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Virginia Couple Files Lawsuit Against Emerald Beach Resort Following Assault

Plaintiffs claim resort's security and discrimination practices contributed to a dangerous environment resulting in serious injuries

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The Emerald Beach Resort in St. Thomas

In a lawsuit filed on Monday in the District Court of the Virgin Islands, a couple alleges that Emerald Beach Corporation negligently exposed them to danger by allowing persons known for violent tendencies on its premises, and discriminated against them due to race following an attack on property.

Raekoi Evans was arrested in April 2022 after a scuffle on Lindbergh Bay Beach turned into a violent altercation during which Evans allegedly struck a man and his girlfriend with rocks,

causing serious injuries to both. In September 2023, Evans pleaded guilty to aggravated assault and battery, and the next month was handed a suspended 1-year sentence, followed by a year of supervised probation. He was ordered to pay restitution to both the man and the woman, in the total sum of \$ 3182.25.

Now, a civil suit filed by the couple says Evans, an unnamed Emerald Beach security guard, and Emerald Beach itself are liable for damages stemming from the incident.

According to court documents, in April 10, 2022, the couple had been on the beach awaiting their outbound flight when the woman went to the restroom, passing Evans and the security guard who were talking to each other. Evans reportedly made vulgar comments toward the woman, prompting an argument between him and the couple, during which Evans reportedly made threatening comments towards the woman's boyfriend.

The security guard eventually told Evans to go away, but he reportedly remained near the property, congregating near a group of other young men.

Hours later, Evans reportedly returned to where the couple was lying on the resort's beach chairs and approached them with more hostile and threatening comments. The group of men he was with reportedly began spreading out and closing the distance between themselves and the couple, prompting the man to pre-emptively strike Evans. During the fight that ensued, Evans reportedly hit the man several times in the back of the head with a rock, and threw the rock into the woman's face.

Covered in blood, the couple reportedly ran into the Emerald Beach Resort restaurant, desperately seeking assistance. However, they accuse the staff of making no move to help until the man picked up a knife from the restaurant to defend himself, at which point the police were called.

The couple claims that the security guard was seen speaking to Evans and the other men involved in the altercation following the attack. Police ultimately arrested and charged Evans, however the others in the group of men were never identified by the security guard, and reportedly never faced accountability for their role in the incident.

The couple alleges that it was only when resort staff realized the injured people were guests of the hotel who had recently checked out, that they became sensitive to their needs, with the security guard reportedly offering them a room for the night, which the couple declined.

Evans is being sued for intentional infliction of emotional distress, negligent infliction of emotional distress, battery, and assault for his violent acts against the couple.

The security guard, who the couple claims makes his friends including Evans welcome on hotel property, is being sued for negligence in failing to contact authorities after Evans issued his original threats against the couple, and allowing him on hotel property despite being familiar with his "propensity for instigating violent confrontations," according to the lawsuit.

Emerald Beach Resort itself is also being sued for negligence in allowing its staff to encourage or permit their friends to occupy the premises irrespective of character. The resort is also being accused of discrimination – "using the non-white race of...people as a basis for assuming that a person is not a hotel guest," and using that assumption to apply a "reduced level of care," as alleged in the lawsuit.

The plaintiffs are asking the court to assess general and punitive damages against all three defendants in amounts to be decided through a jury trial. Evans, the unnamed security guard, and

Emerald Beach itself have yet to respond to the allegations.

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