

Man files discrimination lawsuit against CN

(The following story by John K. Ryan appeared on the Southtown Star website on October 2, 2009.)

CHICAGO — A black man is suing Homewood-based Canadian National Railway for discrimination, saying he was harassed on the job with such acts as finding nooses in his work area.

In a suit filed this week in Cook County Circuit Court, Korey Currie, of Chicago, said he was treated differently from others in his group at the CN yards near the Wisconsin border where he started working in June 2008.

The mistreatment included being forced to perform tasks while other employees called him a racial slur and watched him work, and having his tools stolen and his safety signals ignored. He also claimed he wasn't fully trained.

In addition to finding nooses near his work area, Currie's suit claims fellow employees tried to intimidate him by shaving their heads to look like skinheads.

Currie was the only black person in his group at the time of the incidents, said Kimberly Carr, an attorney representing Currie.

Currie claimed he told his supervisor about the noose, but his supervisor said he didn't know anything about it.

"The company took no steps to enforce their anti-discrimination policy," Carr said. "They did nothing to resolve the situation."

The suit said Currie was fired from CN July 23, 2008, for "not catching on" and after being accused of sleeping on the job, which he "completely denies," Carr said.

In addition to discrimination, the suit charges CN with retaliation for Currie's complaints about discrimination, and with creating a hostile work environment.

The suit seeks lost wages, lost benefits, compensatory damages, attorney fees and cost of the lawsuit.

CN spokeswoman Kelli Svendsen said the railroad would not comment on a pending legal matter.