

# New York Company Must Pay \$5.1 Million for Demanding Religious Practices From Employees

A New York federal jury awarded 10 former and current employees of a Long Island company \$5.1 million because the company was found to have forced them to practice certain religious activities, reports *The Washington Post*.

*Post* contributor **Gene Marks** writes that the EEOC suit alleged that United Health Programs of America employees were being forced to follow an internal “Harnessing Happiness” system started by an aunt of the owners in 2007 that required them to engage in activities such as prayers, religious workshops and “spiritual cleansing rituals.”

“Nine employees said the ‘religiously infused atmosphere’ created a hostile work environment for them, and the jury agreed,” according to Marks. “The same jury also found that another employee was fired for opposing the practices. A judge had previously ruled that the Harnessing Happiness system – which was also known as ‘Onionhead’ – constituted a religion.”

**Read the *Post* article.**