

NY Lawyer Hits Fox News With More Bias Suits, Keeps Pressure on UK Deal

[newyorklawjournal.com/id=1202786882378](https://www.newyorklawjournal.com/id=1202786882378)



The avalanche of sexual harassment lawsuits and discrimination complaints facing Fox News continued to grow Monday, as two employees brought new suits and another joined an [earlier racial discrimination filing](#) against the cable news channel, its executives and its parent 21st Century Fox.

A black computer technician—whose accusations of racist behavior led to May 19's dismissal of Bob Beckel, co-host of the network's prime-time program "The Five,"—has also signed on for representation, said [New York plaintiffs attorney Douglas Wigdor](#), who now represents 23 former and current employees of the network.

Wigdor is also keeping the heat on Fox with [a letter to British regulatory agency Ofcom](#), detailing the new allegations against Fox. Wigdor [has urged the regulator](#) to consider what he describes as a pattern of discrimination, harassment and retaliation at Fox before approving the company's \$14.8 billion acquisition of Sky News in the U.K.

"Business at 21st Century Fox continues to operate more akin to 18th Century Fox," Wigdor said in a statement referring to the [spate of suits alleging institutional discrimination](#) at Fox News, a key component of Rupert Murdoch's media empire. Fox News founder Roger Ailes, [who died last week](#), and high-profile host [Bill O'Reilly](#) were both [shown the door](#) after being targeted in several suits in the past few months. Staunchly conservative Fox News has paid out a reported \$45 million to settle sexual harassment cases involving Ailes and \$13 million to head off similar cases involving O'Reilly. A call to 21st Century Fox on Monday seeking comment was not immediately returned.



In [a suit filed Monday](#), Fox News Radio shift editor Kathleen Lee, a network employee for more than a decade, alleges that starting in 2013, she endured repeated incidents of sexual harassment by anchor Ron Flatter. When she complained to Fox News Radio's top executives Mitch Davis and Bernie Pigott, she was told to "deal with it,"

according to the complaint in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. She then reached out to Denise Collins, the former head of human resources, and [Dianne Brandi, general counsel for Fox](#), and was again ignored, according to the filing.

It was July 2015, after Flatter is alleged to have physically threatened Lee and referred to Hillary Clinton as "Clit-on" throughout the newsroom, that he was removed from his position, according to the filing. Fox continued to pay Flatter, the suit alleges, while Lee was subjected to unceasing retaliation, she claims.

In a separate suit, former accounts payable coordinator Naima Farrow, who worked for Fox News from July 2014 to November 2015, claims she was fired less than 72 hours after disclosing her pregnancy to her supervisor. Farrow, who is black, says she was also subjected to a racially hostile work environment at the hands of Judith Slater, Fox News' former controller. Slater often greeted Farrow by saying "Hey girlfriend," a mocking and stereotypical impersonation of a black woman, [according to the suit](#).

Vidya Mann, a former accounts receivable specialist, claims that following her employment via an agency in 2009, she was repeatedly denied classification as a permanent employee and health benefits despite doing the same work as other Fox employees. Mann, who is described as brown-skinned and Guyanese, also claims that Slater, the HR chief, targeted her with racially discriminatory remarks throughout her tenure. Mann filed to join the suit filed on April 26 by Adasa Blanco, a former Fox employee also represented by Wigdor. The suit targets Slater and Brandi in addition to the network and its parent company.

The unnamed black IT worker involved in the incident that led to Beckel's firing said the host rushed out when he entered to work on Beckel's computer. When he asked Beckel why he was leaving, the suit claims the host said it was because he was black. The IT worker complained to Fox News' current head of human resources, Kevin Lord, who fired Beckel three days later. Before he left, the suit charges, Beckel repeatedly pressured the IT worker to withdraw his complaint so that the host wouldn't lose his job.

Fox has denied pressuring the IT employee to drop his complaint in a statement, which also said it had "facilitated an apology from Mr. Beckel ... minutes after he was terminated."

Wigdor on Monday sent a letter to Ofcom's chief executive Sharon White, updating the agency on the new lawsuits. Murdoch already owns The Sun, The Times and The Sunday Times, three of the U.K.'s biggest newspapers. A decision by Ofcom on the Sky deal is expected by June 20.