

Fox News Settles Racial Discrimination Lawsuits

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By **Dave Simpson**

Law360 (May 15, 2018, 10:16 PM EDT) -- More than a dozen former Fox News employees have settled a putative class action in New York state court alleging systematic racial discrimination by the network news giant, according to the employees' attorneys.

"All we can say is the following, which is a joint statement from our firm and Fox — 'The parties have reached mutual agreements that resolve various cases involving former Fox News employees,'" plaintiff attorney Michael J. Willemin of Wigdor LLP told Law360 in an email.

Other publications, including The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal, have reported that the settlement is "around \$10 million" or "roughly \$10 million."

The complaint was **first brought** by former payroll manager Tichaona Brown and payroll coordinator Tabrese Wright, who accused ex-controller Judith Slater of ridiculing black employees and making racist comments about people of color.

Then the filing **was updated** to name Fox General Counsel Dianne Brandi and include plaintiff Monica Douglas, who claimed Brandi failed to address complaints about Slater's behavior as far back as November 2014 and again in mid-2015.

In late April 2017, the suit was **refiled as a putative class action** with new named plaintiffs, including Kelly Wright, a two-time Emmy Award winner and U.S. Army veteran who has worked for the network since 2003.

Wright said he was removed as host from "Fox & Friends" and replaced with a white colleague, is paid less than white peers, has been subjected to racist comments and hasn't been given the same opportunities as his white colleague, like hosting his own show or reporting on the 2016 presidential race.

In May 2017, two new plaintiffs, Elizabeth Fernandez and Claudine McLeod, **joined the action**, saying they too were exposed to racially charged statements while working in the accounts payable department under Slater.

McLeod and Fernandez filed a second amended complaint in state court in the Bronx alleging the news network systemically discriminates against black and minority employees and allowed Slater to make racist comments without repercussions.

McLeod, a Panamanian woman who is black and has worked for Fox in the accounts payable department since 2007, says she was "subjected to numerous discriminatory comments and conduct" by Slater.

She said Slater had demanded to know whether she and other minority employees were U.S.

citizens and made disparaging remarks about her heritage, among other racially discriminatory behaviors.

Fernandez, a Hispanic woman who worked for Fox from August 2008 through July 2014, said Slater made discriminatory comments about her heritage and her physique, the complaint says.

The workers claimed there are more than 200 current and former employees who may have been victims of discriminatory and retaliatory conduct at Fox. Claims included discrimination based on race, color, ethnicity and national origin, disability discrimination, and retaliation in violation of the New York State Human Rights Law and the New York City Human Rights Law.

Representatives for Fox did not immediately respond to request for comment Tuesday.

The employees are represented by Douglas H. Wigdor, Jeanne M. Christensen and Michael J. Willemin of Wigdor LLP.

Fox News and 21st Century Fox are represented by Joseph A. Piesco and Garrett D. Kennedy of DLA Piper.

The case is Brown et al. v. Twenty-First Century Fox Inc. et al., case number 22446-2017E, in the Supreme Court of the State of New York, County of the Bronx.

--Editing by Adam LoBelia.