

\$150G for Former Worker

A former Huntington town employee who claimed his bosses retaliated against him for alleging racial discrimination was awarded \$150,000 by a Suffolk County jury Monday, his attorneys said yesterday.

Richie Batts, 45, of Brentwood, had been a maintenance mechanic for Huntington's highway department and a member of a group of black employees who forced the town to pay \$210,000 to settle a racial-discrimination case in 1985.

As part of that settlement, the town was ordered not to retaliate against the complainants and to remedy a poor hiring and promotional record of minority employees, Batts' lawyers said. Batts said he was demoted and mistreated in his department, leading him to quit in 1989.

Town officials said they could not comment on the jury award because U.S. District Court Judge Leonard Wexler in Hauppauge has yet to rule on the jury's award. The two sides have 10 days to file motions asking him to overturn the ruling or increase its amount.

"It's really premature," said George Hoffman, spokesman for the town. "Until the judge decides what the jury's findings mean we really can't comment."

Five other cases filed by black employees are pending against the town. Since the ruling, about 12 other people have come forward seeking representation, said Lenard Leeds of Mineola, Batts' other attorney. — Ching-Ching Ni