

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission  
Meeting on Employer Testing and Screening  
May 16, 2007

Statement of James Robinson, Sr.

My name is James Robinson, Sr. and I'm pleased to be here today to tell you about my testing experience.

I am a 48 year old African-American and have worked for the Ford Motor Company since mid-November, 1996, when I hired on as a Manufacturing Technician at the Sharonville, Ohio plant, near Cincinnati. I am also a UAW Local 863 member. I am married with two children--- a son and a daughter and I always tell them to be the best at everything they do. I tell them life is full of opportunity and take advantage of what life offers. Don't let anyone stop you from being whatever you desire to be.

I and hundreds of other Ford employees, took the apprentice test in January, 1998 to qualify for one of around 117 apprenticeship positions available at Ford's Sharonville and Batavia plants. In early February, 1998, the UAW and the Company wrote me a letter advising that unfortunately, my name did not appear among those provided to us as qualified.

To qualify, you had to score better than 70% of everyone who took the test. The test was simple. It had about 120 questions in 4 parts. Only those employees who insisted on knowing their scores actually received them, so I asked for mine. I had to wait 3 months to get my score. I was told I did not fall over the 70%. I was not shown the actual answers I gave or which ones were wrong. To my knowledge, no African-Americans from the Sharonville plant, and only one or two from the Batavia plant, were selected as apprentices from the January, 1998 test.

Some hourly African-American employees told us, even before we took the test, that we would not be put in the Apprentice Program because Blacks are not accepted into the program. This has happened before. About 44 other African-Americans voiced objection to their exclusion from the apprentice program and some signed a petition about this problem.

I saw the financial and personal harm that exclusion from the apprentice program caused many of my African-American coworkers. We each lost at least \$4 an hour increase we should have gotten as apprentices and Journeymen. At first, I was

angry, outraged and discouraged. A lot of us felt betrayed that these things still happened today. But then I realized that we cannot allow people to discriminate against us---we have to stand up for what we believe in and make things change.

Some of us came to EEOC in October, 1998 and filed discrimination charges against our employer, Ford and our Union, the UAW, concerning the test and our exclusion from the Joint Apprenticeship Program. Because we wanted the system to change, we took a risk by trying to fix this problem at Ford while still working at the company. We received EEOC Determination letters in our favor---EEOC determined that the apprentice test 'had a disparate impact on the Charging Party and on Blacks as a class.'

I took the test again and passed it in 2003---I'm apprenticing as a Millwright at the Ford Sharonville plant and expect to earn my Journeyman certificate in December 2008. I served on the named plaintiff's settlement subcommittee during the extensive negotiations between EEOC, the Charging Parties and private class, Ford and the UAW. I am pleased that other qualified African-Americans have joined me as apprentices at Ford as a result of the settlement in this case.

Thank you for asking me to share my test experience with you.