

Activist sues council, claims discrimination

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A member of the Sylmar Neighborhood Council is suing her colleagues and several community activists, claiming they harassed her and discriminated against her because of her race and religion.

The lawsuit filed by Maggie Campbell marks the first time a representative of one of the advisory boards has sued fellow neighborhood council members.

"We have 1,800 board members and among each of those 1,800, you're going to have the broadest array of temperaments and attitudes. I'm kind of amazed this hasn't already happened," said Greg Nelson, who heads the city's Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, which oversees neighborhood councils.

Campbell could not be reached for comment Wednesday. But in court documents, she said the neighborhood council leadership blacklisted her because she is African-American and a Christian.

In particular, the neighborhood council members refused to use her title "Evangelist Maggie Campbell," and pressured her to drop the "evangelist," she said in the documents.

Campbell filed the lawsuit Tuesday and served the council at its meeting that night.

Neighborhood Council President Tammy Flores and others named in the lawsuit said they were advised by the city attorney not to comment on the lawsuit.

The lawsuit comes after months of tension at the Sylmar council.

Campbell and some Sylmar residents had filed dueling grievances, and the council was supposed to consider Tuesday night two petitions - one to remove Campbell and another filed by Campbell to remove Vice-President Bonnie Bernard .

Nelson said the City Attorney's Office will defend the neighborhood council against Campbell's lawsuit.

"I would hope that people would realize if they are going to do this that they are going to be face to face with the city attorney," he said.

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