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11 DEWITT LAMBERT

ENDORSED
FILED
ALAMEDA COUNTY

MAR 27 2017

CLERK OF COURT
By TANIA PIERCE
Deputy

12 IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
13 IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA
14 UNLIMITED JURISDICTION

15 DEWITT LAMBERT,

16 Plaintiff,

17 v.

18 TESLA, INC. DBA TESLA MOTORS, INC.;
19 and DOES 1-10, inclusive,

20 Defendants.

Case No.

RG 17854515

COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES

1. Race Harassment (FEHA);
2. Race Discrimination (FEHA);
3. Sexual Harassment (FEHA);
4. Retaliation (FEHA);
5. Failure to Prevent Harassment, Discrimination and Retaliation (FEHA);
6. Threats of Violence in Violation of the Ralph Act (Cal. Civ. Code § 51.7);
7. Violation of the Bane Act (Cal. Civ. Code § 52.1);
8. Failure to Accommodate (FEHA);
9. Failure to Engage in Interactive Process (FEHA);
10. Assault; and
11. Battery (Cal. Civ. Code § 1708.5).

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

1 **INTRODUCTION**

2 Nigger, we take your ass home, nigger. Shred you up in pieces, nigger.
3 Cut you up, nigger. Send your ass so everyone in yo family so
4 everybody can have a piece of you, nigger. Straight up, nigger. We get
5 down like that, nigger.

6 1. Although one may think the above statement came from a Pre-Civil Rights Era
7 Ku Klux Klan member; this hateful, violent and racist rhetoric actually came from a Head Lead
8 on the assembly line at Tesla, Inc. dba Tesla Motors, Inc. (“Tesla”), a 21st century company in
9 the heart of Silicon Valley. This Head Lead, along with another Supervisor, Lead and Production
10 Associate continue to roam the halls of Tesla today, even though Tesla is aware that they
11 subjected Plaintiff DeWitt Lambert to repeated racist epithets for months.

12 2. Mr. Lambert, who is African American, is an electrician by trade. He traveled
13 across the country, from Alabama to California in 2012, in hopes of a brighter future. Joining
14 Tesla in 2015 was a dream come true for Mr. Lambert, and he was excited to be building cars for
15 a company that is at the forefront of modern day technology and innovation. Unfortunately,
16 almost immediately after starting at Tesla, Mr. Lambert learned that although the company may
17 be revolutionizing the world of transportation, it lagged miles behind when it came to adhering to
18 civil rights that his ancestors fought so hard to obtain more than half a century ago.

19 **PARTIES**

20 3. Plaintiff DeWitt Lambert has been employed by Tesla as a Production Associate
21 since approximately June 26, 2015. Plaintiff is, and at all times relevant herein was, a resident of
22 Oakland, California.

23 4. Defendant Tesla is a publicly-traded Delaware corporation with its principal place
24 of business in Palo Alto, California. In approximately February 2017, Tesla Motors, Inc. changed
25 its name to Tesla, Inc. Tesla designs, manufactures, and sells electric vehicles, and operates its
26 vehicle manufacturing factory at 45500 Fremont Blvd., Fremont, California. The harassers’
27 conduct at issue in this case took place at the Fremont factory.
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1 California by taking on electrician jobs. He subsequently landed a Production Associate position
2 at Tesla's Fremont factory on June 26, 2015. Eager to succeed and grow through the ranks at a
3 company that was revolutionizing the car industry, Mr. Lambert worked hard and put in long
4 hours.

5 11. From approximately June 26, 2015 until April 2016, Mr. Lambert was assigned to
6 Chassis Two, where he worked with Supervisor Charles Lambert, Head Lead Christian Kramer,
7 Lead Jose Jimenez, Production Associate Crispin Rodriguez and Production Associate Treat
8 Doan.

9 12. Almost immediately after Mr. Lambert began working on Chassis Two, Mr.
10 Kramer, Mr. Jimenez, Mr. Rodriguez and Mr. Doan, who are all in their twenties, began
11 targeting Mr. Lambert and engaging in unprofessional conduct, including: attaching vin number
12 stickers on Mr. Lambert's back; filling Mr. Lambert's back pockets with gold nuts and screws;
13 sticking tools in Mr. Lambert's pocket; hiding Mr. Lambert's tools; using adhesive tape to stick
14 Mr. Lambert's tools to a table; stealing Mr. Lambert's phone, and taking photos and videos on it
15 without his permission. Mr. Lambert pleaded for them to stop.

