

Monday, February 27, 2006

Lawyers in bias suit awarded \$1.7 million in fees

Attorneys won case vs. school that fired principal.

By LARRY WELBORN

The Orange County Register

Irvine attorneys who won an employment discrimination judgment for a black woman who was fired as principal of an Islamic school have been awarded more than \$1.7 million in attorney and expert witness fees.

Orange County Superior Court Judge Corey S. Cramin said the award was based in part on the "exceptional competence exhibited at trial" by lead attorney Ed Conner, who argued that his client, Zakiyyah Muhammed, 60, was fired because of a culture clash between black and immigrant Muslims. Muhammed was dismissed after five years as principal in 2003 from Orange Crescent School in Garden Grove, which is operated by the Islamic Society of Orange County.

She filed suit in 2004 for discrimination, infliction of emotional distress, fraud and negligence, and claimed that the school board believed she did not have the right to a grievance hearing as a Muslim woman.

An Orange County jury decided in September after hearing final arguments by Conner and Matt Fletcher that Muhammed should be awarded \$788,000 in punitive and compensatory damages. The Islamic Society of Orange County is appealing the verdict, Conner said.

Attorneys who win a discrimination case are entitled to ask for attorneys' fees from the losing side.

Copyright 2005 The Orange County Register | [Privacy policy](#) | [User agreement](#)