



INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

September 29, 2026

Report No. 26-N-0052

The EPA OIG Substantiated Retaliation Allegations Against the Nonprofit Blacks in Green

This investigation was conducted by the Administrative Investigations Directorate, within the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General's Office of Special Review and Evaluation. The AID conducts noncriminal investigations of allegations of senior agency employee misconduct and whistleblower reprisal.

Under 41 U.S.C. § 4712, the EPA OIG is required to conduct investigations of nonfrivolous allegations of reprisal made by employees of EPA or U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board contractors, subcontractors, grantees, subgrantees, and personal services contractors for making protected disclosures to certain persons or bodies regarding EPA or CSB contracts or grants.

Inquiries. Address all other inquiries to OIG.PublicAffairs@epa.gov.

In September 2026, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General concluded an investigation into allegations that Blacks in Green, the recipient of an EPA grant,¹ violated 41 U.S.C. § 4712(a), which prohibits reprisal against employees of federal grantees and certain others who make disclosures of wrongdoing. Blacks in Green is an environmental justice nonprofit based in Chicago, Illinois. Our investigation substantiated allegations that Blacks in Green terminated an employee and removed the employee's supervisory duties in retaliation for the employee disclosing potential inaccuracies in Blacks in Green's grant documentation. We did not substantiate the allegation that Blacks in Green removed the employee from meetings in retaliation for the employee's disclosures.

Specifically, the employee disclosed that multiple Blacks in Green employees were listed as full-time employees for more than one grant. This meant that Blacks in Green potentially double billed the government for multiple salaries and may not have correctly allocated the percentage of time that employees worked on the EPA grant. The employee also disclosed that Blacks in Green did not remove former employees from grant documentation. The employee reported raising these concerns to three Blacks in Green personnel—the chief executive officer, the chief of staff, and a grant consultant—as well as an EPA senior project officer. The employee alleged that the chief executive officer took three actions in retaliation for these disclosures: (1) removed the employee from meetings, (2) stripped the employee of supervisory duties, and (3) terminated the employee from Blacks in Green.

We determined that the employee made at least one protected disclosure—in other words, a disclosure protected against retaliation under 41 U.S.C. § 4712—to the chief executive officer and the chief of staff. We found that the protected disclosure was a contributing factor in the employee's termination and loss of supervisory duties. We determined that Blacks in Green could not demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that it would have terminated the employee or removed the employee's supervisory duties in the absence of the protected disclosure. We recommended that the EPA administrator consider appropriate corrective action in light of these findings.

¹ The EPA awarded Blacks in Green a cooperative agreement, which is similar to a grant but involves substantial programmatic involvement by the agency during the performance of activities. For simplicity, we use the term grant in this summary to refer to the cooperative agreement.