

# EEOC Sues AutoZone for Harassment Based on National Origin

Article By:

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

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## Hispanic Employee Subjected to Egregious Slurs and Forced to Resign, Federal Agency Charges

WILMINGTON, N.C. - AutoZoners, LLC, the company that operates AutoZone stores nationwide, unlawfully subjected a Hispanic former employee to harassment based on his national origin, which forced the employee to resign, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in a lawsuit it filed today.

AutoZoners, LLC distributes automotive replacement parts and accessories. The company operates AutoZone retail stores throughout the United States to sell the parts and accessories, including a store located on Market Street in Wilmington, N.C. The EEOC alleges that Isaac Rodriguez was harassed while working at the Wilmington store because he is Hispanic, in violation of federal law. The EEOC also alleges Rodriguez was forced to resign because of the harassment.

Rodriguez was hired by AutoZoners in late July 2011 as Parts Sales Manager at its Market Street store. According to the EEOC's complaint, beginning in August 2011 and continuing until Rodriguez's resignation in January 2012, Rodriguez was subjected to unwelcome derogatory slurs, comments and jokes because of his national origin. The complaint alleges that the slurs were made on an almost daily basis and included such things as "sp-c," "beaner," "border hopper" and "island n----r." The alleged harassers were the store's general manager and two of Rodriguez's coworkers. Rodriguez complained about the harassment on numerous occasions, but no action was taken to stop the harassment. About January 25, 2012, Rodriguez resigned from his job because of the abuse.

Such alleged conduct violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which protects employees from discrimination, including harassment based on national origin. The EEOC filed suit in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina, Southern Division (*Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. AutoZoners, LLC d/b/a AutoZone*; Civil Action No. 7:14-CV-00207-D) after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its conciliation process. The EEOC seeks back pay, compensatory damages and punitive damages as well as injunctive relief.

"The EEOC alleges that Mr. Rodriguez suffered outrageous episodes of harassment that no

employee should be forced to endure," said Lynette A. Barnes, regional attorney for the EEOC's Charlotte District. "The EEOC is committed to the elimination of such illegal misconduct in the workplace and this lawsuit reaffirms the EEOC's commitment to the eradication of harassment based on national origin."

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National Law Review, Volume IV, Number 271

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