

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF NEW YORK

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CHRISTINA YOUNG,

Plaintiff,

Index No.:
Purchase Date:

-against-

Complaint

STEVEN HALL & PARTNERS LLC and STEVEN
HALL,

Defendants.

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Plaintiff, Christina Young, by her attorneys, The Dweck Law Firm LLP
complains of the Defendants and respectfully alleges to this Court as follows:

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. This is an action to recover damages for sexual harassment/gender discrimination in the terms, conditions and privileges of employment under the New York Executive Law §290, *et seq.* (“NYSHRL”) and damages for sexual harassment/gender discrimination in the terms, conditions and privileges of employment under the Administrative Code of the City of New York, §8-107, *et seq.*, (“NYCHRL”). This complaint is based on the fact that Defendants promoted and tolerated a hostile work environment based on a pattern and practice of pervasive sexual harassment, which was subjectively and objectively offensive. To make matters worse, Defendants have retaliated against Plaintiff in response to her complaints about this illegal activity.

PREREQUISITES

2. Before filing the Complaint in this action, Plaintiff caused a copy of it to be served upon the Corporation Counsel of the City of New York.

3. Before filing the Complaint in this action, Plaintiff also caused a copy of it to be served upon the New York City Commission on Human Rights.

PARTIES

4. Plaintiff Christina Young (“Plaintiff”) is a 36-year-old female.

5. At all times hereinafter mentioned, Plaintiff was and still is a resident of the State of New York.

6. At all times material herein, Plaintiff was an “employee” entitled to protection within the meaning of the NYSHRL and NYCHRL.

7. Upon information and belief, the Defendant Steven Hall & Partners LLC (“SH&P”) is a foreign limited liability corporation with its principal office located at 650 Fifth Avenue within the City, County and State of New York.

8. Upon information and belief, SH&P is conducting business in the City, County and State of New York.

9. SH&P is an “Employer” within the meaning of the NYSHRL and NYCHRL.

10. At all times material herein, Defendant Steven Hall (“Hall”) was a founding Partner, Managing Director and sole member of SH&P.

11. Upon information and belief and at all times hereinafter mentioned, Hall was and still is a citizen of the State of New York.

12. Hall actually participated in and aided and abetted in the conduct giving rise to the sexual harassment/hostile work environment and retaliation claims.

13. This action arises out of Defendants’ wrongful, illegal and tortious conduct within the State of New York.

BACKGROUND OF PLAINTIFF'S EMPLOYMENT

14. Plaintiff earned a Bachelor of Science in Policy Analysis and Management in 2000 from Cornell University.

15. Plaintiff earned a Masters of Science in Education in 2002 from City College, City University of New York.

16. Plaintiff earned a *Juris Doctor* in 2005 from New York University School of Law.

17. Plaintiff is a licensed attorney.

18. Plaintiff commenced her employment by SH&P with the title or position of Managing Director in September 2011.

19. At all times material herein, Plaintiff was engaged in specializing in executive compensation consulting.

20. At all times material herein, Hall was Plaintiff's supervisor.

21. At all times material herein, SH&P did not engage in a practice of providing its employees with written performance appraisals.

22. In 2011, SH&P awarded Plaintiff a guaranteed bonus.

23. In 2012, SH&P awarded Plaintiff an \$80,000.00 performance based bonus, which was over and above the agreed upon target bonus.

24. When Hall advised Plaintiff that he had decided to award Plaintiff a performance based bonus for 2012, which was over and above the agreed upon target bonus, he advised Plaintiff that he and the other Managing Directors had been pleased with her work performance.

25. At all times during the course of her employment by SH&P and up until the present, Plaintiff performed her services competently, faithfully, diligently and in an outstanding manner.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT/HOSTILE WORK ENVIRONMENT

26. During Plaintiff's employment by SH&P, Defendants created, promoted and maintained a hostile work environment and atmosphere during which she was constantly subjected to multiple acts of sexual harassment and discrimination as hereinafter described which included without limitation, constant verbal harassment and other sexually suggestive conduct.

