

Summary Judgment Review

Case Name: *Woods v. Lockheed Martin Corporation*

Nature of the Order: Final Report and Recommendation

Magistrate Judge: Christopher C. Bly

District Judge: Steven D. Grimberg

Claims & Outcomes:

1. **Claim:** Sex Discrimination (Title VII)
 - a. **Outcome:** Summary Judgment Recommended
2. **Claim:** Race Discrimination (1981)
 - a. **Outcome:** Summary Judgment Recommended

Whether R&R Followed: Yes

For Race/Gender Discrimination Cases:

Race of Plaintiff: African American

Gender of Plaintiff: Female

Summary

Plaintiff Margaret M. Woods (“Plaintiff”) failed to file a response to Lockheed Martin Corporation’s (“Defendant”) statement of material facts, and therefore, Defendant’s facts were admitted for the purposes of Defendant’s motion for summary judgment.

Plaintiff is an African American female. In 2008, Plaintiff was selected as a quality manager on Defendant’s C-130 aircraft flight line, and she was promoted to senior manager in 2012. In 2015, as a result of a reorganization plan and workforce reduction policy (and down-leveling of some employees), Plaintiff and three male senior managers were grouped together, as they had similar skills and held similar positions. The workforce reduction committee reviewed the four senior managers’ factor scores and past performance ratings, pursuant to the reduction in force policy. Bryant McKee, an African American male, had the highest score and was transferred to a different role in a different program. John Strickland, a Caucasian male, received the next best score and took over the new consolidated senior manager position. Bryan Batt, a Caucasian male, received the third best score, and was reclassified into a different position. Plaintiff received the lowest score and was identified for layoff. Ultimately, however, she was given the option to select a down-leveled position. Plaintiff chose the down-leveled, lower-level manager position.

Defendant’s argument was that Plaintiff could not make out a prima facie claim of disparate treatment on account of race under § 1981 and Title VII, or gender under Title VII. Specifically,

Defendant argued that Plaintiff did not provide evidence showing Defendant intended to discriminate. Defendant had adhered to its reduction-in-force policy and decided that Plaintiff was to be down-leveled by comparing the senior managers' skills and recent performance ratings, without considering her race or gender. Defendant also argued that even if Plaintiff could establish a prima facie case, she could not establish that Defendant's legitimate business reason for down-leveling Plaintiff were pretext for discrimination.

In response, Plaintiff argued that by grouping employees with similar skills and roles, Defendant strategically placed African Americans into lower pay brackets and that it was used to remove the only Black female from senior leadership and flight operations. She also argued that she made a prima facie showing of discrimination because she was replaced by someone outside of her protected class. While the others had scored higher using Defendant's system, Plaintiff argued that she was more qualified than Strickland.

The Court decided to treat Plaintiff's case like a demotion, rather than as a reduction in workforce, because the framework used to analyze reduction in workforce requires that the plaintiff be terminated (rather than down-leveled). Because she was replaced by a person outside of her protected class (Strickland is a Caucasian male), the Court said she easily satisfied the element, and therefore made a prima facie case of race and sex discrimination.

The Court also determined that Defendant's reorganization plan was void of any consideration of race or gender, and therefore a legitimate reason for the adverse action. Thus, Plaintiff had the burden of showing Defendant's legitimate reason for down-leveling her was pretext for discrimination. The Court determined that her argument (that she was more qualified than Strickland) was insufficient, and that she had to "show that the disparities between the successful applicant's and her own qualifications were of such weight and significance that no reasonable person, in the exercise of impartial judgment, could have chosen the candidate selected over the plaintiff." Plaintiff had to show, not just that Defendant's decisions were mistaken, but they were motivated by race and/or gender. Plaintiff only offered evidence showing that she disagreed with Defendant's decision and failed to address Defendant's legitimate reasons for down-leveling her.

Thus, the Court recommended that Defendant's motion for summary judgment be granted.