

LEGAL/PRIVACY

## McQueen, Kering sued by employees over alleged discrimination

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*Alexander McQueen fall/winter 2015 campaign image*

By STAFF REPORTS

British fashion house Alexander McQueen and its parent company Kering have had a lawsuit brought against them by two store employees.

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The plaintiffs, Christopher Policard and Duane Davis, filed a suit in a New York court that claims the brand has "engaged in systematic racism" against its African-American employees. Consumers are increasingly looking at the practices of the brands they buy into, in which even an alleged wrongdoing may sway their sentiment.

### Alleged affront

Both plaintiffs work at the label's New York flagship. Aside from McQueen and Kering, other defendants include managers and supervisors.

The lawsuit claims that African-American applicants seeking a position on the sales floor, where they would be interacting with or seen by customers, are rejected. Instead, the suit says that they are hired only for "menial" jobs out of view.

According to the suit, African-American employees are only seen when they are being searched for theft during opening hours. The plaintiffs say that white employees, on the other hand, are searched after closing.



*McQueen New York flagship on Madison Avenue*

Mr. Policard, who is an inventory supervisor, and Mr. Davis, who is an inventory clerk, also say that when they filed a

complaint with the company, the defendants retaliated against them, denying vacation time and excluding them from meetings.

In addition to monetary damages, the plaintiffs are looking to ban the company from enacting any practices or rules that prevent employees from benefits and opportunities such as promotion.

This is not the first time McQueen has been hit with a discrimination suit. In 2013, a former store employee said that she was called derogatory names by her supervisor, including "burrito face," before she was fired.

That same year, a security guard filed against the company, claiming he had been on the receiving end of racially-skewed teasing from sales associates.

Other luxury brands have bounced back from discrimination suits after making amends.

In late 2013, department store chain Barneys New York faced a discrimination lawsuit from a consumer who said he was wrongly accused of shoplifting in the retailer's Manhattan flagship store because of his race. As the news of the litigation spread, Barneys was on the receiving end of negative social media posts, evidence of wider consumer outrage ([see story](#)).

The following year, Barneys New York paid \$525,000 in costs, fees and penalties following the high-stakes discrimination lawsuit.

The retailer also agreed to institute a number of policies to minimize the chance that racial-profiling happens again. Although Barneys' reputation took substantial hits following the controversy, it seems to have mitigated what could have been devastating repercussions ([see story](#)).

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