

Woman Sues Walmart for Discriminating Against African-American Customers

By Bonifacio C. Sison, J.D. Candidate 2020 | February 6, 2018

Imagine this scenario: you are walking to your local retail chain to buy basic hygiene products, like a comb, hair conditioner, and skin lotion. And every time you want access to this product to either hold it or read the label on the back, you must walk all the way to the cashier and wait for them to be free so that they can unlock the product for you. The vast majority of customers do not have to go through this process, but you do.

A California woman, Essie Grundy, and many African-American shoppers at a local Walmart do not have to imagine this scenario. Earlier this year, she [noticed](#) that beauty products targeted for African-American consumers at her store were locked up, requiring an employee's attention in order to unlock the products from a security case. Ms. Grundy went through this inconvenient process on three different occasions.

As a result of this disparate treatment, Ms. Grundy has decided to [sue](#) Walmart. Citing her feelings of humiliation and discrimination, Ms. Grundy initially spoke with the store's employees to try and see if the policy of locking up products could be modified. However, she was unsuccessful.

According to Walmart, items are locked up for security purposes and the products to be locked up are decided on a store-by-store basis. Moreover, items are locked up because they are more likely to be stolen. Still, despite this rational intent, many African-American customers at Walmart find themselves bearing the disproportionate burden when shopping at the store.

Ms. Grundy is represented by Gloria Allred, a high-profile civil rights [attorney](#) who is known for taking controversial cases and focuses on the protection of women's rights. Ms. Allred is known for representing Nicole Brown Simpson's estate during the O.J. Simpson trial, and more recently, at least 28 women who have accused Bill Cosby of sexual assault.

Ms. Grundy is asking for modification of Walmart's policy toward African-American shoppers, lawyer fees, and \$4,000 in damages.