



### **Starbucks sued by former employees** **Both say they were fired for being gay**

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Two former employees are suing Starbucks Corp., alleging they were fired for being gay.

Joseph Hooks and Dorothy Baker, in a lawsuit filed June 13, say that they were harassed by the company's director of compliance and equal opportunity, Craig Sawyer.

Starbucks denies the claims.

Hooks reported to Sawyer from January 2007 until May 2007. According to court documents, Sawyer made anti-gay remarks and references to Hooks during this time and repeatedly pressured him to apply for positions elsewhere in the company.

In April of that year, Sawyer told Hooks that he could not go to lunch with him and another employee because "just the boys are going to lunch," according to the suit.

The suit also claims that Sawyer phoned Hooks sometime in May 2007 and pressured him to resign by the end of the day. Although Hooks did not resign, Sawyer sent out an e-mail stating that he had. In July, the human resources department left a voice mail for Hooks, telling him that Starbucks had packed up his desk and an announcement had been made about his resignation. At that time, he had not resigned.

Baker worked for Starbucks from August 2007 until February of this year. Baker told Sawyer she was gay when they met to discuss diversity and Equal Employment Opportunity categories. Following Baker's disclosure, the suit alleges, Sawyer began to isolate her, skipping their scheduled one-on-one meetings, changing her deadlines and complaining to human resources that she was not completing her work.

According to the court filing, Sawyer also made comments to Baker about gay men. He had worked with HIV/AIDS-affected gay men as part of an internship after graduate school and told her a "funny" story about how he once threw one of the men "through the wall" while wrestling with him. Baker later complained to human resources about Sawyer and requested to report to another supervisor. The suit says she was placed on administrative leave at the end of January, pending investigation of Sawyer, and was fired in February. Sawyer was not placed on leave and still works for the company.

Before he was hired, Sawyer was interviewed by May Snowden, vice president of global diversity; during the interview, the suit says, he told her "in words or substance" that he had grown up in an environment, including military service, "where there was prejudice against homosexuals." According to the lawsuit, Sawyer told her he was on a "personal journey to overcome this bias in himself."

Hooks and Baker are seeking unspecified damages for lost pay, future pay and emotional upset. The two weren't available for interviews Thursday, said their lawyer, David Breskin.

In a statement issued Thursday, Starbucks said the company regrets that Hooks and Baker believe they were treated unfairly.

"We are proud of our long history as a leading, progressive employer with a commitment to diversity in the workplace," the statement said, noting that Starbucks has offered same-sex and domestic partner benefits to both full- and part-time employees since the 1970s.

Starbucks has been named to the Human Rights Campaign's 2008 Best Places to Work list, recognizing companies that support equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees; it also ranked ninth on the Best Corporate Citizens list, as published in The Advocate magazine.

The company said it wouldn't comment on the specifics of the pending lawsuit and that Sawyer was not available for comment.