

Jury Determines Ricoh Did Not Practice Reverse Discrimination

By Tim Willert

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SANTA ANA - Tustin-based Ricoh Electronics did not discriminate against two Caucasian men on the basis of race or national origin, a jury found Thursday. James Haluck and Michel Litton sued Ricoh in August 2003, alleging reverse discrimination and retaliation in violation of the Fair Employment and Housing Act.

Haluck and Litton claimed the company passed them over for promotions in favor of less-qualified Asian employees who were placed in management positions.

The 12-member jury deliberated five hours before deciding unanimously that Ricoh did not discriminate against Haluck, a senior engineer, and Litton, an engineer who was fired in 2002. *Haluck v. Ricoh Electronics Inc.*, 03CC1010 (Orange Super. Ct., filed Aug. 12, 2003).

Ricoh attorney Dan Callahan of Santa Ana's Callahan & Blaine argued that neither plaintiff was qualified for the positions they sought and that both men ignored requests by the company to take additional training and assume more leadership roles.

"I am very pleased with this jury's verdict because it vindicates Ricoh's employment practices and encourages Ricoh to expand its corporate presence here in Orange County," Callahan said Tuesday outside Judge James M. Brooks' courtroom.

Ricoh, a subsidiary of Ricoh Company Limited of Japan, makes copiers, toners and computers. With 1,000 workers, the company is Tustin's largest employer.

Michelle Reinglass, the attorney for Haluck and Litton, said she wasn't surprised by the outcome of the two-months-long trial.

"We've been preparing for a defense verdict from the beginning because [the defense] was permitted, in our view, to put on entirely improper and prejudicial evidence during plaintiffs' presentation," Reinglass said.

Jurors, however, didn't see it that way.

"In our opinion, the case was frivolous from its inception," jury foreman Stanley Interrante said outside the courtroom. "There was no credible evidence to indicate that Ricoh Electronics deliberately discriminated against the plaintiffs based on race or national origin."