

ELON MUSK'S HATRED OF BLACK PEOPLE POWERS TESLA MOTORS

Sun, 09 Jul 2023 19:54:23, admin45789, [[post_tag: elon-musks-hatred-of-black-people-powers-tesla-motors, category: news]

Bay Area: Black workers at Tesla claim lawsuits have not stopped discrimination

-
-

[caption id="attachment_242083" align="aligncenter" width="708"]IT IS SAID THAT MUSK THINKS BLACK WOMEN ARE ONLY GOOD AS SEX TOYS[caption]

-
-
-



Novato resident Darnell Williams, 64, is a Tesla factory worker on unpaid leave after surgery to fix a shoulder injury from his work in the company's Fremont plant. (Karl Mondon/Bay Area News Group)

By [ETHAN BARON](#) |

Complaint after complaint alleging racism against Black employees at Tesla's factory in Fremont has not stopped such abuse and discrimination, according to claims in recent court filings and employee interviews.

Black workers allege they are segregated into the hardest, most dangerous, lowest-paid jobs and subjected to a barrage of racist treatment, language and images.

Black workers at the plant — Tesla's biggest California facility, which employs thousands to build its four electric car models — alleged such abuse often began soon after they started, excited at landing a job at the famed automotive pioneer.

In declarations filed by more than 200 current and former workers at the factory in connection with an Alameda County lawsuit against Tesla that now seeks class-action status, workers said they quickly learned that working for Tesla meant facing rampant, extreme racism.



The Tesla factory in Fremont, Calif., on Tuesday, May 12, 2020. (Anda Chu/Bay Area News Group)

The company's billionaire chief executive officer, Elon Musk, is not named as a defendant in the lawsuit. In interviews, however, Black workers faulted Musk for setting the tone and failing to take action against harassing behavior. The conditions have been extensively alleged in a series of lawsuits and were found by a jury in one case to warrant a multimillion-dollar verdict against the company.

Novato resident Darnell Williams, on unpaid leave from Tesla after getting hurt in the factory, laid the company's alleged failure to prevent racism at Musk's door.

"It's a reflection of him," Williams, 64, said. "He doesn't care how those cars get pushed out that door as long as they get pushed out the door."

The sworn statements from workers in the Alameda County case, some paid less than \$20 an hour, provide the most detailed and wide-ranging window into the racism complaints.

"The number of workers affected in this case and the egregiousness of the violations and the length of time that the company has allowed them to go on are all on a level that I'm not aware of any employer tolerating," said Bryan Schwartz, a lawyer for the plaintiffs.

Virshon Meadows, who provided a declaration filed in court, said in an interview that he was overjoyed to get a job in 2018 buffing and sanding newly painted Teslas. Within a week, though, Meadows said he saw racial slurs scrawled in the bathroom and heard managers refer to the factory as "the Plantation" and describe colleagues with racial slurs.

At Meadows' station, the paint-baking ovens blasted workers, nearly all Black, with punishing heat. Personal water was banned, and no fountains were located nearby, he said. When an older Black woman collapsed and he went to help her, another employee told him, "Boy, get back to the line," he said.

"I didn't expect there to be that much racism, open racism in the job, even growing up in the South," said Meadows, 41, who lived in Georgia. "For the company you work for to actually have it out in the open, it was shocking." Meadows no longer works at Tesla.

Tesla did not respond to repeated requests for comment, via email and Twitter, or to make Musk available for an interview. Attempts to reach Musk, who bought Twitter last year, also were unsuccessful.

Tesla said in a 2022 blog post that it "strongly opposes all forms of discrimination and harassment" and claimed it "has always disciplined and terminated employees who engage in misconduct, including those who use racial slurs or harass others in different ways."

The \$800 billion company's only publicly available diversity report, from 2020, said its workforce was 10% Black, including 4% of employees at the director level or higher.

A 2017 letter from Musk to employees, filed with the lawsuit, addressed treatment at the Fremont factory of workers he described as being part of "historically less represented" groups. "If someone is a jerk to you, but sincerely apologizes, it is important to be thick-skinned," Musk wrote.

Jonwante Summers, who assembled motors, said in a declaration filed with the court that his White boss often said, "You have to have thick skin to work here." Musk's top-down "thick skin" messaging, Summers said, meant "Tesla was not going to do anything about all the racist remarks and incidents at the factory — that Black workers were just supposed to endure it."



