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MEDIA CONTACT:
Dan Stormer, Esq. – (626) 585-9600 – dstormer@hadsellstormer.com
Plaintiffs available for interviews.

PORT OF LOS ANGELES/LONG BEACH RAILWAY WORKERS SUE FOR DECADES OF RACIST ABUSE

The complaints as filed in federal and state court may be viewed at the link:
FederalComplaint
StateComplaint

Lawyers from the civil rights law firms Hadsell Stormer Renick & Dai LLP and Mirer Mazzocchi & Julien PLLC yesterday sued Pacific Harbor Line, Inc. ("PHL"), its parent company Anacostia Rail Holdings Company ("Anacostia"), and two of their managers for decades-long race discrimination, harassment, hostile work environment, and retaliation against Black workers. PHL is a short-line freight railroad corporation servicing the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, which together form the largest container port in the United States. PHL's work includes, among other things, moving cargo off the ships and onto trains, including a vast variety of goods such as baked goods, paper, lumbar, petroleum gas, corn syrup and other corn products, iron, and fireworks. Anacostia owns and manages six short-line freight railroads, including PHL, operating in seven states across the United States. This is the second lawsuit against one of Anacostia's subsidiary short-line railroads for widespread racial discrimination and harassment; the first being against New York and Atlantic Railway.

The seven plaintiffs—six of whom are Black—are current and former railroad engineers with 18 to 7 years of tenure with PHL and Anacostia at the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. Their work connects manufactured goods, industrial products and food that pass through the third-largest port in the world to communities all across the United States.

Throughout their employment with PHL and Anacostia, the Black plaintiffs and their colleagues have been subject to racial epithets such as "n***er", "slave", "monkey", and "coon"; exposed to chalk-drawn graffiti on a bridge in the rail yard including threatening KKK imagery, images of black men hanging, and chalk-drawn slogans such as "the only good n***er is a dead n***er"; demeaned by denigrating racist stereotypes of black people as "lazy"; harassed with "slave jokes"; debased by negative racial stereotypes around watermelons and fried chicken; pelted with urine-filled bottles; and mocked for the color of their skin. This abuse intensified with the arrival of new management in 2009. PHL managers repeatedly turned a blind eye to this appalling conduct—when they were not participating in it directly.

"I filed this lawsuit because I do not want the next generation of black workers to have to go through what I went through," said plaintiff **Monte Chandler**, a 16-year engineer at the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. "My co-workers hung nooses where I could see them and pelted me with bottles. They terrorized and humiliated me, and when I spoke up it only got worse."

“I want to see PHL and Anacostia held accountable for their horrendous treatment of Black employees,” said plaintiff **Joshua Jones**, who worked for 7 years as an engineer at the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles.

The racism was so persistent and widespread that it literally became part and parcel of the black workers’ jobs at PHL and Anacostia. Black workers were disciplined and fired at higher rates, and hired and promoted at lower rates, than their non-black colleagues. Among the Black plaintiffs specifically, two were fired, two were forced to resign, and one was forced to resign from his position in management by the sheer level of racist hostility in the workplace.

Those who stood up for their rights at PHL and Anacostia suffered retaliation: Non-Black workers who spoke out for their Black colleagues were shunned and called “n***er lovers.” The dwindling number of Black workers at PHL tells the story of an employer that has become, over time, utterly hostile to Black people in the workplace.

PHL and Anacostia’s management has endorsed directed discriminatory policies and practices against their black workforce. Managers who knew about, tolerated, and participated in the hostile environment remain in their positions, including the two individual defendants Gregory Peters and Eric Flores.

“The racial discrimination at PHL and Anacostia has been going on since the early 2000s,” said plaintiff **Lonnie Pate**, who worked for 14 years as an engineer at the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles and who describes fearing for his life as a manager in a truck called “Heeeere, n***er, n***er, n***er” in a sing-song voice while shining a flashlight at him in the dark. “I want PHL and Anacostia to change for the better and truly become equal opportunity employers for everyone—not just say they are.” Mr. Pate felt anxious, humiliated, and disgusted by what he went through at PHL and Anacostia; when he was wrongfully terminated he lost not only his job, but also his career and livelihood.

“I am bringing this case because no one should have to endure a hostile work environment because of the color of their skin,” said plaintiff **Jessie Luvert**, who has worked for 7 years as an engineer at the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles.

“We are outraged that nothing has been done to stop this despicable conduct,” said attorney **Dan Stormer** of noted Los Angeles civil rights practice Hadsell Stormer Renick Dai LLP. “This abusive, racist behavior cannot be allowed to continue, and these workers intend to put a stop to it.”

Six plaintiffs filed their lawsuit in the Superior Court of the State of California for the County of Los Angeles. One plaintiff filed his lawsuit in the United States District Court for the Central District of California.