

# JET

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## **Bell Atlantic Workers File Racial Bias Lawsuit**

A group of current and former employees of Bell Atlantic Corp. recently joined together in a class-action racial discrimination lawsuit against the company.

The 124 workers, who worked for the company in the Washington, D.C., area, in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and West Virginia, allege that over the past seven years they have been subjected to racial epithets, racist slights and unfair treatment by management and co-workers, the Washington Post reported.

A Bell Atlantic spokesman said the company is investigating the allegations raised in the suit.

"It's a huge corporation," spokesman Eric Rabe told the Post. "Any corporation that said it couldn't happen would be unrealistic."

He said the company does not condone or tolerate cruel and racist behavior.

One of several allegations noted in the lawsuit is from Willie Bennett, a 27-year-old veteran of the company in Pennsylvania. Bennett said at a company party in 1995, a group of White co-workers showed him a video they made in which one of the White co-workers wore an Afro wig. The co-worker pretended to be Bennett and portrayed him as getting his job because of his basketball-playing skill, Bennett recalled.

The employees said their supervisors did nothing when they complained about the incidents.

The class-action suit was filed in federal court in Washington, D.C.