



\$762,000 for Race Discrimination

Onuoha v. Roche Molecular Systems:

A Middlesex County jury awarded \$762,000 on Sept. 23 to an African-American scientist who claimed he suffered discrimination due to his race.

Anthony Onuoha, now 45, was a principal scientist at Roche Molecular Systems in Branchburg from 2005 to 2009.

He was paid less than the others in a group of about 15 scientists and denied the same training opportunities, even though he was the only one holding a Ph.D., says his lawyer, **Harold Parra**, of **Cahn & Parra** in Edison.

Parra adds that Onuoha, the group's only African-American, also received unfair evaluations.

Onuoha claimed he went to his supervisor about the evaluations in 2006 and when nothing was done, went to a manager and got the same result. He then e-mailed a vice-president and complained specifically of bias, says Parra. Subsequently, Onuoha was told that an investigation had found no

unfair treatment, says Parra.

Onuoha claims he continued to experience disparate treatment, including denial of salary increments and difficulty getting vacations approved.

He sued after he was fired during a 2009 reduction in force. He was one of two let go in his group and the other was an independent contractor, says Parra. He found a new job but makes \$60,000 less a year.

After trial before Superior Court Judge **Bryan Garruto**, the jury found the termination was retaliatory and awarded \$162,000 in back pay, \$350,000 in lost future wages and \$250,000 for emotional distress. Roche has moved to set aside the verdict.

Defense counsel **Patrick Stanton**, of **Ogletree Deakins Nash Smoak & Stewart** in Morristown, declines comment.

Steven Cahn was lead counsel for Onuoha.

—By **Mary Pat Gallaher**