

Real-Life Scenarios To Help You Identify Discrimination in Housing and Employment

Robert* is Seventh-day Adventist and observes Sabbath on Saturdays. He goes to a job interview. During his interview, Robert mentions that he will need Saturdays off to observe his Sabbath. The interviewer tells Robert that it wouldn't be fair to other employees for Robert to always have the weekend off, so Robert would need to be willing to work on Saturdays or else he can't work there.

Joseph* is Pagan. His belief requires him to adorn his apartment's front door with different types of ornamentation throughout the year. The co-op board of his building notified him that he must remove the ornaments or face fines for violating the by-laws, which state that residents may not hang items on the outside of their apartment doors. Joseph notified the board and the property manager that the ornamentation was part of his religious practices to no avail. In December, Joseph noticed that most of the apartments on his floor had Christmas decorations on their front doors. Joseph asked the board about this and they replied that they make an exception for the holiday season.

Alexandra* is Muslim and works as a cashier at a supermarket. She regularly wears a hijab. One day, a customer spits at her and calls her "terrorist." Alexandra is devastated and reports the incident to her supervisor. Her supervisor tells her that she should resign to protect herself from customer harassment and says that her last day will be Friday.

*Note: Names used in these scenarios are fictitious in order to protect the privacy of individuals.

Faith-Based Communities and the New York City Human Rights Law

All New Yorkers, regardless of who they are, where they live, or their beliefs, deserve to live freely and safely from discrimination. The New York City Human Rights Law protects New Yorkers from discrimination so they can live, work, and thrive in our city free from discrimination. The Law prohibits discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations based on actual or perceived religion or creed. It is illegal for employers, housing providers, business owners, and providers of public accommodations in New York City to treat someone differently because of their faith. The NYC Commission on Human Rights enforces the City Human Rights Law, educates the public about the Law, and encourages positive community relations among New Yorkers.

If you believe you have been discriminated against based on your actual or perceived religion or creed, call 311 and ask for "Human Rights" or call the Commission's info line directly at 212-416-0197. For additional information on the NYC Commission on Human Rights, please visit NYC.gov/HumanRights and follow @NYCCHR on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

NYC Commission on Human Rights

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STRENGTHENING AND SUPPORTING FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES IN NYC

Protections Against Religious Discrimination



NYC Commission on Human Rights

10 Things To Know About the New York City Human Rights Law's Protections Against Discrimination Based on Religion/Creed

1.

The New York City Human Rights Law protects people based on religion/creed, making discrimination based on faith unlawful in housing, employment, and public accommodations.

2.

Housing providers cannot unfairly limit the housing choices available to you because of your religion/creed by misrepresenting the availability of housing or posting discriminatory advertising.

3.

A landlord or management company cannot refuse to offer you a lease, charge you higher rent, require you to pay additional fees, or offer you different services because of your faith.

4.

Employers cannot discriminate against you based on your faith. For example, employers cannot place you in non-customer facing roles because your actual or perceived faith requires you to wear specific attire or because customers are uncomfortable with your religious expression.

5.

Discriminatory harassment is illegal under the City Human Rights Law, which means it is illegal for someone to harass you because of your religion/creed in a threatening or coercive manner.

If you believe you have been discriminated against, call the NYC Commission on Human Rights at 212-416-0197.

6.

You have the right to request and receive reasonable accommodations from your employer based on your religious observances. Employers should grant accommodations as long as they do not cause an “undue hardship”.

7.

Employers may need to allow employees paid or unpaid time off as a reasonable accommodation to observe religious holidays or rituals.

8.

Employees may also request reasonable accommodations in the context of company dress codes. For example, if a company policy prohibits hats or head coverings, employees can request an accommodation to wear a hijab, turban, or yarmulke.

9.

You have the right to enjoy the city and its rich medley of public spaces free from discrimination. Stores, restaurants, and movie theaters cannot deny you access because of your actual or perceived faith.

10.

It is illegal for someone to retaliate against you because you filed a complaint with the NYC Commission on Human Rights, participated in an investigation, or otherwise opposed a discriminatory practice based on religion/creed.

If you would like to attend free workshops on the NYC Human Rights Law, including new “Understanding Islam” and “Religious Accommodations” workshops, visit [NYC.gov/HumanRights](https://www.nyc.gov/humanrights)

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Rebecca* is Jewish and observes the Sabbath. She cannot use electricity or machinery from sundown Friday through sundown Saturday. Rebecca has seen the doormen in the building regularly assist residents with the elevator when they are carrying packages and cannot reach the buttons. Rebecca contacted her landlord, explained her religious practices and requested that the doormen, when they are not otherwise occupied, be told to assist her with the elevator during the Sabbath. The landlord replied, “C’mon, your religion says you can’t push a button? Just stay home on the weekends then.”

James* is an atheist. His supervisor, who is religiously observant, sometimes asks James questions about whether he goes to church. Although James seeks to avoid or redirect those questions, his supervisor continues asking similar questions with increasing frequency and also starts inviting James to join her at religious services. James politely declines and his supervisor starts to give him less desirable work than his peers.

Rachel* is Muslim and observes Ramadan by praying immediately after sunset. She works as a security guard. Her regular shift is from 3pm–11pm. During Ramadan, Rachel asks her supervisor to allow her to take her regular 15-minute break slightly earlier or later during her shift so as to coincide with sunset. Her supervisor refuses and doesn’t want to discuss any further, saying that he doesn’t have time to coordinate coverage for irregular breaks.

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