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Press Release
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‘My face didn’t fit in with the white, racist culture of accountancy giant PwC’

One of Britain’s leading accountancy firms, PricewaterhouseCoopers, is steeped in “Anglo-Saxon male culture” that discriminates against non-whites, a partner has alleged.

Dunstan Pedropillai, 47, is suing the firm for £2.6 million, accusing it of racism and paying him less than white colleagues.

The Sri Lanka-born Cambridge graduate, who earns nearly £1 million a year, told an employment tribunal he did not get top jobs and his earning potential was limited. When he complained he suspected racial discrimination, he was threatened with the sack, he claimed.

He is suing for lost earnings and pensions contributions. In a statement to the tribunal in Croydon, he said: “I believe I have been treated less favourably by PwC on the grounds of my race. I am stuck on a very low role level. However hard I pump my accelerator I am never going to get up to the kind of income level other partners have.

“The original culture of the firm is an extremely strong collegiate club-like corporate culture which has its roots in Anglo-Saxon male culture.”

Mr Pedropillai, of Wimbledon, has lived in Britain since he was 11 and joined PwC as an audit specialist in 1986. His lawyer Christopher Jeans QC said bosses were so impressed that they proposed him for partnership a year earlier than was customary, in 1997.

But his career began to falter in 2001. His unit dealt with clients such as Barclays and Goldman Sachs, but he was given small, high-risk firms, it is claimed, and by 2003 his rating had dropped to the lowest level possible.

He said: “It was as if they had already formed a view that I was not a ‘member of the club’ or that in some way my face did not fit ... they felt as a non-white I didn’t look right.”

In 2002 he was given a bad appraisal for dating a colleague - Marina, later his wife - without telling his boss

how serious the relationship was. He complained about his role rating, and, said Mr Jeans: “In 2005 Andrew Smith, head of partner affairs, leaves him a voicemail saying if he claimed for race discrimination he would be dismissed.”

Suzanne McKie, for PwC, said it denied the claims and Mr Pedropillai’s career stalled because of “poor people skills”. She said the economic downturn saw two of his white peers made redundant, and his 12 per cent pay cut last year was in line with that of other partners.

The hearing continues.