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COVER STORY

New plaintiffs join engineer's class action against Google

By Andy Serbe
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Three new named plaintiffs and a set of fresh allegations have been added to a lawsuit filed by a former Google engineer accusing the company of discriminating against white, conservative males.

James Damore and David Gudeman filed the proposed class action in January. Damore was fired in August 2017 after publishing a 10-page memo that questioned the company's diversity initiatives and suggested there are biological reasons behind the disparity between men and women in engineering and leadership positions.

The new plaintiffs — Manuel Amador, Stephen McPherson, and Michael Burns — allege they were denied positions at Alphabet, Inc.-owned Google because they are white, conservative men.

Amador left his position voluntarily and was denied reinstatement when he applied to return, whereas McPherson and Burns were first-time applicants. *Damore et al. v. Google Inc.*, 18-CV321529 (Santa Clara County Super Ct., filed Jan. 8, 2018).

The complaint specifically mentions that Burns publicly shared a post supportive of Damore's memo on LinkedIn while he was going through the interview process at the company.

"The three additional plaintiffs add a new dimension to the lawsuit in that we believe there are thousands of people who have been denied or are currently being denied jobs at Google solely due to their protected characteristics," said Harmeet K. Dhillon of the Dhillon Law Group. She did not speculate on the size of the potential class.

"Amador, McPherson, Burns, and other class members were denied employment because of their actual and perceived conservative political activities and affiliations, and their status as actual or perceived Asian or Caucasian male job applicants," the amended complaint states.

Google responded to a request for comment by reiterating its response to Damore's original filing: "We look forward to defending against Mr. Damore's lawsuit in court."



Daily Journal photo

Harmeet K. Dhillon, who represents plaintiffs in a proposed class action against Google, alleges that her clients were denied jobs at the company because of their perceived conservative views.

The document includes allegations of overall hostility in the company toward conservatives and supporters of President Donald J. Trump. A senior software engineer suggested Google "blacklist" right-leaning sites and delete Trump administration members' Gmail accounts, the complaint states.

The complaint describes suggestions made by Google employees that Damore and other conservatives raising complaints be terminated.

According to the document, Google also did not match employee donations to nonprofits to conservative organizations, contrary to a company policy to do so up to \$6,000. One example is a right-leaning immigration website.

Damore's allegations remain largely the same, and he maintains he was an ideal employee. He said seminars to promote efforts to increase the number of women working at Google included what he calls illegal quotas.

After one seminar, Damore posted his memo on an employee forum. The human resources

department took interest after it was leaked to the media and employees began to harass him, which he says led to his firing, according to the lawsuit.

In a note to employees after the memo gained attention, Google CEO Sundar Pichai said he supports the right of employees to express themselves, but that the memo violated the company's Code of Conduct. The memo crossed the line "by advancing harmful gender stereotypes in our workplace," he said.

"To suggest a group of our colleagues have traits that make them less biologically suited to that work is offensive and not OK," he added. "It is contrary to our basic values and our Code of Conduct, which expects 'each Googler to do their utmost to create a workplace culture that is free of harassment, intimidation, bias and unlawful discrimination.'"

Google is also being sued by a former engineer from an ideologically opposite perspective, who says he was terminated for posts critical of Damore.