

NY man named Osama wins \$4.7M lawsuit; co-workers bullied him, called him 'bin Laden'



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A Yemeni-born man named Osama has been awarded \$4.7 million in a lawsuit against his former employer and a co-worker who harassed him because of his name and ethnicity.

Osama Saleh, 27, worked as a stock clerk at the Pretty Girl women's clothing store in Brooklyn in 2007. During his employment he was taunted and even assaulted by James Robinson, a security guard at the store, according to the [New York Daily News](#).

Saleh, who earned a \$7.15 minimum wage at Pretty Girl, was awarded \$4.7 million Friday by the jury at Brooklyn Federal Court because his bosses at the store did nothing to stop the harassment.

Robinson repeatedly called Saleh "bin Laden" and "terrorist." He also ranted about hating Arabs because they were "dirty," and told Saleh to go back to Yemen, according to the Daily News.

"Being called a terrorist and bin Laden is like an insult and a slur against me and my race," Saleh told the Daily News.

Robinson also attacked Saleh in the store's basement in September 2007, leaving him with a fractured cheekbone and sending him to the hospital for seven days, according to [The Daily Mail](#).

Robinson and Saleh had argued on the retail floor. Robinson then confronted Saleh in the basement, saying, "I'm going to call the police on you, telling them that you don't have papers and you are a terror [sic]." He also said that Saleh was "not an American."

Saleh responded, "my father is an American, so I'm an American," and told Robinson that he was acting like "a little kid and that he should act like a grownup."

Robinson then punched Saleh in the face, knocking him to the floor. He pleaded guilty to the third degree assault charges, but did not respond to Saleh's civil suit.

Saleh said he still suffers hearing problems and struggles with chewing because of the attack.

The Pretty Girl manager, Albert Hamra, dismissed Saleh's complaints, saying the name-calling was only kidding around between employees.

The company's president, Victor Lavy, testified that being called "bin Laden" was not insulting or inappropriate.

"It's not a bad name, it's a name," Lavy said. "They were teasing each other by calling the names. They're playing."

Saleh's lawyer, Fred Brewington, told the Daily News, "That level of disregard is so dangerous in a multicultural society."

The jury agreed, and Saleh's award covers emotional distress, assault, negligence in the hiring of Robinson and punitive damages, according to the Daily News.

In a similar case in February, a federal jury in Detroit awarded Ali Aboubaker, a Muslim man, \$1.1 million because he was called a terrorist and passed over for promotions while working for Washtenaw County for 17 years, according to [CBS Detroit](#). The county in that case appealed the decision.

The judge in Saleh's case set a deadline for the defendants to motion to reduce the verdict. The store's lawyer said she would explore that option with Pretty Girl, but did not comment further on the verdict.