16 13. A month or two into Mr. Lambert's employment, Mr. Kramer's, Mr. Jimenez's,
17 Mr. Rodriguez's and Mr. Doan's conduct took on a racist tone. The Chassis Two employees
18 began calling Mr. Lambert "Nigger" on a continuous basis, and making comments, such as,
19 "Don't this nigger look just like Samuel Jackson;" "Don't he look like this nigger [referring to
20 Samuel Jackson in Django Unchained], these two niggers are just alike;" "Don't this nigger look
21 like Major Payne;" and "The black version of Mr. Clean Right there." This racist behavior
22 included threats of violence. The group would flash 408 gang signs at Mr. Lambert, and one of
23 the employees detailed how he was going to cut Mr. Lambert up into pieces and send his body
24 parts to his family members. The harassing conduct was part of a continuous course of conduct.

25 14. The group also attacked Mr. Lambert based on his sex. For example, while Mr.
26 Lambert was bent over working on the line, Mr. Kramer stuck a drill gun into Mr. Lambert's
27 buttocks in front of his co-workers. Comments were also made about the size of Mr. Lambert's
28 penis, including, "I bet you my dick is bigger than yours," and "He said you got that baby

1 dick...is that dick so small you piss on your balls.” These employees would also imitate sex
2 between a man and a woman with fingers, imitate performing oral sex on a man with mouth and
3 finger in front of Mr. Lambert, and make comments to Mr. Lambert, such as, “Tell your bitch to
4 stop texting me.” This conduct was in part an attack on his identity as an older African
5 American male and on the racial and sexual stereotypes of African American males.

6 15. It is very difficult to imagine such blatant racism and sexism permeating the
7 workplace in 21st century Bay Area and at a progressive company, such as Tesla. However,
8 these unabashed harassers went out of their way to document their racist and sexist behavior by
9 leaving several video recordings on Mr. Lambert’s phone.

10 16. Mr. Lambert begged these Chassis Two employees to stop harassing him. On
11 numerous occasions, and as early as Fall 2015, Mr. Lambert complained to Supervisor Charles
12 Lambert about the hostile work environment. He also asked, “Why do they use the N-word so
13 freely around here?” Charles Lambert’s response each time was to ask Chassis Two employees
14 to stop referring to Mr. Lambert as “Nigger.” In addition to complaining to his supervisor, Mr.
15 Lambert turned to the Human Resources Department for help. He complained to Human
16 Resources about being called “Nigger” in the workplace, and some of the other above-described
17 harassing conduct. He was told that Human Resources would look into it. However, the hostile
18 work environment continued and there was no evidence human resources conducted any
19 investigations into Mr. Lambert’s complaints or took action to stop the harassment which
20 continued.

21 17. Mr. Lambert then took action on his own to move out of Chassis Two by applying
22 for numerous positions in other departments. Starting in December 2015, Mr. Lambert submitted
23 numerous applications for various positions at Tesla. Unfortunately, none of them lead to a
24 transfer. Mr. Lambert pleaded with Human Resources to be moved to another line.

25 18. Rather than promptly investigate the matter, put an end to the hostile work
26 environment and reprimand the harassers, Tesla rewarded the harassers with promotions. In
27 approximately February 2016, Mr. Kramer was promoted to Supervisor of Chassis Two, Mr.
28 Jimenez was promoted to Head Lead, and Mr. Rodriguez and Mr. Doan were both promoted to

1 Lead positions. At the same time, Supervisor Charles Lambert, who is African America, was
2 transferred to another line.

3 19. After Supervisor Charles Lambert's transfer, the new Supervisor Christian
4 Kramer threatened Mr. DeWitt Lambert with, "Your ass is outta here now. Charles isn't here to
5 protect you anymore." Mr. Dewitt Lambert complained to Supervisor Charles Lambert about the
6 hostile statements, however, the hostile comments continued.

7 20. Shortly after Mr. Kramer became the Supervisor of Chassis Two, the employees
8 began taking active steps to get Mr. Lambert fired. They tried to provoke Mr. Lambert by
9 intensifying the harassment. Mr. Lambert would respond with, "I'm not losing my job for one of
10 you kids." In approximately February 2016, a Lead from another line told Mr. Kramer, "You
11 trying to set that man up. That man has a family. You don't do shit like that." Mr. Kramer also
12 issued Mr. Lambert a write up for eating a snack bar on the line. Not only were other employees
13 not reprimanded for eating food on the line, but just a few days prior, donuts were passed around
14 the line and no one was reprimanded for eating the donuts on the line. Mr. Lambert complained
15 to Assistant Manager Alfonso Franco about the harassment and the retaliation. In response, Mr.
16 Franco stated, "You all need to get along."

