

MEDIA ADVISORY

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R.A.F.A.E.L. Calls for Women and Men Victimized  
by Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Whistleblower Retaliation  
at EPA to Step Forward

WASHINGTON, DC—A group of former and current women EPA employees calling itself R.A.F.A.E.L. (Rejecting All Fear And EPA Lawlessness) today called for EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson to initiate an investigation of Rafael DeLeon, whom she recently named as the Director of the Office of Civil Rights (OCR). Mr. DeLeon has been the subject of numerous complaints by women at the Agency. "EPA has a long history of serious human, civil rights and personnel problems," said Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo. Perhaps, Administrator Jackson is unaware of the Agency's sordid history. In any event, Mr. DeLeon must be investigated. If the facts of the investigation support the complaints, he must go."

A significant number of EPA women employees have spoken on the condition of anonymity about the "gulag mentality" inside the EPA's Office of Civil Rights, referring to the EPA as "a rogue agency." The women are calling for an independent investigation of Mr. DeLeon as well as former Deputy Chief of Staff Ray Spears and former EPA Director of Civil Rights, Karen Higginbotham. R.A.F.A.E.L. seeks not only Ms. Jackson's support but is appealing to members of Congress as well. "Congress took the initiative in 2001 when it passed the No FEAR Act," a senior EPA manager said, "maintaining a hostile work environment, trading sexual favors, sexual, racial and color-based discrimination and retaliation is illegal."

"Congress needs to exert its control again in the face of the hideous complaints we are receiving," said Dr. Coleman-Adebayo. It was the successful lawsuit brought by Marsha Coleman-Adebayo against the EPA that triggered the No FEAR Act. "We are prepared to ask Congress to reassert its commitment to a workplace free of whistleblower retaliation, sexual harassment, sexism and racism through additional legislation and hearings if EPA Administrator Jackson doesn't address these alleged civil and human rights abuses said Coleman-Adebayo."

R.A.F.A.E.L. says that Lisa Jackson, in particular, should have sensitivities about women's workplace protection against harassment, retaliation and discrimination owing to her gender and her being a woman of color herself. Several of the women expressed dismay at the irony of having the nation's first African-American president who is a civil rights attorney presiding over "plantation conditions inside the EPA."

Placing DeLeon in charge of the Office of Civil Rights is “like putting the fox in the hen house,” said a former senior official in the Office of Civil Rights. "His appointment is an affront to all of the women who fight for civil rights in the work place and a particular outrage for the courageous women who have filed complaints against Mr. DeLeon in the past that cost them their careers. DeLeon’s appointment begs the question of whether EPA Administrator Jackson is committed to a workplace free of discrimination and abuse. As long as DeLeon is the Director of Civil Rights Administrator Jackson's EEO proclamations and her speeches on women’s rights and the bravery of Martin Luther King, Jr. ring hollow,” she said.

R.A.F.A.E.L. is calling on all employees, both men and women who allege that they have been discriminated against, sexually harassed, abused or suffered retaliation by DeLeon, Spears, and/or Higginbotham to come forward by writing to [kmbmediagroup@gmail.com](mailto:kmbmediagroup@gmail.com). The sources of all information will remain anonymous.

"We must put a stop to the legacy of retaliation and discrimination at the EPA so that another generation of public servants will not suffer," said Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo, the leader of the No FEAR Coalition. Dr. Coleman-Adebayo won an historic lawsuit against the agency that led to the first civil rights and whistleblower law, the Notification of Federal Employees Anti-discrimination and Retaliation Act of 2001, (No Fear). Dr. Coleman-Adebayo is standing with the women at EPA who are complaining about EPA Administrator Jackson’s appointment of Mr. DeLeon to the civil rights position.

"If we stand together we can create an EPA that will serve the public and eliminate the fear that has prevented so many devoted environmentalists from carrying out the mission of the Agency. We can create an EPA free from sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, racism and sexism," said Coleman-Adebayo.

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