

A44 OUR TOWNS

CENTRAL ISLIP

Jury hears racial suit against lab

■ Former employee of Brookhaven National Laboratory seeks \$25M, says workers' hostility was tolerated

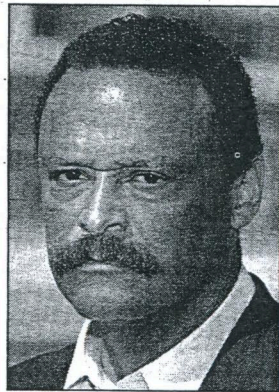
BY LUIS PEREZ

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Accusations that racial animosity between employees at Brookhaven National Laboratory was tolerated for more than a decade were aired yesterday in federal court in Central Islip.

A jury made up of nine whites and one black began hearing the suit of a black technician who said he was taunted with a hangman's noose and by a colleague donning a Ku Klux Klan hood.

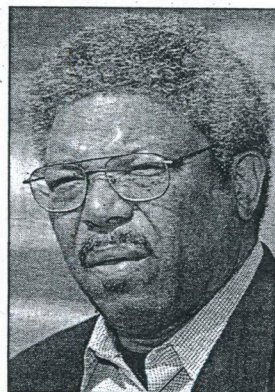
Malry Tardd, 53, of Quogue, who until 2004 worked as a vacuum technical specialist at the research center, is suing the laboratory and a half dozen of its employees for



Malry Tardd's discrimination suit seeks \$25 million.

race discrimination and retaliatory behavior, said Tardd's attorney, Frederick Brewington of Hempstead.

In the complaint, Tardd said the backlash of hostility began after he came up for promotion



NEWSDAY PHOTOS / DAVID L. POKRESS

Otto White has a separate lawsuit against the lab.

in 1996. He then complained to the state Division of Human Rights, saying a co-worker taunted him while wearing the hood. That complaint was upheld.

Tardd is seeking \$25 million in damages.

In his opening statement before U.S. District Judge Arthur D. Spatt, Brewington said the experience caused his client "enormous stress, enormous pain, but he wanted to continue to work there because he felt he could make a difference."

Tardd became an Equal Employment Opportunity officer after he filed the complaint with the state.

Christopher A. Parlo, the lab's attorney, described the charges as a product of Tardd's imagination. Parlo, of Manhattan, said he would introduce a Columbia University psychiatrist who would show that Tardd not only suffers from paranoid personality disorder but is also the "perfect poster child for this disorder."

Parlo said it was the employees at Brookhaven who were the victims.

"Mr. Tardd alone was fixated on people's race," Parlo said. "Even if it's not about race, he turned it into race

when it served his purposes. Some people call that playing the race card."

Tardd, whose sister and in-laws sat in the stands, grimaced and fidgeted in his seat while Parlo spoke.

The suit was originally filed along with another plaintiff, Otto White of Mount Sinai, a former lab employee who said he was also systematically discriminated against after he tried to mediate on Tardd's behalf. White, who is also represented by Brewington, is standing alone in a separate lawsuit.

Tardd is one among several former employees of the laboratory who have lodged state and federal race discrimination complaints or lawsuits in recent years.

The lab, which is run by the U.S. Department of Energy, has also faced similar grievances from a Muslim woman and another black man employed there.