

school *and* state

Abercrombie & Fitch to Pay \$40 Million in Discrimination Suit

- Press Release

Civil rights attorneys announced the settlement of a class action lawsuit, *Gonzalez v. Abercrombie & Fitch*, requiring the retail clothing giant to pay \$40 million dollars to Latino, African American, Asian American and women applicants and employees who charged the company with discrimination.

The settlement, approved by U.S. District Court Judge Susan Illston, also requires the company to institute a range of policies and programs to promote diversity among its workforce and to prevent discrimination based on race or gender.

The lawsuit was originally filed in U.S. District Court in San Francisco in June 2003 on behalf of nine young adults of color, including students and graduates of the University of California and Stanford, who were refused sales jobs or terminated based on their race or ethnicity.

The settlement requires the store to pursue "benchmarks" for the hiring and promotion of Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans and women; the company must report on its progress toward these goals at regular intervals to the plaintiffs' attorneys and to a

Special Master named by the court.

In addition, the company must hire 25 recruiters who will seek out minority employees. The company is barred from targeting particular fraternities or sororities for recruitment purposes, a practice that previously helped to ensure a predominantly white sales staff.

To ensure compliance with the provisions of the Consent Decree, the company will name a Vice President for Diversity, and provide diversity training for all employees with hiring authority. A new internal complaint procedure will provide employees with a mechanism to report any problems they face.

Abercrombie has more than 700 stores and a workforce of 22,000. The retail chain uses visual media to promote the "A&F Look," and image to employees, customers and potential applicants. The settlement requires that marketing materials - including the posters, shopping bags and catalogue - include members of minority racial and ethnic groups.

"Abercrombie now realizes diversity makes good business sense," said Kimberly West-Faulcon, Director and Western Regional Counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. "We hope the rest of corporate America gets the message."

Plaintiff Anthony Ocampo, a

recent Stanford graduate, who was told he couldn't be hired because "there's already too many Filipinos," agreed with Gonzalez. "It is important that Abercrombie seek out employees of color and provide them training and opportunities for promotion."

Carla Grubb, an African American student at California State Bakersfield, was constructively discharged from the Abercrombie store in the Bakersfield Valley Plaza Mall. "I felt demoralized being the only African American employee and being specifically assigned to dust the store, wash the windows and clean the floors. With this settlement, I now know that Abercrombie cannot treat other employees of color in such a manner."

Attorney Martin J. D'Urso of Kohn, Swift & Graf, P.C. explained that the monetary awards to the class members will be based on the number of claimants who come forward and the kind of discrimination they faced.

Notices will be placed on the Internet and in major magazines to alert class members from around the country. People who feel they are part of the class should call 1-866-854-4175 or go to www.Abercrombieclaims.com where they can submit information. Source: Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein, LLP.

Dear Counselor,

After being home for just a long weekend on Thanksgiving break, I am not looking forward to the Christmas holidays and semester break at all. My parents still treat me like I am in high school, and don't seem to understand that I have been living on my own for the past 3 months—and doing a pretty good job of taking care of myself by the way. Why is it so hard for them to see how much I have changed? Why is it so hard for them to treat me like an adult?



-Cassie Pavone

-Frustrated Freshman

Dear FF,

What you are describing is a fairly common experience for students, especially if they are the first in their family to leave home. While you have been here at Montreat growing in your independence, self sufficiency, and developing your maturity, your parents have most likely been at home carrying on with their standard routine. It is important to remember, while you have been experiencing significant changes, your parents have not had the opportunity to observe your going through these changes. Keep in mind, too, holidays in general can be stressful times for families. Making some time to reconnect with your parents when you get home may be very helpful in giving them an opportunity to see the responsibility that you have developed while you have been gone. Discussing each other's expectations at the beginning of your time at home may reduce the risk of conflict later on. Your initiating these times with your parents has the potential of helping them see your increased maturity level.

I am willing to bet that with a little preparation and patience, your parents will be delighted with how things have changed for you and will appreciate and respect the adult that you have become.

Best wishes for you and your family for a joyful and peaceful Christmas,
-Cassie

Note: Keri Boer and I encourage you to send your questions and comments to us at The Counseling Center. We welcome the opportunity to talk with you individually, in small groups, or answer your questions on line. Please contact one of us by coming by our offices located in the lower level of Bell Library, send a message to campus mailbox 807, leave a voicemail message at ext. 3538, or e-mail us at cpavone@montreat.edu or kboer@montreat.edu.

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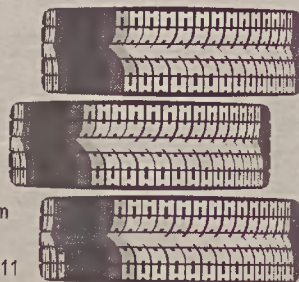
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