



By [Ashlee Rezin](#) May 16, 2014 9:20 pm Chicago Sun-Times

Suit: Woman subjected to racial discrimination at Canadian Railway

A former Canadian National Railway worker is suing the company, alleging she was racially discriminated against when she was fired in 2012.

Jessica Ballard, who was first hired at Canadian Railway's Homewood location in January 2008, filed the discrimination lawsuit Thursday in U.S. District Court. She claims the company violated the Civil Rights Act and the Illinois Human Rights Act.

Between 2008 and 2011, Ballard, an African-American who worked as a crew caller until her termination, received positive performance reviews and feedback from her supervisors, according to the lawsuit.

But the lawsuit claims starting around November 2011, a white woman—who is listed as a defendant in the lawsuit—became her supervisor, and from that point on Ballard was subject to racial discrimination.

Her supervisor continuously accused Ballard of engaging in prohibited conduct, and once made a statement that Ballard would be terminated “like the other black girls,” the suit alleges.

In May 2012, the lawsuit claims Ballard's supervisor accused her of using a personal cell phone, but Ballard's phone records indicate she did not make any phone calls at the time.

The supervisor intentionally created a harassing and stressful work environment for Ballard and, unlike similarly situated white employees that engaged in the same or similar conduct as Ballard, conducted three “sham” investigations regarding minor infractions, according to the suit.

Among the minor infractions, the lawsuit alleges Ballard was blamed for a computer error that was a common problem.

Ballard was terminated on Nov. 2, 2012 and was issued a Notice of Right to Sue from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on Feb. 24, according to the lawsuit.

The three-count lawsuit claims racial discrimination and Ballard is seeking an undisclosed amount in damages. She is also asking to either be reinstated to her old job, or receive future wages she would have earned in the position.

The company has not yet been served with the suit, said Canadian Railway spokesperson Patrick Waldron, who declined to comment on it Friday evening.

This is not the first time parent-company Canadian Railway is being sued by a former employee alleging racial discrimination.

Feb. 4, Solomon Perry, a former conductor at the Illinois Central Railroad Company, a subsidiary of Canadian Railway, claims he was racially discriminated against based on his African-American race. Racial slurs were commonly spoken in the workplace by Perry's coworkers and supervisors, according to the lawsuit.

Perry claims in the suit he was assaulted by coworkers who cut his hair, which was styled in a Rastafarian haircut. The lawsuit also claims Perry was repeatedly harassed, assaulted and subsequently terminated. His lawsuit does not mention Ballard's supervisor.