

Black workers in Georgia sue General Mills

Allege decades-long discrimination at plant

Jonathan Stempel
REUTERS

General Mills has been sued by eight Black employees who accused the food company of tolerating decades of racism at a suburban Atlanta plant led by white managers known as the “Good Ole Boys.”

A complaint filed on Sunday said

managers at the Covington plant, which makes cereal and trail mix, favor white employees for promotions over more qualified Black employees, subject Black employees to tougher performance standards, and manufacture false evidence to justify demoting Black employees.

One plaintiff, Keith McClinton, said that after “KKK” was scrawled on his lunchbox in 2006, he was forced to give a handwriting sample to show he did not do it himself.

The plaintiffs also said many Black

workers fear complaining about discrimination because managers will retaliate, and that managers co-opted racist symbols to keep Black employees “in their place.”

They cited a mural displayed from 2005 to 2021 that echoed a memorial for Confederate leaders on Georgia’s Stone Mountain, but with the Cocoa Puffs cuckoo bird portraying Jefferson Davis and the Honey Nut Cheerios bee portraying Stonewall Jackson.

General Mills did not immediately respond on Tuesday to requests for com-

ment. A lawyer for the plaintiffs did not immediately respond to a similar request. On its website, Minneapolis-based General Mills said it prohibits discrimination, and is “dedicated to becoming a reflection of the world we seek where racial equity, diversity and inclusion nourish us all.”

Sunday’s lawsuit alleges violations of federal civil rights law and federal and state racketeering laws at the Covington plant, where “entire careers have been hampered by Good Ole Boys” since the late 1980s.