

ELON MUSK'S RACISM IS ON VIEW FOR ALL TO SEE

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Lawsuit claiming racism at Tesla draws almost 240 black workers

- Musk's father killed many blacks in Africa and owned slave work mines



Tesla has been hit with several high-profile suits over its treatment of black employees and contract workers at its plant in Fremont, California. PHOTO: REUTERS

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NEW YORK - A black former assembly line staffer at Tesla is moving to add almost 240 other workers to his 2017 lawsuit in which he called the electric car maker's production floor a "hotbed for racist behaviour".

Mr Marcus Vaughn says class-action status is appropriate to address Tesla's failure to stop a "pattern and practice of race discrimination" and a hostile work environment at the factory in Fremont, California.

His request in a court filing on Monday is backed by sworn statements from other black former employees and contractors who claim they too were offended by racist graffiti sprawled in common areas and the use of slurs in the workplace, including the "n-word," "boy" and "monkey".

Tesla did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Companies typically try to block lawsuits from winning class-action status, which allows plaintiffs to pool resources and exert greater leverage in settlement negotiations.

If a state court judge in Oakland agrees to let Mr Vaughn broaden the case, it would raise the stakes for Mr Elon Musk's company.

A jury in San Francisco awarded an individual Tesla worker US\$3.2 million (\$\$4.3 million) in damages in April over similar discrimination claims.

[Mr Owen Diaz won a US\\$137 million jury verdict in 2021](#) in the original trial in his case, but asked for a redo after the judge slashed the damages award.

Tesla initially responded to Mr Vaughn's suit with a blog post titled "Hotbed of Misinformation", denying wrongdoing and saying the company had fired three people after probing alleged incidents.

A female worker who was fired in 2018 said in a court declaration that a co-worker told her she has "monkey toes", while another called her "Nicki Minaj", even though her only resemblance to the popular rap singer was that they are both black women.

Another worker who quit in 2020 said he was told to "keep my head down and mind my business" when he complained about the use of "offensive language" and unfair treatment of black employees to a white supervisor.

A third worker said he continued to "feel unwelcome and unsafe" after his verbal complaints over being called the N-word were ignored.

Tesla has been hit with a number of high-profile suits – including [one filed by the state of California in February 2022 – over](#) its treatment of black employees and contract workers at the Fremont plant.

In 2017, Mr Vaughn worked from April to October on the production floor, first as a contractor through a staffing agency before he was hired by Tesla in August.

A hearing on his request for class status is set for July 14. BLOOMBERG