

Lawsuit Alleges Discrimination and Retaliation at Troutman Pepper Hamilton Sanders



Former associate Gita F. Sankano has filed a lawsuit against Troutman Pepper Hamilton Sanders, claiming that complaints about discriminatory conduct within the firm were consistently ignored or met with gaslighting and retaliation. The lawsuit, filed on January 17 in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, sheds light on the alleged mistreatment Sankano faced during her time at the firm.

Discriminatory Email Sparks Controversy

The lawsuit points to an August 2023 email from partner Matthew Bowsher as pivotal. Described as "outrageously demeaning, dehumanizing, and demoralizing," the email insulted Sankano's cognitive ability. According to the suit, this incident indicated Bowsher's behavior towards Sankano and other Black women at the firm.

Want to know if you're earning what you deserve? Find out with LawCrossing's salary surveys.

Inadequate Investigation and Swift Termination

Troutman Pepper took 77 days to investigate Sankano's complaint regarding the discriminatory email. However, the suit claims that the investigation concluded with the assertion that Bowsher had not engaged in discrimination because he also treated others poorly. Sankano was terminated a few weeks after the investigation, purportedly based on performance, despite consistently receiving above-average performance reviews.

Lack of Consultation and Unjust Review Process

The lawsuit highlights that the Black associate for whom Sankano performed most of her work was not consulted or informed about her termination. It further alleges that Bowsher consistently "belittled" Sankano and gave her a negative review, with no corrective action taken.

Stay up-to-date without the overwhelming noise. Subscribe to JDJournal for a curated selection of the most relevant legal news.

Micromanagement and Unfair Treatment

Sankano, a 2018 cum laude graduate of the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law, was described as an "incredible asset" to the firm. However, the suit contends that she was set up to fail due to the micromanagement of her billable hours. At the time, Sankano, the only Black attorney in the Pepper Hamilton D.C. office, faced additional challenges when her hours were allegedly manipulated to make the partner appear more profitable.

Firm's Denial and Commitment to Defense

Troutman Pepper staunchly denies the allegations, asserting that Sankano's termination was based on legitimate, nondiscriminatory reasons for her performance. Diane C. Iselin, director of communications at Troutman Pepper, has expressed the firm's commitment to defend itself against the claims vigorously. The lawsuit, represented by the Wigdor law firm, has brought broader issues of discrimination and retaliation to the forefront within the legal profession, emphasizing the need for transparency, fair investigations, and accountability.

See also: [Former Black Associate Files Discrimination Lawsuit Against Troutman Pepper Hamilton Sanders](#)

Don't be a silent ninja! Let us know your thoughts in the comment section below.

