Racism in the Workplace

More than four decades ago, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 gave minorities equal rights. Yet, racism continues to spread throughout the workplace. Some argue that minorities gaining a larger share of the market place results in increasing harassment charges. However, harassment charges have jumped 100% compared to the 36% increase in minority employment.

Reported cases continue to arise concerning nooses left at workstations, derogatory comments, KKK symbols, and other blatant marks of racism. One case reports an employee received “back-to-Africa tickets.” Before claims are finally made public most cases have evidence of practices enduring for many years prior. Continuous comments support the fact that racism continues and appears on the rise.

Workers, both minorities and whites, run into trouble when these issues become public. Even if a case wins and judgment ensues, the issue remains, and in some cases increases. Ted Gignilliat had to take a leave of absence for speaking up about two nooses left in the workplace. “He said he was threatened, his truck broken into, and he got anonymous phone calls at work and home – one telling him he would “wind up on a slab, dead”” (Bernstein, 4). Many say the behavior only increases if claims are brought forth. The authors conclude the article by stating, the problem diminishes when employers “confront the rise of ugly racism head on,” and take action for those who cannot, or fear to, take action on their own (Bernstein, 5).

This article focuses on racism “hidden” within the workplace. More focused on the blue-collar workforce, racism is prevalent is some companies. While other articles focus on the small incidents leading to a crisis, it seems this article’s examples exceed the level of “small incidents.” Furthermore, this article is in the minority when dealing with racism in the public eye. The article provides examples of how minorities have stood against racism only to receive greater doses under the same employment. Other articles take the opposite viewpoint by stating racism will decrease when confronted.

Bernstein, Aaron; Arndt, Michael, “Racism in the Workplace.” Business Week; 7/30/2001 Issue 3743, p64, 4p, 3 graphs, 5c.