

STATE OF NEW YORK
DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**New York State Division of Human Rights Rules in
Favor of Teenage Employee Subjected to
"Horrendous" Sexual Harassment**

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*Commissioner Awards \$500,000 In Damages For Mental Anguish To
Employee Sexually Assaulted By Her Employer*

Kumiki Gibson, the Commissioner of the New York State Division of Human Rights, issued an order last Friday, finding against an employer who subjected a female employee, a mere high school student, to horrendous acts of sexual harassment, including sexually assaulting the teenager.

"This supposed manager was more like a sexual predator, targeting and preying upon a teenage girl. This conduct shocks the conscience. This type of despicable conduct is unlawful and will not be tolerated, and victims will be compensated to the fullest extent of the law for the immense harm caused by such wrongdoers," stated Gibson.

At the time of the unlawful conduct, the teenager worked at a fast food franchise in Norwich, New York, co-owned and managed by Dale Blackwood. Blackwood, who had a record of mistreating the female workers, enticed the teenager to go to his apartment, at which time, he sexually assaulted her. The teenager attempted to fight off Blackwood, but failed. When the young employee refused to return to Blackwood's apartment, he terminated her employment.

The New York State Human Rights Law prohibits discrimination in employment based upon sex, among other protected classes, and sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination. The Commissioner found that the teenager was subjected to a sexually hostile work environment, as well as *quid pro quo* sexual harassment -- conditioning continued employment or other employment benefits in exchange for sex or in retaliation for the denial of sex.

"Employees have a right to work in a workplace free of sexually inappropriate conduct. They are also entitled to trust that their employers will protect that right -- not violate it. There was a gross violation here, to a teenager, and she deserves to be compensated for the harm that resulted from that violation. I just hope that she will be able to put this tragic experience behind her," the Commissioner stated.

The Commissioner's Order in *Henninge v. Young Legends, LLC*, is available at: www.dhr.state.ny.us/commissioner's_orders.html.

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New York has the proud distinction of being the first state in the nation to enact a Human Rights Law, which affords every citizen "an equal opportunity to enjoy a full and productive life." The New York State Division of Human Rights was created to enforce this important law and does so through, among other things, the vigorous prosecution of unlawful discriminatory practices and the receipt, investigation, and resolution of complaints of discrimination. Please visit the Division's website at www.dhr.state.ny.us for additional information about the agency and its work.