

Amazon sued by black employee over accusations of discrimination

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by Nihal Krishan, Technology Reporter |

March 1, 2021

A black Amazon senior manager and former adviser to Democratic Sen. Cory Booker is suing the tech company and two current employees, alleging gender and race discrimination. The lawsuit filed Monday also alleged that a former Amazon executive sexually harassed the black employee.

The lawsuit, filed by the Wigdor law firm on behalf of Charlotte Newman, alleged that "Amazon has a practice of hiring people of color in its corporate offices at lower levels and promoting them less than their white coworkers with similar qualifications."

Newman has been a senior manager within the Amazon Web Services division of the company since January 2017.

The suit alleged years of "harrowing sexual harassment and sexual assault" by a senior coworker who allegedly groped her thigh without her consent, pulled her hair, and locked his arm in hers while making threats. The suit also alleged that a coworker told Newman she looked "like a gorilla" and that a supervisor called her "just scary" in criticizing how she spoke in meetings.

The complaint says Amazon's alleged mistreatment of its black workforce is in contrast with its "token messages of support of Black Lives Matter" shared by the company, its CEO Jeff Bezos, and others.

"Amazon should harness the power of diverse leadership, instead of dimming the light of Black employees," Newman said in a statement.

Newman says in the lawsuit that when she complained to human resources about the mistreatment and misconduct, Amazon failed to inform her on the status of any investigations or to offer further support. She says Amazon has not implemented any of the proposed policy changes she suggested to help ensure the "equitable treatment of underrepresented minorities at Amazon."

"Amazon still treats Black employees like second-class citizens by shutting them out of high-level corporate roles, paying them less than similarly situated white employees, and dismissing their concerns about equity and safety," said Douglas Wigdor, founding partner of the Wigdor law firm.