

Tort - Sexual Harassment - Unwanted Touching, Horseplay - Post-Traumatic Stress, Depression - Defendant Challenged Credibility - Alleged Racism - \$600,000 Award

by admin

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Brief Statement of Claim: The plaintiff brought a sexual harassment case against Duke University and a co-worker alleging state law claims of assault, battery, intentional and negligent infliction of emotional distress, and negligent retention of an employee.

Principal Injuries (in order of severity): Post-traumatic stress disorder and depression

Special Damages: Medical bills of \$5,500

Tried or settled: Tried

County where tried or settled: Durham

Case Name and number: Sarah Joan Watson v. Bobby Dixon and Duke University (Durham Superior Court; 92 CvS 04633)

Date Concluded: Oct. 10, 1996

Name of Judge: A. Leon Stanback Jr.

Amount: \$605,100 (\$100,100 compensatory damages; \$505,000 punitive damages)

Insurance Carrier: n/a

Expert Witnesses and areas of expertise: Dr. Bonny Gregory, psychiatrist; Claudia Lyons, MSW, therapist

Attorneys for plaintiff: Stewart W. Fisher of Glenn, Mills & Fisher, PA, Durham

Other Useful Info: The defendants alleged that the harassment never occurred and that the plaintiff was not credible. The plaintiff is white and the individual defendant is black. The defendants also allege that the plaintiff was racist.

The jury specifically found that Duke ratified the intentionally wrongful behavior of the individual defendant. The jury sent out a note signed by all 12 jurors along with the verdict sheet recommending that Duke revise its policies and training methods with regard to sexual harassment.