

# New York Times Executives Sued For Alleged Race, Gender, Age Discrimination

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*[Wally Gobetz's Flickr](#).*

Two New York Times employees, both black women in their 60s, today filed a multimillion dollar class action law suit [\[PDF\]](#) against the paper's CEO Mark Thompson and Executive Vice President Meredith Levien, alleging that the executives have created a work environment rife with racial, gender-based and age-based discrimination.

"Unbeknownst to the world at large, not only does the Times have an ideal customer (young, white, wealthy), but also an ideal staffer (young, white, unencumbered by family) to draw that purported ideal customer," reads the complaint, filed today in US District Court.

The plaintiffs on the case, Ernestine Grant, 62, and Marjorie Walker, 61, both work in advertising for the paper of record, and allege that they are paid less than their younger, white counterparts, and have been repeatedly passed over for promotions. According to the suit, "Older advertising directors of color found themselves pushed out through buyouts, or outright terminated, but those vacancies were rapidly filled with younger, white individuals."

Overall, they allege, the paper has gotten considerably younger and whiter since Thompson took over. According to the suit, when Levien began her tenure in 2013, she made a speech to Times personnel emphasizing the need for "fresh faces" and "people who look like the people we are selling to."

The suit also cites Thompson's track record as director-general of the BBC, from 2004 to 2012. In 2011, BBC employee Miriam O'Reilly won an age-discrimination suit against Thompson, prompting him to [admit](#) that, "There are manifestly too few older women broadcasters on the BBC." According to the plaintiffs, there is ample evidence that the Times is no better off—four of the paper's 14-member Board of Directors are women, and Levien is the only woman on the Time's Executive Committee. The suit also references the 2014 firing of former Executive Editor Jill Abramson, allegedly shortly after she spoke up about being [paid less](#) than her male counterparts.

A [2014 survey by the Women's Media Center](#) found that the NY Times had the fewest female bylines out of the top 10 most widely-circulated newspapers, with about 69% of bylines belonging to men. About 75% of the paper's opinion writers are men, according to the report.

"The New York Times obviously is a leading publication that calls itself out as advocating liberal social views," said attorney Douglas Wigdor on Thursday. "Unfortunately, when it comes to the treatment of its own employees, they have a double standard with people of color, people over 40, and women."

Wigdor added that he's seeking financial relief for the plaintiffs, but said it was too soon to speculate an exact amount since the suit may bring on more alleged victims—possibly as many as 50.

The NY Times did not immediately respond to our request for comment. However a spokeswoman [told the Guardian](#) that, "We have not seen the complaint, but the statements you have shared are completely unjustified attacks on individuals and grossly distort the work environment at the New York Times Company."

**[UPDATE:]** New York Times spokeswoman Eileen Murphy issued the following statement in regards to the lawsuit: "This lawsuit contains a series of recycled, scurrilous and unjustified attacks on both Mark Thompson and Meredith Levien. It also completely distorts the realities of the work environment at The New York Times."

"We strongly disagree with any claim that The Times, Mr. Thompson or Ms. Levien have discriminated against any individual or group of employees," she added. "The suit is entirely without merit and we intend to fight it vigorously in court."

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