

Federal Jury Rejects Former Lawyer's Claims of Racial Discrimination at Davis Polk & Wardwell



A federal jury in Manhattan delivered a verdict on Monday, dismissing allegations brought forth by Kaloma Cardwell, a former lawyer at Davis Polk & Wardwell, regarding his termination in 2018. Cardwell, a Black former associate, had filed a lawsuit against the prestigious law firm in 2019, claiming racial discrimination led to his firing.

Davis Polk was Cleared of Retaliation Charges

The jury's decision found Davis Polk not liable for retaliation, representing a setback for Cardwell's legal pursuit. Despite Cardwell's assertions, the jury's verdict absolved Davis Polk of any wrongdoing concerning his dismissal. In response to the verdict, Davis Polk expressed satisfaction and gratitude to the jury and the court for their time and consideration.

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Absence of Immediate Comment from Cardwell's Attorney

Following the announcement of the verdict, David Jeffries, attorney for Cardwell, did not provide an immediate response or comment, leaving the outcome of the trial without further elaboration from Cardwell's legal representation.

Compensation Sought by Cardwell

Cardwell sought substantial compensation ranging between \$16 million and \$30 million, encompassing compensatory and punitive damages and attorney fees, underscoring the gravity of his claims against Davis Polk.

Testimony and Allegations

Throughout the trial, testimonies were presented by various current and former employees of Davis Polk, including Thomas Reid, the former managing partner, now Comcast's chief legal officer. The jury also dismissed allegations against Reid and John Bick, a senior counsel at Davis Polk, both were named as defendants alongside the firm.

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Counterarguments by Davis Polk

Contrary to Cardwell's assertions of racial bias leading to his termination, Davis Polk contended that Cardwell's dismissal was rooted in his subpar performance. Allegations surfaced regarding missed deadlines and mishandled assignments during Cardwell's tenure in the firm's corporate department, contrasting his claims of discrimination.

Incident Highlighted in Defense

Davis Polk highlighted an incident during a significant corporate merger deal in 2017 where Cardwell's absence for over 10 hours necessitated replacement staffing, further reinforcing their stance regarding Cardwell's performance issues.

Legal Proceedings and Dismissals

Cardwell's claims of racial discrimination were dismissed in February of the previous year by U.S. District Judge Gregory Woods, leaving only the allegations of retaliation to be contested. Notably, the lawsuit initially involved other current and former partners at Davis Polk as additional defendants, although many had their claims dismissed throughout the trial.

The Rarity of Firm Going to Trial

The case is a relatively uncommon instance of a law firm proceeding to trial over discrimination claims, as most cases are resolved through settlements or dismissed before reaching a jury.

Case Information: Kaloma Cardwell v. Davis Polk & Wardwell, et al., U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, 19-cv-10256.

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