

'Racial profiling' in store? +

Local TV reporter sues claiming harassment

by **Gloria Campisi**
and **Stu Bykofsky**

Daily News Staff Writers

TV reporter Don Lemon's lawyer calls it a case of "shopping while black."

Lemon, an African-American who is general assignment reporter for WCAU-TV (Channel 10), has filed suit against Tower Records and a white, former security employee of the Tower Records Video Books shop at Broad and Chestnut streets charging that he was followed two blocks to his car after purchasing a compact disc player there the afternoon of Feb. 3, roughed up, and accused of shoplifting.

Lemon maintained in the suit that he was harassed solely because he is black.

According to the suit, he was carrying the disc player in open view because a cashier had told him the store didn't have a bag big enough to hold it.

Lemon's attorney, Richard K. Washington Jr., said the reporter was a victim of "racial profiling."

The guard was unshaven, was not dressed in a security uniform, and refused to show identification or permit Lemon to show his purchase slip, according to the suit.

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LAWSUIT

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Lemon said he feared he was being mugged.

According to the suit, Lemon was pushed into traffic as he tried to get into his car, in front of a crowd of onlookers.

When he was finally able to summon police on his cell phone, they at first told him to "shut up and sit" in his car, until one officer recognized him as a reporter from Channel 10, the suit said.

In the suit, filed Monday in Common Pleas Court, Washington said Tower and its employee used "racial profiling as the sole basis for detaining" Lemon. He said he feared Lemon may not have been



Lemon

the only victim of such conduct.

"This is a shopping while black case," he said. "No matter how educated you are or what kind of job you hold, you are still presumed to be a criminal if you're of a certain ethnic background."

A store manager referred questions to Tower's corporate headquarters where spokeswoman Louise Solomon said she couldn't comment because the company hadn't yet seen a copy of the lawsuit.

The former security guard, identified in the suit as Christopher

Wirth, could not be reached for comment. Washington said Wirth lost his job after the confrontation with Lemon.

Lemon wouldn't discuss the incident.

But according to the suit, he suf-

fered physical injuries, embarrassment, emotional and psychological trauma, headaches, dizziness, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic syndrome.

The suit said the incident had caused Lemon an "inability to en-

gage in his work and/or occupations."

Washington declined to discuss whether Lemon had lost time from work as a result of the incident.

The suit seeks the standard punitive and compensatory damages "in excess of \$50,000."

"We believe what happened is the guard saw half of the incident," Washington said. "All he saw was Mr. Lemon walking out the door ... He put one and one together. He saw a black male with an item not in a bag and he assumed he had to be a shoplifter." ■



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Q. Based on Don Lemon's alleged treatment by a store security guard, give the details of a training program you would recommend be instituted for all store security personnel.

Send e-mail to campisg@phillynews.com