

Jury awards PBSO sergeant \$262,000 in discrimination case

[COMMENT](#) (11) [Email](#) 21 [Share](#) 11 [Tweet](#) 2 [ShareThis](#) 45

By [Lawrence Mower](#)

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Palm Beach County Sheriff's jail supervisors discriminated against a sergeant because she was white, a jury ruled Tuesday.

Corrections Sgt. Beverly Ellis was both suspended and passed up for promotions because of her race, the jury determined. They awarded her \$262,000 in lost wages and for emotional pain and suffering.

Ellis filed the lawsuit against Sheriff Ric Bradshaw in 2008, after experiencing years of what she called "workplace discrimination and harassment."

Bradshaw was unavailable for comment Wednesday. Ellis' attorney, Isidro Garcia, also could not be reached.

In 2001, she reported her then-supervisor, Lt. Ruby Starks, to the department for discrimination. Starks then reprimanded Ellis and gave her verbal counseling. The sheriff's office did not take action against Starks, and Ellis reported the discrimination to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

"She yells, screams and use (sic) racial slurs," Ellis wrote in her complaint to the EEOC. "She does not treat black supervisors in the same manner."

The EEOC sided with Ellis in 2002.

In 2004, she was passed up for a promotion to lieutenant under Col. Keith Chambers, whom she claimed allowed a promotional list to expire so that she wouldn't get the job. Two men with similar qualifications were hired, Ellis said. Chambers is black.

The next year, she was suspended without pay for conduct similar to her non-white peers, but for which only she was punished, she wrote in the lawsuit.

A Palm Beach Circuit Court jury on Tuesday found that Starks and Chambers created a hostile work environment and that Ellis' race was a "substantial or motivating factor" for being suspended and being denied the promotion.

Ellis, 53, has been with the department since 1988. Starks has been with the agency since 1986. Chambers left the department in 2008 for failing to qualify with a firearm, records show.

[COMMENT](#) (11) [Email](#) 21 [Share](#) 11 [Tweet](#) 2 [ShareThis](#) 45

MORE NEWS