

Allegations against Mitsubishi

In answer to a Mitsubishi motion, the EEOC is trying to convince the U.S. District Court that it should be allowed to argue at trial that Mitsubishi engaged in a "pattern or practice" of sexual discrimination.

In its most recent court filing, the EEOC spent much of a 68-page brief listing examples of what it says happened at the Mitsubishi auto plant in Normal.

The EEOC says its examples are taken from the sworn statements of 50 victims, some of the plaintiffs in a similar lawsuit, statements attached to Mitsubishi's own pleadings and Mitsubishi's own disciplinary files.

At this point, the information — some of which is listed below — is cited in support of the position of one side, the EEOC. It has not been accepted by the court as trial evidence.

Orientation and training:

■ From at least 1988 to 1993, female employees were told the Japanese did not believe women should work in factories; told not look Japanese managers directly in the face because such looks would be regarded as come-ons; and told Japanese men did not consider women equals. One Japanese manager would not speak directly to female subordinates.

■ In orientation tours, women were subjected to "cat-calls, whistling, screaming and howling."

■ Male American managers were taken to Japan and lavished with sexual entertainment, including participation in live sex shows. Those managers talked in the plant of bringing home souvenirs other than gifts, meaning sexually transmitted diseases.

■ Pornography and obscene graffiti were present in public and private parts of the plant. Women were called abusive names. Men made comments about women's sex lives, including proposing sexual relationships and discussing sexual exploits.

■ Men exposed themselves to women.

■ Physical assaults ranged from pats on the buttocks, grabbing of breasts, knocking a woman down to criminal sexual assault.

Sex-based harassment and pervasive anti-female sentiment:

■ Women were constantly told that they did not belong in the plant, were not welcome or were considered second-class employees.

■ Women were "subjected" to an "unending stream" of offensive names.

■ Women were constantly being blamed for problems on the assembly line.

■ A company doctor reportedly told a woman, "You have the 3 F's against you — you're fat, female and forty."

■ Other anti-female comments included, "I bet you like big - - - instead of money" and "Life's a - - - - and then you have to work with one."

■ Some women were threatened, stalked and menaced.

One man talked about wanting to kill women and said he would force one woman in particular to perform sex acts on him and would "blow her away" during those acts. He reportedly threatened to kill that woman and her children. Told of the man's behavior, a supervisor reportedly said, "He's a hard worker. He deserves another chance."

Hyper-sexualized environment:

■ Sexual graffiti was placed on cars coming down the line.

■ Men's bathrooms were "virtually papered" with sexual graffiti, including the names and numbers of female employees.

■ Models of male and female genitals were crafted from company scrap and placed on display.

■ Notes such as "Blowup doll" and "Sexually overactive" were pinned to women's backs.

■ Women observed two male associates demonstrating a sexual position to an approving upper-level manager.

■ Men simulated masturbation or fondled themselves in front of female co-workers.

Pornographic materials in the plant:

■ The workplace was littered with sexual materials. In one example cited, men reportedly passed around pictures of women engaged in sex with animals.

Verbal and physical sex assaults:

■ Male employees, including several supervisors, repeatedly made comments about women's bodies and proposed sex acts.

■ One woman suffered through having offensive remarks about her written in a work area, including "X is like a doorknob. Everybody gets a turn."

■ A note saying "Do you know the five people X slept with?" was pinned to that woman's husband's locker.

■ Men would come up behind women and lean against them, simulating sexual intercourse.

■ One frequent harasser said, in front of group leaders who did nothing, that he would force one woman to have sex with him before he killed her.

■ One man forcibly cut a female employee's hair.

■ Women were subjected to threatening calls, stalking and assaults away from work after they complained.

One woman, driven home from work by a branch manager because she was ill, allegedly was subjected to an assault in which the man stopped the car, pulled down his pants and, despite her protests, kissed her.

Toleration of hostile environment:

■ "The evidence shows that (a) Mitsubishi has never had an effective sex harassment policy, (b) victims routinely complained about sex harassment to their supervisors, the group leaders, without result and, (c) that when complaints were made to the Employee Relations Department, the consequences were little or no disciplinary action against the harassers and ostracism or even retaliation against the victims by co-workers."

Sex parties:

■ The EEOC contends off-premises "sex parties" were arranged by managers and other employees from 1992 to 1996 and color photos taken at those parties were circulated on the plant floor.

The agency cites a Mitsubishi document that reportedly says:

"Present at these parties were a multitude of Japanese (technical advisers/

coordinators), staff employees, supervisory employees and associates. In addition, it should be noted the photographs were taken of the strippers and circulated within the . . . shop."

One group leader who went to four such parties said they usually included a buffet dinner, keg of beer and strippers. The man said men could lick whipped cream from the strippers and remove cherries from the strippers' vaginas. At one party, the girls performed a floor show with sex toys.

The group leader said he had heard of people going into a back room with the girls and paying for sex.

One woman, asked if she complained about seeing pictures from the parties, reportedly responded "It would be difficult to complain to the supervisors queued up in line to see."

Mitsubishi's response to EEOC lawsuit:

The EEOC says Mitsubishi's chairman's letter to employees of "complete and absolute denial" of the allegations and a string of company-sponsored or encouraged meetings, petitions, phone banks and pep rallies led to intensified harassment.

The EEOC says that while the company closed down the production line and bused employees to Chicago to protest at EEOC offices on April 22, 1996, it "retaliated" against workers who chose not to go to Chicago by making them report to work or be docked a day's pay and face discipline.

The intent and effect was to demand from employees, in view of their co-workers, "Are you with us or against us?" and to increase hostility to employees asserting their rights, according to the EEOC.