Damell Williams, 64, a Tesla factory worker on unpaid leave from Tesla after surgery to fix a shoulder injury from his work in the company's Fremont electric car factory, prepares for an uncertain future at his home in Novato, Calif. Tuesday, June 27, 2023. (Karl Mondon/Bay Area News Group)

Of the 240 Black workers who provided statements for the lawsuit in Alameda County Superior Court, about two-thirds said they saw anti-Black graffiti including nooses, racial slurs and swastikas, and about 75% said they heard Tesla workers refer to the Fremont plant as "the Plantation" or the "Slave Ship," according to a court filing. More than half said they heard production leads, supervisors and managers use a racial epithet, and a quarter said higher-ups used the term. A court filing lists more than 50 anti-Black slurs allegedly uttered or scrawled freely at the factory.

Nearly half the Black workers said they complained to bosses, supervisors, managers or the human relations department, but Tesla failed to address their concerns. Dozens said their complaints drew retaliation, including termination, the filing said.

Schwartz, the lawyer pursuing the case, described the factory's alleged race-based abuse as "on a scale that I've never seen or heard or read of before, in hundreds of cases I've litigated."

The lawsuit, filed in 2017 by former Tesla contractor Marcus Vaughn, seeks unspecified damages, anti-harassment training and a public declaration of the illegality of the allegedly racist behavior. Lawyers for Vaughn, including Schwartz, and other plaintiffs who joined the lawsuit are seeking class-action status to bring in what Schwartz's firm estimates are more than 6,000 Black current and former workers at the plant since early November 2016. A hearing on class-action certification is expected in December.

Tesla is also battling at least three other [racism-based lawsuits](#), including one [filed last year](#) by the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has identified racial discrimination at Tesla similar to that alleged by that state agency, a Tesla [regulatory filing](#) last year said. The EEOC said it was prohibited by law from commenting.

In April, a [jury awarded \\$3.2 million](#) to a Black former Tesla worker who [sued the company in 2017](#) over "vitriolic racial harassment" and "daily racist epithets" at the Fremont factory. Although a lawyer for Tesla told the jury what happened to Owen Diaz was not "defensible or right," Musk, in response to the jury's \$3.2 million verdict, [tweeted](#), "If we had been allowed to introduce new evidence, the verdict would've been zero."

Among the allegations in the Vaughn case against Tesla is that Black workers "were almost always stationed in areas where the machines were older, less efficient, and more prone to breaking down," according to Alvin Patterson, who claimed he worked on a machine with a chain crudely mended with plastic ties. In his declaration, he said he never saw a non-Black worker at that station.

"One day, in September or October of 2022, the zip-ties broke and the chain crashed down on my head," Patterson said. "The blow from the chain on my hard hat caused it to crack and leave a hole."

U.S. Department of Labor data indicate Tesla was fined \$112,065 over 19 alleged workplace safety violations — nearly all contested by Tesla — and four accidents in the plant last year, including penalties for repeated failure to properly train workers and report accidents involving serious injury.

After Patterson complained to a supervisor about Black people getting unequal workloads, worse machines and more scrutiny, he said in a declaration his supervisor began harassing him. Exhausted from 12-hour shifts, he said he refused to work more overtime and was fired.

In another declaration, Alfred Moffett told a non-Black colleague in 2020 that he had complained to a supervisor about rampant use of racial slurs and references to "the Plantation," the colleague told him, "(Expletives) get lynched."

Keyanna Campbell, 29, of Hayward, who started at Tesla in 2021, said in a phone interview that she quit recently after her hopes of advancing through a strong work ethic and appetite for new skills were stymied by a racist workplace in which progress was denied to Black workers.

"We're working our butts off but still not getting anywhere," said Campbell, now working in food service at the Veterans Administration in Menlo Park while studying at Carrington College in San Leandro to become a medical administrative assistant.

Several workers described getting hurt on the job, then being forced to work at tasks that aggravated their injuries. Williams, of Novato, started working in the Tesla factory in 2015. In early 2020, during a 12-hour shift involving repetitive hoisting of heavy boxes of car windows, he tore cartilage in his shoulder, Williams said in a phone interview. He received a doctor's note prescribing no lifting, but was given such tasks anyway, he claimed.

"I had to lift my arms up and I had to put a sticker on a car for the whole shift," said Williams, who has been on unpaid leave from Tesla since shoulder surgery in 2021. "For sure it was race-based."



Former Tesla factory worker Keyanna Campbell, 29, who said she quit the company in June over widespread racism at its electric car factory in Fremont, arrives to work at her new job at the VA Medical Center in Menlo Park, Calif., on Wednesday, June 28, 2023. (Karl Mondon/Bay Area News Group)