

NY1 Discriminated Against Pregnant Anchors, New Suit Says

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By **Craig Clough**

Law360 (July 31, 2019, 6:04 PM EDT) -- Charter Communications was hit with a second lawsuit Wednesday alleging it discriminates against older, female on-air talent at its NY1 station, with two women claiming they were fired after becoming pregnant and that managers favored younger journalists.

The complaint follows a **similar one brought in June** by five current female news anchors who claim that since Charter Communications merged with Time Warner Cable in 2016, they have been sidelined in favor of younger on-air talent with less experience.

In the new suit filed in Manhattan federal court, Thalia Perez and Michelle Greenstein both said they were discriminated against after becoming pregnant when they were over 40, with Perez fired while in her third trimester and Greenstein after returning from maternity leave.

"Their experiences only further substantiate and corroborate what is already obvious and well-known — that since taking over NY1, Charter has deliberately promoted and favored younger female and male on-air talent and at the same time pushed older women out," the women said in the lawsuit. "That NY1/Charter also disfavored older women who were pregnant and/or had young children only makes this conduct that much more despicable."

According to the complaint, Charter acquired NY1 as part of its merger with Time Warner Cable in May 2016, which was followed by a "restructuring" plan that resulted in both women being discriminated against.

Perez, who was a part-time anchor, told her manager in May 2017 that she was pregnant and saw her on-air time slashed while other opportunities also evaporated, according to the complaint.

The manager "pestered" Perez about her pregnancy, her body and about any future pregnancies before she was excluded from a revamped version of the segment she anchored in favor of younger talent, according to the complaint. Perez said she was in her third trimester and 43 years old when she was fired in October 2017.

Greenstein gave birth in March 2017, was pressured to return to work from maternity leave and saw her on-air opportunities cut when she did, according to the complaint. She also said she was denied a full-time position in favor of a younger, childless beauty pageant winner who had been with the station for less than a year.

The same manager told Greenstein she was denied the position because she was a new mother who should stay home with her baby, according to the complaint. Greenstein said she complained in writing about her treatment but was let go from the station a few months later.

The new lawsuit claims discrimination and retaliation against the two women in violation of the Family and Medical Leave Act and the New York State Human Rights Law.

"Ms. Perez and Ms. Greenstein's experiences only confirm and emphasize the allegations of both discrimination and retaliation from the other case we filed on behalf of five women only weeks ago," Douglas H. Wigdor of [Wigdor LLP](#), who represents the women, said in a statement. "NY1/Charter has blatantly discriminated against older women who appear on-air — and disregarded any complaints of mistreatment — and this practice must end immediately."

Charter spokeswoman Maureen Huff denied the allegations in the new lawsuit.

"As we've said, we take these kinds of allegations seriously, but this lawsuit has no merit," Huff told Law360 in an email. "These two women only provided fill-in work. A few years ago, we decided to employ more full-time on-air employees. At that time, we no longer had a need to call them for shifts. Our records show that neither Michelle nor Thalia applied for any open position."

In the June lawsuit, NY1 anchors Roma Torre, Kristen Shaughnessy, Jeanine Ramirez, Amanda Farinacci and Vivian Lee — ages 40 to 61 — say they have seen their on-air opportunities reduced in favor of younger women who sometimes resembled them in various ways, including ethnicity, hair color and skin tone.

The women in both suits are represented by Douglas H. Wigdor, David E. Gottlieb and Julia Elmaleh-Sachs of Wigdor LLP.

Counsel information for Charter was not immediately available.

The case is Perez et al. v. Charter Communications, case number [1:19-cv-07141](#), in the [U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York](#).