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DJ sues station, alleging racism Bill Womack, an African American, says WMGK cut his pay. The station calls his claims baseless.

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January 31, 2004 | By Michael Klein INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Bill Womack, a disc jockey at WMGK-FM (102.9) since 1979 and its sole African American on-air personality, has sued the station, alleging that his salary was cut in half because of racial bias.

In his federal complaint, filed last month in Philadelphia by Center City attorney Jeffrey Campolongo, Womack alleges that he was given a choice in November 2001: Take a pay cut or be let go. He contends that management told him the cut was necessary for financial reasons.

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An attorney for the station denied the allegation.

In an interview yesterday, Womack, 51, said he had been making about \$60,000 a year, including about \$10,000 for personal appearances, and now makes \$25,000.

After the November meeting, "I was thinking this was really odd," Womack said. "I said, 'Let me think about this for a while.'" Soon after, he said, he overheard other employees complaining about the size of their raises. He deduced that racism was a factor because, he said, he was the only employee whose pay was cut.

"It was not a big leap to realize what was going on," he said.

He said he chose to keep working at the station, then decided to file the suit. He and his family moved in with relatives to save money, he said.

Womack has held the weeknight overnight shift since 1991. WMGK is one of the few remaining local commercial stations to employ a live announcer on overnights. It's considered more economical to use an automated system to cover the shift, which draws comparatively few commercials.

Womack said he preferred to work overnights because it fit in with his ministry work.

The suit names the station; its parent, Greater Media Inc.; and station manager Richard D. Feinblatt.

Station attorney Kenneth R. Gilberg said Greater Media and WMGK were committed to being an equal-opportunity employer.

"WMGK respects the rights of its listeners and employees," he said in a statement yesterday. "There is no merit to either the facts or claims of Mr. Womack, and Greater Media and WMGK intend to vigorously

defend their good name and the baseless allegations brought against them by Mr. Womack."

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