



The Firing of Rachel Jette: *Gender Identity Employment Discrimination in Massachusetts*



My name is Rachel Jette and I was fired for being a transgender woman.

In early Dec. 1994 I applied for a Cashiers position at Honey Farms Mini Markets in Rutland, Ma. I made the Store Manager who interviewed me, aware of my status as a transgender woman. I was hired as Rachel on Dec 20, 1994.

As part of the hiring paperwork I had to provide proof of citizenship. I submitted my driver's license, which still had my previous name on it, as I was still in the process of changing my identity documents.

In the beginning of January 1995, after I had been working there for at least 2 weeks, the personnel manager from the main office demanded that I redo my hiring application. He wanted the application to have my previous name on it, not Rachel, the name I use. He stated that it was illegal pay me under the name of Rachel and he would refuse to pay me under that name. Since I needed that job so I could pay my basic living expenses I complied with his demand and changed my paperwork.

A week later the same Personnel Manager said I needed to start presenting myself as a male. He demanded that I change clothes, remove my makeup, and cut my hair. I had started medical transition some time ago and had been living as a woman... as Rachel, for even longer.

I requested that I be allowed to continue dressing in my preferred gender, as female. My request was refused I refused to comply with the demand. I was very upset that someone would tell me what gender they thought I should be in order to keep a job, a job that I needed very much to pay my rent and buy food to eat.

I contacted the ACLU shortly after. They sent a letter to the owner of Honey Farms requesting that I be allowed to continue as I was, presenting as a woman. This again was met with a refusal from the Honey Farms.

The next week, harassment from the personnel manager began to increase, with demands that I present male at work.

A week later I was written up, twice in one day, for not following the male dress code. I asked how I could be written twice on the same shift for the same offense. According to the Store Manager, I was written up for a previous offense, in which I was observed by the personnel manager working in female clothes on a previous shift and for showing up to work on that day also dressed as female.

The next week I was written up again for not dressing in male mode.

When I reported to work on Feb. 1, 1995 I was told by the store manager that I would not be allowed to work, he said it was because I was dressed in slacks and blouse and wearing makeup. I asked to know why I would not be allowed to work. He hesitated then shrugged his shoulders and said just because. I asked again why and he said that I was fired.

I walked out of the store feeling angry, confused, and disrespected. I did my job, I showed up on time, and did the tasks that were assigned to, but here I was being fired.

Soon after I was fired I filed a complaint to the Massachusetts Commission against Discrimination. Honey Farms never disputed the facts of the case, yet they refused to admit, that I was fired because I am a transgender woman. They stuck to their statement that I was fired, because I would not follow the male dress code.

It took me eight months to get another job, worrying, how would support my self. It took another nine years to settle the case. Nine years of having to re-live a humiliating experience. No one should have to go through what I went through. Discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression in employment should not be tolerated in the Massachusetts.