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County settles 6 jail discrimination lawsuits

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The Tulsa County Sheriff's Office has settled six lawsuits filed by black former employees of the Tulsa Jail who claimed they were discriminated against on the basis of their race.

The county has paid a total of \$60,000 to two of the former Sheriff's Office employees, court documents indicate. Payments to the other four are pending.

A seventh case is scheduled for trial.

Assistant District Attorney David Iski said settling the cases was a prudent use of taxpayer dollars.

"We absolutely, absolutely deny any discrimination on any level with these plaintiffs," Iski said.

In federal court documents filed in the Northern District of Oklahoma, the former employees allege that they were treated differently and less favorably than white employees; were denied promotions and transfers for which they were eligible; were disciplined more harshly than white employees; and were subject to racially hostile language about which nothing was done.

Specific allegations include:

- A white detention officer calling a black female detention officer "a black bitch."
- White detention officers routinely using racially offensive language, such as the N-word, in front of black employees.
- A chaplain telling racially hostile jokes in front of a black employee.
- The absence of qualified black employees in the Sheriff's Office's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement program.

Two of the lawsuits allege racially insensitive behavior by Chief Deputy Tim Albin.

One plaintiff alleges that Albin gave her a management manual titled "Who's Got the Monkey?"

"The plaintiff is not aware of any circumstances where this manual was given to her Caucasian counterparts," the lawsuit states.

Another plaintiff alleges that Albin told her that she was intelligent and used good grammar and could be his "go-between" with other black employees.

Albin's remark, the lawsuit claims, implied "that African-Americans aren't smart and have poor grammatical skills and the plaintiff was an exception to this rule."

The cases that have been settled were filed by Ronald Hodge, Charles Wimberly, Taneisha Taylor, Dana Marie Moses, Kristv Peters and Cherrv Aniorin.

The county paid \$35,000 to settle Moses' lawsuit. Taylor received \$25,000. The settlements will be paid from the county's sinking fund, which is funded through property taxes.

The seventh case was filed by Rolanda Harvey.


Court documents provide sometimes conflicting information on whether the employees were fired or left of their own volition.

Attorney Daniel Smolen, who is representing all seven former jail employees, and Undersheriff Brian Edwards each declined to comment Wednesday, citing a confidentiality agreement.

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