

## **Racial Discrimination – Retaliation – Hostile Work Environment**

Dickson v. Scripps Howard Broadcasting Company (Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court, No. 328680)

\$1.25 million jury award  
November 1999

*Attorneys for plaintiff: Ellen Simon and Ann-Marie Ahern; The Simon Law Firm, Cleveland*

The plaintiff was a four-time Emmy Award winning television news producer. She began working for the defendant television station in 1989 producing weekend newscasts.

In late 1991, the plaintiff requested an interview for the 6 p.m. producer position, which would have been a promotion. The news director assured her that she would be interviewed and considered for the position. Despite this promise, the plaintiff was allegedly never given the opportunity to interview for the position, which was filled by a white male.

The plaintiff complained to the media chairperson for the Cleveland chapter of the NAACP. The NAACP representative, in turn, called the station on behalf of the plaintiff.

The day after the telephone call from the NAACP, the station allegedly began to place memos in the plaintiff's personnel file criticizing her performance.

Prior to this time, the plaintiff claimed she had never received any written performance criticism. In addition, the plaintiff alleged that the news director began to humiliate the plaintiff in front of her coworkers, denying her favorable job assignments and acting increasingly hostile towards her.

The alleged retaliation culminated in the plaintiff's termination on Dec. 31, 1992. Since that time, the plaintiff has been unable to secure comparable employment in the industry.

The plaintiff alleged that the hostility directed at her was symptomatic of a pervasive, racially hostile environment at the defendant television station. Current and former employees of the station alleged at trial that black employees were routinely denied the training, resources and respect that was freely afforded to their white counterparts. In addition, some employees testified that they regularly were subjected to racist comments, jokes and slurs. (OHLW Feb. 7, 2000)