27. From the time that the Plaintiff's employment commenced up to and including the present, Hall and others have instigated and engaged in making numerous inappropriate verbal comments and other sexually suggestive activities.

28. These comments and activities include but are not limited to the following:

- a) A male Managing Director encouraging female Managing Directors to perform oral sex on potential clients in order to sign up new deals;
- b) A male Managing Director asking another female Managing Director about her husband's erections;
- c) Managing Directors making repeated comments about oral sex;
- d) A male Managing Director and male Consultant making repeated comments and references to masturbation;
- e) A male Managing Director commenting about Plaintiff's appearance in a skirt;

- f) A male Managing Director suggesting that Plaintiff's appearance in a skirt was generating work opportunities;
- g) A male Managing Director stating that he would sit on Plaintiff's lap until she it made her smile;
- h) A female Managing Director advising Plaintiff that Hall likes seeing her in a skirt;
- i) A male Managing Director Discussing a male Consultant's sexual prowess;
- j) A male Managing Director simulating performing sexual intercourse with an office chair;
- k) A Managing Director discussing erections;
- l) A Consultant requesting that a Managing Director read erotica out loud;
- m) A Managing Director reading erotica out loud;
- n) A male Consultant making regular comments and references to oral sex;
- o) A male Consultant discussing that some men must masturbate in order to compose themselves; and
- p) A male Managing Director watching a female Managing Director eat a sandwich and inquiring about similarities between how she bites the sandwich and performs oral sex.

29. The hostile work environment was so pervasive and severe that some employees placed wagers on how long it would take to adequately offend Plaintiff before she would be forced to leave the room.

30. Upon information and belief, SH&P has no policy prohibiting discrimination/harassment.

31. Upon information and belief, SH&P has no written complaint procedure for discrimination/harassment in the workplace.

32. A proposed policy prohibiting discrimination/harassment was not adopted.

33. Several Managing Directors, not including Plaintiff, expressed concern that if SH&P adopted a sexual harassment policy Hall would violate the policy immediately upon its implementation.

34. Various high level officials at SH&P, including, but not limited to Hall, Joseph Sorrentino, Sandra Pace and Nora McCord were aware of the pervasively hostile work environment and allowed it to continue.

35. Hall actually fostered the pervasively hostile work environment by engaging in the improper conduct himself.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT/HOSTILE WORK ENVIRONMENT COMPLAINTS

36. Plaintiff advised Hall on at least two occasions that his conduct was inappropriate.

37. Despite Plaintiff's complaints, Hall's conduct continued unabated.

38. After recognizing that Hall's comments and sexual innuendos were offending Plaintiff, a Managing Director told Plaintiff that Hall is "harmless," and then failed to implement any remedial measures whatsoever.

39. Plaintiff issued complaints to SH&P's Director of Operations about the inappropriate and unwelcome comments and behavior.

40. SH&P's Director of Operations responded by acknowledging that the hostile work environment exists at SH&P.

41. SH&P's Director of Operations also confessed that she had received other similar complaints concerning Hall's conduct and SH&P's hostile work environment.

42. The management team at SH&P was aware that the work environment was offensive and that Plaintiff and other employees were affected by the pattern and practice of sexual harassment.

43. Despite Plaintiff's complaints and the knowledge that the work environment was poisoned by sexual harassment, none of the individuals in supervisory positions took any steps or actions to reasonably investigate or remedy the discriminatory conduct.

44. On January 8, 2014, Plaintiff issued an oral complaint of sexual harassment/hostile work environment to Hall. Hall took no remedial measures in response to Plaintiff's complaint.

45. On January 8, 2014, Plaintiff issued a written complaint of sexual harassment/hostile work environment to Hall.

46. SH&P has condoned and supported the hostile work environment by failing to respond to Plaintiff's complaints.

47. Hall has condoned and supported the hostile work environment by failing to respond to Plaintiff's complaints and engaging in the improper conduct.

