

Delta employees claim they were fired for speaking Korean, reporting sexual harassment

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Four women claim Delta fired them for speaking Korean and reporting sexual harassment in the workplace. (iStock)

Four former Delta employees are suing the airline for allegedly firing them for speaking Korean and reporting sexual harassment in the workplace, claiming “race and national origin discrimination and retaliation.”

Ji-Won Kim, Lilian Park, Jean Yi and Jongjin An have a combined 50 years’ experience working as desk and gate agents for the airline out of Sea-Tac Airport in Seattle.

All four women were born in Korea and dealt with passengers flying to and from South Korea on a regular basis.

Yi told [KIRO 7](#) that Korean-speaking passengers “were so glad to see me. They say, 'Oh I feel so comfortable. You know, they don’t speak English.’”

“I treated all Delta passengers as my family — brothers and sisters, parents. Everything came from the heart,” Park said.

But while the women, three of whom are now U.S. citizens, claim their ability to speak Korean was one of the reasons Delta initially hired them, they now believe it’s the primary reason they were terminated in May 2017.

The lawsuit, which was recently filed in King County Superior Court, alleges that "though assigned to work flights to and from Korea, composed of many Korean-speaking passengers, they were singled out and admonished for speaking Korean," KIRO 7 reports.

An claims her Delta manager told her there were complaints from “non-Korean-speaking agents” and that “they feel uncomfortable, so please limit speaking Korean.” But the women say no other foreign language-speaking employees were given the same instructions.

The women also believe their termination came as retaliation for complaints they filed against another Delta employee for sexual harassment.

The women were reportedly harassed multiple times by the same person while on the job. Yi told KIRO 7 she tried to “avoid touching” from the harasser “so when he came to the gate, I just moved out of sight. I didn’t want to deal with him touching, whispering.”

“It was a daily thing,” Park said. She and Kim both reported the employee’s inappropriate behavior to their supervisor, but they say nothing was ever done.

“That agent is still working there and the touching has not stopped,” Jennifer Song, the women’s attorney, told KIRO 7. “We also suspect that their termination is related to the reporting of sexual harassment.”

According to the lawsuit, the women were informed they "were suspended and ultimately terminated for allegedly offering unauthorized upgrades." However, the women say it’s a standard practice among agents and claim they were the only ones fired.

“Offering free upgrades, especially on an oversold flight, is a common practice, but suddenly, it became a reason to be terminated, just for us, for Korean women,” Kim said.

“Other agents do it, on a daily basis,” Song said.

Delta did not immediately respond to Fox News’ request for comment on the lawsuit, but the airline released the following statement to KIRO 7: "Delta does not tolerate workplace discrimination or harassment of any kind. Such behavior runs counter to our core values of diversity and inclusion and our mission of connecting the world.

"We take allegations of workplace harassment and discrimination very seriously and our investigations into allegations made by these former employees were found to be without merit. These former employees were unfortunately but appropriately terminated because the company determined they violated ticketing and fare rules. Delta is confident that these claims will ultimately be determined to be without merit."

Michelle Gant is a writer and editor for Fox News Lifestyle.