsible for enforcing anti-discrimination laws, has also sued Tesla, claiming among other things that Black workers are “severely underrepresented” in management positions.

“It is telling that every government agency and workers’ advocate who looks at this situation has the same reaction,” Bryan Schwartz, an Oakland lawyer who represents plaintiffs in the class action suit, said in an email. “Tesla’s racist harassment of and discrimination against Black workers is horrific, and unlawful, and must be addressed on a systemic, class-wide basis.”

Lawyers for Tesla did not respond to requests for comment.

In a 2022 statement in response to the California agency’s lawsuit, Tesla said it “strongly opposes” all forms of discrimination. The company described that case as “a narrative spun” by the state agency and plaintiffs’ law firms.

One Black employee said he had been disciplined for playing music after complaining about the misconduct. Elon Musk, Tesla’s chief executive, has said Tesla employees are encouraged to play music on the assembly line and described the company as a “fun” place to work.

The commission's lawsuit asks the federal court in Oakland to order Tesla to stop discriminating and retaliating against Black workers, and to compensate employees who have been mistreated. The suit also seeks punitive damages.

Источник: The New York Times