17 21. After enduring months of harassment, Mr. Lambert was finally transferred out of
18 Chassis Two to Station 40 in April 2016. However, the retaliatory conduct of the harassers did
19 not stop there. In approximately July 2016, one of the harassers brought up to Human Resources'
20 attention a photograph of Mr. Lambert taken inside the Tesla Fremont factory and posted on
21 Facebook. As a result, Mr. Lambert received a final written warning. Other employees, who had
22 photographs of themselves at the Tesla Fremont factory on their Facebook profiles, were not
23 reprimanded. Mr. Lambert addressed this final warning with Human Resources. During this
24 meeting, Human Resources Representative Rose Sanson observed the hateful, violent and racist
25 videos created by Chassis Two employees, including Mr. Kramer and Mr. Rodriguez. Even after
26 viewing the videos, however, Tesla failed to investigate and reprimand the harassers. Rather,
27 again, it promoted one of the harassers – Jose Jimenez – to Supervisor.

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1 22. During this time period, Tesla also continued to discriminate against Mr. Lambert
2 by refusing to promote him. Mr. Lambert was initially turned down for a promotion because he
3 had not met the alleged six-month requirement period, although, at least one of the harassers,
4 who also did not meet the six-month requirement period, received a promotion. Later, Mr.
5 Lambert was again denied a promotion because he was issued the above-described retaliatory
6 write-ups.

7 23. Tesla also retaliated against Mr. Lambert by refusing to properly rotate him,
8 thereby causing a serious injury to his back. Because Production Associates often engage in
9 repetitive work, Tesla's policies require that they rotate their Production Associates every two
10 hours to avoid injuries. Tesla failed to rotate Mr. Lambert. Mr. Lambert complained on multiple
11 occasions about not being rotated and developing pain in his lower back due to the repetitive
12 motion. He complained to Human Resources and his Supervisor. He told them, "tell them to
13 rotate me," "you need to rotate me," and "my back is killing me." Human Resources
14 Representative Erin Garcia stated she would speak to Supervisor Cole Buchner about this matter.
15 However, Mr. Lambert continued to work on the same station and was refused alternative work.
16 In fact, employee Jared (last name unknown) told Mr. Lambert that the last employee that
17 performed Mr. Lambert's job incurred a back injury.

18 24. After working in a confined space for 12 hours a day, 6 days a week, and without
19 being rotated for three months, Mr. Lambert suffered a lumbar back strain that caused radiating
20 pain starting from his lower back down to his upper buttocks, and resulted in a visit to the
21 emergency room. On July 29, 2016, the Tesla Health Center conducted a physical of Mr.
22 Lambert and issued work restrictions, that limited lifting, pushing and pulling to 10 pounds or
23 less, prohibited stooping and bending, and limited standing or sitting to a maximum of 4 hours
24 per day.

25 25. Despite the doctor's orders, Supervisor John Maestre refused to accommodate Mr.
26 Lambert and instead forced Mr. Lambert to continue working 12 hours per day, and engage in
27 the same repetitive motion that caused the back injury. Mr. Maestre refused to take Mr.
28

1 Lambert's injury and accommodations request seriously, and told Mr. Lambert that if he could
2 not do the work, then he should go home.

3 26. Mr. Lambert brought Mr. Maestre a Work Status Recommendation from his
4 medical provider requiring that he perform mostly seated work and limit standing/walking to no
5 more than 10 minutes per hour. Mr. Maestre initially provided Mr. Lambert with a plastic crate
6 with no back support as an accommodation. Other employees had regular chairs with back
7 support. When Mr. Lambert asked for a chair with back support he was told that this request
8 would not be accommodated because it was not specified in the Work Status Recommendation.
9 Mr. Lambert's doctor issued a *new* Work Status Recommendation limiting Mr. Lambert to,
10 "Mostly seated with *back support*. Limit standing to no more than 10 minutes/hour." This time,
11 Mr. Maestre refused to accommodate Mr. Lambert because no chairs were allegedly allowed on
12 the line, although other employees were using chairs. Mr. Maestre ordered Mr. Lambert to go
13 home. Mr. Lambert complained to Human Resources Representative Elyse Elliott for being
14 forced to go on leave when he was more than capable of performing the job with the assistance
15 of a chair. In response, Ms. Elliott instructed Mr. Lambert to go home, and notified him that the
16 company would contact him when it had light duty available. As a result, from September 1,
17 2016 until November 22, 2016, Mr. Lambert was forced to go on leave because Tesla refused to
18 accommodate his simple request for a chair with back support.

