

northwest

Brother vs. Brother

Nonprofit organization must address sexual harassment allegation

by Jaymee R. Cuti

Brother to Brother might soon be forced to divert its attention from helping an entire community of African-American men who have sex with men to addressing a complaint by just one.

Loomis Hendrix, better known as Kourtnei Dupree, has hired a lawyer to pursue a claim that his boss at the nonprofit organization sexually harassed him. He further alleges that the board's failure to act on his repeated complaints forced him to resign as Brother to Brother's HIV specialist in May.

The boss in question is former executive director Darryl Moch, who resigned hastily July 19. At the time, he cited family-related obligations in Los Angeles and a desire to focus on his consulting and motivational speaking career. He was replaced by board treasurer Alisa Simmons.

Hendrix's attorney, Natalie McDougal, sent a letter Oct. 17 outlining Hendrix's accusations to Brother to Brother's employees and board. According to the correspondence, Hendrix and other employees "were victims of sexual harassment at the hands of then executive director Darryl Moch." McDougal added that Hendrix alerted the board verbally and in writing on numerous occasions and was merely advised to take his complaints to his harasser.

"The actions of Mr. Moch made it impossible for Mr. Hendrix to do his job," the letter continues.

"As a result of Mr. Moch's actions and the failure of Brother to Brother to take any action, Mr. Hendrix lost a job he took pride in, lost his medical insurance and has yet to be able to find comparable work in this field."

McDougal also claims Hendrix was asked to designate extra hours he worked as "volunteer time" instead of overtime, which would be an illegal act.

The letter concludes by asking for contact with the organization's insurance carrier. It never mentions the word "lawsuit."

McDougal and Hendrix declined to speak on record because of the pending legal matter.

But Moch, contacted by telephone, said Hendrix's accusations of harassment are not true and speculated that he is looking for money.

"Kourtnei knows that I did a decent job of getting the right kinds of insurances, and they'll probably not want to take this to court," said Moch. "They'll probably want us to give him some money."

Moch says he has not been contacted about the legal matter.

Regarding the overtime allegations, Moch said that, as a salaried employee, Hendrix was entitled to time off, but not overtime pay.

"People that are salaried do not get overtime. Kourtnei may have gotten comp time because the nature of our work was both in the office and in the field," said Moch. "Our structure was so lax that

everyone managed their own hours and turned them in to me."

While denying harassment charges, Moch acknowledges that the nature of the organization's work sometimes led to discussions atypical of the average conference room.

"When you're working with men who have sex with men, you're asking about their behaviors and attitudes. Sometimes you feel too close to some people. Me, being in Portland without having a real family there, you develop friendships with folks, and it's hard when your entire base of support is the people you work with," said Moch. "Maybe there were times I have been a little too familiar not having lived there long enough, but I haven't ever done anything that I'm aware of—at least not purposefully—that would have made someone feel uncomfortable and definitely not being engaged with employees or even clients."

He added, "I've had plenty of offers that I felt oftentimes could be inappropriate."

Moch agreed that Hendrix voiced "a variety of complaints" to the board. "The board did in due diligence look into things," he said. "I asked board members to be impartial listeners and investigators to respond to concerns that staff members had."

Moch said the board addressed Hendrix's concerns, although the result might not have been to the employee's liking.



Darryl Moch, former executive director of Brother to Brother, says a sexual harassment claim against him is untrue.

Simmons declined to comment directly on any investigation.

"Fighting for a community in which black LGBT people are able to live healthy and full lives is our highest priority," she said. "We take all issues brought before us very seriously and will address them."

Moch is searching for activism work in Los Angeles while writing grants for performing arts companies and doing ministry work in Washington, D.C.

"I would not do anything on purpose that would jeopardize the status of the organization," he said. "I would rather still be there working with the community and doing the work that we were committed to doing." 19



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