

Los Angeles Jury Orders UC Regents to Pay Woman \$1.58 Million in Case Involving Claims of Hostile Work Environment

August 6, 2019 - Los Angeles, CA - After a week-long trial, a Los Angeles jury ordered UC Regents to pay \$1.58 million to a woman who alleged she was subjected to a hostile work environment where coworkers subjected her to racially charged comments and harassed her while she performed her work duties.

Nicole Birden is an African-American woman who began working at UCLA as a phlebotomist in 2015. Shortly after Ms. Birden began working with UCLA, she experienced racially motivated discrimination, harassment, and bullying from co-workers and supervisors. One co-worker addressed her as “My Nigga” and frequently used the word “Nigga” in the work places. Other coworkers made disparaging remarks about the color of her skin and racially stereotyped her in Spanish. These coworkers made harassing phone calls to Ms. Birden on hospital-issued phones during work hours despite the fact that she was diligently performing her job duties and tampered with blood specimens Ms. Birden had drawn, mislabeling them or throwing them away altogether. In June of 2016, after months of suffering through a hostile work environment where she was called racial slurs, harassed and more, the UC Regents abruptly terminate her employment, despite the fact that she was never reprimanded, written up or received any kind of disciplinary action against her.

V. James DeSimone, lead trial lawyer for Ms. Birden, stated: “We are thankful that a diverse Los Angeles jury could come together and give Ms. Birden the justice she deserved after a hard fought jury trial.”

DeSimone added: “The UC Regents wanted to make this case about Ms. Birden’s performance. The evidence at trial, however, showed Ms. Birden was an excellent phlebotomist with no complaints from patients, nurses or doctors. The performance complaints from dispatchers were bogus, instead they proved employees of UCLA Hospital lab singled out, discriminated against and harassed Ms. Birden.”

The jury verdict totaled \$1,576,145.92 with \$190,033.92 being awarded to past economic losses; \$86,112.00 in future economic losses; \$500,000 in past emotional distress and mental harm; and, \$800,000 in future emotional distress and mental harm.

The case is *Nicole Birden v. The Regents of the University of California*, Los Angeles Superior Court, Case No. BC663189.

About V. James DeSimone Law

At V. James DeSimone Law, our Los Angeles employment law and civil rights attorneys are committed to justice. For over 30 years, we have been focused on representing individuals whose employee or civil rights have been violated. We believe no one should be a victim of such mistreatment, and passionately fight for the individuals who have been. Our team prides itself on being the tenacious advocates these individuals can rely on to pursue justice on their behalf. For more information, go to www.vjamesdesimonelaw.com.