19 27. After Plaintiff raised his concerns, Defendant reacted by attacking Plaintiff and
20 his conduct. Defendant falsely accused Plaintiff of fighting and threatening other workers, of
21 using profanity in the workplace and investigating him for conduct in the distant past. Many of
22 these accusations originally came from the harassers. This appears to be part of a campaign to
23 threaten, bully and smear Plaintiff in an effort to victimize the victim for exercising his rights.

24 28. As a result of the acts and omissions of Defendant, Plaintiff has suffered, and
25 continues to suffer, emotional distress and psychological damage including, but not limited to:
26 depression, anxiety, stress, insomnia, loss of confidence and self-esteem, and uncertainty
27 regarding the future. Defendant's actions have also resulted in past wage and benefit loss, and
28 are expected to result in economic loss in the future.

1 35. The harassing conduct to which Plaintiff was subjected to was so severe,
2 widespread, and/or persistent that a reasonable African American in Plaintiff's circumstances
3 would have considered the work environment to be hostile or abusive.

4 36. Plaintiff considered the work environment to be hostile and/or abusive.

5 37. Supervisor Kramer, along with other Chassis Two employees, engaged in the
6 racially harassing conduct as set forth herein. Defendant Tesla failed to take prompt, remedial
7 and effective action to stop the harassers.

8 38. Defendant's violations of the FEHA caused Plaintiff to suffer harm as set forth
9 above.

10 39. As a result of Defendant's unlawful acts, Plaintiff is entitled to damages as set
11 forth herein.

12 40. By reason of the conduct of Defendant as alleged herein, Plaintiff has necessarily
13 retained attorneys to prosecute the within action. Plaintiff is therefore entitled to reasonable
14 attorney's fees and litigation expenses, including expert witness fees and costs, incurred in
15 bringing the within action.

16 41. Defendant did the acts alleged herein maliciously, fraudulently, and oppressively,
17 and/or with the wrongful intention of injuring Plaintiff, and/or with the conscious disregard of
18 the rights and safety of Plaintiff, and/or with an improper and evil motive amounting to malice.
19 Plaintiff is thus entitled to recover punitive damages from Defendant in an amount according to
20 proof.

21 **SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION**

22 (Race Discrimination)

23 Cal. Govt. Code § 12940, *et seq.*

24 42. Plaintiff realleges and hereby incorporates by reference the foregoing paragraphs,
25 as though fully set forth herein.

26 43. Plaintiff at all times was an employee covered by the FEHA, California
27 Government Code §§ 12940(a) and (j), which prohibits an employer from discriminating against
28 an employee on the basis of color and race.

1 44. Defendant Tesla was at all times an employer defined under the FEHA as
2 explained above.

3 45. Tesla failed to promote Plaintiff because of his color and race.

4 46. Defendant's practice was a substantial factor in causing Plaintiff's harm.

5 47. Defendant's violations of the FEHA caused Plaintiff to suffer harm as set forth
6 above.

7 48. As a result of Defendant's unlawful acts, Plaintiff is entitled to damages as set
8 forth herein.

9 49. By reason of the conduct of Defendant as alleged herein, Plaintiff has necessarily
10 retained attorneys to prosecute the within action. Plaintiff is therefore entitled to reasonable
11 attorney's fees and litigation expenses, including expert witness fees and costs, incurred in
12 bringing the within action.

13 50. Defendant did the acts alleged herein maliciously, fraudulently, and oppressively,
14 and/or with the wrongful intention of injuring Plaintiff, and/or with the conscious disregard of
15 the rights and safety of Plaintiff, and/or with an improper and evil motive amounting to malice.
16 Plaintiff is thus entitled to recover punitive damages from Defendant in an amount according to
17 proof.

18 **THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION**

19 (Sexual Harassment)

20 Cal. Govt. Code § 12940, *et seq.*

21 51. Plaintiff realleges and hereby incorporates by reference the foregoing paragraphs,
22 as though fully set forth herein.

23 52. The above conduct by Plaintiff's supervisor Kramer, Rodriguez, and other
24 Chassis Two employees, was unwelcome, severe, and/or pervasive, directed towards Plaintiff,
25 and part of an ongoing and continuing pattern of conduct.

26 53. The above conduct caused Plaintiff to perceive his work environment as
27 intimidating, hostile, abusive, or offensive, and a reasonable person in Plaintiff's position would
28 perceive the work environment as intimidating, hostile, abusive, or offensive.

