

LEGAL AFFAIRS

Ex-employee sues Sprint

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There are ludicrous cases and then there are Ludacris ones.

A former compensation manager at **Sprint Nextel Corp.** says she was fired because she hired the Grammy-winning rap singer to entertain employees, supposedly without first obtaining permission of her boss.

Elizabeth Henry says she was asked to arrange a contest to reward Sprint's top call center employees. The workers said they wanted a minority entertainer at the reward event.

Henry hit on a "Rock Star" theme for the event, which was to be held in Las Vegas, and her boss approved, according to the lawsuit filed last week in federal court in Kansas City, Kan.

She said her boss green-lighted two entertainers, rappers Ludacris and LL Cool J. Eventually Henry secured Ludacris.

But after another employee allegedly told her boss that "she must be into the black thing" because Ludacris was retained, her boss became concerned, according to the lawsuit.

Henry told her boss that Ludacris would perform according to "PG-13 standards" but if she was still concerned, Henry could get another performer. She reminded her that call center employees wanted an African-American entertainer.

Her boss allegedly responded that any black performer would be controversial. Henry, who is white, called the remark discriminatory.

Henry was later interrogated in a secured room for close to five hours by the defendant's corporate security officers, the suit alleges. At the end of the interrogation, the suit continues, the officers concluded no wrongdoing on the plaintiff's behalf and the plaintiff received no reprimand stemming from this custody and interrogation.

After that, planning for the event was handed over to Sprint's events marketing team. Later that same day, she alleges, her boss told her she was fired.

“She said she was terminating her for insubordination,” said Henry’s lawyer, Brendan J. Donelon of the **Donelon Law Office**. “She said it had to do with the fact that she retained Ludacris as the entertainer without her permission.”

“I think what happened is that her boss approved it and didn’t think anything of it until somebody said, ‘Hey, have you ever listened to their music or know ” who they are?’ and her boss was like, ‘Whoa, wait a minute.’

Sprint officials could not be reached for comment.

The event with Ludacris never took place.

Henry has since found work at **Cerner Corp.**, but at a third the salary she made at Sprint. Her suit seeks unspecified damages for retaliation.