

**PATERSON PRESS**

# Paterson settles two sexual harassment suits that described city court as 'toxic hive'

*2-minute read*

**Joe Malinconico** Paterson Press

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PATERSON — City officials have agreed to pay \$700,000 to settle two sexual harassment lawsuits saying Paterson failed to stop a sexual predator from targeting female employees in the Municipal Court.

The accused court director, Manuel Quiles, was fired in March 2022, about eight months before his former employees, Carolina Hernandez and Sayuris Del Rosario, filed their lawsuits against him and Paterson.

The City Council on Thursday night approved separate \$350,000 settlements for Hernandez and Del Rosario, neither of whom still works for Paterson. None of the council members commented publicly in approving the payments. Under the settlement, the city did not admit any wrongdoing by Quiles or others.

***Story continues below photo gallery.***

Quiles could not be reached for comment regarding the settlements. In 2022, after the lawsuits were filed, he told Paterson Press, “I always treated the women in the office with the utmost respect.”

The same law firm represented both court employees, and their complaints accused the city of failing to stop Quiles’ alleged misconduct.

“That Quiles’ predatory behavior was allowed to fester unabated for so long at the court is hardly a surprise: The court was a toxic hive for female workers,” said the lawsuits.

One of the women said Quiles tried to force himself on her during the COVID-19 pandemic. In one instance, she said, the court director trapped her inside his office, grabbed her and rubbed her breast. She said he then took her hand and made her touch his private area.

The woman’s lawsuit said she went on medical leave for six months because she was so shaken by that incident. Upon her return, she said, she talked to female co-workers and “was stunned to learn she was not the only one Quiles had sexually harassed.”

## **Forced to endure intolerable work environment for years**

The other woman said Quiles asked her out to dinner soon after she started working for him, an offer she rejected, telling him she was married, according to the lawsuit. Afterward, the woman said, Quiles continued to make inappropriate comments about her appearance, and once told her he had dreams and fantasies about her.

“No one at the court stopped Quiles, and plaintiff was forced to endure his behavior — and an intolerable work environment — for years,” said her lawsuit.

The lawsuits alleged that Quiles wasn’t the only male supervisor misbehaving in the city court office.

“It was well-known among court staff that a certain high-ranking court official (the “court official”) had been engaged in an ongoing, extramarital romantic relationship with a female court employee,” said the lawsuits.

“This illicit relationship appears to have had discriminatory benefits: In early 2022, the court official posted that the court was creating a 'new' court administrator position — something that had not happened in decades,” said the lawsuits. “This position would have paid court workers like plaintiff double their salaries. Various court employees applied for the position.

“However, the court official gave the position to his mistress — over far more qualified applicants, including plaintiff,” said the lawsuits.

In its 2023 court response to the lawsuits, Paterson said it lacked “sufficient knowledge” regarding the official who allegedly promoted his mistress.