1 91. Defendant's conduct caused Plaintiff to suffer, and continue to suffer damages as
2 set forth above.

3 92. As a result of Defendant's unlawful acts, Plaintiff is entitled to damages set forth
4 herein.

5 93. By reason of the conduct of Defendant and each of them as alleged herein,
6 Plaintiff has necessarily retained attorneys to prosecute the within action. Plaintiff is therefore
7 entitled to reasonable attorney's fees and litigation expenses, including expert witness fees and
8 costs, incurred in bringing the within action.

9 94. Defendant did the acts alleged herein maliciously, fraudulently, and oppressively,
10 and/or with the wrongful intention of injuring Plaintiff, and/or with the conscious disregard of
11 the rights and safety of Plaintiff, and/or with an improper and evil motive amounting to malice.
12 Plaintiff is thus entitled to recover punitive damages from Defendant in an amount according to
13 proof.

14 **EIGHTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

15 (Failure to Accommodate)
16 Cal. Govt. Code 12940, *et seq.*

17 95. Plaintiff realleges and hereby incorporates by reference the foregoing paragraphs,
18 as though fully set forth herein.

19 96. Defendant had an affirmative duty to make a reasonable accommodation for
20 Plaintiff's disability. The duty arises even if Plaintiff did not request an accommodation.
21 Defendant failed to accommodate Plaintiff's disability.

22 97. At all relevant times, Defendant had actual and constructive knowledge of the
23 failure to accommodate described and alleged herein, and condoned, ratified and participated in
24 the failure to accommodate Plaintiff's disability.

25 98. Defendant's conduct caused Plaintiff to suffer, and continue to suffer damages as
26 set forth above.

27 99. As a result of Defendant's unlawful acts, Plaintiff is entitled to damages set forth
28 herein.

1 public policy and applicable law as described above with conscious disregard of the result or
2 outcome of such conduct.

3 117. Rodriguez touched Plaintiff's person with the intent to cause a harmful or
4 offensive contact with an intimate part of Plaintiff. Plaintiff did not consent to the contact.
5 Plaintiff was harmed or offended by Rodriguez's conduct. Rodriguez's conduct was committed
6 during the course of and scope of employment.

7 118. At all relevant times, Defendant had actual or constructive knowledge of the
8 conduct described herein, and condoned, ratified and participated in such acts.

9 119. As a result of Defendant's actions, Plaintiff was harmed as set forth above.

10 120. As a result of Defendant's unlawful acts, Plaintiff is entitled to damages as set
11 forth herein.

12 **REQUEST FOR RELIEF**

13 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff requests judgment against Defendant Tesla as follows:

14 1. General damages according to proof, however, no less than the jurisdictional limit
15 of this court;

16 2. Special damages in amounts according to proof, together with prejudgment
17 interest;

18 3. Exemplary and punitive damages in amounts according to proof;

19 4. Civil penalties pursuant to Civil Code section 51.7;

20 5. Attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to Government Code section 12965, Civil
21 Code sections 52(b)(3) and 52.1(h), and any other applicable statute;

22 6. Interest as provided by law;

23 7. Costs of suit incurred herein;

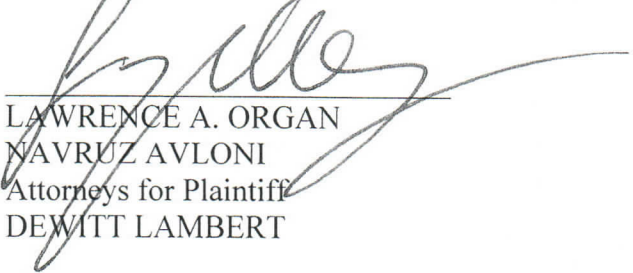
24 8. Injunctive relief to require Defendant Tesla to better train its staff on race and sex
25 harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and its duty to accommodate and engage in a good faith
26 interactive process as well as conduct more thorough investigations; and
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9. For such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Dated: March 27, 2017

CALIFORNIA CIVIL RIGHTS LAW GROUP



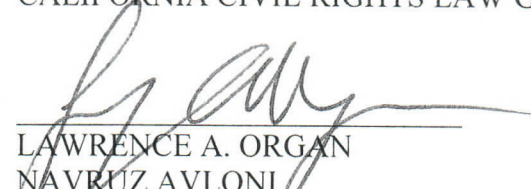
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DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

PLAINTIFF hereby demands a jury trial on all issues.

Dated: March 27, 2017

CALIFORNIA CIVIL RIGHTS LAW GROUP



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DEWITT LAMBERT

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