Three more Fox News employees allege sexual harassment, racial discrimination in lawsuits

Provide and Anticipation Pentertainment/tv/fox-news-lawsuits-allege-harassment-discrimination-article-1.3186186

BY Victoria Bekiempis Meera Jagannathan



The News Corporation building at 1211 Sixth Ave. in Manhattan Friday afternoon. Fox Corp subsidiary Fox News finds itself the target of another lawsuit.

(Craig Warga)

A new cluster of sexual harassment and racial discrimination lawsuits rocked the already scandal-riddled Fox News Channel on Monday.

Fox News Radio shift editor Kathleen Lee alleged a "sexually hostile work environment," while former Fox News employees Naima Farrow and Vidya Mann said they were terminated over their pregnancies in suits against parent company 21st Century Fox.

The allegations were filed Monday in Manhattan Federal Court by law firm Wigdor LLP, which represents almost two dozen plaintiffs making similar charges against the cable news giant.

A Fox News spokesperson characterized the new claims as "without legal basis" in a statement obtained by the Daily News.

Two more Fox News employees join race discrimination lawsuit

"We have consistently demonstrated that the Company is committed to a diverse workplace that is free from all forms of discrimination, takes any complaint of discrimination seriously, and in these particular matters took prompt, effective and, where necessary, strong remedial action.

"We believe these latest claims are without legal basis and look forward to proving that the Company at all times has acted appropriately, and lawfully, in connection with these matters."

Lee, a Fox News Radio employee of more than 10 years, alleges radio anchor Ron Flatter subjected her to "unrelenting sexual harassment" after the network hired him in 2013.

Paid Content by Qantas

The Results are In: These are the Most Fantastic Activities Found in Perth

Among a variety of allegations of Flatter's workplace misconduct — including yelling Hillary Clinton's name in the newsroom as "Hillary Clit-on," referring to the newsroom as "ISIS" and creating an insulting clip calling ex-anchor Andrea



Tantaros "loose" — Lee claims the anchor called her "useless," timed how long she took to use the bathroom and nicknamed her after WWI spy Mata Hari.

Ailes' death complicates Fox News' ability to defend lawsuits

Flatter openly referred to female workers including herself "sluts and "whores," she added in the suit.

Lee, who was born with heart conditions and one kidney and has a rare genetic disease that resulted in scoliosis, further alleged Flatter regularly called her an "invalid" and referred to her as "Leak-y" in front of fellow employees.

When she reported Flatter's alleged misconduct, she says, Fox News Radio VP Mitch Davis wanted to resolve her complaint "internally" — and ultimately told her to "deal with it."

But after Flatter allegedly launched a physical threat against Lee, she reported him to an HR honcho — who, with Davis and ex-news director Bernie Pigott, "looked the other way and failed to act."

Fox News anchor Kelly Wright joins racial bias lawsuit

Flatter could not immediately be reached for comment.

The second litigant, Farrow, was hired in July 2014 as an accounts payable coordinator and allegedly fired "without any warning or explanation" in November 2015 — less than 72 hours after telling her boss she was pregnant, she claims.

Former controller Judith Slater — who was fired by the network in March after employees alleged she'd made racist remarks — also subjected Farrow to a hostile work environment "because Ms. Farrow is Black," the suit claims.



A new batch of sexual harassment and racial discrimination lawsuits have been filed against the already scandal-ridden Fox News Channel.

(Howard Simmons/New York Daily News)

Slater, for example, called Farrow "girlfriend' in a mocking and stereotypical impersonation of a Black woman," the lawsuit claimed. "Slater also regularly referred to the 16th floor of Fox's headquarters, where Ms. Farrow and many other minority employees worked, as the 'ethnic floor."

Charles Payne joins list of Fox News anchors facing lawsuits

Farrow, who claims she was an exemplary employee, also says she wasn't paid overtime she had earned.

Meanwhile, Mann — a Guyanese woman who describes herself as "brown-skinned" — was hired in April 2009 to work in accounts receivable at Fox. While she was originally slated for a four-week stint during a full-time staffer's maternity leave, Mann was asked to stay on and did for more than four years.

But because she'd been hired through an agency, she wasn't considered a "permanent" employee at Fox "despite the fact that Ms. Mann worked in exactly the same positions, and performed the same work, as other employees in (accounts receivables)."

Mann asked several times to be made permanent. Her supervisor said she would submit Mann's resume to Slater — and recommend a permanent gig — but the then-controller rejected it.

Instead, Slater hired a "young, White female as an intern," the suit claims.

Mann became pregnant in late 2012. She says she kept begging for full-time status because she had no health

insurance — but was fired in summer 2013, shortly after giving birth.

"Ms. Mann worked until the last possible day she could physically withstand fulltime work before giving birth. At some point in in June 2013, Ms. Mann had to stop reporting to the AR Department for work. Thereafter, she gave birth to her child.

"Sadly, Fox used this opportunity to terminate Ms. Mann and avoid paying her any insurance or extra compensation. Upon information and belief, shortly after Ms. Mann gave birth, Slater hired another individual to work full-time as a 'permanent' employee to perform Ms. Mann's responsibilities."

Lawyers for Slater declined to comment.

Wigdor, alongside Monday's litigation, also announced it would represent an unnamed black IT worker whose racial discrimination complaints against "The Five" co-host Bob Beckel prompted the liberal anchor's axing on Friday.

Fox News has weathered a blitz of legal trouble since last summer, when former anchor Gretchen Carlson slapped ex-CEO Roger Ailes with a sex harassment suit. Ailes, who died Wednesday at 77, resigned from his media empire in July after more women came forward.

Star pundit Bill O'Reilly, too, left the network in a cloud of scandal last month after his \$13 million in sexual harassment settlements came to light.

Tags:

fox news media hillary clinton discrimination lawsuits

Send a Letter to the Editor

Join the Conversation: facebook Tweet