DEFENDANTS' RETALIATION AGAINST PLAINTIFF

48. After Plaintiff issued her complaints, SH&P's employees including the management team treated her less favorably than similarly situated employees who have not complained.

49. For example, Hall and certain other Managing Directors have increasingly stopped assigning Plaintiff work and excluded her from communication with clients.

50. To make matters even worse, Hall and certain other SH&P employees have discontinued replying to Plaintiff's electronic mail messages and have systematically ignored Plaintiff even when in the same office location.

51. On January 8, 2014, immediately after Plaintiff issued her oral complaint to Hall, Plaintiff reiterated her complaint to a Managing Director who admitted that she and Hall were well aware that Plaintiff was unwilling to participate in and obviously uncomfortable with Hall's sexually charged statements. This Managing Director also suggested that Plaintiff should agree to leave on "good terms."

52. Based on the foregoing, it is obvious that Defendants have engaged in disparate treatment and selected Plaintiff for termination in retaliation for her lawful complaints of sexual harassment.

AS AND FOR A FIRST COUNT

53. Plaintiff repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs of the Complaint numbered "1" through "52" inclusive with the same force and effect as if fully set forth at length herein.

54. By virtue of the acts complained of herein, the sexually hostile work environment at SH&P was sufficiently severe and pervasive to alter the terms and

conditions of Plaintiff's employment and create a subjectively and objectively abusive/discriminatory work environment in violation of the New York State Executive Law.

55. Hall violated the New York State Executive Law by aiding and abetting the sexually hostile work environment at SH&P.

56. As a direct and proximate result of the unlawful and discriminatory practices of Defendants, Plaintiff has sustained substantial damages the amount of which is to be determined by a jury.

AS AND FOR A SECOND COUNT

57. Plaintiff repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs of the Complaint numbered "1" through "52" inclusive with the same force and effect as if fully set forth at length herein.

58. By virtue of the acts complained of herein, the sexually hostile work environment at SH&P was sufficiently severe and pervasive to alter the terms and conditions of Plaintiff's employment and create a subjectively and objectively abusive/discriminatory work environment in violation of Article 8 of the New York City Administrative Code.

59. Hall violated Article 8 of the New York City Administrative Code by aiding and abetting the sexually hostile work environment at SH&P.

60. As a direct and proximate result of the unlawful and discriminatory practices of Defendants, Plaintiff has sustained substantial damages the amount of which is to be determined by a jury.

AS AND FOR A THIRD COUNT

61. Plaintiff repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs of the Complaint numbered "1" through "52" inclusive with the same force and effect as if fully set forth at length herein.

62. By virtue of the acts complained of herein, Defendants retaliated against Plaintiff in violation of the New York State Executive Law.

63. As a direct and proximate result of the unlawful and discriminatory practices of Defendants, Plaintiff has sustained substantial damages the amount of which is to be determined by a jury.

AS AND FOR A FOURTH COUNT

64. Plaintiff repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs of the Complaint numbered "1" through "52" inclusive with the same force and effect as if fully set forth at length herein.

65. By virtue of the acts complained of herein, Defendants retaliated against Plaintiff in violation of Article 8 of the New York City Administrative Code.

66. As a direct and proximate result of the unlawful and discriminatory practices of Defendants, Plaintiff has sustained substantial damages the amount of which is to be determined by a jury.

Wherefore, Plaintiff demands the following relief:

a) A money judgment against Defendants for her damages, including but not limited to lost wages, lost benefits, other economic damages, shame, humiliation, embarrassment and mental distress;

- b) Under the second and fourth claims, an award of punitive damages and attorney's fees;
- c) Prejudgment interest and costs; and
- d) Such further and additional relief as the Court deems just and appropriate under the circumstances.

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