


Employee sues Fannie Mae, saying she was hired for IT but boss required sex



By Sara Ganim, CNN

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Bloomberg via Getty Images

Washington (CNN) — A former adult dancer is suing Fannie Mae for sexual harassment and hostile work environment, claiming she was hired under the guise of working for the IT department but was instead expected to serve as personal entertainment for one of the mortgage company’s senior directors.

Employee Soleil Bonnin filed the lawsuit this week in superior court in Washington, saying that “contrary to its public message and its internal policies, Fannie Mae promotes a culture that mistreats women, including hiring and paying them to have sex with upper management, and tolerates illegal, extreme, and abhorrent sexual harassment.”

Fannie Mae is run as a private company that insures mortgages made by home lenders, which helps to lower the cost of home loans to borrowers. But a bailout of the company during the 2008 financial crisis left it in the control of the US Treasury Department.

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Bonnin claims former IT department manager Joseph King hired her in July 2016, with no work experience in IT, shortly after they met at the strip club where she worked. King offered to mentor her into a new career at Fannie Mae, according to the lawsuit. But the lawsuit claims it soon became clear that Bonnin was being paid about \$90,000 to have sex and party with him during work hours.

“King would verbally abuse plaintiff when she tried to socialize with other employees. He controlled every aspect of her day,” the lawsuit says. “Because of King’s position at Fannie Mae, and her isolation from others, plaintiff feared losing her job if she did not cooperate with King’s requests.”

The lawsuit says the behavior escalated to physical abuse, with King sexually assaulting Bonnin in a hotel room during a paid work trip.

“King’s relationship with plaintiff was well known at Fannie Mae. The two would leave the office for hours at a time, and on several occasions for most of the day. King took plaintiff on ‘business’ trips to Texas – although there was no business justification for doing so – which required approval from King’s supervisor,” the lawsuit says.

The suit names King’s former supervisor, Jeff Willis-Jones, the director of workplace operations, and claims he socialized with King, allowed the repeated daytime absences and “approved unnecessary expenses and travel for King and Bonnin.”

“Fannie Mae was aware or should have been aware of King’s exploitation of plaintiff. Other employees of Fannie Mae pressed plaintiff about her lack of job specifications and absences during the day. King assured plaintiff that he would ‘take care of it,’ ” the lawsuit says.

In the fall of 2017, Bonnin sought and received a protective court order against King after he entered her apartment without her permission, according to the lawsuit. The order prevented King from having contact with Bonnin, and he was then fired by Fannie Mae, the suit says.

King and Willis-Jones could not be reached for comment.


“We have zero tolerance for sexual misconduct and harassment,” Fannie Mae said in an email statement to CNN. “We investigate allegations whenever we are made aware of them, and we take swift and decisive action when we establish inappropriate behavior. We took swift and decisive action in this instance. While we won’t comment on a pending lawsuit, we continue to investigate the allegations.”

Bonnin’s lawsuit, filed by attorney Ari Casper, claims discrimination, sexual harassment, hostile work environment, retaliation, battery, assault and intentional infliction of emotional distress, and seeks \$20 million in damages.


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