

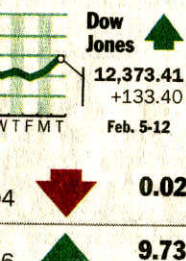
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Crew member sues Carnival

Cruise line denies accusations of forced labor, human trafficking

BY DONNABALANCIA
FLORIDA TODAY

A crew member working on a Port Canaveral-based cruise ship filed a lawsuit Tuesday in federal court against Carnival Corp., accusing the Miami-based cruise

line company of "forced labor, slavery and/or human trafficking" of her and other crew members aboard Carnival ships.

In court papers filed in U.S. District Court for the Southern District in Florida in Miami, at-

torneys for Reshma Harilal, a 33-year-old citizen of South Africa, ask that she be removed from the Carnival Glory cruise ship, where she currently is working. The suit also asks that her passport be returned to her, and that she be paid wages that she agreed to work for.

"Based on what our client has told us, there are other crew members who are also working in lower positions and at a lower



Reshma Harilal is suing Carnival Corp., saying she was held against her will on the Port Canaveral-based Carnival Glory.

pay than they agreed when they boarded the vessel," said Tonya Meister, an associate at the Miami-based law firm Lipcon

Lawsuit online

To view a copy of the lawsuit against Carnival Corp., follow the online link at

floridatoday.com

Margulies & Alsina. "This case stands for more than money. Human beings should not be treated
See CARNIVAL, 2C

Worker claims Carnival won't return passport

CARNIVAL, from 1C

this way. They should not be forced to work under conditions they did not agree upon, and that's what this case is about."

Carnival Cruise Lines, the Carnival Corp. division that operates the *Glory*, issued a statement late Tuesday denying the allegations, calling them "completely false" and "baffling."

With Harilal aboard, the *Carnival Glory* left Port Canaveral on Saturday.

Court documents claim that Harilal traveled from South Africa to take a position as a "stateroom stewardess" — a job that pays about \$1,500 every two weeks.

But, after signing a contract indicating that would be her position, the suit alleges, while already aboard the Bahamas-flagged ship, Harilal was told to work in a "lower position" at pay of about \$250 to \$300 every two weeks, the suit claims.

That position, her lawyers say, was an assistant cabin steward.

The suit alleges that Harilal on or about Saturday "refused to work in the lower position at the lower rate of pay," and asked Carnival to "return her passport so she could leave and return home."

Instead, the suit claims, Carnival refused to return her passport, and "forced and/or psychologically coerced" Harilal to stay on the ship "against her will," and work in the lower position at lower pay.

In its statement, Carnival Cruise Lines said: "Reshma Harilal has worked for Carnival since 2000. She joined the company in the position of stateroom stewardess and is presently employed as a stateroom stewardess. Over the past seven years, she has returned for multiple contracts with the cruise line. The allegations contained within the suit are not only completely false, but baffling, and the company looks forward to vigorously defending itself."

The *Glory* left Belize on Tuesday en route to the Bahamas, where it is due Friday. The ship is scheduled to return to Port Canaveral on Saturday.

Harilal's attorneys have faxed the complaint to the ship, and said they hope Harilal will be removed from the ship Friday, when the ship is in the Bahamas, and then will be brought back to Miami.

Harilal holds a tourist visa, and would stay with her daughter, who lives in Florida, attorney Meister said.

"Forcing someone to work under terms they did not agree to —

we believe these circumstances give rise to violation of federal statutes that prohibit forced labor, human trafficking and slavery," Meister said. "It's our belief this happens to a lot more people than you would think. We're doing this for people who can't stand up for themselves. Slavery occurs when there is physical restraint, but it also occurs when there is psychological coercion."

Meister said the attorneys on the case now are "focusing on getting her off the ship, and getting her the amount she agreed to work for."

Meister said it is her understanding that there are other crew members in Harilal's department who "also came to work came to work in one position, and ended up working in another."

Harilal previously has worked as a cabin steward, while aboard the *Liberty*, another Carnival ship, and developed a rash from the cleaning chemicals, Meister said.

"When she was working on the *Liberty*, she developed a rash, and they didn't allow her off the ship," Meister alleged. "There was a time on the *Liberty* when she was not allowed to get off the ship to get her own medical attention. She wasn't happy with medical attention on the ship." ■

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