

STATE OF FLORIDA  
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

THOMAS HARRIS,

EEOC Case No. 15D201500745

Petitioner,

FCHR Case No. 2015-01547

v.

DOAH Case No. 16-2166

BREVARD COUNTY SHERIFF'S  
DEPARTMENT,

FCHR Order No. 16-063

Respondent.

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**FINAL ORDER DISMISSING PETITION FOR  
RELIEF FROM AN UNLAWFUL EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE**

Preliminary Matters

Petitioner Thomas Harris filed a complaint of discrimination pursuant to the Florida Civil Rights Act of 1992, Sections 760.01 - 760.11, Florida Statutes (2014), alleging that Respondent Brevard County Sheriff's Department committed unlawful employment practices on the basis of Petitioner's race (African American) and on the basis of retaliation for having filed an earlier discrimination complaint, by subjecting Petitioner to different terms and conditions of employment, by harassing Petitioner, by denying Petitioner promotions and by constructively discharging Petitioner.

The allegations set forth in the complaint were investigated, and, on March 17, 2016, the Executive Director issued a determination finding that there was no reasonable cause to believe that an unlawful employment practice had occurred.

Petitioner filed a Petition for Relief from an Unlawful Employment Practice, and the case was transmitted to the Division of Administrative Hearings for the conduct of a formal proceeding.

An evidentiary hearing was held in Titusville, Florida, on June 27, 2016, before Administrative Law Judge J. D. Parrish.

Judge Parrish issued a Recommended Order of dismissal, dated September 16, 2016.

The Commission panel designated below considered the record of this matter and determined the action to be taken on the Recommended Order.

Findings of Fact

We find the Administrative Law Judge's findings of fact to be supported by competent substantial evidence.

We adopt the Administrative Law Judge's findings of fact.

### Conclusions of Law

We find the Administrative Law Judge's application of the law to the facts to result in a correct disposition of the matter.

We adopt the Administrative Law Judge's conclusions of law.

### Exceptions

Petitioner filed exceptions to the Administrative Law Judge's Recommended Order with the Division of Administrative Hearings on or about September 19, 2016.

We note that while Petitioner is represented by counsel in this matter it appears that Petitioner filed exceptions to the Recommended Order, himself.

With regard to exceptions to Recommended Orders, the Administrative Procedure Act states, "The final order shall include an explicit ruling on each exception, but an agency need not rule on an exception that does not clearly identify the disputed portion of the recommended order by page number or paragraph, that does not identify the legal basis for the exception, or that does not include appropriate and specific citations to the record." Section 120.57(1)(k), Florida Statutes (2016); see, also, Taylor v. Universal Studios, FCHR Order No. 14-007 (March 26, 2014), McNeil v. HealthPort Technologies, FCHR Order No. 12-026 (June 27, 2012) and Bartolone v. Best Western Hotels, FCHR Order No. 07-045 (August 24, 2007).

A review of Petitioner's exceptions document suggests that it does not comply with this statutory provision.

It can be said, generally, that Petitioner excepts to the Administrative Law Judge's finding that no unlawful employment practice occurred in this matter.

The Commission has stated, "It is well settled that it is the Administrative Law Judge's function 'to consider all of the evidence presented and reach ultimate conclusions of fact based on competent substantial evidence by resolving conflicts, judging the credibility of witnesses and drawing permissible inferences therefrom. If the evidence presented supports two inconsistent findings, it is the Administrative Law Judge's role to decide between them.' Beckton v. Department of Children and Family Services, 21 F.A.L.R. 1735, at 1736 (FCHR 1998), citing Maggio v. Martin Marietta Aerospace, 9 F.A.L.R. 2168, at 2171 (FCHR 1986)." Barr v. Columbia Ocala Regional Medical Center, 22 F.A.L.R. 1729, at 1730 (FCHR 1999). Accord, Bowles v. Jackson County Hospital Corporation, FCHR Order No. 05-135 (December 6, 2005), Eaves v. IMT-LB Central Florida Portfolio, LLC, FCHR Order No. 11-029 (March 17, 2011) and Taylor, supra.

In addition, it has been stated, "The ultimate question of the existence of discrimination is a question of fact." Florida Department of Community Affairs v. Bryant, 586 So. 2d 1205, at 1209 (Fla. 1<sup>st</sup> DCA 1991). Accord, Coley v. Bay County Board of County Commissioners, FCHR Order No. 10-027 (March 17, 2010), Eaves, supra, and Taylor, supra.

It is also unclear whether Petitioner served Respondent with the exceptions document as there is no such indication on the document. See Fla. Admin. Code R. 28-106.104(4) requiring a party filing a document to serve all other parties with the document and include a certificate of such service on the document.

Petitioner's exceptions are rejected.

Dismissal

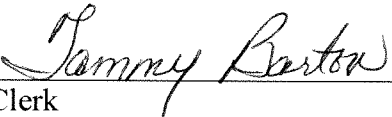
The Petition for Relief and Complaint of Discrimination are DISMISSED with prejudice.

The parties have the right to seek judicial review of this Order. The Commission and the appropriate District Court of Appeal must receive notice of appeal within 30 days of the date this Order is filed with the Clerk of the Commission. Explanation of the right to appeal is found in Section 120.68, Florida Statutes, and in the Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure 9.110.

DONE AND ORDERED this 8 day of December, 2016.  
FOR THE FLORIDA COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS:

Commissioner Rebecca Steele, Panel Chairperson;  
Commissioner Derick Daniel; and  
Commissioner Gilbert M. Singer

Filed this 8 day of December, 2016,  
in Tallahassee, Florida.

  
Clerk  
Commission on Human Relations  
4075 Esplanade Way, Room 110  
Tallahassee, FL 32399  
(850) 488-7082

Copies furnished to:

Thomas Harris  
c/o Richard Manzo, Esq.  
The Manzo Law Firm, P.A.  
Post Office Box 599  
Titusville, FL 32781

Brevard County Sheriff's Department  
c/o Marc A. Sugerman, Esq.  
c/o Wayne L. Helsby, Esq.  
Allen, Norton & Blue, P.A.  
1477 West Fairbanks Ave., Ste. 100  
Winter Park, FL 32789

J. D. Parrish, Administrative Law Judge, DOAH

James Mallue, Legal Advisor for Commission Panel

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a copy of the foregoing has been mailed to the above listed addressees this 8 day of December, 2016.

By: Tammy Barton  
Clerk of the Commission  
Florida Commission on Human Relations