Female FBI Trainees File Gender Discrimination Class Action Against FBI

Twelve women have filed a class action against the FBI arising out of gender discrimination, harassment, and retaliation at the FBI’s Training Academy in Quantico, VA, and formed the organization ‘Taking Action Against Gender Discrimination,’ (TAAGD). The women are represented by David J. Shaffer, a Washington, DC attorney.

WASHINGTON (PRWEB) November 27, 2018 -- Twelve women have filed a class action against the FBI alleging gender discrimination, harassment, and retaliation at the FBI’s Training Academy in Quantico, VA, with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, (FBI-2018-00243), and formed the organization ‘Taking Action Against Gender Discrimination,’ (TAAGD). The women, former New Agent Trainees (NATs) and New Intelligence Analyst Trainees (NIATs), alleged they were wrongfully discharged from the FBI’s Basic Field Training Course (BFTC), often just days before graduation, after they were singled out for intense scrutiny and subjective disciplinary action, subjected to pervasive harassment, and/or retaliated against.

The case challenges the alleged widespread use of gender stereotypes by FBI instructors and supervisors who punish female trainees selectively for “lacking maturity,” being “overly emotional,” and “lacking judgment,” in circumstances where male trainees are commended for being aggressive, decisive, and having a command presence. Lead Plaintiff Paula M. Bird, who was discharged from BFTC after allegedly being singled out for disciplinary action by male instructors, stated that the complaint shows that, “For men, Quantico is a Training Academy; for women it’s an Elimination Academy. Despite repeatedly demonstrating our mental and physical aptitude, women are harshly punished for actions that men simply are not,” (FBI-2018-00243).

The women allege immense disparity in discharge rates at the FBI Academy: although females comprise less than a quarter of all BFTC trainees, according to data gathered by TAAGD, over 80% of new trainees dismissed from the FBI Academy in specific BFTC sections were female. The women cite the FBI’s June 2018 Office of Inspector General report, which documented gender disparities in the FBI’s ranks, to support their allegations. Plaintiff Clare Coetzter elaborated, “As trainees, the FBI’s Core Values, including Diversity and Integrity, were drilled into us. But with so few female trainees at the Academy, their disproportionate terminations, and attempts to cover up these disparities, it's safe to say that the Bureau doesn't actually uphold its own Core Values,” (FBI-2018-00243).

The case further alleges FBI supervisors not only knew about the discrimination but punished women for coming forward. Plaintiff S.M. Lee, a former NIAT, claimed “When I attempted to address the discrimination and harassment I faced with my chain of command, the Training Division’s Unit Chief mocked me, said I didn't know what real discrimination looked like, retaliated against me, and immediately recommended me for dismissal,” (FBI-2018-00243).

The women’s attorney, David J. Shaffer, who represented Black Special Agents of the FBI in two previous class actions, stated that the complaint alleges “The FBI is still an Old Boys’ Network, and has not changed since the settlement of those cases in the 1990’s.” Shaffer states that the complaint alleges, “The FBI has known about these claims for over three years, possesses over a dozen cases raising the same fundamental issue, but has failed to even investigate them,” (FBI-2018-00243).

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